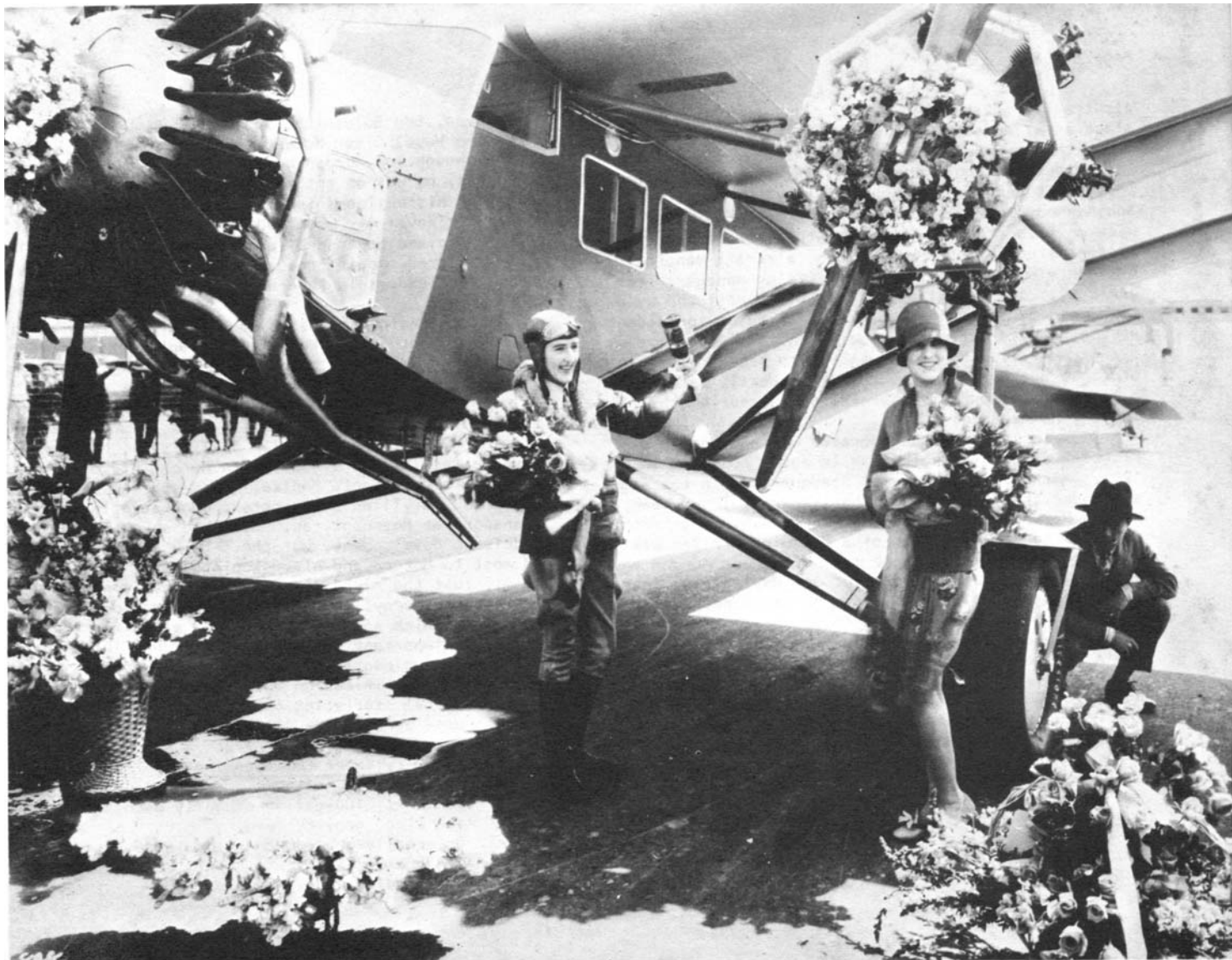




Bobby Trout and Ruth Elder, Tom Morgan in background, rehearsing the christening ceremony of the Bach 3-CT-6 Air Transport at the Pickwick Airways Inaugural at Grand Central Air Terminal on March 29, 1929. (M. L. Bailey)

PICKWICK AIRWAYS

By ALLEN MORGAN

"Southward, Northward, Southward again, Pickwick flew today. With the muffled roar of three great engines that growled defiance at gravity, the sleek air transport rose majestically from the runway of the Grand Central Air Terminal in Glendale. With two crack pilots at the dual controls and eight lucky passengers in the luxurious cabin, it hurtled to San Diego. Ninety minutes later it headed Northward again, this time to San Francisco, and then homed Southward once again." Much the same words appeared in local newspapers on the evening of 29 March 1929. Flamboyantly descriptive, they heralded the opening of another chapter in the growth of U. S. transport aviation--the inauguration of Pickwick Airways.

