

She Flies Like a Kangaroo

By Danny Howser

December 2015

As a result of reading the posts regarding “Super Dog”, another Reserve aircraft demonstration and possible selling tour came to mind.

In the 1975 / 1976 timeframe (can't remember exact year) the 356th took a C-123K to Venezuela. The Venezuelan Air Force was flying C-123B's and had been for many years. I'm not sure if they had contacted the Air Force and expressed an interest in acquiring the C-123K but the decision was made to take a “K” model to El Libertador Air Base for their overview and opinion of the aircraft.



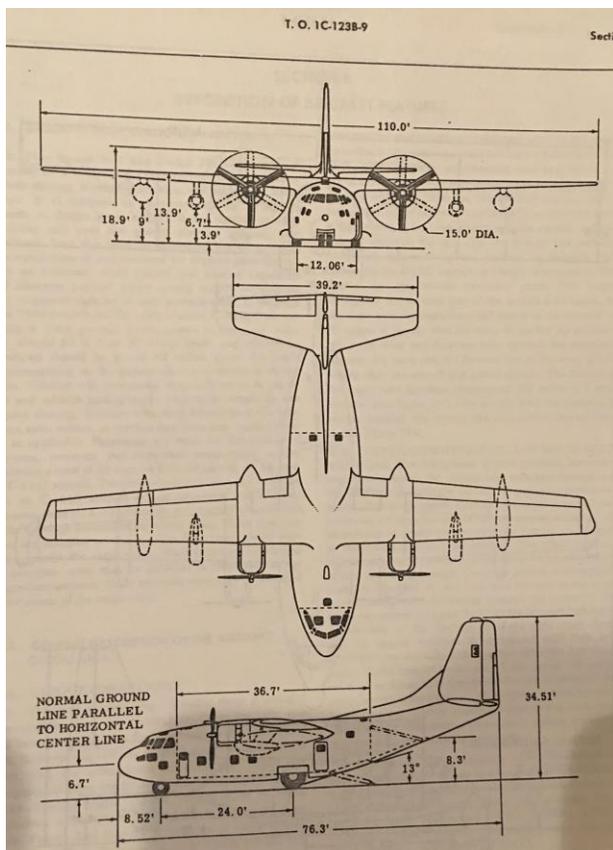
Several members of the 302nd were picked to go on the trip. Many disciplines to include Supply, Propulsion, Quality Assurance were included. Although I was a qualified Flight Mechanic I went as an Aircraft Maintenance representative.

The trip to Venezuela took three hops. The first day was to Homestead in Florida, the second hop was to Navy Roosevelt Rhodes in Puerto Rico and the third hop was to El Libertadore. I would also be remiss if I failed to mention the oil consumption of the right recip on 54-593. It consumed an average of 5 to 6 gallons per hour. I don't recall the left recip consumption but I do recall my arms being tired after the third hop. Many of you reading this may recall the aux oil drum and hand pump on the right side of the



fuselage. If you recall that you may recall that it was hard and took many cranks to pump oil to the engines in flight.

After a couple of down days with the Venezuelan maintenance personnel it was decided that their commander would fly the "K" model. I'm not sure if this was an AFRES decision or a decision made by our crew. Anyway regardless of the level a decision was made for him to fly the aircraft from the left seat. I was not the Flight Mechanic for this flight but did have a ringside seat. The cockpit familiarization must have gone ok, as well as the engine runup, before takeoff and lineup checklist. But things took a downturn from there.



It seemed like after lineup on the runway it took a bit longer for the takeoff roll to begin. They must have been discussing last minute procedures. I must also state at this point in the story that the aircraft parking brake can only be released from the pilot's seat. Remember previously that I stated the Venezuelan Commander was to occupy that seat. The recip came up to power and the jets accelerated to 100%. I surmise that the pilot didn't have the brake pedals fully depressed and didn't release the parking brake. The brakes didn't hold the aircraft and it

started to creep forward. Someone (I'm guessing the IP in the right seat pulled off the recip throttles. The right recip died. The boost pumps were on high and the mixture must have still been in auto rich because a monumental stack fire started in the right recip exhaust. It seemed like a long time of cranking before the fire went out and the right recip started. After that they did make a successful takeoff and flew the aircraft.



After landing the Venezuelan Commander was asked what he thought of the C-123K. His exact words were “she flies like a Kangaroo”. I guess the brakes were jerking and chattering as they tried to takeoff with the parking brake engaged.

After flying the “K” model some of our aircraft flew with them in one of their “B” models. They were going to drop troops. They did it Vietnam style, no seats just sitting on the cargo compartment floor. I don’t think they had static line retrievers either. They took off, climbed to drop altitude and came back over the base. As they started dropping from the left troop door a few got out before one trooper became hung up outside of the aircraft. It seemed to be no big deal to them as they towed the hung trooper around back over the drop zone and cut him loose. Reserve chute deployed and incident over. Trooper recovered uninjured. **Bob Potts** and **Billy Reese** were our Loadmasters on the trip and if I remember correctly neither had been on a drop before that experienced a hung trooper. The Venezuelans told our guys that when a trooper was hung up never make a turn away from the trooper. In other words if hung outside the left door, make left turns and vice versa if hung outside the right door. I don’t recall ever being trained on this technique. We always briefed that if a trooper was hung up and could not be retrieved we would not cut him loose until he placed one or two hands on his helmet signifying that he was conscious and ready to be cut loose. No discussion of directions to turn to get back over a drop zone or safe area.