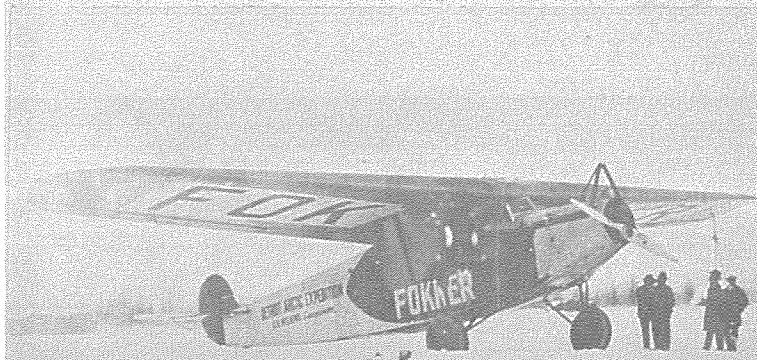




"DETROITER"

P.M. Bowers photo



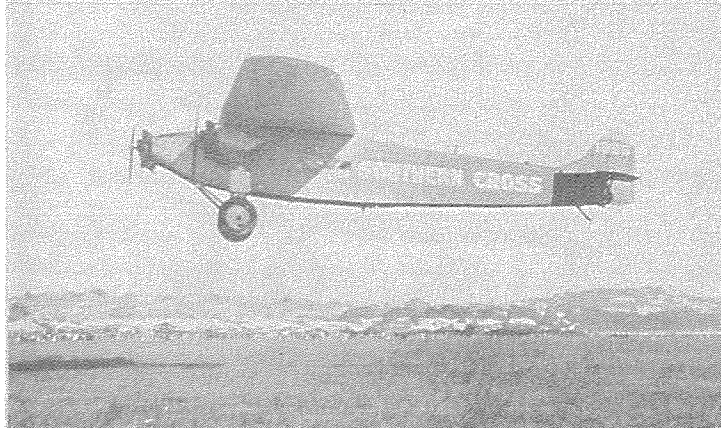
"ALASKAN"

Liberty Memorial Museum photo

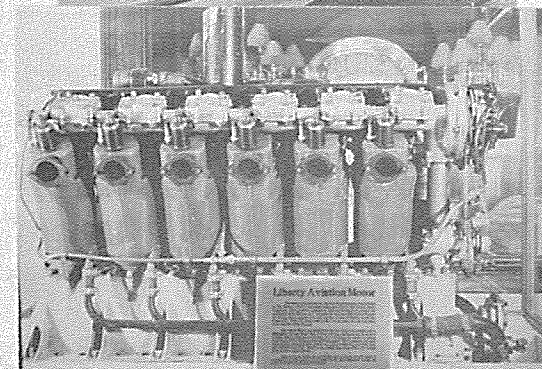
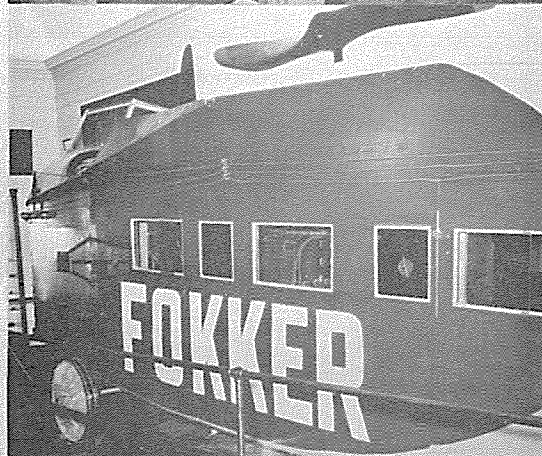
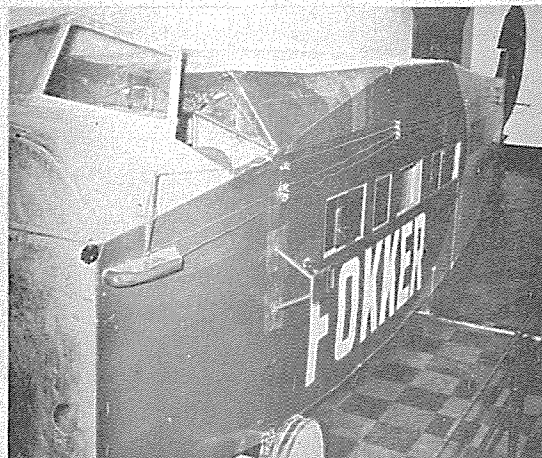


"THE BIG FOKKER" ("The Hybrid")

S.J. Hudek photo



"SOUTHERN CROSS"



"ALASKAN" in the Liberty Memorial Museum.

