

The Tale of “TG-CUS-C”

written by Mario Overall | March 23, 2018



The photo accompanying this post was shared with us by our friend and superb aviator Luis Carlos Samayoa and is part of his father’s personal collection. It shows a Beechcraft AT-11 *Kansan* carrying the Guatemalan registration TG-CUS-C, after sustaining damage to the landing gear while taxiing for takeoff at the La Panchita airstrip, located in the mountains of El Quiché. The photo was taken in November 1963 during a flight led by Capt. Samayoa Sr., at the controls of a C-47 of Aviateca that had just landed at the mentioned runway. The sad part is that this AT-11 was never repaired and remained there at La Panchita, eventually being scrapped.

The TG-CUS-C was manufactured in March 1942 with the constructor number -C/N- 1005 and was delivered to the United States Army Air Forces (USAAF), where it was assigned the serial number 41-9579. It was later incorporated into the bombing school at Victorville, California, with the squadron code V-203. In July of the same year, the aircraft was involved in a collision with another AT-11 during a formation flight training, 10 miles southeast of the base. Two crew members parachuted from 41-9579, although the pilot remained in the aircraft and managed to return to Victorville and land. Unfortunately, the other AT-11 crashed.

In September 1945, the aircraft was removed from the USAAF inventory and placed into semi-permanent storage. However, in December of the same year, it was acquired as surplus by Costa Distributing Co. of El Centro, California, and registered with the civilian registration NC56966. In 1949, she was re-registered as N56966 following the reorganization of registrations implemented in the United States that year. It is important to note that during this time, the aircraft had been “civilianized,” meaning all military equipment had been removed, turning the airplane into a more or less standard Beechcraft C18S.

The next stage of this aircraft’s life is somewhat confusing. According to Air Britain records, the aircraft was acquired by Thompson Cornwall Inc. of New York in February 1957, who registered her as N29TC. However, Capt. Samayoa Sr. brought the aircraft to Guatemala on June 2, 1956, as noted in his logbook, since the local company Aeroservicios de Emergencia, S.A. (ASDESA) had acquired it. Once the aircraft was in Guatemala, it was registered with the registration it ended its days with: TG-CUS-C. The N29TC registration was finally canceled in the United States in June 1958.

The second photo included in this post, also from Capt. Samayoa’s collection, shows the aircraft with the registration N29TC shortly after its arrival in Guatemala. The wooden structures in the background indicate that the photo was taken in the civilian side of La Aurora International Airport, where the Aeroclub is now located.



Beechcraft AT-11, N29TC. (Photo: Luis Samayoa)

Something worth mentioning is that for many years, it was believed that this aircraft had come to Guatemala much earlier, as part of a batch of AT-11s acquired by the Guatemalan Air Force in 1945. In fact, according to the Air Britain listings compiled directly from the records of the Guatemalan Civil Aeronautics Directorate in 1971, she was listed with the C/N 4966, the USAAF serial 42-37669 and the Guatemalan registrations TG-TAG-64 and later on, as TG-DIK. However, thanks to Capt. Samayoa's photos and log book information, it was possible to determine the exact identity of TG-CUS-C.

It is still a task at hand, however, to determine the true Guatemalan identity for 4966 / 42-37669, which, I presume, was a Guatemalan Air Force AT-11.

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