It was sunny and smogless in Glendale on that March morning. Five hundred air-minded people filled the grandstands which had been set up between the airport administration building and the flight ramp at Grand Central. Looking out over the heads of the dignitaries, seated on a stand below them, the spectators saw five brand new Bach tri-motor transports, or Air Yachts

as they were known, lined up on the asphalt runway. Across the field, the old Slate balloon hangar stood out like a large thimble against a Griffith Park background. This inaugural was to mark the beginning of regular California coastwise airline service, scheduled for three round trips daily, week days only, to San Diego (Ryan-Mahoney Airport) and one round trip daily except Sunday, to San Francisco (Mills Field). Fares were \$15.00 and \$49.50 respectively.

While the American Legion drum and bugle corps and the City Band struck up a fitting tune, the propellers on the first plane of the fleet turned over. Cameras began to click as the big Bach taxied up to the speaker's stand where Bobby Trout, former holder of the women's endurance record, swung a bottle of vintage champagne against the side of the airplane in the traditional christening ceremony. Included among the celebrities and local dignitaries on the stand were Los Angeles District Attorney Buron Fitts and Thomas Morgan, Vice President and General Manager of Pickwick. Both spoke briefly about the development of commercial

air transportation and keeping California in its place as a leader in the field of aviation.

With the conclusion of the ceremony, the Air Yacht taxied out and took to the sky. At the controls on this first regular service flight were Bill Frye and Bob Kennedy. The eight passengers, all guests of Pickwick on this occasion, were: Ruth Elder, aviatrix; Al Wilson, stunt pilot; Morton Bach, aircraft manufacturer; Henry Hohman, Pickwick advertising manager; Fred Schiegel, Jack Howell and Victor Clark, oil and aviation company executives and Walter Clauson, president of the Reserve Officers Association. Wilson almost didn't make it. He had to hobble to the airplane on crutches due to an injury received shortly before in a parachute leap from a burning plane, during the filming of "Hells Angels."

Pickwick Airways Incorporated was a creation of Pickwick Stages, a magic name in motor coaching in the '20s. Pickwick busses, with headquarters in Los Angeles and under the direction of Charles Wren, Tom Morgan and Howard Morgan, were threading American highways from coast to coast. The idea of a Pickwick airline was "dreamed up" mainly by three men, Wren, Tom Morgan and Bill Frye--an experienced pilot and WWI flying instructor. Wren was to be President, Morgan Vice President in charge of management, and Frye, chief pilot. Dave Mitchell would be flight operations manager. It was Tom's job to select routing, get departmental approval and establish service facilities and tariffs, and he and Frye would select an aircraft type most suitable for the venture. Frye was in charge of recruiting pilots. This was right down his alley, for being in the Army Air Corps Reserve, he was able to select the best from a pool of eager aviators--men he had flown with and who had learned the value of teamwork through logging hundreds of hours in multi-engine airplanes. He made his choice, then successfully checked out each of the following men as first pilots and copilots for Pickwick:

Bob Kennedy, Dean Farran, Joe Woolfolk, George

Maves, Lou Goldsmith, Dan Ellis, C. W. Gilpin, John Wood, Elmer McLeod, Russ Hall and Hi Sheridan.

Although Tom Morgan never flew as a pilot on a scheduled run, he was an accomplished flyer and made the majority of his business junkets about the country in his personal Travel Air model 4000. The 4000 was a speedy little biplane powered by a 220 hp Wright J-5, and Tom's wife, Mildred, would frequently "borrow" it to finish among the leaders in several women's transcontinental air derbies.

