

# SKY TRUCK 2

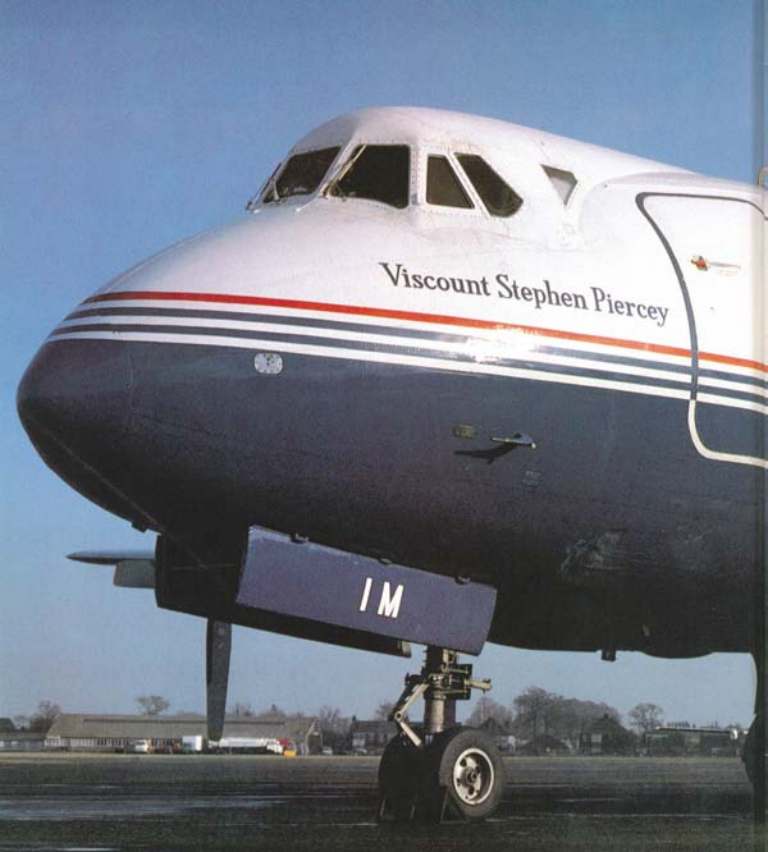


Stephen Piercey

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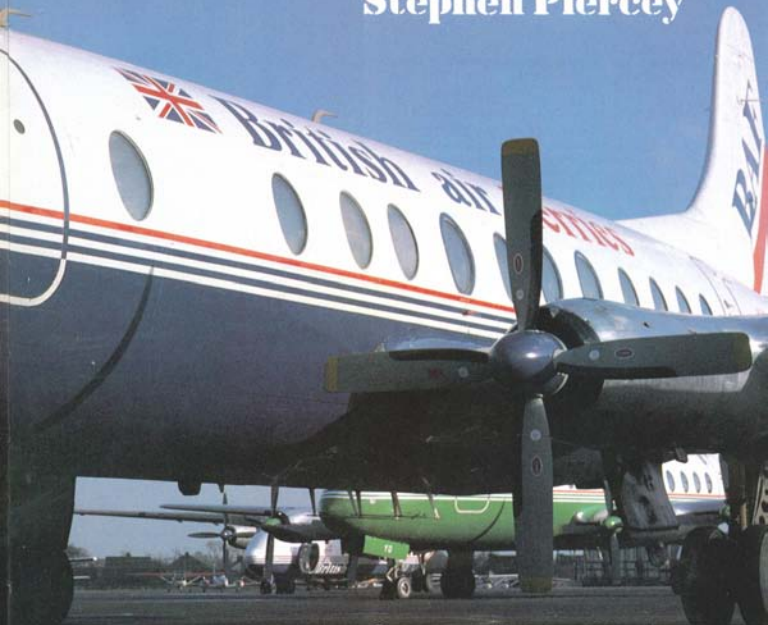
Viscount Stephen Piercey

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# SKY TRUCK 2

Stephen Piercey



Osprey Colour Series

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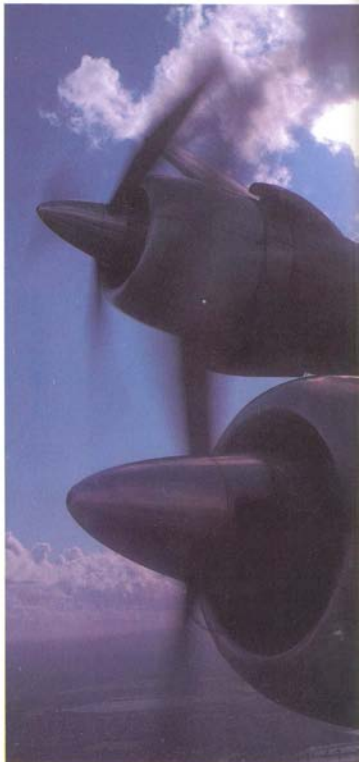
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# Introduction

Anyone who already has a copy of *SKY TRUCK* on their bookshelf will not need to be told that *SKY TRUCK 2* is devoted to the classic piston-engined airliners of yesteryear. If you're new to the world of the big recipis, welcome aboard. Sit back, stuff some cotton wool in your ears and pop a barley sugar in your mouth, because for the next 120 pages soporific high-tech jetliners, with their colour-CRT displays and other gismo-goodies, are *out*. Gas-guzzling old clunks rule, OK?