B. Weinreich photos

GREGORY C. KOHN

"The Southern Cross" Complex

Periodically, during the past 31 years, aviation writers all over the world have chosen to tell the public the story of the "Southern Cross." This, the most famous of the old tri-motor Fokker monoplanes, was the first airplane to be flown across the vast expanse of the south Pacific Ocean from the United States to Australia. History was made in this airplane when Charles Kingsford-Smith, C. T. P. Ulm, Harry Lyon and James Warner completed their flight in three stages from San Francisco to Honolulu, then on to the Fiji Islands before landing on Australian soil. They blazed a trail for the later day commercial airliners who now fly this route on a daily schedule.

Every story ever written about this specific aircraft and its famous flight has, at some point, made reference to the fact that the "Southern Cross" was a composite aircraft. The latest of these stories appearing in the October, 1958, issue of Great Britain's Air Pictorial, goes into some detail regarding the technical aspects of just how the "Southern Cross" was constructed from salvaged parts of two entirely different aircraft. Perhaps it never occurred to the many "Fokker Fans" to check the validity of such a belief. Then again, it may have been the greatness of accomplishment overshadowing this particular airplane that has caused serious historians to refrain from challenging what, apparently, we have all taken for granted. Therefore, in failing to disprove the theory that the "Southern Cross" was a composite aircraft, we have been misinformed.

If one studies the individual design features of the single engined Fokker F-VII and the Fokker F-VII-3m tri-motor, the two aircraft involved in what I shall call "The Hybrid Theory", the similarity of planform design in the fuselage and tail components of Tony Fokker's early aircraft makes it easily believable that a combination of the two aircraft could be possible. It was not only possible, but it was in fact true; the hybrid aircraft such as everyone believes the "Southern Cross" to be, actually did, for a time, exist. Although the composite airplane existed for only a short time, several months at the most, the "Hybrid Theory" as related to the Southern Cross has prevailed and is today the popular belief. This theory therefore, while, feasible, ~~from the limited knowledge available~~, has no truth in fact because both aircraft involved in the theory are in existence today, each in a museum, each in a different country. The "Southern Cross" is in Australia, and the single engined Fokker "Alaskan" is in the United States.

It is common knowledge that the Fokker F-VII-3m tri-motor called the "Detroiter", and which ultimately became the "Southern Cross", was originally used along with a single engined Fokker F-VII named "Alaskan", by the late Sir George Hubert Wilkins, the famed Arctic and Antarctic explorer. The Hybrid Theory came about when both of these Fokker monoplanes were damaged in the 1906 Detroit News Expedition to the Arctic to the extent that Wilkins, Expedition Commander, was left without an airplane. It was only by combining

parts of both of these planes that he was able to continue with his exploration. Because of the circumstances involved, and the importance of events that followed, one must know the complete story to fully understand what actually happened.

The Story

During the later part of 1925 Captain George Hubert Wilkins, the noted Australian adventurer and explorer, ordered and obtained the original "Big Wing" (71 foot 2 inch wing span) Fokker F-VII-3m monoplane for use in his Arctic exploration expedition. This plane was powered by three Wright J-4 air cooled radial engines of 200 H. P. each. It was equipped with additional fuel tanks in the cabin area to enable Wilkins to have enough fuel for a nonstop flight across the Arctic Ocean from Barrow, Alaska to Spitsbergen. It was shipped from the Holland factory of the Fokker Aircraft Corporation to the Atlantic Aircraft Corporation at Teterborough, New Jersey where it was covered, finished, and assembled to make sure all parts would fit properly. It was completely equipped for Arctic operation with the exception that it was mounted on standard wheel landing gear. Ski gear was not provided, as Wilkins was a staunch believer in using the standard wheel landing gear, even if he had to lay down a runway in the snow and pack it solidly to support the heavy plane.

For short haul work Wilkins had also obtained a smaller 63 foot wing span single engined Fokker F-VII monoplane. This airplane was already in the United States, and it was prepared for the expedition in a manner similar to the larger tri-motor with the exception of the cabin fuel tank. Standard tankage was maintained as the cabin was needed to haul supplies for the expedition. A special 450 HP. Liberty engine which has been specially built for racing by Johnson of New York, was fitted to the Fokker. A spare Liberty Engine was presented to Wilkins as a gift from Henry Ford.