After considerable study and numerous trips to air-frame manufacturers throughout the United States, Morgan found his "ideal" transport practically in his own backyard--Metropolitan Airport in Van Nuys, just 12 miles as the crow flies from Pickwick's base of operations--to-be in Glendale. Morton Bach, a young aeronautical engineer, together with Bill Graves, had organized the Bach Aircraft Company in March 1927 on old Clover Field in Santa Monica. They started production on various civilian types before concentrating on air transport at Metropolitan. Bach had several transport models in development, but the 3-CT-6 Air Yacht appealed most to Morgan and his associates. It was sturdily built, just the right size, was adequately powered (with a big Hornet in the middle and two Comets under the wings which some said just went along for the ride) and, most important, had good all-around flying characteristics. Incidentally, veteran Waldo Waterman flew most of the certification tests for this airplane. Here are some vital statistics on the Bach 3-CT-6 Air Transport as used by Pickwick Airways:

Power Plant: One 9-cylinder Pratt & Whitney Hornet

and two 7-cylinder Comet engines of 130 hp under each wing.

Fuel: Two tanks, 100-gallon capacity each, in the roots of each wing, gravity feed.

Wings: Externally-braced monoplane in two sections, Clark "Y" airfoil, spruce spars, fabric-covered, plywood leading edge.



Guests and dignitaries at the Pickwick Airways Inaugural ceremonies were (from left): Wally Timm, Major MacBain, Eugene Biscailuz, Capt. C. Spicer, Al Wilson, Colonel H. Wheeler, Capt. William Frye, Buron Fitts, Ruth Elder, Tom Morgan, Bobby Trout, Victor Clark and Capt. William Dawley. (Author)



Above, the Travel Air 4000 which was owned and flown by Tom Morgan, Vice President of Pickwick Airways. Right, Pickwick personnel in 1929—William A. Frye, chief pilot; Dean Farran, pilot; Dave Mitchell, flight operations manager; and John Wood and Robert Kennedy, pilots. (M. L. Bailey)



One of Pickwick Airway's Bach 3-CT-6 eight passenger transports during first months of operations. The Bach was powered by a single Pratt & Whitney Hornet engine and two, smaller Comet engines giving a total of 835 hp. At a weight of 8000 pounds, normal cruising speed was 125 mph. (M. L. Bailey)



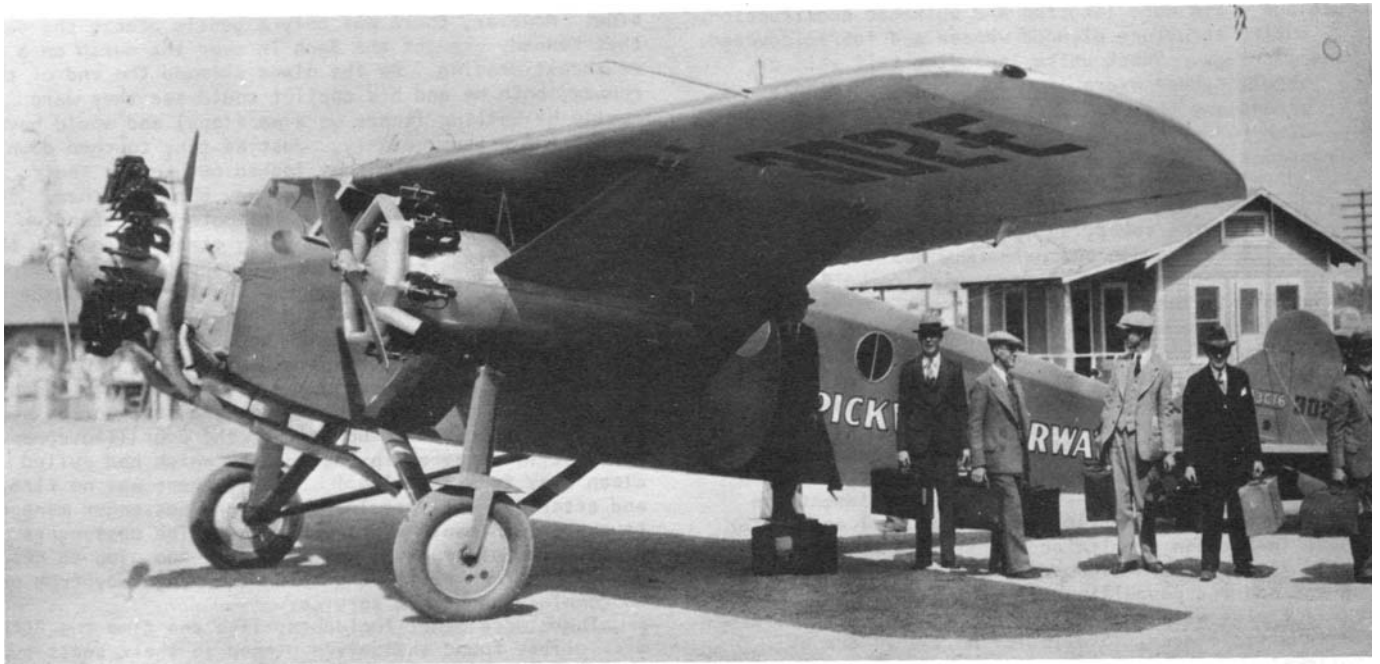
Hal Forrest and Glenn Chaffin board Pickwick Bach on nationwide air tour for Nat'l Aeronautical League. (M. L. Bailey)