It may not be common knowledge that Stephen Piercey was tragically killed in a flying accident on 20 May 1984, shortly before *SKY TRUCK* was published. This sequel would not have been possible without the consent, patience, and encouragement of Ray and Patsy Piercey, Stephen's parents. I would also like to thank them for their hospitality during the hours I spent sifting through his vast collection of transparencies. About 90 per

cent of the material I've selected was shot after *SKY TRUCK* went to press in November 1983.

Happily, *Propliner*, the magazine which Stephen Piercey founded and edited to cater for piston-engined and turboprop transport aircraft enthusiasts, is now back on the streets. Former assistant editor Tony Merton Jones is now in the left-hand seat.

There is, of course, a missing dimension to the captions. Steve's unique knowledge of the propliner population died with him. I've given it my best shot, and I apologize for any errors or omissions.

Like *SKY TRUCK*, the photographs in this book were all taken with Nikon cameras and lenses, loaded with Kodachrome 25 and 64.

Dennis Baldry  
Osprey Publishing Limited  
London, January 1986

**Front cover** Most Western airlines were equipped with the Douglas DC-6 before the big jets relegated the type to low-cost charter and cargo work. The DC-6B (pictured) is powered by four 2500 hp Pratt & Whitney R-2800-CB17 radials, giving a cruising speed of 316 mph. About 60 examples of the 'Six' remain active, surviving on ad hoc cargo business in South America and Africa

**Back cover** Rurrenabaque, Bolivia, as seen from the forward door of a Frigorificos Reyes' DC-4

**Title pages** The editor's photograph of a very special Vickers Viscount, taken at Southend Airport on 28 January 1986. Thanks to Mike Kay, the commercial director of British Air Ferries, G-APIM was officially named *Viscount Stephen Piercy* on 25 August 1984 during a ceremony attended by the Piercy family and many of Stephen's friends. Before she was purchased by BAF, G-APIM saw extensive service with British European Airways and British Airways; during his career with BEA one Ray Piercy captained 'India Mike' on numerous occasions



Back in 1977, Stephen Piercy made one of his many trips to South American and he couldn't resist posing in this remarkable Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress, operated as a meat wagon out of La Paz, Bolivia, by Frigorificos Reyes. CP-891 bears evidence of a neat wartime battle-damage repair below the flight-deck window

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# Bolivian odyssey

In the rarified 13,000 ft-high atmosphere of La Paz, Bolivia, you really do have to trust in God and Pratt & Whitney if you're flying a Curtiss C-46 Commando. With 2000 hp of tired iron turning on either side, CP-974 *Super Raton* ('Super Mouse') is held against the brakes while the pilot checks for any tell-tale mag drop. The single-engined performance of a C-46 is less than sparkling—you don't climb, you don't maintain height, you just head earthwards



Synchronicity: *Super Raton's* R-2800-34s ping into life and start to hit that perfect beat. You can almost hear it . . .



Resplendent in its polished, natural metal finish, the broad-shouldered Commando bounds across a rudimentary taxiway. When this picture was taken in April 1984, CP-974 was operated by meat-

hauler Empresa Transportes Aereos Ltda. The aircraft is festooned with a variety of aerials for direction finding and communications

**Overleaf** A local Indian woman looks on as *Super Raton* rumbles past







Kicking up some dust, CP-974 taxis out for takeoff





Retractable tailwheel locked and main gears chocked, *Super Raton* takes a break between operations. Maintenance is carried out in the open as a matter of routine—hangarage is a luxury most Bolivian operators cannot afford or don't need, probably both. Rudderless DC-3 CP-607 in background is owned by Transportes Aereos Tadeo (TAT)





Framed by a snow-sprinkled peak rising from the *altiplano*, a C-46 stands with its cargo door held open

**Right** Empresa Transportes Aereos Ltda is one of about a dozen meat-haulers which operate out of La Paz. Another of their faithful Commandos, CP-1593, comes home after foraging in the Bolivian hinterland







The Commando is a big airplane, a dominating 21 ft 8 in tall, 78 ft 4 in long, and with a wing span of exactly 108 ft. It must have seemed huge when the civil CW-20 first flew in March 1940. The demands of war left no room for the manufacture of commercial models; 3141 examples of the military C-46 were completed when production ceased in 1945

**Right** After a disastrous start the C-46 became a hero of the Hump, the China airlift over the Himalayas from Burma and India in WW2. Old-timers who flew the C-46 along the route back in 1943-45 will probably appreciate the airmanship of this Commando crew as they gain altitude to clear the Andes. Also pictured on the following page, CP-1593 was photographed from the flight-deck of another Commando, CP-754





The equipment might be old, but its paid for and a good deal more practical than alternative forms of Bolivian transportation. Road and rail development is hamstrung by national poverty and awesome natural obstacles