Since there wasn't a suitable field near the Atlantic Aircraft Corporation from which to test fly the two airplanes, it was decided to test them on location in Alaska to save time. By the latter part of January, 1926, both aircraft had been disassembled again and loaded on board railroad flat cars and were shipped overland to Seattle, Washington. In Seattle they were loaded on a freighter bound for Seward, Alaska. Once ashore they were once more lashed to flat cars and were taken by rail to Fairbanks. Here they were assembled and prepared for test flight.

The two aircraft, each painted blue and silver, were rolled out onto the field for christening ceremonies. The single engined Fokker was named "Alaskan" and the sobriquet "Detroiter" was applied to the larger three-engined machine. This was done by a Catholic priest, an Episcopal parson, and a Presbyterian minister while a small girl cracked a bottle of gasoline over the nose of each plane.

During the preparations for the test flight of the "Detroiter", a member of the expedition had walked into one of the whirling propellers and was killed outright. This being considered an ill omen, it was decided to delay the test flight of the tri-motor and test fly the single engined "Alaskan" first.

With Carl Ben Eielson, Chief Pilot of the "Detroit News Expedition" at the controls and Captain George Hubert Wilkins, Expedition Commander as passenger, the "Alaskan" rose smoothly from the snow runway. Circling to make the first landing, Eielson cut the throttle and started his final approach. When about 200 feet above the ground, the Fokker, evidently gliding too flatly and too slowly, began to stall. With insufficient altitude safely to put the ship into a dive to regain flying speed, Eielson immediately rammed open the throttle, dipping the nose slightly at the same time. The Liberty roared to life, but not in time to take hold; and the plane hit the rough ground about 50 feet from the end of the runway. The landing gear collapsed letting the plane skid forward on the special steel skid installed on the bottom of the fuselage. (This had been a precautionary measure in the event that the plane had to be hauled out of the water onto the ice after a breakthrough.) The "Alaskan" smashed through the field boundary fence adding to the damage and finally skidded to a stop. Although the two airmen escaped without injury, the Fokker suffered.

A quick survey of the airplane showed that the landing gear had been wiped completely off the plane. The engine and mounts were damaged, and the tips of the special all metal Curtiss-Reed propeller were curled. Although the plane was repairable, it would take time. Wilkins therefore ordered the "Detroiter" out, and it was warmed up for its test flight.

Although he had not lost confidence in the ability of his chief pilot, Wilkins was forced to consider the investment by his sponsors. Therefore, in all fairness to the rest of the members of the expedition, he assigned the job of testing the tri-motor Fokker to Major Lanphier, the hired Fokker expert. Each pilot would have his chance.

With Wilkins again as passenger, this time in the co-pilot's seat, Major Lanphier opened the throttles and started to move down the runway. Trouble began almost immediately. Unused to handling three throttles at one time, and being unable to steer the big plane with the rudder alone, Lanphier allowed the Fokker to swerve, and head for certain disaster in the huge snow banks at the left side of the runway. Since he could not stop the plane, nor allow the time necessary to try and straighten it out, he did the best thing under the circumstances and opened the three throttles wide simultaneously, raised the tail and bounced the ship into the air just in time to avoid hitting the snow banks.

Once clear of the ground, Lanphier took the plane around the field and approached the runway, gliding with all three engines throttled back. When almost directly over the spot where the "Alaskan" had crashed a few hours previous, Lanphier cut back the power on the outboard engines expecting the plane to continue its glide under the power of the center engine only. The "Detroiter" stalled immediately and dropped almost a hundred feet to the ground. The impact collapsed the landing gear, first on one side then on the other. The Fokker then skidded onto its back. The tail came up and the plane balanced precariously on its nose. The engine mounts gave way pushing the engine back into the cockpit. For a moment it seemed that the tri-motor would go over onto its back; but after hanging in the balance for a few moments, it slowly settled coming to rest with its tail high in the air. Alvin Wilkins and his pilot escaped uninjured. The Fokker tri-motor, however, was severely damaged.

A survey showed that the landing gear and the central engine mount were almost a complete write-off. The engine and propeller were damaged, but repairable. Although the spare material brought along for emergencies was sufficient to repair the "Alaskan", it would take weeks, perhaps even months, to obtain the necessary parts to put the "Detroiter" back into flying shape. Therefore, Wilkins ordered the repair of the "Alaskan" to start at once.