Pair of Bach 3-CT-6s, 539-E and 302-E, at inaugural ceremonies in Glendale, California, March 29, 1929. (M. L. Bailey)



Bach taking off from Mines Field, Los Angeles in 1929. Today this is Los Angeles International Airport. (Erickson)



Passengers debarking from Bach 3-CT-6 after flight on the California coastwise service during 1929. (Author)



"A Convenience Feature of the New Air Travel Company." Pickwick Stage meets Pickwick Airways tri-motor. (Erickson)



Boarding of passengers is carried on at Lindbergh Field, San Diego, California during mid-1929. (Erickson)

Fuselage: Six wood longeron and bulkhead construction. Entire structure plywood veneer and fabric covered. Undercarriage: Shock units including tail skid or wheel, rubber hydraulic construction. Bendix wheels and brakes. Brakes independent or direct with rudder control.

Dimensions & Weight: Span 58 ft. 6 in., length 36 ft. 10 in. Empty, 4,739 lbs, loaded, 8,000 lbs.

Performance: Max. speed 150 mph, cruising speed, 125 mph, landing speed, 55 mph, service ceiling 18,000 ft., range approximately 600 miles.

Accommodation: 8-place, side-by-side cockpit protected by unsplinterable windows, baggage compartment, openable, unsplinterable windows throughout wood-paneled cabin, electric lights, air cushion seats, heater, drinking fountain and lavatory.

As the months went by, more and more people were finding pleasure and convenience in this new, fast coast-wise service. As Pickwick air passenger business flourished, it was soon realized additional airplanes would be needed. These would supplement the Bachs in handling overflow traffic as well as charter hops, in-between service and utility work. The Fairchild 71 was chosen because it was ruggedly constructed and had the capability of getting in and out of small fields with a sizable load, and it could be stored in a small area. Statistics on the 71 *are* as follows:

Power Plant: One 9-cylinder Pratt & Whitney Wasp, 410 hp engine.

Fuel: One 60-gallon tank in each wing root and one 40-gallon tank above the cabin. Gravity feed.

Wings: Externally-braced monoplane in two sections. Spruce and plywood spars, fabric covered, plywood leading edge. Wings hinged into fuselage center section.

Fuselage: Welded steel tube fabric covered.

Undercarriage: Oleo and spring shock absorber legs, Bendix brakes, tail skid or wheel.

Dimensions & Weight: Span 50 ft. (wings folded 14 ft.) length 33 ft. Empty 3,135 lbs, loaded 5,500 lbs.

Performance: Max. speed 128 mph, cruising speed 102 mph, landing speed 55 mph, service ceiling 15,000 ft., range approximately 650 miles.

Accommodation: 7-place (pilot, six passengers). All windows of non-splinterable glass, ventilators, heaters, baggage compartment, cushion seats.

Airline flying wasn't always the sedentary experience it is on the big smooth jets of today. Times were when pilots had to leave their charges in a mud hole and traipse down the nearest road, and after a mile or two, if they were lucky, they'd come across a farmhouse with a telephone or a tractor to pull them out of difficulty, or they'd locate spare parts or extra gasoline. A Pickwick pilot was always prepared to assume the role of maintenance man, mechanic, steward and flyer all in one. There was one occasion when a return flight from San Francisco was interrupted by a forced landing on the Stanford University campus. The co-pilot took the passengers on a fast tour of the school while the pilot made some necessary minor repairs. As the Bach circled the campus and once again winged its way home, the passengers chuckled at the fact they were riding the only airline that could boast of sending its passengers through college in one afternoon.

