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"CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA" MAKES MAIDEN FLIGHT TO YAP AND PALAU

SAIPAN, MARIANA ISLANDS, TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS, (MARCH 14)...Yap, the smallest and alphabetically the last district of the Trust Territory, earned the distinction of becoming the first district to host the new DC-4 aircraft on its inaugural flight to Yap and Palau last Friday, March 11.

According to Assistant Commissioner for Resources and Development Paul L. Winsor, the new DC-4 plane will be officially christened the "Congress of Micronesia" during its inaugural flight to Truk, the home district of Acting Speaker Petrus Mailo and President Tosiwo Nakayama.

Carrying 22 passengers and piloted by Captain Hugh Kelly on its maiden flight to the Trust Territory, the new aircraft air-borne from Guam Naval Air Station at about 8:20 a.m., and flew uneventfully at an altitude of 8,000 feet for two hours and 25 minutes before landing at Yap Airport. With skill and accurate timing, Captain Kelly took the "Congress of Micronesia" down for a smooth landing on the 4,800-foot Yap Airport at approximately 10:45 a.m. Nearly 200 spectators crowded the Yap Air Terminal to greet the new plane on its inaugural flight.

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Young Yapese maidens, some of them in their native ceremonial grass-skirts, were at the head of the reception line to present flower leis to all official passengers, who included Acting Director of Public Health Luke A. Howe, Headquarters Engineers Tony Tenorio and Koichi Wong, Assistant Public Information Officer Luke M. Tman, and Headquarters Photographer Augustin Taitano, and plane crew. Congressmen Francis Nuuan and Joseph Tamag, Yap's members of the Congress of Micronesia's House of Delegates, were assisted by a string of young girls in decorating the new aircraft with a 60-foot long garland, which stretched across both wings and around the plane's fuselage. In the fashion of local tradition of name blessing ceremony, Mrs. Carmen Chigiy, one of Yap's prominent women, blessed the new plane by presenting two pieces of Yapese ceremonial shell money. Mr. Tman, Yapese member of the Congress of Micronesia's General Assembly who happened to be the first congressman to fly on the new plane, was designated to accept the memorial gifts on behalf of the High Commissioner and the Congress of Micronesia. One piece of the shell money is to be presented to the High Commissioner and the other piece is to be presented to the Congress of Micronesia in honor of the "Congress of Micronesia's" inaugural flight to that district. The shell money were given by the people of Yap through their representatives in the Congress of Micronesia.

Local dignitaries on hand at the Yap Air Terminal to witness the ceremony included members of the Yap Islands Congress, the Yap Islands Council, District Administrator Maynard Neas and his assistant William C. White. Yap District Administration was a host during refreshment served at the air terminal during one hour and five minutes stopover.

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Continuing its inaugural flight to Palau, the "Congress of Micronesia" took off from Yap at 11:50 a.m. and made another soft landing on the 6,000-foot Airai Airfield, Babelthuap Island, at 12:12 p.m. (Palau Local Time). As soon as the new aircraft taxied to a stop and the first passenger stepped of the plane, the well-organized Palau High School Band--consisting of high school students--struck its instruments to the tune of Micronesian "national" anthem, "'Tis Here We Are Pledging," in welcoming the new DC-4 plane.

Much greeting and hand shaking were exchanged between the incoming passengers and the local well-wishers led by members of Congress of Micronesia Jacob Sawaichi, Roman Tmetuchl, and Sadang Ngiraheherang, District Administrator Boyd J. MacKenzie and his two Assistant District Administrators Thomas Remengesau and Takeo Yano as well as members of the Palau District Legislature residing in Koror and nearby areas. Other spectators watched the proceedings with enthusiasm and appeared unconcerned about the Palau's hot blazing sun that afternoon. Despite the six miles stretch from the District Center of Koror to Airai, an estimated 200 people, mostly from Koror area, were seen at the air terminal to welcome the new "Congress of Micronesia."

Leis prepared by Palau High School girl students were presented to all passengers and plane crew by the female staff members of the Palau District Administration. District Administrator's Secretary Francesca Gillham, assisted by other young Palauan ladies, placed a huge lei on the aircraft nose before the onlooking members of the Micronesian Congress, Distad MacKenzie, and members of the Palau District Legislature.

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Speaker of the Palau District Legislature Jacob Sawaichi, who is also a member of the Congress of Micronesia's General Assembly, and District Administrator Boyd MacKenzie shared the honor of breaking bottles of champagne at the planeside commemorating the inaugural flight of the "Congress of Micronesia" to Palau. Refreshment was also served by the members of the Palau District Administration during the 50-minute stop.

Both at Yap and Palau, guided-tours inside the new plane were conducted by the crew members for local dignitaries, school children, and other interested people.

The new DC-4 aircraft, which was purchased from the Charolette Air Corporation of Miami, Florida, is almost identical to the "first" DC-4 plane except for slight internal modification in the cabin. The new DC-4 has a capacity for carrying 61 passengers, including two flight attendants. According to Mr. Winsor, the "old" DC-4 which has a passenger-capacity of 59 will be sent to Hong Kong, where it will undergo complete engine and body overhaul. The "old" DC-4 is expected to be back in service within six weeks to two months.