

## Ford 5-AT-B Tri-Motor

1928

### About This Aircraft



### General History

#### Tin Goose

Many people have heard of Henry Ford's Model T car, nicknamed the "Tin Lizzie." But many have forgotten that the Ford name flew overhead too, on the corrugated metal tail of the "Tin Goose," Ford's reliable and rugged three-engine airplane.

The beginnings of flying Fords stem from a letter sent to Henry Ford's son Edsel in 1923. It said, in part, "I should like one thousand dollars, and I can only promise one thing. You'll never see the money again!" The strange request was signed by inventor and airplane builder William Stout. By 1925, Stout's company was part of Ford's empire and in the following year, the Ford 4-AT (Air Transport) took to the air.

With a trio of powerful motors, a thick wing and all-metal construction, as well as the most trusted name in transportation, "FORD" on the side, the Tin Goose was popular with many fledgling airlines. Approximately 200 Ford 4-ATs and 5-ATs were built.

#### Flying in a Ford

The early days of airline service were far from luxurious. With their luggage stowed in the wings, passengers had to be almost as tough and resilient as the planes in which they traveled. The Tin Goose was so loud inside that the stewardess commonly passed out cotton to passengers to use as ear plugs.

Some flyers, chilled by the cold air at higher altitudes, complained that the *Tri-Motor* should be called the "Flying Icebox." It was always too hot or too cold, mostly too cold! And perhaps worst of all, Fords flew low, bumping and bouncing their way through turbulent skies. Air sickness was a common affliction!

Built in 1928, this Ford, serial number 8, was delivered to Transcontinental Air Transport (TAT) in early 1929. Used on TAT's pioneering passenger service between San Diego and New York, the Ford was named *The City of Wichita*. On a flight in May of 1930, Douglas Clarke flew aboard this airplane on one leg of his cross-country journey. At the time, the 8-month-old Clarke was the youngest transcontinental passenger ever flown. "I was too young to remember the flight, but my parents' stories, and the clippings (from newspapers) have kept the flight on my mind," says Clarke.

The plane was sold to Grand Canyon Airlines in 1935 and found its way to Central America and Mexico in the 1940s. During a 1951 overhaul in Mexico City, the Ford's trademark corrugated skin was replaced with modern, flat sheet metal. It became known as the "smooth skin Ford."

Damaged in a 1954 accident in Mexico, the airplane was repaired and sold to Gene Frank of Caldwell, Idaho, who wanted to use the aircraft to fly smokejumpers. However, the Federal Aviation Administration would not certify this aircraft as airworthy because of the modification to its skin.

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Harrah's Club of Reno, Nevada purchased the aircraft after it sat in a state of disrepair for ten years. After an amazingly thorough restoration costing millions of dollars and taking seven years, the vintage *Tri-Motor* was dubbed *The City of Reno*, and was displayed in Harrah's auto museum in Reno, Nevada. When Harrah's museum closed in 1986, Gary Norton purchased the plane.

Evergreen acquired the Ford *Tri-Motor* in February of 1990. When it visits other cities, it is sometimes renamed to honor that city. The *Tri-Motor* has special significance to Evergreen. In 1975, Evergreen acquired the Johnson Flying Service in Montana. Johnson had employed Ford *Tri-Motors* from before World War II until 1970, to drop smokejumpers to fight fires in rough terrain.



### Specifications

Type:	Civilian Passenger Aircraft
First Flown:	4-AT on June 11, 1926
Wingspan:	77 feet 10 inches
Length:	49 feet 10 inches
Height:	12 feet 8 inches
Wing Area:	835 square feet
Weight, Empty:	7,576 pounds
Weight, Loaded:	12,576 to 13,250 pounds
Power:	Three Pratt & Whitney R-985, 450 horsepower engines
Normal Flight Crew:	Three (Pilot, Copilot and Stewardess)
Capacity:	12 to 14 passengers
Typical Armament:	None

### Performance

Cruise Speed:	122 miles per hour
Top Speed:	142 miles per hour
Range:	540-610 miles
Service Ceiling:	18,500 feet