In the 1920s there weren't as many shattering experiences connected with scheduled flying as there were in barnstorming, but there were still plenty of thrills and spills for the airline pilot in those days. Take the time Bob Kennedy came in for a landing at Lindbergh Field (Ryan-Mahoney) on the San Diego run. The field was not much more than 1500 feet long, with a hill at one end and a marsh at the other. Its only runway was rough, and it ran parallel to a normally prevailing wind from the northwest. The hill at the southwest, complete with high tension wires, prevented a windward landing in anything less than a 30-knot

blow. However, there was only a gentle breeze the day that Kennedy brought the Bach in over the marsh on a southeast heading. As the plane skimmed the end of the runway, both he and his copilot could see they were really hi-balling (there were no flaps) and would have to hit the brakes quickly. Just as they touched down, the plane lurched, and they looked out to see their right wheel rolling down the runway ahead of them. The next thing they knew, the tri-motor was standing on her nose, and they were peering straight down at the center prop, looking as if it had sprung out of the ground like a plant and wrapped itself around the Hornet. The two Comets were belching plumes of white smoke from hot collector rings that were bathed in fuel from the dripping wing tank vents. Kennedy cut the switches and both men scrambled up to the cockpit door. It was jammed from the cabin side by a stack of passengers. They were piled up against the door like cordwood, still strapped in their seats which had pulled clean away from the floor! Luckily there was no fire, and after the tail was lowered, every passenger managed to untangle himself and stumble out. The passengers didn't complain much. They were only too glad to get off with a few bruises and to "be walking away from one" to complain about the service.

There were other incidents, like the time two Pickwick pilots found themselves pinned to their seats by the control wheels that suddenly jammed full aft just after a landing rollout. After extricating themselves, they discovered what had happened. The entire tail assembly was lying at a grotesque angle on the runway, practically separated from the fuselage. It wasn't a patch of rough air that caused the porpoising on final after all, it was only a broken empennage! It was concluded that longeron failure in that area had been set up by some earlier hard landings.

In spite of the incidents and the accidents that were a part of everyday flying in those days, Pickwick's air safety record rated one of the best per hours and miles flown. By the end of 1929 they had safely carried 3,780 people almost 180,000 miles over California routes. They were getting repeat business. A good deal of this success could be attributed to the introduction of a convenience feature that was unique in air travel experience. Because the traffic department of Pickwick Stages was set up to function also for the affiliate, Pickwick Airways, tickets were sold over the air routes from any Pickwick Stage ticket office in the United States. Passengers were brought directly to points of departure in busses and transferred to the planes. Before boarding, each person was handed an ample supply of gummed luggage labels, in keeping with the popular fad that called for decorating traveling bags with sticky-backs collected from various hotels and transportation companies. It was fun to compare bags to see who'd been where and how he'd gotten there. So, even though they still lacked an air mail contract, things continued going well for Pickwick Airways. Everything went so well, in fact, it was decided to extend operations into Latin America.

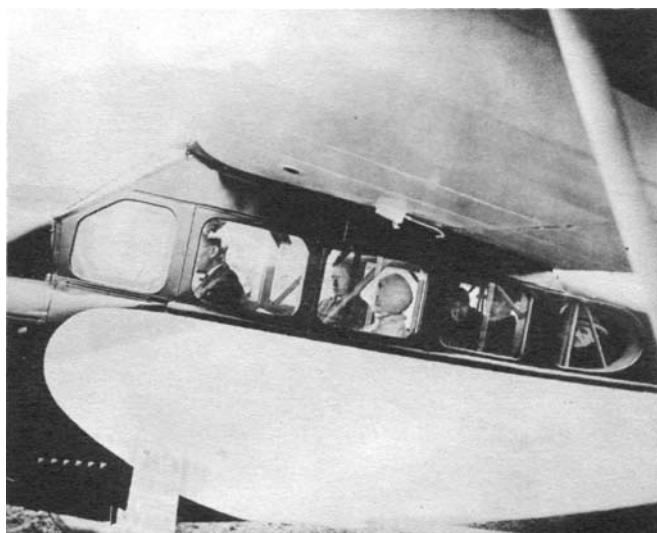
Thus conceived in the summer of 1929 was an airline that would cover three Republics--Pickwick Latin American Airways. It was planned to cross the Mexican border at Tijuana, fly east to Nogales, straight south to the west coast of Mexico, and then all the way to the Republic OF Guatemala, 2000 miles distant, via Mexico City. Such an operation would mean much from a social, as well as a commercial standpoint and would be welcomed by increasing numbers of people whose business carried them into Latin American communities. It would also provide an unusual and interesting way for visitors to see neighboring countries. Of course, properties had to be acquired and contracts approved by the governments involved, but Mexican and Guatemalan officials were only too glad to accommodate. After all, wouldn't they, too, benefit from this new form of revenue and fast transportation from their prosperous