Commando CP-754 chases its own shadow across the landscape. **Left** Past the outer marker: a DC-6 on finals for La Paz Airport. **Overleaf** An ex-*Luftwaffe* F-4 front-seater is the chief pilot of Eldorado Ltda, an outfit which consists solely of this C-46 Commando, CP-1617











Downtime for CP-1244, another member of the Empresa Transportes Aereos Ltda fleet. The Pink Panther seems to be impersonating Noel Coward



This page and overleaf In April 1984, Transportes Aereos Universal Ltda operated two Commandos, but CP-1588 was subsequently written off after an accident. Large chunks of the aircraft were still cloistered around Universal's premises at La Paz in May 1985. Bolivia suffers from a high rate of illiteracy, so the motif on the fin may have a serious purpose





TRANSPORTE

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AEROS UNIVERSAL DA

Frigorifico Santa Rita operate two Commandos, CP-754 (pictured) and CP-1848. A lone DC-3 (CP-529) is also in its inventory



Well worn, CP-754 exudes rugged dependability. The wide track landing gear and generous flap area are vital for short-field survival





Taxying out for takeoff at La Paz, CP-754 is bound for a remote farm in the Bolivian lowlands





Line-up and hold. Before he pushes the throttles forward for takeoff, the pilot will let the airplane run forward to straighten the tailwheel





Down on the farm, a specially adapted ox-cart is used to reach the cargo door. Bolivia is not a major beef producer like Brazil or Argentina—most of its livestock consists of sheep and goats. **Right** A safer, more substantial walkway was employed for the second batch of slaughtered animals





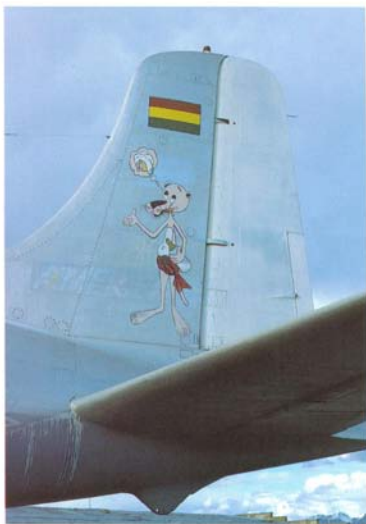
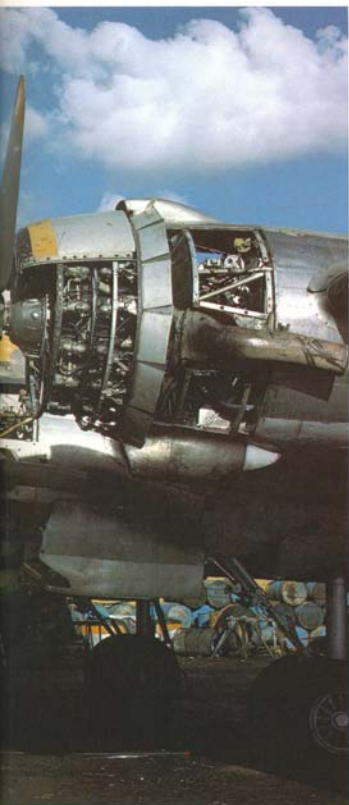


Universal's surviving C-46, CP-1655, tops up with oil and gasoline at Espiritu



CP-1655 looked rather lack-lustre back in April 1984. The old Commando has since been re-sprayed in a smart white/off-white/azure blue livery, highlighted by black engines and nacelles





Above Think pink: this intriguing Pink Panther character adorns the tail of DC-6 CP-1654

Let me fly again . . . this Frigorificos Reyes' Douglas DC-4, CP-1517, looks like a candidate for cannibalization or the nearest dump, but a transfusion of spare parts and a coat (or two) of paint may produce a Phoenix-like transformation



Ready to roll. A Frigoríficos Reyes' DC-4, CP-1653, waits for takeoff clearance at La Paz before departing for Rurrenabaque, 160 miles to the north along the river Beni

**Right** The same airplane at Rurrenabaque after an uneventful landing on the grass field









DC-4 CP-1653 off-loading supplies



DC-6 CP-1650 after disgorging a respectable tally of fuel drums



**Above and right** Rolling. Every inch of the grass strip is used in the quest for airspeed. If the aircraft unsticks a little late, the pilot of this DC-6 may have to contend with a load of timber he hadn't bargained for. But no sweat: the big Pratts are pulling strongly, the field is hard, the grass nice and short. Add 20 degrees of flap and you've got it made

**Overleaf** Frigorificos Reyes' DC-4 CP-1207 sits it out at La Paz













# Budworm and borate



This page and overleaf Hawkins and Power's rare Liberator parked on the ramp at Chandler Airfield, Arizona, in February 1984. 'Bomb doors' agape, this converted B-24 can haul 2000 US gal (18,250 lb) of fire-retardant borate







A spraying specialist, Chandler-based Biegert Aviation own a sizable fleet of C-54s. N44909 is a particularly handsome example



A good pre-owned C-54 can be bought for under \$100,000 from the Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Center (formerly MASDC) at Davis Monthan AFB, Arizona. Aero Union Corporation are the experts when it comes to converting old airliners into borate bombers or budworm sprayers

to Standard Transport Category standard. A ventral pannier with a borate capacity of 3000 US gal (limited to a 2000 US gal uplift on the C-54 for centre of gravity reasons) is the biggest single modification. N963581/160' stands ready for the call to haul