The original Liberty engine, especially built for racing purposes, was damaged beyond repair in the crash landing. The spare engine was mounted in its place, and although it was not as highly tuned as the first engine, it gave very satisfactory performance. The metal propeller, now useless, was replaced with a wooden spare. Fortunately this propeller was packed at the last minute. The landing gear was repaired, and the "Alaskan" was once more ready to fly.

Eielson and Wilkins completed a successful test flight in the plane; and now satisfied with its performance, began the exploration flights to the far north on March 31, 1926. Gasoline was ferried to Point Barrow, Alaska in hopes that, after the "Detroiter" was repaired, the non-stop flight from Point Barrow across the Arctic Sea to Spitsbergen could yet be made.

In the meantime however, news of the repair of the "Detroiter" was disappointing. The plane had been test flown by the Fokker expert and declared unairworthy for its intended purpose. Lanphier claimed that the center engine was out of line, that fuel consumption was 52 gallons per hour, quite high, and that the top speed was only 90 miles per hour. In addition, with all three engines wide open the plane could scarcely climb to 5000 feet. The Wright engines would not function well in the cold weather; and in general, it was unsatisfactory for the use to which it would be put.

Wilkins on hearing the report of the "Detroiter", was very disappointed. It seemed hard to believe that a new machine with 600 horsepower could not perform as well as the single engined Fokker with only 450 horsepower. It seemed unlikely that Tony Fokker would furnish a plane with such poor qualities; yet, it had been tested thoroughly by experts on Fokker aircraft, and their report had to be accepted. In the face of the poor performance of the tri-motor it seemed best then to discontinue with the "Alaskan", for the time being, until he could get to Fairbanks and check on the accuracy of the "Detroiter" report for himself.

In the meantime the new metal propeller had arrived for the "Alaskan" and was installed. As soon as the engine was started it was evident that all was not well. The RPM of the Liberty was much higher than it was supposed to be. With a full load of gasoline stored in the cabin, the plane refused to budge even under full throttle. It was then decided to lighten the ship and make a test flight with the new prop, and accordingly the ship was unloaded. Although two attempts were made to get off the ground, the plane would not rise, and it overran the runway, hurtling into the rough ground beyond the strip. The "Alaskan" was dragged back to the runway by hand; and rather than waste any more time with the new propeller, it was decided to reinstall the old brass bound wooden prop and carry on with it.

The "Alaskan" was once more loaded to capacity with supplies and was started down the runway. The Fokker had almost reached flying speed when

in crossing a slight depression in the runway there came a bump and a crash which dropped the plane to the ground as the right wing suddenly collapsed taking with it the landing gear support. The plane continued to slide along the ground and finally stopped with its tail pointed skyward. Both Wilkins and Eielson were trapped between the thirty cases of gasoline that had been stored in the cabin, and which had slid forward after being torn loose from their lashings as a result of the impact. Fortunately both men escaped with nothing more than a few bruises.

An examination of the damage showed that the wing had broken in half near the fuselage fittings. The spars had evidently been badly fractured at the time of the first crash landing and had gone unnoticed. The wing had no doubt been strained even further when the plane overran the runway with the new propeller, the rough ground beyond the strip shaking the ship severely. With the main spars of the wing gone, the "Alaskan" was now beyond repair. To make the plane again airworthy, a new wing was needed. Since there was no new wing available, the "Detroit News Expedition" came to an end.

Shortly thereafter, news came that Richard Byrd had crossed the North Pole in the Fokker tri-motor "Josephine Ford" on May 9, 1926, and that Nobile, Amundsen and Ellsworth had crossed the pole landing at Barrow in the dirigible "Norge". Wilkins decided to give up the entire expedition for that year. He then stored what was left of the "Alaskan" and the seemingly unairworthy "Detroiter" at Fairbanks, Alaska and returned to the United States.

Wilkins returned to Alaska in the spring of 1927 to continue his explorations over the Arctic ice; and needing smaller aircraft for his purpose, he brought with him two Stinson biplanes, one of the first closed cabin biplanes in existence. Small planes, he figured, were needed so that a landing could be made on the ice without danger of breaking through. It was also true that because of the short run required by a biplane, a safe takeoff in a very short distance could be made with little difficulty. The Stinsons had a range of 1600 miles, and were considered perfect for the job.

