

Budd RB-1 Conestoga Fleet History

BuNo	MSN	N-number	Notes
39292	001	NX(C)41810	Resume Testing: April 25, 1944. May 8, 1944: Crash on landing after only five flights / 9.4 hours. No one badly injured, minor a/c damage including nose-wheel collapse. Five on board. This a/c was sold to NSF in July 1945. Crashed in Forth Worth, Tex., en route to California. Sold for \$500 as a hamburger stand.
39293	002	NX37097	March 11, 1944, received temporary NX certification at Budd factory due to inherent structural problems. Was flown to NAS Patuxent River for experimental testing by contractor pilot H.W. Holliday at 1800 on March 11. Des' first Flight Test March 15, 1944, 1.5 hrs. [FAA says it was certified February 9, 1944-why?] April 12, 1944: After 12 flights /13.8 hrs. as pilot, crash on takeoff Written Off- Total Loss: one fatality, six injured, one uninjured.
39294	003	NC45347	Des tested May 10, 1944: 1.7 hrs. eight aboard. July 22, 1944, Lt. Cdr. Vantuil suffered a left landing gear failure and crash. Minor damage to right wing tip, bottom fuselage and nose wheel fork. The a/c was sold to NSF in July 1945. Crashed in Bluefield, Va., onto a golf course 1:00 a.m. (Jan.1, 1946) New Year's Eve. Written Off.
39295	004	NC45348	Des flew 18.5 hrs. in 10 flights before June 16, 1944: Crash on take-off, no one badly injured in an intentional wheels-up landing on the field. The a/c suffered minor damage when the aircraft failed to climb sufficiently to clear obstacles (more trees). The a/c was sold to NSF in July of 1945 and resold to Cuba?
39296	005	No known	Cdr. George Greene with +10 people aboard, August 7, 1944: Landing gear failed to retract upon takeoff, spent 2½ hrs. trying to get it down before making a belly landing on wet grass. Minor injuries and a/c was repairable. August 30, 1944: Cdr George Greene and four passengers flew the repaired 39296 for a few hours when the fuel cut out suddenly from both engines at 800 ft. necessitating a skilled water landing in the Chesapeake Bay. The a/c was struck from the record. Written Off.
39297	006	NC45349	Sold to Shell Ecuador in July 1945. Crashed Shell, Mera – May 15, 1946. (Bar)
39298	007	NC41805	Not listed by Davis: Did Prescott deliver this a/c to Aerovias Azteca.1945? Did the Navy hold back one a/c?
39299	008	NC45350	Sold to Shell Ecuador in July 1945. WFU July 23, 1946 (wing fatigue)
39300	009	NC45351	Sold to Shell Ecuador in July 1945. WFU October 1946 (wing fatigue)
39301	010	NC45352	Sold to Shell Ecuador in July 1945. WFU August 26, 1946 (wing fatigue)
39302	011	NC45353	Near Alameda, New Mexico. Crashed on November 7, 1945. Pilot and copilot killed, and flight engineer severely injured. Written Off.
39303	012	NC45354	This a/c was reportedly sold by FTL to Tucker in 1947, when FTL was selling its RB-1s. The automobile company used it to take its car to various auto shows around the country. The aircraft in fact was later sold by the Trustee for the bankruptcy of Tucker Automobile on April 19, 1949, for \$6,000. It was used to fly shrimp in from Mexico. The a/c was supposedly last seen abandoned in Oakland, Calif.. in 1980 (information from The Tucker Automobile Club).
39304	013	NC45355	Received NC certification July 5, 1945. Said to have been sold by FTL to Cuba Espresso Aero of Havana, CU-C413. Joe Baugher cited Trans Air Hawaii, Ltd. As N5619V. Current status unknown.
39305	014	NC 45356	According to Davis the only aircraft with The Flying Tiger Line (FTL) in September 1947. Davis suggested that this may have been the a/c damaged on landing at LAX and was donated to the LAX Airport Fire Department.
39306	015	NC45357	Davis deduced that this was the a/c that crashed into a Detroit, Mich., graveyard on August 25, 1945. WFU. The copilot was said to have picked up his suitcase and was never seen again.
39307	016	NC33308	Received NC certification March 10, 1945. Sold to Aerovias Azteca.. According to Joe Baugher this a/c might be the one that was flown in Mexico for many years and then was seized for smuggling by the U.S. government. Sat at Douglas, Ariz., for years and then sold at auction to Pima Air & Space Museum for restoration. (Or it was abandoned on its way to Cuba.)
39308	017	NC33330	Received NC certification March 10, 1945. Sold to Aerovias Azteca.1945.

Flying Tiger History says that two FTL Budds were sold to "South America" in 1956. Did they regain the Tucker aircraft and sell it to Columbia? Was the unlisted RB-1 (BuNo 39298, NC41805) not sold to Aerovias Azteca as I proposed. Did they only sell two instead of three to Mexico as Davis believed. That would allow for the two sold to Columbia and one to Cuba.

There is some confusion about the Pima, Ariz., aircraft. Davis theorized that if this a/c BuNo 39307 was being flown, along with CU-C-495 or CU-C-496 and the other ex-Azteca BuNo 39308 were on the way from California to Cuba, but was abandoned on the Arizona/ Mexico border.

Sources: John M. Davis, from a list found among the Flying Tigers information on their website, Joe Baugher, FAA records, Benjamin H. Kristy, Aviation Curator at the USMC Museum at Quantico, Capt. H. J. Hendrix, USN, Director, Naval History & Heritage Command...