

Print version - © COPYRIGHT 2003 The Hon...wspaper , a division of Gannett Co. Inc. <http://the.honoluluadvertiser.com/article/2003/Feb/22/In/In35a.html?print=t>



Posted on: Saturday, February 22, 2003

Harry Clark Jr., WWII pilot, Genavco Air Cargo owner, dead at 77

Advertiser Staff

Harry J. Clark Jr., a pilot in World War II and owner of Genavco Air Cargo, died Feb. 14. He was 77.

Clark was born in Connecticut and got his pilot's license in 1941 when he was 16. Two years later he joined the Army Air Corps as a pilot in North Africa.

After the war, the cigar-smoking pilot flew for the king of Saudi Arabia, TWA, Iranian Airlines and several other companies. When the airline industry began to clamp down on smoking in planes, Clark formed his own airline in 1970.

At first, Genavco flew Curtiss C-46 Commando aircraft. But Clark soon found out that the aircraft was too big for interisland flights so he switched to DC-3s, known as "gooney birds." Clark's Lagoon Drive company owned the only two DC-3s left in the Islands.

Clark is survived by wife, Luchy; son, Chris; two grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; brothers Arthur and James; sisters, Catherine Marron, Dorothy Yashinco, Betty Ciresi, Elizabeth Evers, June Summa and Gail Caggiano.

Service 2 p.m Tuesday at Scottish Rite Cathedral.

Back

© COPYRIGHT 2003 The Honolulu Advertiser, a division of Gannett Co. Inc.
All materials contained on this site are protected by United States copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, published or broadcast without the prior written permission of The Honolulu Advertiser. You may not alter or remove any trademark, copyright or other notice from copies of the content.

The Honolulu Advertiser

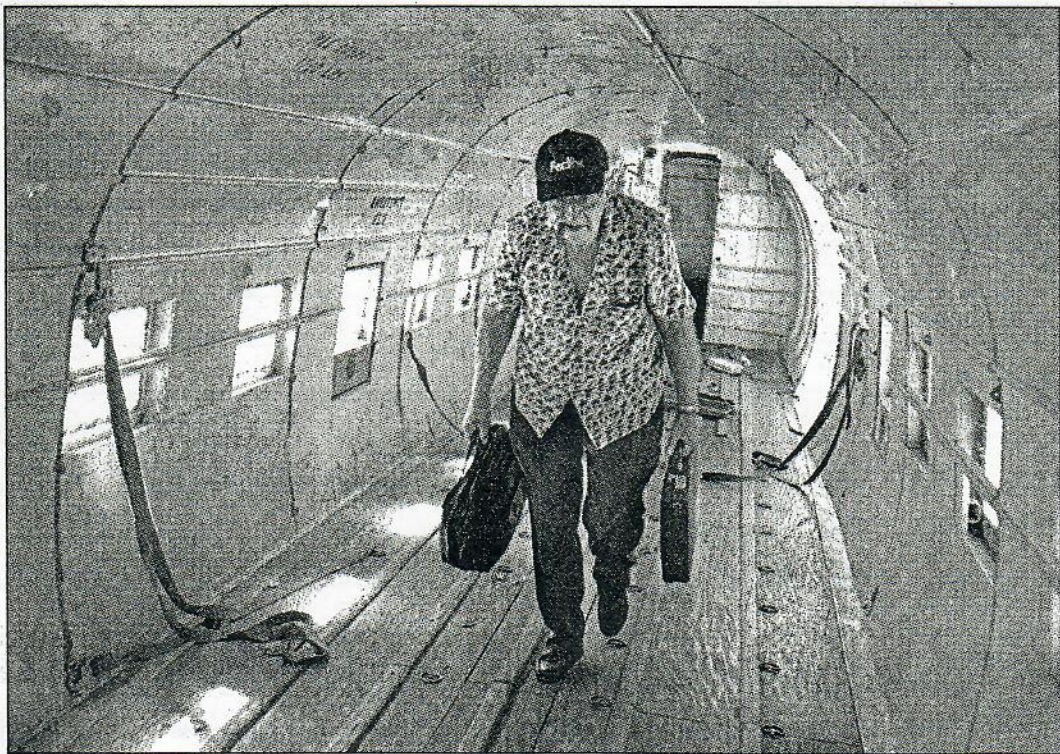
ISLAND LIFE

SECTION C ★

MONDAY • AUGUST 21, 2000

www.honoluluadvert

Flying like a gooney bird



Photos by JEFF WIDENER • The Honolulu Advertiser

Chomping one of his ever-present cigars, Harry Clark, 75, heads for work aboard the vintage DC-3 transport plane that he flies most weekdays as chief pilot for Genavco Air Cargo Corp. After nearly six decades at the stick, the veteran World War II pilot says he has no intention of quitting — either smoking or flying.