Although the procurement of the small biplanes caused Wilkins much worry, by using the available cash on hand and by using one of the engines and some instruments from the apparently useless "Detroiter", he could have one airworthy plane. Much to his surprise and extreme pleasure one of his previous benefactors, hearing of his wishes to procure a small biplane, furnished a second identical plane as a gift. Wilkins now had two Stinson "Detroiter" biplanes, and with them he again left for Alaska.

Still desiring to complete the nonstop flight from Point Barrow to Spitsbergen, Wilkins decided that he would attempt to make one airworthy craft out of the now useless "Detroiter" and the wingless "Alaskan". This could conceivably be accomplished by attaching the wing of the tri-motor, sans outboard engines and mounts, to the fuselage of the "Alaskan". He reasoned that although the wing of the tri-motor was much larger than the original single engined Fokker wing, it was not large enough to make much difference. With an apparent solution to his difficulties in mind, Wilkins planned to complete the short exploration flights out over the Arctic Ice Pack, and thereafter take the Fokker to Point Barrow for the flight across the Arctic Ocean to

Spitsbergen.

After further study of the remains of the two Fokker monoplanes, Wilkins came to the conclusion that his theory of combining the wing of the trimotor and the fuselage of the single engined Fokker would actually work. Fortunately the wing to the fuselage junction fittings on both the planes were identical, so after removing the outboard nacelles and engines from the "Detroiter" wing, it was joined to the fuselage of the "Alaskan". After repairing the landing gear the plane was mounted on a pair of skis that Wilkins had built by hand at Fairbanks. (Note: This was the first and only time that either of the two Fokkers was mounted on skis.) Now for the first time a "hybrid Fokker" had been created out of the two available aircraft, a hybrid that was a single engined aircraft.

Although the "Big Fokker", as it was now called, was used for several flights, its performance left much to be desired; and it was decided that it was not suitable for the Point Barrow to Spitsbergen flight after all. Therefore, with the big flight now out of the question, the short flights over the ice pack continued until one of the Stinsons was forced down on the ice pack after it ran short of fuel; and Wilkins and Eislson once more escaped death by walking across the ice pack to civilization.

The intrepid adventurers set out in the remaining Stinson with a supply of fuel to bring the airplane off the ice cap, but due to the bad weather and fog they were unable to find it. Rather than take a chance of running out of fuel for the second time, and take a chance of losing the second plane, they abandoned the search, returning to Fairbanks disappointed at the loss. With the realization that he again failed to accomplish his goal because the remaining Stinson and the "Big Fokker" would not be able to do the job, Wilkins again gave up the expedition for 1927. He then sold the Stinson plane to Noel Wein at Fairbanks and had the parts of the two Fokkers crated and returned to the Boeing Aircraft Company at Seattle, Washington.

It had been agreed that at the end of the expedition, be it a success or a failure, the single engined Fokker would be returned to the sponsors at Detroit. It had also been agreed that the tri-motor Fokker would become the property of Captain Wilkins. Accordingly the remains of the "Alaskan" were turned over to the sponsors and arrangements were made that it be shipped to them.

Meanwhile the wing from the "Detroiter" was again joined to its original fuselage by employees of the Boeing Aircraft Company, at whose hangars the plane was being stored. With the exception of the engines and instruments, the "Detroiter" was once more a complete aircraft. (Note: Wilkins cannot account for the instruments and the remaining two engines, but he offered the opinion that they were probably sold to provide the funds with which to purchase the original Stinson biplane.) Inasmuch as he had no further use for the Fokker tri-motor, Wilkins decided to sell it "as is" and purchase another plane more suitable for the Point Barrow to Spitsbergen flight.

At this time Wilkins had come to San Francisco to make arrangements to sell his Fokker. He had observed the original Lockheed Vega monoplane, which was owned by William Randolph Hearst, and which was entered in the Dole Race

from San Francisco to Hawaii. He decided that he would have a Lockheed Vega hoping that he could dispose of the useless "Detroiter" in time to pay for the Lockheed. He did not have long to wait.