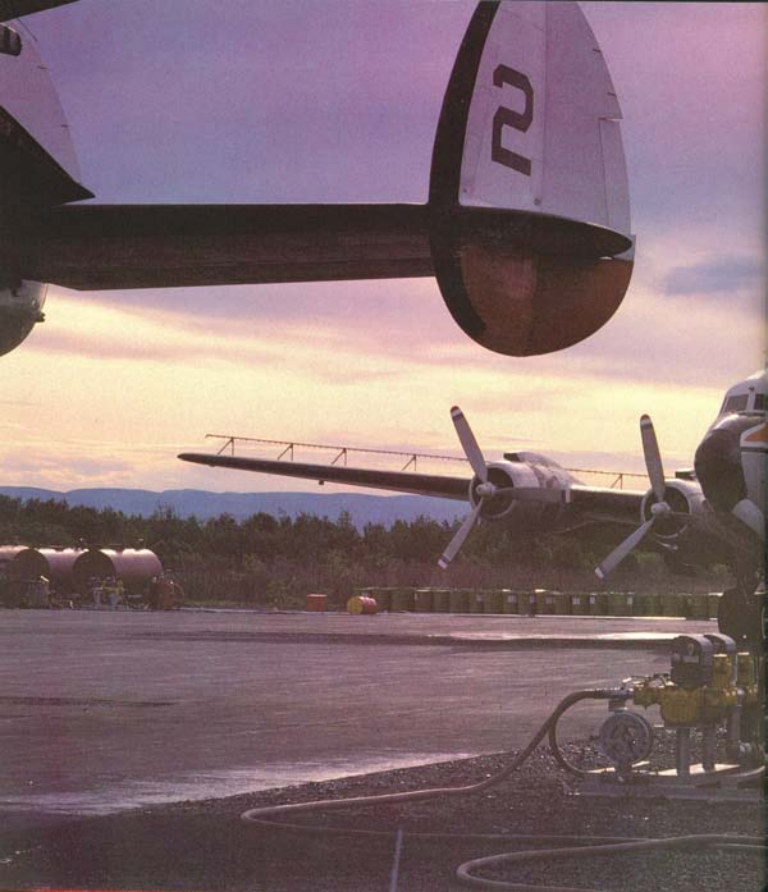
C-54 '117' warms its natural metal finish in the strong Arizona sunshine



Under normal circumstances, Conair would be a somewhat suspicious name for an aircraft operator, but in this case it refers to the airborne protection of Canada's rich coniferous forests. This borate DC-6, C-GIOY/'48' stands illuminated under a rain laden sky

**Overleaf** Fire is an obvious and spectacular consumer of wood. But there is a more insidious enemy lurking in the depths of the forest. As dawn breaks out over northern Quebec, it's time to start pumping 'goop' into Conifair's spraying fleet for a concerted attack against insect pests such as the spruce budworm, hemlock looper and jackpine sawfly