Miss Dorothy Day and Lloyd J. Gunderson—with 1929 Cadillac—before Pickwick Airway's Fairchild 71. (Herman Rubin)



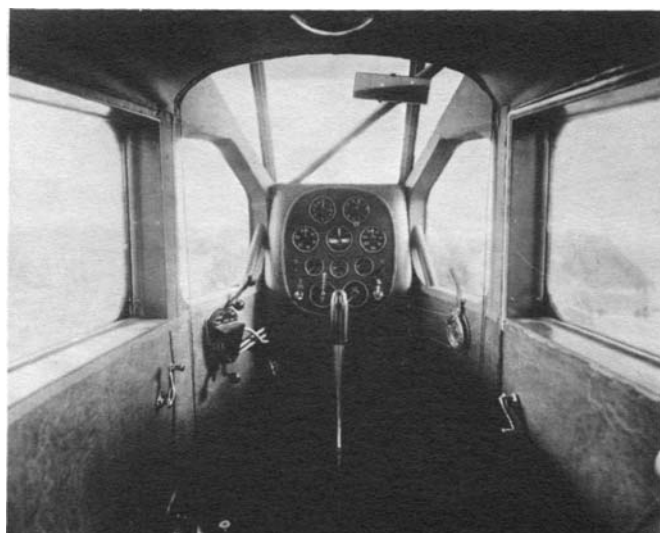
Trailing edge of wing folded forward to allow passenger entrance into cabin of the Fairchild 71. (Herman Rubin)



Pickwick's Fairchild fully loaded and ready for takeoff during the summer of 1929. (Author)



Louis Goldsmith, E. E. Forbes and mechanic examine 71's tail following repair after hitting condor. (M. L. Bailey)



Cockpit details of the Fairchild 71 as viewed from the approximate position of the pilot's seat. (Author)

brothers up north? The Mexican Government even offered to extend their airmail contracts.

Other matters had to be ironed out before the first scheduled flight of Pickwick "Latino Americano" could be realized--rates, maintenance facilities and a fleet of airplanes capable of crossing wide deserts, rugged mountains and tangled jungle. About this time, Ryan Aircraft Corporation was building a commercial version of Lindbergh's Spirit of St. Louis, the B-5, in St. Louis, Missouri. Tom Morgan had heard about it and thought "what's good enough for Lindbergh might be good enough for me." He went to see the commercial "Spirit" and to watch it perform. (Marvel Crosson, California aviatrix had just set a new women's altitude record of 24,000 feet in a B-5.) He didn't change his mind, he ordered eight of them. Here are some statistics for the Ryan B-5 Brougham:

Power Plant: One 9-cylinder Wright Whirlwind J-6 of 300 hp.
Fuel: One 50-gallon tank within the root ends of each wing, gravity feed.
Wings: Externally braced monoplane, spruce spars, Clark "Y" airfoil, fabric covered.
Fuselage: Welded steel tube, fabric covered.
Undercarriage: Main shock absorber members attached to

front wing brace struts, Bendix wheels, brakes, swivel tail wheel.

Dimensions & Weight: Span 42 ft. 4 in., length 28 ft. 4 in. Empty 2200 lbs, loaded 4000 lbs.

Performance: Max. speed 140 mph, cruising speed 120 mph, landing speed 50 mph, service ceiling 18,000 ft., range approximately 700 miles.

Accommodation: 6-place (pilot, 5 passengers), however, side-by-side forward seats and dual controls for two pilots if needed. Luggage compartment, heater.

