

A Million Dollars

written by Gary Kuhn | May 24, 2022



The old joke goes: How do you get a million dollars in the airline business? The answer: Start with ten million! Governments, wanting “flag airlines”, took most of the losses for prestigious international air service. Winston Guest (father and son), wealthy heirs to a steel-making fortune, lent their family name to money-losing airlines based in Panama and Mexico.

Aerovías Guest in Mexico has been well described by photographer-historian Hugo Gutierrez in the 2002 edition of *Quauhtli, Revista de Historia Aeronáutica de México*. He notes that Winston Guest, a traveler and investor in that North American nation, was persuaded in 1946 to invest a spare million dollars or so in the effort to achieve a pioneering trans-Atlantic service. Two years later, the Lockheed L749 Constellation XA-GOQ (C/N 2503) achieved the ambitious service to Madrid and beyond.



Lockheed L-1049G XA-NAD (C/N 4677) of Guest Aerovías Mexico, photographed in Paris, France, in 1960. (Photo G. Styan, via the author.)

For more than fifteen years the Guest name graced XA airliners, even after the 1958 death of elder Winston Guest and the sale of the Mexican assets. My personal memory of the airline is from a cold January day in 1962, when bad weather at Chicago caused a de Havilland DH-106 Comet 4C, registered XA-NAT (C/N 6443), of Guest Mexicana to land in snowy Minnesota.



de Havilland DH-106 Comet 4C XA-NAT, of Guest Mexicana, photographed by the author in Minnesota sometime in January 1962. In that occasion, the jet was bound for Chicago but had been diverted due to bad weather.

TIME magazine, December 8, 1967, published an article: *The Rich; Caught Short*. It concerned the son of the original 1946 investor, his celebrity socialite wife, and their cash flow problems. Despite their wealth, Winston Guest (the son) had to sell one of their estates plus various antiques and art. Along with the expense of high-status living was his flyer with Aerovías Panamá, a scheduled passenger and freight airline that had gone bankrupt two years earlier, leaving him sole guarantor for bills totaling \$499,765.53 owed to a Miami airplane-leasing company.

LAAHS Panama Germinal Sarasqueta's chronology of Panamanian aviation (Momentos Memorables de la Aviación Panameña, 2003) notes on page 102 that Aerovías Panamá -APA- appeared in November 1955, absorbing the assets of a prior airline. It was created as an adjunct to the Mexican airline. The younger Winston Guest remained responsible for the Panamanian line, even after the Mexican venture was sold, until its demise in January 1965. Several years later the bills could no longer be avoided.

The moral of the story, dear LAAHS member: Enjoy aviation history with us, limiting your financial investment to your computer!