

TIN GOOSE—The Firestone was an impressive sight in its day and created a sensation wherever it went. The second of two Ford Tri-Motors operated by Firestone, this one later carried President FDR on his only flight aboard a commercial airliner.

Firestone NEWS

July, 1963

Page 3

History Relived With Revival Of Ford Tri-Motor

It was a pioneer and a flight
in it was always a thrill

The old "tin goose" was back in action recently and many an old-timer with Firestone will remember her with a touch of nostalgia. American Airlines has re-purchased one of its Ford Tri-Motors, which it operated in the 1920s and 1930s.

It was scheduled to tour the country and then, bearing the colors of American Airways and equipped with Firestone tires, was to be turned over to the Smithsonian Institution's National Air Museum.

American disposed of the plane in 1936 and it experienced a wide and varied career during the ensuing years, seeing service from Alaska to Central America. It was rediscovered beside a small airfield at Oaxaca, Mexico.

It had been damaged while landing there and had been abandoned. While no longer flyable, it was still in use, for someone was living in it. The occupant had installed a wood-burning stove complete with chimney sticking out the top of the fuselage.

When American Airlines began restoring and refurbishing the venerable airplane at the AA Tulsa Maintenance Base, just about the first new item required was a set of tires. Southwest Airmotive Company, Firestone's aircraft parts distributor in Tulsa, won the bid.

ALTHOUGH the size and type of tire originally used on the Ford Tri-Motor is no longer manufactured, this posed no problem. The wheel assembly on the Ford comes from a Lockheed Lodestar. Firestone's Lodestar and Piper Cub tires filled the bill promptly.

Firestone and the Ford Tri-Motor are closely linked in history, for the company operated two of these planes from 1929 to 1932. The first, called "The Firestone," was traded back to Ford for the second and more powerful aircraft. "The Firestone II" was sold to American Airways and shortly after its sale had the distinction of making what airline officials call

"the most noteworthy Ford Tri-Motor flight in the company's history."

It happened in 1932.

The Democratic National Convention at Chicago had nominated New York Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt for President on July 1. Traditionally, a presidential nominee always accepted the nomination at a formal ceremony sometime after the convention, but Roosevelt decided to take advantage of air travel, then in its infancy.

He flew directly to Chicago on the former Firestone plane to make his acceptance speech. It was his only trip on a commercial airliner.

Firestone's Ford Tri-Motors created a sensation wherever they went and during the four years they were in company service, they hauled more than 200,000 passengers in all parts of the nation.

WHILE CRUDE by today's standards, the appointments of "The Firestone" and its successor were considered at the time to be "deluxe fittings providing the last word in comfort and luxuriance" according to an old issue of company's headquarters employee publication, the Non-Skid.

Firestone employees who remember the company's tri-motors may have wondered for years what happened to them. Unlike an automobile, which has a few years of use after one or two owners, most airplanes—being more costly investments—last for considerable time.

Like old friends who have moved out of town, they go on to new and interesting careers until they fade away with time. Firestone's second tri-motor, for example, after being sold to American, saw service on the airline for four years, then was sold to the Chilean Navy. Outfitted as a medical airplane, it became the world's first flying hospital.

Then all records of it came to an end and the craft, in all respects, vanished into history.

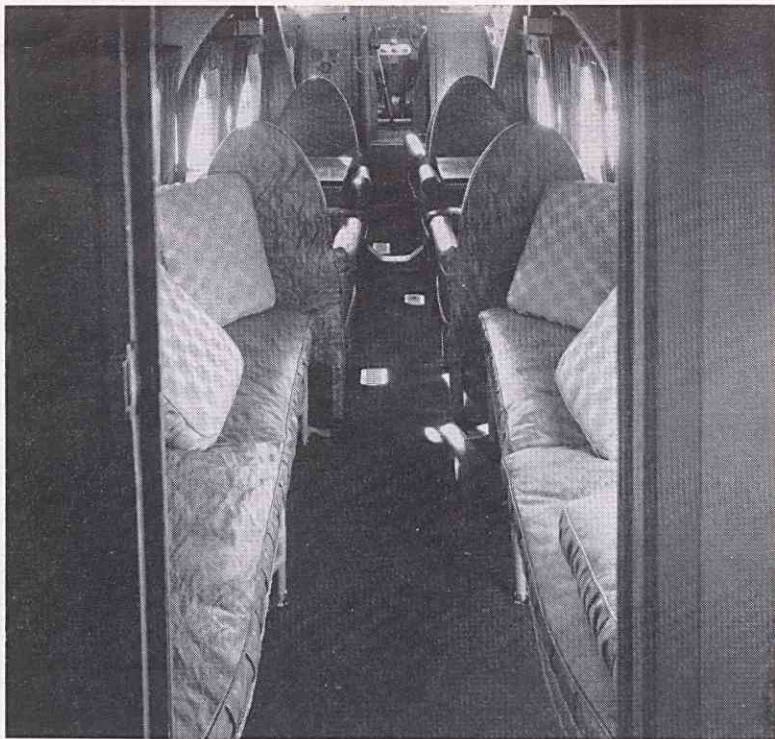
MANY of today's jet travelers first flew in a Ford Tri-Motor.