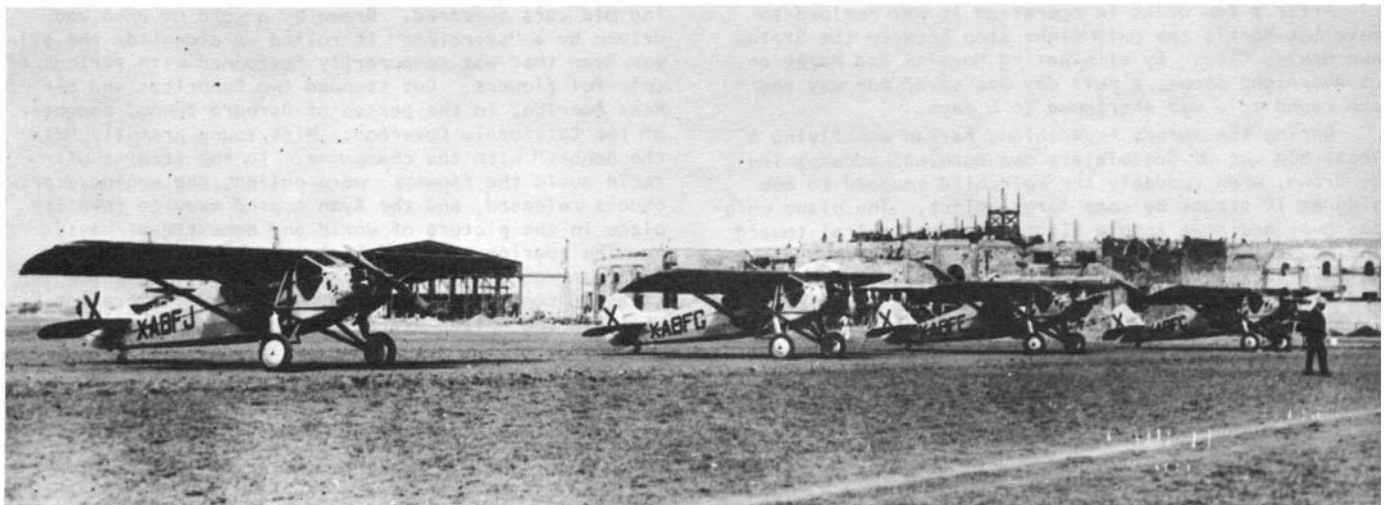
While the necessary paperwork, contract negotiations, etc. were going on, a survey flight was being made by Company pilots Maves and Farran in two of the F-7ls. They were joined by mechanics Fred Brown and Bill Schoenfeldt. Years later Bill was to gain fame, alongside Tony LeVier, in the Nationals at Cleveland with his Schoenfeldt Special, the "Firecracker." Bill would be of particular value on this survey flight because he had previously helped operate a small air service in Costa Rica. The itinerary was: Glendale, San Diego, Tijuana, Mexicali, Nogales (overnight stop), Hermosillo, Guaymas, Obregon, Culiacan, Mazatlan (overnight stop), Tepee, Guadalajara, Morelia, Mexico City (overnight stop), Oaxaca and Guatemala City. The round trip to Guatemala City through Oaxaca and intermediate towns comprised



Two views of Pickwick Latin American Airways' Ryan B-5 Brougham. Slate balloon hangar in background. (M. L. Bailey)



Four of Pickwick's Ryan Broughams at Mexico City in 1929 with X-ABFC and X-ABFA at end of lineup. (Author)



Another photograph of four Ryans at Mexico City displaying their Mexican registrations. (Author)



Brougham at Glendale with Robert Kennedy (l), Paul West (r) and William Shoenfeldt in the cockpit. (Author)



Brougham in Mexico during 1929 and bearing company name, Pickwick Latino Americano Correos Aereos. (Author)

the fourth day. Based on what was learned along the route and what facilities were set up, a schedule was made to fly the Ryans on a three-flight per week basis--Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursday, with a round trip of 8 days. This would allow for adequate aircraft servicing and rest for the pilot. Passenger fares to Mexico City would be \$263.45 one way and \$474.90 round trip. To Guatemala City it would be \$377.45, and \$680.90 round trip. Gasoline and oil at all stops below the border, except Mexico City, would have to be pumped by hand from 50-gallon drums stored on each field. In this case, the name "field" is flattery--emergency strips would be more descriptive.

There were no navigation facilities, no airway beacons and no radio. There was, however, a "bandido" who once swept out of the hills near Mazatlan and attempted to ride off with anything he could carry from the field on a horse. It became obvious that some place was needed to lock up the equipment and to provide storage and maintenance facilities, so a hangar was built on a field about midpoint between Obregon and Culiacan--the only such facility between the border and Mexico City. Here, at Los Mochis, near the Gulf Coast, Pickwick mechanic Phil Oberg remained in full-time duty. As it turned out, Pickwick Latin American had the good fortune to be in operation during a relatively quiet period in Mexico (between revolutions), and Phil never felt the need for a gun. Although the pilots kept side arms handy on these flights, they never used them on anything more than tin cans and small animals.