JEFF WIDENER • The Honolulu Advertiser

"Everything I know about flying I learned in a DC-3," said DC-3 pilot Stewart Kawakami, who until two years ago had never flown and was unaware of the DC-3 mystique. His respect for the plane has soared.

Pilot no longer blind to vintage plane's mystique

By **Will Hoover**
ADVERTISER STAFF WRITER

There's no doubt Stewart Kawakami has bragging rights. At 31, the Honolulu pilot's time behind the stick of a vintage DC-3, which has been called the "most beloved aircraft in history," matches that of some World War II fliers more than twice his age.

Compounding the irony is the fact that, until two years ago, Kawakami thought his dreams of becoming a pilot would never be more than that, even though that's all he'd wanted to be since he was a child.

"In high school I went through ROTC my freshman and sophomore years," he said. "The military seemed like the way to become a pilot."

Then came the big hurt: Kawakami learned he is colorblind. "I knew right then that there was no chance I'd ever be a pilot," he said. "So, I just went on with my life. I graduated from high school. Got my B.A."

Kawakami taught Hawaiian Studies and pursued his second great passion, music. In 1997 he and two other Kamehameha School grads formed Pat'ea, a guitar and bass trio.

Still, he lamented his fate. Finally, a pilot friend insisted that Kawakami get his eyes re-tested. "He told me colorblindness has different levels of severity," said

Kawakami.

Kawakami took a Federal Aviation Administration eye test and was told his ailment was so minor it wouldn't prevent him from becoming a civilian pilot. Kawakami's friend introduced the would-be fly-boy to colleagues at Genavco Air Cargo Corporation in Honolulu, which owns a fleet of two 1942 DC-3s.

That night Kawakami got a call from the company offering to train him for a job.

"The first time I was ever in a cockpit was in a DC-3," he said. "I had no idea there was so much respect and nostalgia surrounding this plane. I remember looking at the control panel and thinking, 'This is horrible! My truck has better instrumentation than this.'"

He began to get an inkling of the DC-3 mystique after he'd learned to fly.

"I'd occasionally talk to old-time captains who would come in," said Genavco first officer Kawakami. "I could tell by their reaction there must be something special about it. Then, you'd see DC-3s in commercials, TV shows and documentaries. And I thought, 'Wow!'"

His own respect for the aircraft has soared. With more than 1,000 hours of flying time under his belt, Kawakami says he still can't believe his luck in ending up a guitarist playing DC-3 pilot.

"I get to do the two things I enjoy most, and get paid for it," he said.

Flying: DC-3s were WWII workhorses

FROM PAGE C1

little longer, we'd have paid them to take it away," said Clark, who got \$10,000 for a DC-3 skeleton.

In 1941, when he was 16, Clark smoked his first cigar. The same year he got his pilot's license. Two years later, he was an Army Air Force pilot in North Africa. After the war he continued smoking cigars and flying planes, as a pilot for the king of Saudi Arabia, for TWA, for Iranian Airlines, and for half a dozen other outfits. All told, he has logged 28,000 hours of flying, and smoking, time.

"I smoke every time I fly," he said. "When they started cracking down on smoking in planes, I formed my own airline."

Clark was making his own rules before the crackdown. He started Genavco in 1970, flying Curtiss C-46 Commandos. Too big for inter-island flying, he says. So he switched to DC-3s.

"The DC-3 is the ideal airplane for inter-island transport because of its low operation costs," he explained. "It's a tricky little devil to fly. Whichever way the wind blows is the way it wants to go."

But you can buy a DC-3 for a quarter-million ("that's cheap"); they're safe, they're rugged and they can haul 7,500 pounds of bulky cargo, no sweat.

Says Genavco captain and director of maintenance Jim Petrides, "Where are you going to stick a 30-foot pipe or a 4,000-pound generator? ... We never know what we're getting. We get livestock, heavy

equipment, goats ..."

Petrides, 36, fills the Indiana Jones role for the company. He has been flying DC-3s for Genavco since 1996, even though he could be making more money flying elsewhere. But elsewhere wouldn't give him the chance to pilot the genuine classic that he calls "The Harley-Davidson of the skies."

It's not a perfect aircraft, he says, as he drops into the pilot's seat and checks out an instrument panel that's straight out of every black-and-white WWII flick ever made. It's noisy, the cockpit is chilly, the plane is temperamental, and it's perpetually shaking and rattling.