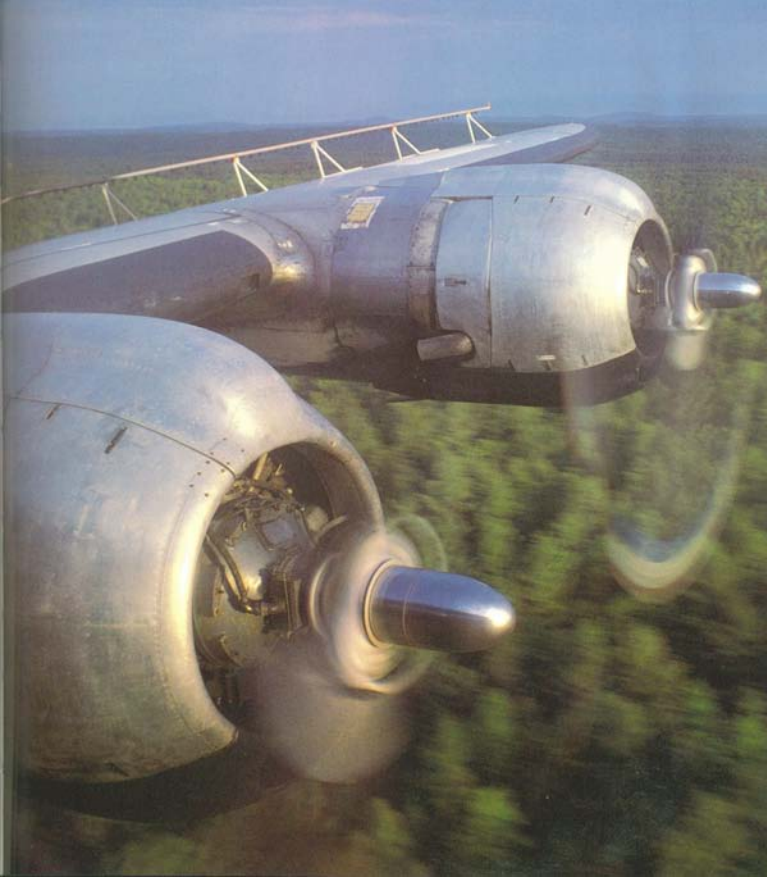






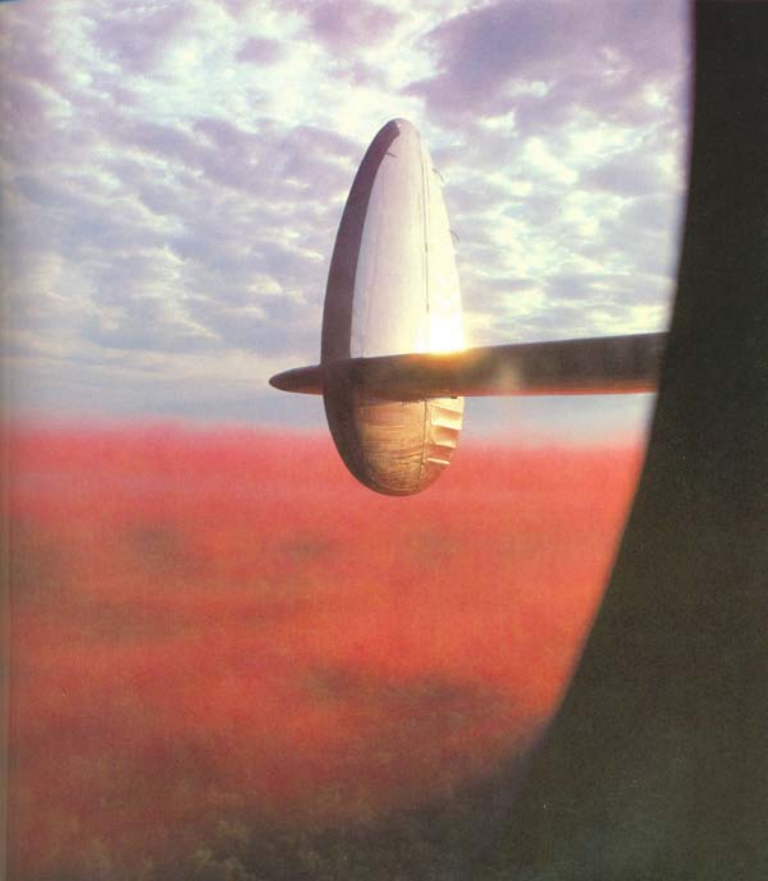
Constellation C-GXKR is one of a pair of lusty 749ers operated by Conifair Aviation Inc

Right A Conifair Connie in full cry at the start of a spraying run





Goop is a cocktail of diesel fuel and malathion with a dash of red dye to aid visual monitoring. Although it's bad news for budworms, the spray is at worst a passing irritant to other forest creatures. Calm conditions are required for a smooth, accurate application. When the going gets rough, the goop stops flowing





T & G Aviation of Chandler, Arizona, is probably the world's biggest operator of DC-7 borate bombers. DC-7C N5903 looks to be in superb condition









One of Conifair's four DC-4s (C-GXKN), just after a smart re-spray at Saint Jean Airport

**Top right** In its heyday the DC-7C 'Seven Seas' was a peerless performer. Thanks to its quintessential aerodynamics and abundant power, the 7C could carry over 100 cosseted passengers non-stop across the North Atlantic (the first aircraft to do so) at 345 mph, even against the strength-sapping jetstreams encountered on the westerly route. The 7C was the ultimate development of the magnificent 'Seven', which



was also the first airliner to fly non-stop from coast to coast across the United States, a feat it achieved in November 1953. Douglas dominated the market for four-engined transports, building a total of 2284. Almost 30 years after it rolled off the production line at Santa Monica, N90802 now sports a ventral borate tank with a capacity of 3000 US gal (27,375 lb). **Right** The Wright Stuff: the 7C is powered by four mighty 3400 hp TC18 Turbo-Compound (R-3350-EA1) 18-cylinder two-row radials housed in titanium nacelles. The port inner needs a spinner





Douglas built the last of 121 DC-7Cs in 1958; Arizona is probably home for most of the handful which survive



Heads and tails: a DC-6B sticks its nose into a gaggle of C-54s



# Water-wings

Grumman is justly renowned for its outstanding contribution to naval aviation, especially the 'cat' family of famous fighters perpetuated by the F-14 Tomcat. The G-21 Goose of 1937 was a rare foray into the civil market which drew on the company's experience with the aquatic J2F Duck biplane. This See Bee Air G-21A retains the original fit of close-coupled 450 hp Pratt &

Whitney R-985-SB-2 engines; from 1958 McKinnon Enterprises offered two, four 340 hp Lycoming versions (G-21C/D, the latter with a lengthened bow) and PT6A turboprop conversions (G-21E/G). The neat retractable wing-tip floats are non-standard, almost certainly a McKinnon touch





Wasp R-1340s blaring, a Grumman G-73 Mallard (N1208) begins a scenic trip across the Virgin Islands