At this time Squadron Leader Charles Kingsford-Smith and Flight Lieutenant Charles T. R. Ulm were in the United States for the express purpose of buying a Fokker tri-motor monoplane similar to the one Byrd had used for his transatlantic flight from New York to the shores of France. Another Fokker tri-motor had also been used by Maitland and Hegenberger to make the first flight between the United States and Hawaii. Much impressed with the added safety of three engines, and the performance of Byrd's "America" and the Army's "Bird of Paradise", the Australian airmen had made up their minds that only a three engined Fokker would do for their proposed Transpacific flight from the United States to Australia. It did not take long before Smith and Ulm heard of the availability of the old "Detroiter", and after being told of its history and capabilities, the two Australians took over ownership of the plane for a down payment of 3000 pounds sterling.

The two Australian airmen obtained the necessary funds for engines and instruments as a gift from Mr. Sydney Myer, a wealthy Australian businessman, and three Wright Whirlwind J-5 200 H. P. engines were ordered with delivery promised as soon as they were available. With time slipping rapidly by, Kingsford-Smith convinced the U. S. Navy Department to release three engines from a Navy order, and he soon had the engines for the plane.

With the engines and the instruments on hand, Kingsford-Smith hired an experienced engineer, Phil C. Salzman, and a mechanic George A. Hedinger, to supervise the installation of the engines. At the suggestion of Kieth Anderson, the third member of the Australian team, the Fokker was named "Southern Cross", after the constellation of the same name. With the engines and plane now secure, Kingsford-Smith and Ulm dispatched Anderson to Honolulu and the Fiji Islands to inspect the available landing fields they could use upon arrival. They were taking no chances on hearsay and chose to obtain first hand trustworthy information in this vital area.

With their plans well under way, appeals from Australia to abandon what was now considered to be a foolhardy attempt, in the light of the recent Dole Race disasters. At the same time Captain Wilkins was ready to take delivery of his new Lockheed Vega monoplane and needed the money from the sale of the "Detroiter" to pay for his airplane. The new owners of the Fokker now found themselves seriously in debt.

In an effort to raise needed funds, Kingsford-Smith and Ulm, hoping to win a monetary prize, hit upon the idea of breaking the existing world record for sustained flight. With the help of Captain George Pond, a hired Fokker test pilot, plans for an endurance flight were made. It was reasoned that the endurance flight would also serve as a test for the fuel consumption and load carrying characteristics of the "Southern Cross", an invaluable aid for the projected Pacific flight. Accordingly, the plane was flown to the Douglas Aircraft Factory near Los Angeles to be prepared for the endurance flight.

In order to carry as much fuel as possible for the endurance attempt, the plane was stripped of all excess equipment not considered necessary, for the flight. New stub axles were fitted to the landing gear, and spe-

cially built wheels, strong enough to support the tremendous load of gasoline, were installed. Even the wheel brakes were removed to save weight. The whole tail end of the fuselage was fitted with extra vertical members to reinforce the fuselage structure at that point, so that it would hold up under the expected gross weight of approximately 15,800 pounds.

During the numerous load carrying tests, building up the gross weight of ten per cent at each successive takeoff, it was soon discovered that the "Southern Cross" suffered from tail flutter caused by vibrations set up in the rear control surfaces of the heavily loaded plane while it was flying too slowly. This would also be true in the case of a lightly loaded ship flying too fast. In order to correct this situation, additional rudder area was added by Phil Salzman until the tail flutter was eliminated. Thus the original Fokker rudder lost its identity completely.

It was during this period that the United States Department of Commerce Aviation Division inspectors stepped in, and the Fokker was given an identification mark of 1985. (Note: This mark is not to be confused with an official registration or airplane license number. Aircraft of this period carried on their Factory Tags the words Identification Mark.) The numbers 1985 were painted on the wings and rudder.

The "Southern Cross" now carried two additional names, "Fageol Flyer" and "Spirit of California" for the endurance flight. The word "CHRONICLE" was painted in large letters on the lower surface of the right wing.

A total of five separate attempts were made to establish a new endurance record, but the Fokker was incapable of carrying enough fuel to do the job. After three abortive attempts on December 3rd, 4th and 8th, 1927, a fourth attempt was made on December 18, 1927, which lasted 49 hours and 27 minutes, a few hours short of the required time to set the new endurance mark. It was decided that a final supreme effort be made to break the new record of 52 hours and 22 minutes, just set by the team of Edzard and Ristiz in a Junkers J-33 monoplane over Germany, and on January 17, 1928 the flight got under way.

Although Kingsford-Smith and Pond literally starved their engines, the plane could not stay in the air any longer than 50 hours and 40 minutes, again a few hours short of success. Now, because of the great deal of expense connected with the endurance flights, the Australians were more in debt than before. While greatly disappointed in their failure to establish a new endurance mark, the recent flights did prove that the aircraft was capable of making the Pacific flight as planned.

