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DC-3 'Yukon Sourdough' at 2023 Westmoreland Airshow

Mar 29, 2023



The Air North DC-3 "Yukon Sourdough" will be at the June 17-18 SHOP 'n SAVE Westmoreland Airshow at Arnold Palmer Regional Airport in Unity Township.

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Another new attraction – the Air North DC-3 "Yukon Sourdough" – has been landed for the SHOP 'n SAVE Westmoreland Airshow at Arnold Palmer Regional Airport June 17-18 in Unity Township.

The aircraft's life began as an order to the Douglas Aircraft Corporation in 1942. It was delivered to the U.S. Army Air Forces Jan. 25, 1944, and two weeks later it was transferred to the Royal Canadian Air Force in a "Lend-Lease" deal and stationed in Edmonton, Alberta, as a VIP transport.

The transport aircraft flew all over Canada, merging into instruction and training use until it was sold to Eldorado Aviation Ltd. in 1963. During that period, it was designated as a DC-3 and, in 1982, it was purchased by Air North Charter and Training Ltd.

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As with all of Air North's aircraft, it was given a Yukon Territory name and tail art. With a gold prospector emblemized on the tail, the transport plane was dubbed the "Yukon Sourdough," and flew scheduled passenger, cargo and charter runs throughout Canada and Alaska.

The Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) picked it up in 1996 and it was registered with the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) under the tail number N983DC. It's currently based in Frederick, Maryland, at Hagerstown Regional Airport, and is making its debut at the SHOP 'n SAVE Westmoreland Airshow.

"This will be the first time that we've had this aircraft here, and we're very much looking forward to it," said Gabe Monzo, executive director of the Westmoreland County Airport Authority. "It being on display here is a great opportunity for people to see aviation history up close."

Headlining the Father's Day weekend show will be the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds Demonstration Team, with their trademark red, white and blue F-16 Falcon jets.

Also performing will be the Northern Stars Aeroteam, Eric Edgren, Greg Koontz, a USMC Osprey, an A-10 Thunderbolt and a P-51 Mustang tactical demonstration and other performers and displays.

Airshow tickets will be \$25 at the gate, but will also be available at SHOP 'n SAVE stores for \$15 starting in mid-April. Children under age 10 are admitted for free, and parking on the field is \$5.

Preferred Seating tickets include parking and provide exceptional viewing for the show, however you must bring your own seat and no umbrellas or tents are permitted.

VIP tickets also include parking, as well as cart and shuttle service to tents, premium under-tent or outdoor seating, air-conditioned private restroom trailer with running water, physically disabled access, food and soft drinks, cash wine and beer and a commemorative program.

Preferred Seating tickets (\$50) and VIP passes (\$200) are available online through the airshow link on the Palmer Airport website (www.palmerairport.com). The site also hosts answers to a number of frequently asked questions.



History of DC-3

"Yukon Sourdough"

Initially ordered in 1942, the Douglas Aircraft Corporation built the aircraft in Oklahoma City, OK, as aircraft #12267, delivering the C-47A-5 'Skytrain' to the U.S. Army Air Corps as the number '42-92464,' on Jan. 25, 1944.

Less than two weeks later, on Feb. 7, 1944, the aircraft would be transferred to the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) in part of the Lend-Lease Act as a 'Dakota IIIU,' numbered 'F2675.' It was used by No. 164 Squadron (SQN) at RCAF Station Edmonton, Alberta, until the war's end as a VIP transport aircraft. Then, in August 1946, No. 164 SQN, which had detachment operations out of Dartmouth, Nova Scotia; Rivers, Manitoba; Edmonton, and Winnipeg, Manitoba, re-designated the Edmonton detachment as No. 435 Transport and Rescue SQN. During this time, the Dakota, renumbered '960,' flew a medical evacuation mission to Whitehorse, Yukon, on Aug. 7, 1946, delivered patients to Vancouver, British Columbia, and

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flew a roundtrip mission from Edmonton to Whitehorse on Jan. 24, 1947. The C-47 would continue as an instructional/training aircraft throughout the 1950s, when it was sold off by Crown Assets Disposal Corporation for \$7,605 (CAD) to Eldorado Aviation, Ltd. in 1963.

