

Parks Air College, Teaching Pilots to Fly the Ford Tri-Motor



By Terry Love

The Ford Tri-Motor was all new and shiny with Parks Air College winged logo on both sides of the fuselage. Note the crowd being held back by ropes. Perhaps this was one of those Sunday "Penny-a-Pound" flights.. (All photos from the John Thomas collection)

Parks Air College was founded in 1926 by Oliver Parks as one of the first aviation schools in the country. In fact, it has training certificate number 1 for Flight Training Schools in America. After Charles Lindbergh's transatlantic flight in 1927, aviation became very popular in the United States. Parks Air College was already established for training of academics and pilots.

In the Fall of 1929, Parks purchased a new Ford 5-AT-C Tri-Motor, c/n 5-AT-64. It was registered as NC405H. Parks took delivery on November 15, 1929. The Ford was used by the college for training in the Air Transport Course (today's Air Transport Rating (ATR)) offered at Parks for the sum of \$4,550, which included 200 hours of flight time.

The Ford was also used to give penny-a-pound rides during Sunday airshows. It was frequently piloted by Henry "Hiney" Schnittger.



A magazine advertisement from 1930 tells us that for \$4,550, you can take the Transport Pilot's Course. That was a lot of money in 1930, especially with the onset of the Great Depression.



The Transport Pilot's Course included eight hours of flying the Ford Tri-Motor. The cost of the Ford was approximately \$55,000 in 1929. This is another advertisement from a 1930 magazine.

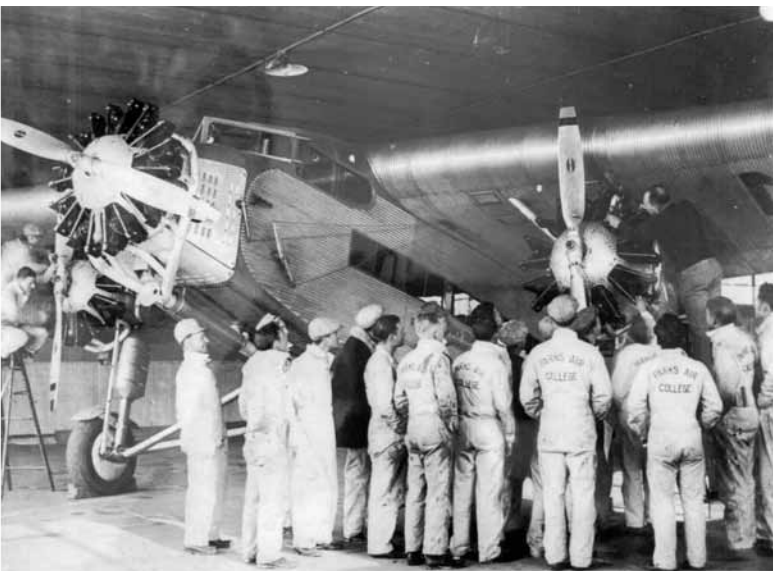
The timing was very bad for Parks Air College as the Great Depression had just hit. The college sold the Ford on May 16, 1930 to Southwest Air Fast Express in Tulsa, Oklahoma. SAFE sold the Ford on November 28, 1930, to Erle P. Halliburton of Los Angeles, California. He sold the plane on August 1, 1934, to Compania Minera Agua Fria S. A. in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Before taking delivery of the Ford, it was converted by Timm Aircraft who reinforced the cabin with a cargo hatch on the top rear and added adjustable propellers. It was registered as XH-TAW. It was next sold to TACA of Honduras. From January 27, 1942, TACA Nicaragua until October 15, 1942, the



In the winter of 1929, these Parks Air College students are hand cranking the inertial starter for the Pratt & Whitney Wasp engine on the Ford Tri-Motor.

Ford was registered as AA-AAN. On April 8, 1946, it was sold to M. A. Zuniga of Mexico City, Mexico. He sold it to Ricardo Nevarez of Campeche, Mexico, where it was registered as XA-FUO. Nevarez operated the Ford until July of 1950.

Thanks to William T. Larkins for his information from his great book entitled *The Ford Tri-Motor* for the history of this Ford. ➔



Parks Air College student mechanics watch an instructor work on the Pratt & Whitney Wasp engine on the Tri-Motor.

to-morrow's demands are met today...
...at Parks Air College



INTERNATIONALLY recognized as the world's finest commercial flying school, Parks Air College has kept far ahead even of the leading institutions of aviation instruction. It has consistently looked to tomorrow—regulated its instruction courses to meet the demands of the future, maintained the finest and most modern equipment both on the ground and in the air. It has conscientiously given its students the finest in aviation learning because it has recognized their right to the best instruction that money, unlimited contacts and a thorough knowledge of the aviation industry can bring.

