

## **Last Remaining Boeing 307 Stratoliner Airplane Fully Restored to Original Condition**

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June 19, 2001 - After a six-year restoration process, Boeing employees will roll out the last existing 307 Stratoliner airplane - the world's first pressurized commercial airliner - on Saturday, June 23, in Seattle.

First delivered to Pan American Airways in 1940 and named the Clipper Flying Cloud, the airplane was restored to original condition with the help of approximately 30 retiree volunteers. In addition, Boeing employees and suppliers built parts and structures according to original drawings preserved by Boeing Archives.

"The dedication of our retirees, employees and suppliers to fully restore this airplane has been tremendous and much appreciated not only by Boeing, but also by the Smithsonian, which will be receiving the airplane," said Alan Mulally, Commercial Airplanes president and CEO.

The Stratoliner is headed for the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center, the new companion facility of the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum that is being built at Washington Dulles International Airport, outside Washington, D.C. The aircraft will be a centerpiece of the exhibit when the complex opens in 2003.

The airplane was "discovered" by several Boeing employees while visiting the Pima Air Museum in Tucson, Ariz., to recover the Dash 80 airplane, which was the prototype for the Boeing 707. They investigated who owned the Stratoliner and learned it belonged to the Smithsonian. The Smithsonian had obtained it from a private owner, who converted it for use as a crop duster.

Realizing it was the last Stratoliner in existence - only 10 were built - the employees met with the Smithsonian and offered to take the airplane out of the desert and restore it with all of its original parts. Upon a simple handshake, the Smithsonian agreed, and Boeing began restoring the airplane so it could fly back to Seattle. The journey was made in June 1994. In March 1995, the airplane was moved to Boeing Plant 2 in the same area where it was originally built, and the Boeing team began work on locating and securing original parts.

F. Schumacher & Co. of New York, N.Y., used a vintage loom to produce the original picturesque Pan Am wall fabric showing the Pan Am logo, world map and animals native to various continents. The fabric design was the same as that of the Boeing 314 Clipper and Boeing Archives fortunately had preserved some of the Clipper fabric. The color of the cloth was determined from remnants trapped between structures of the airplane.

Douglass Interior Products of Bellevue, Wash., donated the flooring in the galley and cockpit, the carpet in the main cabin interior, the paneling in the cabin and lavatory, and the imported Scottish leather for the single-aisle and crew seats.

BE Aerospace of Miami, Fla., donated its time and materials to upholster the five flight deck crew seats, nine passenger seats and eight divans. Only six of the original seat frames were still in the airplane when it was discovered. All of the light fixtures, bulkheads and trims were manufactured from original engineering drawings.

### **Historical Significance**

The 307 Stratoliner was the world's first pressurized commercial airplane that allowed people to "fly above the weather," as was commonly said during that time. It flew at an altitude of 20,000 feet, higher than the 5,000- to 10,000-foot altitudes of unpressurized airplanes. It also was the first four-engine airliner in scheduled domestic service. It carried five crew members and 33 passengers. The nearly 12-foot wide cabin had space for overnight berths.

The Stratoliner was the first land-based airplane to have a flight engineer as a member of the crew. The engineer was responsible for maintaining power settings, pressurization and other subsystems.

Five Stratoliners were produced for Transcontinental and Western Air, which later became Trans World Airlines, three for Pan Am and one for multimillionaire Howard Hughes. Hughes purchased the airplane for \$250,000 and turned it into the first luxury private airliner. The first prototype used for flight testing crashed March 18, 1939, just 11 weeks after its maiden flight by Boeing test pilot Eddie Allen on Dec. 31, 1938. All 10 men aboard the plane perished. In July, Allen successfully flew the second prototype for the first test of cabin pressurization.

On July 8, 1940, TWA introduced the Boeing Stratoliner into service with a 12-hour, 18-minute flight from New York to Los Angeles. TWA's routes were to Chicago, Kansas City, Mo., and Albuquerque, N.M. Pan Am flew from Miami, New Orleans and Brownsville, Texas, into Mexico City and Central and South America.

Sixteen months after the introduction of the Stratoliner World War II broke out and Boeing's hope of selling the plane to European customers diminished. Boeing quickly became focused on building the B-17 Flying Fortress.

In addition, Howard Hughes' desire to fly around the world in the Stratoliner disappeared. By Dec. 24, 1941, TWA removed its five Stratoliners for service in preparation for their mobilization by the Army's Air Transport Command. Soon Pan Am followed suit and Howard Hughes retired his plane to a hangar. Later, his airplane would be purchased by a Texas oil millionaire and end its days as a palatial, Florida-based houseboat.

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For further information:  
Cris McHugh  
office: 206-766-2937

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