Being re-designated as a 'DC3C-1C3G' on the Canadian Aircraft Register to Eldorado Aviation, Ltd., the company would modify the interior and give the plane new colors – it would sport a painted white top half, the belly painted a light grey to a polished mid-section below the windows. An orange stripe would be painted from the nose to the elevators between the window section, with the tail boasting the same color. The plane would carry the lettering "Eldorado-NTCL" above the windows with a new registration of 'CF-OWW'. The Dakota would finish its service with Eldorado Aviation Ltd. when it was purchased for \$239,000 (CAD) by Air North Charter and Training Ltd. on Sept. 22, 1982.

Becoming part of the Air North fleet, the aircraft was repainted using almost the same lines as Eldorado Aviation; what was once white on top would now be a bold chrome yellow, the belly remaining a light grey to a polished mid-section below the windows, and a moss green would replace the orange stripe and tail, with "Air North" being placed above the windows. Additionally, all of Air North's DC-3s were fitted with a lavatory at the back of the aircraft and a gallery behind the cockpit to allow hot meal service on longer flight segments.

With all of Air North's DC-3 aircraft, each was given names and tail art that were uniquely significant to the Yukon Territory, like "Klondike Explorer," "Lady Lou," "Vadzaih Naatali," and "Yukon Musher." Here, the DC-3 gained a gold prospector on the tail and the moniker "Yukon Sourdough." Air North would use the aircraft, offering scheduled passenger, cargo, and charter services throughout Canada (Old Crow and Whitehorse) and Alaska (Fairbanks and Juneau) until selling the DC-3 in the fall of 1997; the plane being deleted from the Canadian Civil Air Registry on Sept. 22, 1998.

Once again, the aircraft would miss the junkyard by being sold to the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) in July 1998. It was issued an airworthiness certificate on Oct. 16, 1998, still as a 'DC3C-1C3G,' and registered by the Federal Aviation Administration as 'N983DC.'

The EAA would move the DC-3 from the Yukon and hangar it in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. Then, their maintenance team would start removing and recovering flight surfaces, restoring the engine cowls to 'like new' condition, insulating the cabin interior, installing a new floor, and extensive airframe work; however, when the EAA's restoration plans changed for the DC-3, it was sold to Northwest Airlines pilot Stephen K. Van Kirk in Aug. 2001.

Capt. Van Kirk and his brother, Malcolm, purchased the DC-3, originally intending to offer sunset dinner flights over Washington, D.C. But unfortunately, less than a month later, aviation was forever changed by the 9/11 terrorist attacks – the sunset flights over the capital would never happen due to newly imposed (and continued) airspace restrictions. Instead, the plane would fly the Van Kirks and friends to various events around the U.S. until 2009, when "Yukon Sourdough" had its airframe in the tail section significantly damaged in a storm, being considered a total hull loss while parked outdoors at Washington County Regional Airport, Hagerstown, Maryland. After 11 years of being a "gate guardian" and acquiring new co-owners Ken Casady and Derek White, the group decided to restore the aircraft and make it airworthy again. Over two and a half years later, with everything from the propellers being inspected to the faded illustration of the gold prospector being restored, the group hoped to make it to the EAA AirVenture in Oshkosh in 2022. Sadly, Stephen passed away on July 1, 2022, only a few weeks shy of witnessing "Yukon Sourdough" take back to the skies, making Oshkosh later that same month. Here, a continuous queue of 30 to 40 people long would wait at the DC-3s large cargo doors, trying to glimpse the refurbished aircraft and speak with the pilots and crew. For 2023 and beyond, the dedicated pilots, maintainers, and crew look forward to getting "Yukon Sourdough" back to the airshow circuit, allowing people of all generations to admire the rich history DC-3s have in both U.S. and Canadian military and civilian aviation.

"Yukon Sourdough" only remaining DC-3 in the Air North livery. It is operated by the 501(c)(3) nonprofit "Ensign Dean R. Van Kirk Aviation Heritage Museum," based in Frederick Municipal Airport, Maryland, with the DC-3 stored at Hagerstown Regional Airport, Maryland. The museum's collection, which also has multiple record-holding Piper Cubs, a German Fokker DR-1 triplane, and an extensive collection of early 1900s U.S. Airmail, helps honor and tell American and Canadian military and civilian aviation history through flight, exhibition, education, remembrance demonstrations, and events, allowing the public to with the DC-3 stored at Hagerstown Regional Airport, Maryland. The museum's collection, which also has multiple record-holding Piper Cubs, a German Fokker DR-1 triplane, and an extensive collection of early 1900s U.S. Airmail, helps honor and tell American and Canadian military and civilian aviation history through flight, exhibition, education, remembrance demonstrations, and events, allowing the public to experience first-hand the sights and sounds of vintage aviation.

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