- • • Parks was the first commercial aviation school to give its students SYSTEMATIZED ground school training. It was the first school to give a TRANSPORT ground course to Private and Limited Commercial Pilot students. It was the first to operate an instruction field with every possible facility for students, including restaurant, barber shop, recreation room and dormitory. It was the first to prescribe FINISHED dual instruction to primary students, insuring their absolute safety for their first solo flight. It was first to give close supervision to flight students during their entire period of training.
- • • It was the first, too, to give its Transport Pilot students instruction on big planes, first to give them REAL solo night flying experience. It was one of the very first institutions to be approved by the Department of Commerce. It was... is... always will be... **First in Everything.**
- • • That is why Parks Air College graduates are in demand wherever airplanes are flown. That is why an aviation diploma from Parks Air College is like a medical degree from Johns Hopkins or a law degree from Yale. Parks prestige keeps its graduates in constant demand. Parks men are competent men. And, from the smallest aerial operator to the giant holding and operating companies, **every man in the aviation industry knows it.**

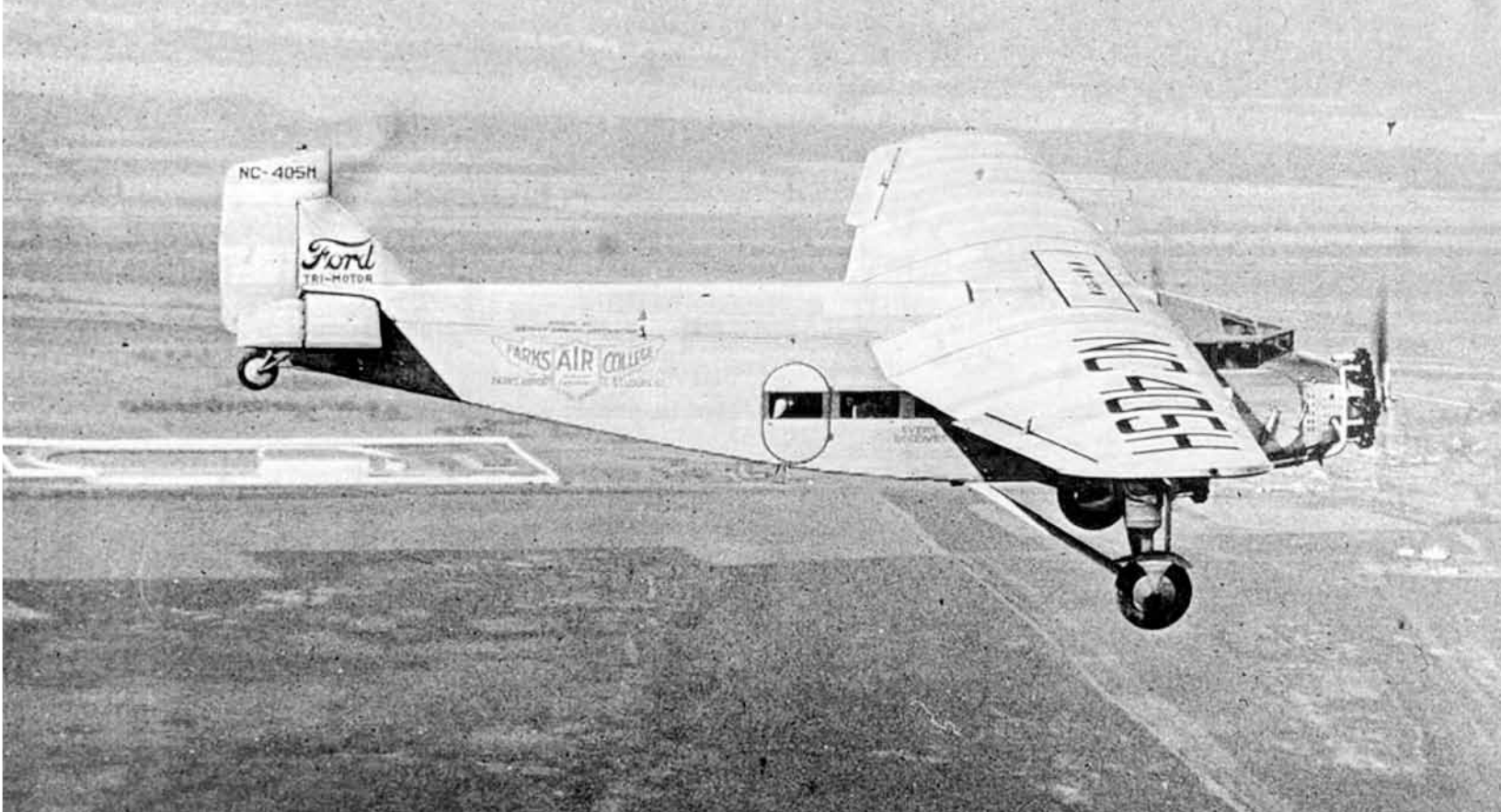
In this magazine advertisement, the Ford Tri-Motor is not specifically mentioned but the drawings are definitely of Ford Tri-Motors.



A "Follow Me" vehicle from Parks Air College! Yes, it was. It advertised "Fly for 1 cent per pound" on the roof and Parks Air College on the door.



In Fall 1929 admiring students are examining the Ford Tri-Motor, while the flight crew on the right discuss things.



Flying over the Missouri or Illinois countryside, the Parks Air College Ford Tri-Motor gave rides for the very popular "Penny-a-Pound" flights. Note the Parks Air College logo on the aircraft.



The Parks Air College has U.S. Army officers looking over the Ford Tri-Motor. It is unknown why they were there checking it out.