After a few weeks in operation it was decided to make Los Mochis the only night stop between the States and Mexico City. By eliminating Nogales and Mazatlan as overnight stops, a full day was saved one way and the round trip was shortened to 6 days.

During the survey expedition, Farran was flying a local hop out of Guadalajara one morning, accompanied by Brown, when suddenly the Fairchild snapped to one side as if struck by some large object. The plane whipped over and down into a tight graveyard spiral toward the mountains beneath them and the jungle that hid the valleys further below. Farran jammed the left rudder pedal. The spiral only became tighter. He put both feet on the pedal and pushed--it wouldn't budge.

"Fred", he yelled, "look back and see if you can tell what's wrong."

Forced up against the side of the cabin by the increasing centrifugal force, Brown managed to get a

glimpse aft. "Wow", he yelled back, "looks like half the rudder's bent over."

"Well, we've got a chance, some rudder is better than none, no matter what shape it's in," said Farran as he cinched up his belt.

Grabbing the tubular frame above his head with both hands and using both feet, he tromped the left rudder with all his remaining strength. Suddenly the world stopped spinning, and he pulled out of the dive uncomfortably close to the jungle below. It took full left rudder to maintain level flight, but they returned safely to learn just what had happened. Stepping out of the airplane, they found gobs of feather and blood imbedded in a bent counterbalance and the vertical fin. They considered themselves lucky when the natives told them they had been hit by a giant Condor.

A few days later the survey was completed and all enroute facilities were ready for business. August 19, 1929 was chosen as the inaugural day that would mark the initial step in forging an air link between the United States, Mexico and Central America. The Ryan Brougham sat poised on the runway at Grand Central Air Terminal, loaded with passengers and autographed photos of prominent people addressed to Presidents Portes of Mexico and Chacon of Guatemala. The mail consignment would be picked up in Tijuana. A notable group, representatives of the three countries involved in the tri-nation service, stood before the throng in the grandstands who were anticipating the colorful oxen-to-airplane pageant that would kick off the flight. Soon a creaking old cart appeared. Drawn by a yoke of oxen and driven by a "carretero" it rolled up alongside the silver Ryan that was temporarily festooned with strings of colorful flowers. Out stepped two senioritas and one Miss America, in the person of Barbara Young, daughter of the California Governor. Miss Young promptly "did the honors" with the champagne. To the strains of latin music the flowers were pulled, the engine started, chocks released, and the Ryan soared away to take its place in the picture of world and domestic airways.

The soaring start of Pickwick and Pickwick Latin American was soon to ebb, however. Early 1930 saw increasing conflict within the Mexican administration, while in the United States the great depression was being felt in earnest. With little chance of a subsidy, and without a U. S. air mail contract, no air carrier could long survive. And like so many other young enterprises of the time, it didn't. In the spring of 1930 the last propeller stopped turning in front of the Grand Central hangar that had "Pickwick" painted on its roof. When they closed the hangar doors, another chapter was placed in the aeronautical history book. Pickwick Airways had made its own kind of history, and its personnel could take pride in the realization that they had played a large part in pioneering mass, worldwide air travel.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Allen Morgan of 8950 Kittyhawk Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90045, has been an ardent aviation enthusiast and modeler since his boyhood days at Page Military Academy in Los Angeles. There, the cadets were shown aviation movies every Saturday in the school gymnasium. His first flight, in 1934, was in the rear cockpit of an OX-5-powered Travel Air from old Dyer Airport in Los Angeles. In college he majored in journalism and also took part in the government-sponsored Civilian Pilot Training program.

Early in World War II, Allen became a Navy flight instructor. Later in the war he was a flying boat commander (on both PBM and PB2Y types) for the Naval Air Transport Service, on Atlantic flights to South America and on Pacific runs to the Philippines. After VJ-Day he worked as a civilian flight instructor for the late Hank Coffin at old Vail Field before joining North American Aviation where he now is a Publications Analyst.

The Tom Morgan of the article was Allen's uncle, and his widow and son were of great help in its preparation.



Pickwick Brougham flying over its home base of Glendale, California during 1929. (Author)