

AIR CANADA'S THIRTY-FIFTH BIRTHDAY

Thirty-five years ago a tiny twin-engined aircraft throbbed into the sky over Vancouver and headed across the United States border to Seattle, Washington, 122 miles away. The plane, a Lockheed 10A *Electra*, was filled to capacity with ten passengers and a two-man crew. It covered the 122-mile route in one hour.

To the casual observer that September 1, there may have been little that was unique about either the flight or the aircraft. Small short-hop passenger-flight routes had been springing up for years around the continent. This particular flight, however, was a momentous one in Canadian aviation history for it was the beginning of scheduled airline services for Trans-Canada Air Lines, founded earlier that year by an act of Parliament in faraway Ottawa.

The second-hand *Electra* was one of two Lockheeds acquired by the fledgling airline now known as Air Canada, when it bought out Canadian Airways, a small airline operating on the West Coast. A third aircraft, also picked up in the transaction, was a single-engine *Stearman* biplane, used in the airline's early years for route-survey purposes.

By 1939, the dream of a scheduled transcontinental route had become a reality, linking the West Coast seaport with Montreal.

During its first year, the airline picked up a total of five *Electras* for prices ranging from \$55,000 and up. The *Electra* and its successors, the 12-passenger Lockheed 14H2 and the 14-seat model 1808A, were the airline's workhorses in its early years.

The 38-foot long *Electra*, with a wing-span of 55 feet, was powered by two 450-horsepower Pratt and Whitney Wasp Junior engines and cruised at 175 miles an hour.

In his first annual report to shareholders, S.J. Hungerford, TCA's first president, reported that total staff at the end of 1937 was 71. By the following September, a total of 2,086 passengers had been carried on the airline's small system. The report showed operating revenues at \$16,278 and operating expenses of \$25,430. Net deficit on the Vancouver-Seattle service was \$9,152.08.

In the 34 succeeding years, the airline has recorded profits 23 times and in 1971 had operating revenues of \$508 million and operating expenses of \$480 million for a net profit of \$1.6 million.

Indicative also of the changes in the airline and in aviation generally is a comparison of aircraft in use then and now.

TODAY'S AIRCRAFT

Pride of the Air Canada fleet now is the 365-seat Boeing 747, purchased at a cost of \$22 million. Compared to the original Lockheed, the 747 is 231 feet long and is powered by four JT9D engines with 43,500 pounds thrust each. The engines are built by

Pratt and Whitney — the same manufacturers of the original tiny Lockheed power plants.

As for the Lockheed airframe, the modern-day counterpart of the original *Electra* is the Lockheed L-1011, an \$18.1-million giant that will seat 256 passengers and cruise at speeds of up to 600 miles an hour, which will be used on transcontinental and transborder services; Air Canada takes delivery of the first of ten of these aircraft in December.

While the original 122-mile route to Seattle from Vancouver is now served by another carrier, Air Canada in 1971 operated over more than 91,000 miles of air routes, carrying 7,436,000 passengers in 1971. It employed more than 17,000 persons across its system, which links Canada with the United States, Britain, Continental Europe, and also islands in the Caribbean Sea.

1. *The Lockheed L-1011, introduced into service in the summer of 1973, is a wide-bodied jet that accommodates 256 passengers. One of its main features is a galley under the passenger cabin from where meals are taken by elevators up to the passengers.*
2. *The first aircraft ever operated by Air Canada (formerly Trans-Canada Air Lines) was the Stearman HEM biplane that was used mostly to survey new air routes in 1937 and 1938. It was sold to Northern Airways in March 1939.*
3. *The Lockheed 10A Electra, which inaugurated the airline's first commercial air service in September 1937 over a 122-mile route between Vancouver and Seattle. TCA purchased five of these ten-passenger aircraft.*
4. *An improved version of the Lockheed 10A was the 14H2, which went into service with TCA in May 1938; the airline purchased a total of 16, the last of which was disposed of in 1948. Twelve of these aircraft were modified after purchase to carry an additional 1,000 pounds and were designated 1408s.*
5. *The 1808A was the third Lockheed-made plane purchased by TCA, which operated 15 of these 14-seat aircraft from 1941 to late 1949. The 1808A had a range of 2,000 miles and cruised at 200 miles an hour.*