Penniless, and with their creditors pressing them unmercifully, they found themselves under orders to sell the plane and return to Australia. Kingsford-Smith and Ulm, forced to give up almost on the threshold of success, decided to try and sell the "Southern Cross" to the Union Oil Company of California. Lacking the rail fare to go to Los Angeles, headquarters of the Union Oil Company, they found that there remained just enough gasoline in the tanks of the plane to reach the city. Although the officials of the Union Oil Company were sympathetic to their cause, negotiations broke down, and they were unable to dispose of the Fokker.

Early in March, during the darkest hours of despair, Andrew Chaffey,

President of the California Bank of Los Angeles, introduced Kingsford-Smith to Captain G. Allen Hancock, who when convinced of the Australian airmen's sincerity, agreed to purchase the "Southern Cross"; and as a sporting gesture, he would allow them to fly the plane across the Pacific to Australia as they had originally planned. On May 31, 1928, the "Southern Cross" left Oakland, California for Australia; and of course, the rest is history.

The Ultimate Disposition of the Southern Cross

While the foregoing story does not portend to portray the complete life history of the "Southern Cross," it does, however, show the history of the plane between the time it arrived in the United States for assembly and left the North American Continent again on a permanent basis. Inasmuch as the only purpose of this story is to disprove a theory, only the present status of the "Southern Cross" is of importance at this time.

At the present time, the "Southern Cross" is on permanent exhibit in a special glass enclosed museum building in Canberra, Australia. This museum, completed only recently as a memorial to the memory of this famous aircraft and its equally famous pilots Sir Charles Kingsford-Smith and Charles T. P. Ulm, was financed jointly by the Fokker Aircraft Corporation of Holland, builder of the airplane, and by the Union Oil Company of California, who supplied the fuel for the transpacific flight.

The "Southern Cross" carried the United States Department of Commerce Identification mark 1985 on its flight across the Pacific, and then carried in turn the Australian registration VH-USU, the registration of England G-AUSU, and again the Australian markings VH-USU. The plane now has lost its Australian registration, and to commemorate the greatest of all its achievements, the first transpacific flight from the United States to Australia, the original numbers 1985 have been reapplied to the "Southern Cross". It appears once more, and permanently, as an American aircraft.

The Ultimate Disposition of the Single Engined Fokker "Alaskan"

It must be assumed that the remains of the single engined Fokker "Alaskan" were returned to the sponsors of the Detroit News Expedition. Although the wing was the only part of the aircraft that was missing, it having been severely damaged and broken up by souvenir hunters after the second and final crash of the "Alaskan", the remainder of the aircraft was still complete and airworthy. From this point on the exact details of the movements of the "Alaskan" are vague. Recent research on this subject has turned up the following information.

For some as yet unexplained reason the 450 HP Liberty engine, the engine cowlings, engine mounts and radiator, along with the laminated wooden propeller, were separated from the fuselage of the "Alaskan" and became the property of the Carl Ben Eielson family of Hatton, North Dakota to be housed eventually in a special "Eielson Memorial Museum" that was being proposed. When the museum failed to materialize, the engine and propeller passed to Melvin T. Lee of Valley City, North Dakota. Mr. Lee was accidentally killed in 1935 and Mrs.

Lee then presented the engine and 12 foot propeller to Major Albert F. Olson, then the husband of Mrs. Lee's niece. In 1936, Major Olson in turn, presented the engine and propeller to the State Historical Society of North Dakota, located in the Liberty Memorial Building at Bismark, N.D. where it is on exhibition today.

The remains of the "Alaskan", evidently also intended for the Eielson Memorial Museum, were donated to the cause, presumably by the sponsors of the Detroit News Expedition to whom the "Alaskan" was returned at the close of Wilkins 1926 expedition, although it could have been purchased from them by the parties that initiated the plan for the establishment of the Eielson Memorial Museum after the death of Carl Ben Eielson. At an undetermined date the "Alaskan" was put into storage in one of the old city hall buildings at Hatton, N.D. When the plans for the erection of the Museum fell through, the remains of the "Alaskan", along with many other Eielson memorials, were presented to the State Historical Society at Bismark, N.D.