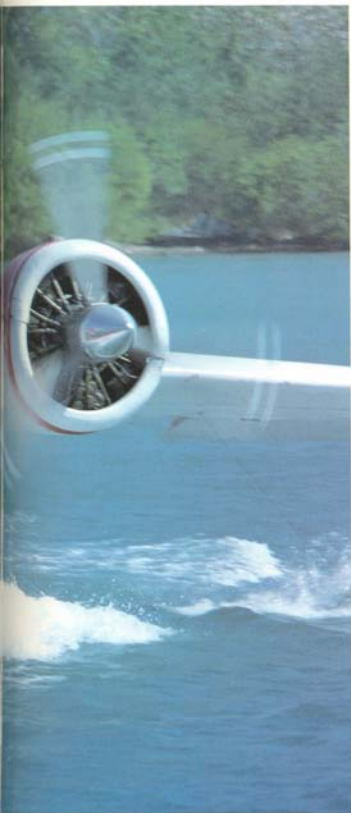


After getting its feet wet, the Mallard powers away in a flurry of spray. Since March 1982, Virgin Islands Sea Plane Shuttle Inc have operated the routes relinquished by Antilles Air Boats









Manoeuvring an amphib on the water is a tad difficult even in ideal conditions; in a fickle current, heavy swell or strong crosswind it can be downright infuriating. After a successful splashdown, the pilot of this Antilles Air Boats' Goose guns his starboard engine to bring the bow into line for the run in to the beaching area; good rudder coordination helps him to steer a true course. **Overleaf** Back for another cargo of sun-worshippers











Grumman teamed with Resorts International to produce the G-111, a 28-seat commuter conversion of the HU-16 Albatross. Chalk's operate three G-111s; N116FB heads back to Watson Island in downtown Miami after a flight from Nassau in the Bahamas. The first G-111, N112FB, exhibited at the NBAA convention in Kansas City in 1980, is in the background (right) behind a PT6-powered G-73T Turbo Mallard. **Overleaf** Bimini in the Bahamas: a Chalk's Mallard waits for the OK from the customs and immigration office









CHALK'S  
INTERNATIONAL

CUSTOMS  
&  
IMMIGRATION

BIMINI BUS





# Prop pot-pourri

Douglas DC-3A EI-AYO is now safely tucked away in the Science Museum's hangar at Wroughton near Swindon after being retrieved from open storage at Shannon, Eire, in October 1978. Originally NC16071, it served with United Air Lines from December 1936 until August 1954, when it was acquired by the Enhart Manufacturing Company of Hartford, Connecticut

and re-registered N333H. Interestingly, NC16071 was one of the initial batch of 15 DC-3As delivered to United; all had the cabin door placed on the right to be consistent with the carrier's Boeing 247s. United also specified 1200 hp Pratt & Whitney R-1830-92 Twin Wasp radials to give the DC-3 enough power to fly routes over the Rockies with a fair safety margin







Despite the introduction of new equipment (HS.748s, for example) SATENA's fleet of DC-3s and C-47s continue to perform the vital social service of providing a reliable link between the industrialized areas of Columbia and its underdeveloped rural regions. The port engine of this C-47 (FAC1120) comes under scrutiny during a turnround check

**Right** The DC-3 celebrated its 50th birthday in December 1985 and the world's most famous transport airplane remains as irreplaceable as ever. N230F pauses for reflection



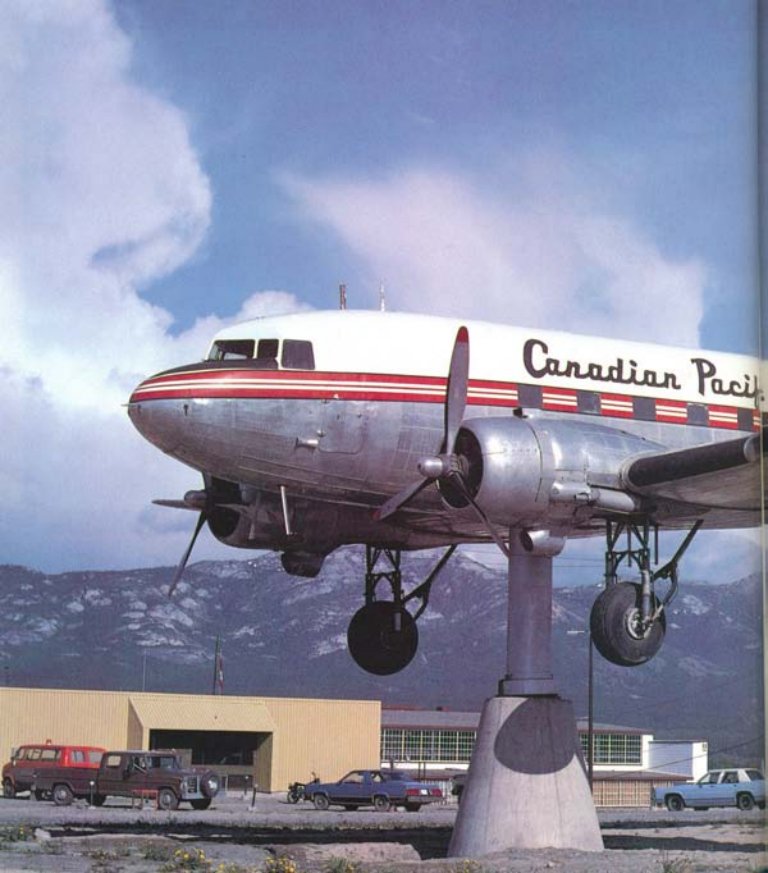


The legend really began with the DST (Douglas Sleeper Transport), certificated on 21 May 1936. Interestingly, the original DST layout featured a separate berth for honeymoon couples, but the idea was discarded before the airplane entered service. Pity



