

THE BOY SCOUT BOMBER, MEXICO'S ELVIS... AND A MYSTERY SOLVED

THE HUNT FOR AN ELUSIVE CIVILIAN B-24 LIBERATOR
BY NICHOLAS A. VERONICO

Working to solve the identities of the “Mystery Liberators” has required the input of many dedicated researchers and enthusiasts from around the globe. One of the toughest mysteries to solve was the identity of the “Boy Scout Bomber” of Gastonia, North Carolina, and the serial number identity of the Mexican-registered Liberator XA-KUN. The identities have been finally been sewn-up — partially through paperwork and partially through photographs.

In the “Airlines” letters to the editor

section of the January 2012 issue of *Air Classics*, Paul Quinn of Stanley, North Carolina, asked about the B-24 Liberator that was flown into Gastonia to serve as a club house and educational tool for the Air Scouts. He remembered, “My dad [Paul Quinn Sr.] was a flight instructor during WWII and loved to take us to the Linwood Airport to see his old friends and watch the planes come and go. Later, dad would take us out to New Hope Road to the Municipal Airport where a WWII B-24 bomber was on display. Since dad was an Air Scout leader, he had the key to the chain link fence that surrounded the behemoth

of the plane and we would climb all through it, sit in the cockpit and work the controls to fly imaginary bombing missions.”

Quinn recalled that the Boy Scouts had sold the bomber after a few years and it was flown out of Gastonia. He had heard rumors that the Liberator had gone to Mexico, but that was all he knew.

If it had gone to Mexico, narrowing down the airframe should have been fairly easy. Only three B-24s are known to have been registered in Mexico in the 1950s and they were XA-KUN, XB-RIS, and XC-CAY. The Confederate Air Force

(now Commemorative) recovered XC-CAY from Mexico in the 1960s and has restored and operated the bomber as *Diamond Lil*. That left XA-KUN and XB-RIS as potential Gastonia Boy Scout Bombers. There was the chance that the plane might not have ended its days in Mexico and could have gone to a South American nation, or been sold on to an operator on another continent. Quinn also recalled a lawsuit where the US government sued the Boy Scouts to recover the sales price of the B-24 plus interest.

THE GASTONIA AIR SCOUTS BOMBER

Thirteen Liberators have been identified as having been distributed to schools or to serve as memorials in the post-war years (see “More Mystery Liberators” *Air Classics* March 2021, page 83). On that list, the identity of the Gastonia Air Scouts bomber had gone unrecorded for decades. Having exhausted all leads and connections through various aviation researchers, Quinn’s only option was to make a trip to the National Archives in Atlanta, Georgia, to find documents from the government’s lawsuit against the Boy Scouts.

After a full day of searching and the assistance of an archivist, Quinn was successful in finding the court case, and among its papers was the Boy Scout

Bomber’s serial number: USAAF 42-78770. From there, the civil registration records of the Liberator were acquired. They documented that the bomber was purchased by local Gastonia businessman Allen Sims, who, on 14 March 1947, paid \$350 for the bomber plus a \$267 delivery fee. Sims donated the money to the Piedmont (North Carolina) Council, Boy Scouts of America Inc., to buy the bomber in memory of his son, 2nd Lt. Albert H. Sims.

The younger Sims was a fighter pilot with the 74th Fighter Squadron, 23rd Fighter Group — the unit that took over from the American Volunteer Group known as the “Flying



Pedro Infante became an all-around entertainer and was wildly popular in Mexico. He was multi-talented and his music, songs, and films made him a household name with the logical comparison to America’s Elvis Presley.