"The windshields always leak," said Petrides, flicking a strip of gray metal over the dials. "Everybody has installed this little rain guard over the instrument panel. I thought it was just something Harry put in. But every DC-3 has one, because every DC-3 leaks. These escape hatches always leak, too."

"But everything works."

The thing is, flying a DC-3 is a labor of love, says Petrides. It's an honor. It's romantic. "You don't make a lot of money doing this," he repeated. "But I'm going to continue flying these things."

So will Harry Clark. Why? Because, as Harry puts it, "the DC-3 is the aircraft." It changed commercial aviation. It helped win the war. It always comes home.

How long will he continue flying "gooney birds"?

"Until I get up and read my own obit," Clark said with a loud and smoky laugh.

Two DC-3s operating over Hawai'i

By **Will Hoover**
ADVERTISER STAFF WRITER

There was a time when the skies over Hawai'i were filled with "gooney birds" — the legendary DC-3 aircraft, celebrating its 65th anniversary this year.

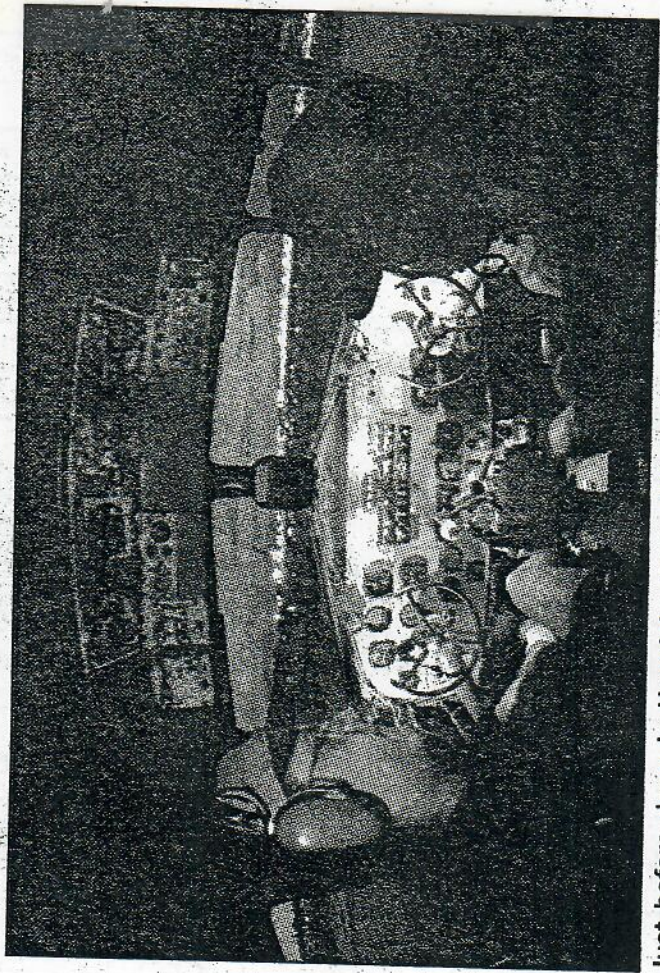
Considering that every "gooney bird" ever built was made in the first half of the 20th century, it's amazing that any are still bouncing around the Islands.

But there are a pair of them left here, both owned by the Genavco Air Cargo Corp. of Honolulu, located at the tail end of Lagoon Drive.

"Those are the only two DC-3s flying in Hawai'i," said Michael Willett, aviation buff and instructor for Honolulu Community College's Aero Maintenance Program. "There are other old planes flying, but the DC-3s are still workhorses, earning their keep. The things were built to last."

Fewer than a thousand DC-3s were made for commercial use. When America entered World War II in 1941, all manufacture of the plane switched to military use. Designated C-47s (U.S. Army); R4Ds (U.S. Navy) and Dakotas (United Kingdom and other Allied countries), more than 10,000 DC-3s were made to transport Allied troops and cargo.

After the war, thousands were converted to commercial passenger and cargo use, dominating flight around the world,



Just before dawn in Honolulu, Capt. Jim Petrides, 36, and co-pilot Stewart Kawakami, 31, prepare for takeoff in a DC-3 straight out of yesterday. The plane is one of hundreds of DC-3 workhorses still in operation around the world.

including inter-island travel in Hawai'i. Both of the Islands' surviving DC-3s served in the war. So did their owner, Genavco chief pilot Harry Clark.

"We had three DC-3s, actually," said Clark, 75, as he sat in his cluttered office and stoked up a hand-rolled Papayao cigar

from the Dominican Republic. "We sold one to Disney for the movie 'Pearl Harbor' and they blew it up." (It was the one they kept around for spare parts.)

"If the Disney people had bargained a

See FLYING, C5