*Taxi Aéreo:* DC-3 HK-329 of El Venado pauses between operations at Villavicencio, Columbia, in October 1977

**Overleaf** Plinth-mounted DC-3 CF-CPY in Canadian Pacific livery is the star attraction at Whitehorse Airport in the Yukon Territory











Opposite page SATENA DC-4 FAC691 on the ramp at Bogota in May 1984 before departing on a flight to Puerto Asis in southern Columbia via Neiva and Florencia. **This page** En route: the flight-deck of FAC691 is the vantage point as the Andes rise into view before being partially screened by a layer of cloud. Mountains and forced landings don't mix





SATENA (*Servicio Aeronavegación a Territorios Nacionales*) is operated by the Colombian Air Force at the behest of the government to provide a lifeline for small, remote communities—a commercially untenable task for unsubsidized private airlines. Above SATENA's two DC-4s, FAC691 and FAC695, ready for inspection; meticulous maintenance keeps 'em flying. Right North American influence permeates the design of the uniforms worn by SATENA personnel, but their professionalism is homegrown





Roughly 20 DC-4s remain in airline service and the majority fly in South American skies. The strut under the tail of FAC695 prevents the aircraft tipping over during loading operations, when the centre of gravity can easily exceed the aft limit. Before takeoff the load will have been properly distributed to put the CG where it should be, forward of the main gears



Until 1980, Eldorado Aviation employed a couple of DC-4s to supply cargo and company employees to uranium mines in Saskatchewan and other locations on northern Canada. This example is being loaded at Edmonton before making a night-time departure to Uranium City



Rescued from the boneyard at Tucson, Arizona, this C-54 has been restored to pristine condition. The assorted junk in the background won't be so lucky





DC-4 N67029 stripped back to bare metal during restoration work at San Jose, California, in September 1983. Overleaf DC-6B N2296B still manages to look majestic despite being parked amid the aeronautical trash at Tucson in February 1984. This airplane is also featured on the front cover









Super Constellation N73544 at Camarillo Airport near Burbank in January 1984 after an eventful ferry flight from Chino, a journey punctuated by an engine shutdown and numerous expletives from her crew. LA-based Classic Air purchased this ex-US Air Force C-121C after the Connie became surplus to spraying requirements. A stillborn attempt to refurbish the airplane for passenger services, which included a half-hearted attack with a spray gun, seems to have ended in stalemate







After a patient three-year wait by its ace reporter and photographer, *Propliner* scooped every other aviation magazine in the world when it carried a major feature on the Super Constellations operated by the Indian Air Force and Navy. Pictured at Lohegaon AFB, Pune, on 6 January

1984, BG583 (foreground) made its last flight in November 1983; the airplane is currently held in storage pending a decision to fly her to the Air Force museum in New Delhi. Like the other eight Indian Connies, this 1049G was a hand-me-down from flag carrier Air India



BG579 began her Air Force career in 1962 and served continuously with No 6 Sqn, transporting personnel and general cargo throughout the Indian subcontinent until she was withdrawn from service on 31 March 1984. During the course of his on-the-spot report, Stephen Piercey made a 28-minute flight aboard this aircraft from Pune to Santa Cruz—the highlight of an historic visit









Left Despite some corrosion problems in the belly area (the toilets were put off-limits to contain it), the serviceable Air Force Connies were still in outstanding condition

The Indian Navy assumed responsibility for all maritime patrol duties in 1976, and five 1049s were duly transferred from the Air Force

inventory to equip No 312 Sqn. All the aircraft were modified for their new role and featured a Thorn EMI ASV.21 multi-mode search radar mounted in a ventral 'dustbin' behind the nosewheel doors. IN317 still wore Air Force uniform when she made her last flight in December 1983; the aircraft is currently in open storage at Goa



IN316 has never been the same since the landing gear was retracted accidentally as it taxied at Goa on 11 January 1983. Fortunately, the Indian Navy received a batch of Soviet Ilyushin Il-38s to replace the clapped-out Connies





# Down and out

DC-7B N90770 will remain stranded at Tucson, despite the characteristically jaunty angle adopted by the nosewheel. With no engines, the cutting torch provides the only way out





DC-7B N4889C still has her full complement of Turbo Compounds, but who needs a thirsty 'Seven' without a strengthened cargo floor? Incidentally, the extended wing centre section added to the 7C lengthened the span by 10 ft (to 127 ft 6 in) and pushed the engines further outboard, a feature which reduced drag and set a new low in cabin noise and vibration



Wings clipped forever, a C-46 waits for the *coup de grâce* at La Paz behind an intact CAMBA  
Martin 4-0-4, CP-1570





