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Douglas DC-3 Flies Again After 13-Year Hiatus

The Air North C-47A conversion 'Yukon Sourdough' returned to service in its first step toward the airshow circuit.

By Julie Boatman

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Yukon Sourdough—a 1942 Douglas C-47A converted to a DC-3C. [Photo: Stephen Yeates]

With a bit of a crosswind at play, pilot Jim Sells and co-pilot Mike Macario climbed aboard *Yukon Sourdough*—a 1942 Douglas C-47A converted to a DC-3C. What lay ahead? The return to service flight of the airplane painted with a bold yellow-and-green livery—the colors of Air North in Canada—at the Hagerstown Regional Airport (KHGR) in Maryland.

The Douglas Gooney Bird hadn't flown since 2009.

The Flight

The plan was to take the DC-3, N983DC, up for a short flight to test basic systems and the operation of its Pratt & Whitney R-1830-92 Twin Wasp engines. Everything went smoothly, according to Sells, and they stayed up a little bit longer than expected—about 40 minutes.

"We looked around for problems and we didn't find any," said Sells, save for an intermittent intercom. Macario, the group's maintenance technician with inspection authority, wants to adjust the fuel pressures on the engines so they match, but that's about it as far as squawks from the first flight after 13 years.



The aircraft is currently shepherded by owners Kent Casady, Malcolm Van Kirk, and Derek White—though White puts it well: "You never really own anything. You

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also can't take anything materialistic with you when you die. We are just good stewards for *Yukon Sourdough*."



Though Macario's typed in the airplane—and the team has worked on it consistently for the past four years—the group brought in Sells for the test flight and to help Macario and other pilots return to currency as well.

The History

The airplane was built at one of the Douglas Aircraft Company's wartime production plants in Oklahoma City in 1942 for the U.S. Air Force, originally carrying U.S. Air Force No. 42-92464. The registration transferred over to the Canadian Air Force, where it flew as Dakota IIIU FZ675, then No. 960. **Air North**, a Canadian airline founded in 1977, operated scheduled service between the Yukon and Alaska, and the company purchased the airplane in 1982, registering it as CF-OVW, a Douglas DC3C-11C3G.

The airline painted on the DC-3's distinctive tail art, for which it was christened *Yukon Sourdough*. It sold in 1998, and its **restoration** was picked up by the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) in 2001. It was purchased from EAA by Stephen Van Kirk, Malcolm's brother, before going to its current owners.

Once the airplane has been through its paces—and the pilots complete recurrent training—they intend to hit the airshow circuit with *Yukon Sourdough* as part of the **D-Day Squadron's** participating aircraft.



Julie Boatman

Based in Maryland, Julie is an editor, aviation educator, and author. She holds an airline transport pilot certificate with Douglas DC-3 and CE510 (Citation Mustang) type ratings. She's a CFI/CFII since 1993, specializing in advanced aircraft and flight instructor development. Follow Julie on Twitter @juleinthesky.

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