Anyone visiting the Liberty Memorial Building at Bismark today can see for himself what is left of the "Alaskan". They will find the blue and white fuselage with its white and black lettering mounted on its transportation gear, using the planes original wheels. The blue horizontal stabilizer and elevators are hanging on the wall along with the wood propeller. The Liberty engine is mounted in a glass case on exhibit alongside the fuselage. All traces of the engine mount, cowlings and radiator, have disappeared.

Conclusion

Since the single-engined Liberty-powered Fokker "Alaskan" is on display in the Museum in Bismark, North Dakota, here in the United States, and the original "Big Wing" tri-motor Fokker F-VII-3m "Detroiter", now the "Southern Cross", is on display in Canberra, Australia, it is clearly evident that the "Southern Cross" is the same aircraft that, with the exception of the plan form of its rudder, its engines, and the shape of its outboard engine nacelles, (these having been altered just prior to the east-west Transatlantic flight of June 23, 1930) originally came off of the drawing boards of the Fokker Aircraft Corporation in Holland in 1925.

The photographs of the "Alaskan", taken in the Liberty Memorial Museum, are the first photos to be taken of the plane by the Museum Staff. These photos were taken in March, 1957, at the expense of the author who, thru correspondence with the late Sir George Hubert Wilkins, discovered the existence and location of this aircraft.

At this time I would like to express my appreciation to Charles V. Page of Aberdeen, Scotland and to Stephen J. Hudek of Detroit, Michigan, whose aid in this matter was invaluable. I especially want to acknowledge their trust in keeping this matter confidential until the time when this story was published.

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Flight Of The Southern Cross, by C. E. Kingsford-Smith and C. T. P. Ulm. New York: Robert M. McBride & Co., 1929.

My Flying Life, by Sir Charles Kingsford-Smith. London, England: Aviation Book Club Edition, February, 1939.

AIRCRAFT VH-USU: Copy of Airworthiness Record

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Surname of Owner
(or name of Company). | Kingsford Smith M.C., A.F.C. |
| 2. Christian Names | (Sir) Charles Edward |
| 3. Address | Kingsford Smith Air Service Ltd., Aerodrome,
Mascot. |
| 4. Nationality | British. |
| 5. Station of Aircraft - | Sydney. |
| 6. Name of Constructor - | Atlantic Aircraft Corporation |
-
7. Type of Aircraft (as above) Fokker Series F7 Constructor's No. -
 8. Place and Year of Construction New Jersey, U.S.A., 1925.
 9. Land and/or Marine - Land.
 10. No. of Planes - One
 11. No. of Engines - Three
 12. Max. No. of persons to be carried - 18.
 13. Category - Normal
 14. Subdivision (a) Public trspt. for passgrs.
(b) " " " mails.
(c) " " " goods.

15. Max. Span (in flying position) - 71'2" Span (folded) -
 16. Max. length (in flying position) - 47'7"
 17. Total height - 12'10"

ENGINES

18. No. Installed - Three 19. Makes - Wright Whirlwind.
 20. Types - J5 21. Power (Per engine) at ground level:
 (a) 200 H.P. at 1800 revs. per min.
 (b) - H.P. at - revs. per min.
 Hourly Consumption at (22. Fuel (a) 14 gals. (b) -
 ground level at above (
 power (per eng.): (23. Oil (a) 6.25 pints (b) -

AIRSCREWS

24. No. Fitted: Types: Pitch: Diameter:
 (a) Three (a) 2 bladed metal. (a) Variable (a) 8'10 $\frac{1}{4}$ "
 (b) - (b) - (b) - (b)
 25. Weight of aircraft empty, including water in the radiators - 6711 lbs.
 26. Weight of fuel (tanks full) - 2248 lbs. 27. Weight of oil (tanks full)
 337 lbs.
 28. Weight allowed for crew 170 lbs
 29. Weight allowed for equipment (excluding wireless)
 30. Weight of wireless apparatus.
 31. Max. commercial load (passengers, goods) authorized when tanks are full
 703 lbs.
 32. Max. total weight authorized 10225 lbs.

REGISTRATION

Certificate No. 210
 Date of Issue 4.7.28
 Date of Expiry 13.9.35

PERIODS OF INVALIDITY

From To
 Lapsed
 13.9.35

AIRWORTHINESS

Certificate No. 377
 Date of Issue 1.5.31
 Date of Expiry 29.5.35

PERIODS OF INVALIDITY

From To
 1.4.32 30.5.32
 Lapsed
 29.3.35

REMARKS

Purchased for Commonwealth Museum.