Top and right Once the sexiest shape on the ramp, this DC-4 now brightens the backlot at La Paz. Above If this DC-6 ever flies again, it will become the world's largest glider





Almost certainly the only surviving Boeing 377 Stratocruiser, N74603 resides at Tucson International Airport. Bought by Aero Spacelines of Van Nuys, California, as a source of spares for its famous Guppy conversion programme, the

Strat remained largely intact until it became a repository for aircraft parts after the tail was removed in 1982. Boeing only built a limited edition of 50 'Statuscruisers' and N74603 was one of a batch of ten delivered to Northwest Airlines



Powered by four 3500 hp Pratt & Whitney R-4360 Wasp Majors, the big Boeing had a cruising speed of 325 mph and transatlantic range. Pictured in January 1984, the sun had yet to erase her original Northwest livery; the *Stratocruiser* script is still visible below the flight-deck windows

**Overleaf** A grounded DC-6 at La Paz with only 50 per cent power remaining; the engines have probably been retained as ballast









A forlorn C-121A Super Constellation (ex-80610) skulks in the twilight zone at Davis Monthan AFB in Arizona. Named *The Columbine*, this special 749 was used by five-star General Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1950-51 during his term as Supreme Commander Allied Forces in Europe

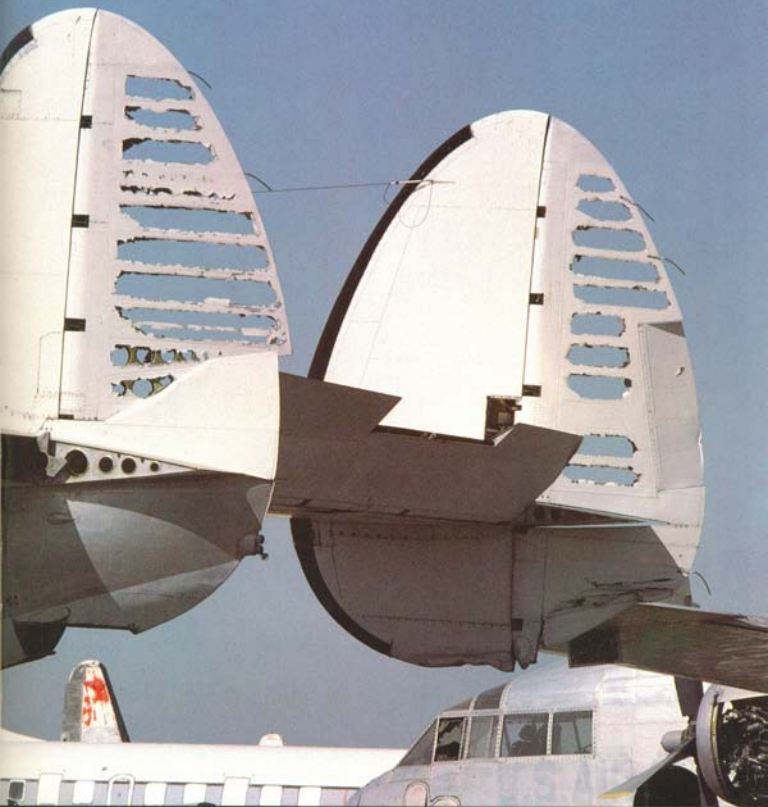




This page and overleaf It shouldn't happen to a lady: the same airplane rotting away in an ocean of unwanted aluminium

A close-up photograph of the tail fin of a military aircraft. The fin is white with a black outline. The number "0-80610" is painted in black on the fin. Above the number is a rectangular patch with a grid pattern. The aircraft's fuselage is visible below the fin, showing rivets and a dark section. The background is a clear blue sky.

0-80610







The final perch of a rare bird: a VC-121C struggles to maintain its sense of balance and an aura of dignity

**Above** A derelict Indian Air Force Super Constellation out to grass at Pune

**Overleaf** A motley line-up of decrepit C-54 Skymasters











A C-118 Liftmaster (ex-0-33245) takes root



With a Constellation for company this C-54 will keep its parking space for a good while yet



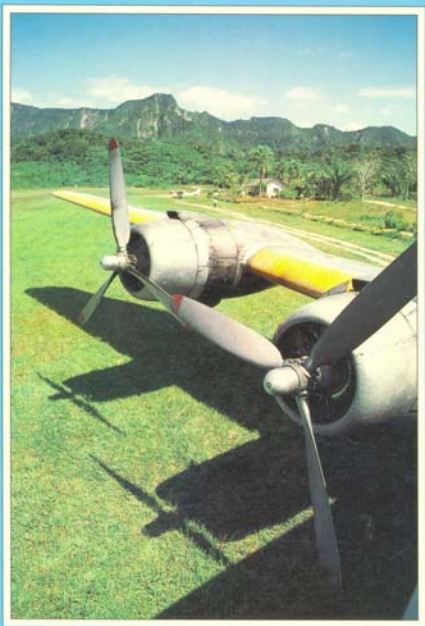
If you're in the market for a C-118, mosey-on-down to Bobs' Airpark

**Right** Glory daze: two DC-7Cs stare into oblivion

**Overleaf** For Steve (Wright R-3350, Super Constellation 1049, HI-207)







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