The plane carried up to 13 passengers, most of them making their first trips by air. They didn't mind the near-deafening noise of the three engines, the teeth-rattling vibration nor the drafts swirling around in the cabin.

These pioneer air travelers were taking advantage of the speed and "comfort" of the new tri-motor airliner.

A comparison of the Ford Tri-Motor with today's 990 Astro-jet vividly illustrates how far aviation has progressed in 30 years. The tri-motor had a range of 400 miles. The Ford cost about \$55,500; the jet \$4,500,000. Top speed of the old plane was 110 mph—close to the speed of sound (Mach. 91).

But the old Ford Tri-Motor, "the tin goose," or "the workhorse of the air" as it was af-



LUXURY—Old-fashioned by today's standards, the interior of The Firestone was considered the last word in plushness. Passengers didn't mind drafts, rattles and gasoline fumes.



BACK TO LIFE—Ford Tri-Motor which once belonged to American Airways was made to fly again recently, then was to be turned over to Smithsonian Institute as an historical item.

fectionately dubbed, had a certain atmosphere about it that is missing in today's sleek jet airliners.

It was a pioneer, and a flight in it was always a thrill. Today

that thrill lives again as one of the last of the old-timers takes to the air once more before being retired and preserved in the Smithsonian Institution's National Air Museum.

RECREATION TRAVEL NOTES

Festivals And Much More On Calendar

July is peak month for the May-October travel and recreation season in the Carolinas and neighboring states Down South. In North Carolina alone, Eastern America's highest mountains and a seacoast famed for fishing and surf-and-sun fun offer their best travel attractions and accommodations.

The NC mountain country, "Land of the Sky", offers natural air conditioning, resorts, lakes, golf courses and magnificent scenic points of interest. It is meeting place of two National Park Service units—the Blue Ridge Parkway and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

ACROSS other sections of the mountains are thousands of acres of National Forest lands, linked by good roads to resorts offering recreation for the whole family.

At the other end of the state are beach resorts on narrow barrier islands or "banks". Surf-and-sun fun are tops this month. Seaside resorts and noted fishing centers are reached by paved highways and auto ferry.

On the banks and along the central and southeastern coast are many historical attractions. Samples are Fort Raleigh on Roanoke Island, Civil War sites such as Fort Macon near Morehead City, and Fort Fisher near Wilmington. US 17 leads through charming cities and towns which are treasuries of Colonial history and architecture.

Between coast and mountains are historical attractions, parks, lakes and golf courses in the Piedmont, all reached by good roads.

Trail Of Handicrafts

North Carolina is one of the country's great centers of fine craftsmanship, and its crafts centers, schools and shops—mostly in the Blue Ridge and Great Smokies region—welcome visitors.

Asheville is headquarters of the Southern Highland Handicrafts Guild, made up of craftsmen from seven states. The Guild sponsors the annual Craftsman's Fair—this year July 15-19—in City Auditorium.

Visitors see elaborate crafts displays, observe craftsmen at work, and enjoy folk music and

dancing. Crafts are sold. A 'do-yourself' program invites visitors to try their hand at loom or workbench.

The fair also features crafts of the Cherokee Indians, and talks by authorities on crafts and folklore.

Calling All Rockhounds

Minerals and gems collectors find good hunting in North Carolina's mountains. The NC Minerals Museum at Spruce Pine features the NC 300th Anniversary program at the annual Mineral and Gem Festival, July 31. The festival will last through Aug. 3, displaying gemstones and minerals from many states and countries. There are guided field trips to collecting grounds in the area.

A rock swap-shop at Gorgarama, Almond, will be held July 13-14.

The topmost section of the Blue Ridge Parkway, opened in June, is a new 20-mile link swinging up to 6,053 feet in the Great Balsam Mountains.

There are more than 400 miles of the Parkway open for travel between Shenandoah National Park in Virginia and the North Carolina entrance to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park near Cherokee.

Summertime Stage Entertainment

Besides North Carolina's three great outdoor dramas—"The Lost Colony" at Manteo, "Unto These Hills" at Cherokee, and "Horn in the West" at Boone—summer theatres are in business this month. The Parkway Playhouse at Burnsville offers productions July 11-Aug. 12. The Charlotte Summer Theatre season begins July 16.

A sampling of other events in July: Junior Rodeo and Junior Horse Show at Love Valley near Statesville, 13-14; Grandfather Mountain Highland Games and Gathering of Scottish Clans, Linville, 13-14; Charity Horse Show, Hendersonville, 18-20; Sailboat Races on Kerr Lake, Henderson, 20-21; Annual Basket Picnic, Whitewater Falls, 24; Horse Show, Waynesville, 26-28.

August preview: Mountain Dance and Folk Festival, Asheville. Aug. 1-3.

Correcting
the Record . . .

CHAIRMAN
IS STILL
CHAIRMAN

In the June issue of Firestone News we miswrote the headline on the story about changes in the responsibilities of the chairman and the president of the company. The headline said that President Raymond C. Firestone was the new company chairman. This was an error.

Harvey S. Firestone Jr. is still chairman (as indicated in the story), but has turned over responsibility of chief executive officer, which he has held since he became chairman, to President Raymond C. Firestone.