



**VANISHING**—The Federal Aviation Administration has grounded its remaining Douglas DC-3 here.

# FAA Grounds Last DC-3 in Hawaii

By Lyle Nelson  
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The greatest airplane ever built has seen the last of Hawaii's blue skies. Maybe.

The Federal Aviation Administration has grounded its last Douglas DC-3 and will turn it over to the General Services Administration as surplus. Some island company or lone pilot may fly it again. Or several now grounded on Oahu may seek certification later.

But right now the DC-3 is history. Who says it's the greatest?

**THE PILOTS DO.** Especially those that date back to the OX9 Jenny or weren't weaned on jets.

Bill Hiatt, aerospace systems inspector for the FAA, thinking back,

said yesterday, "American Airlines took delivery in June 1936. There were 12,000 built in World War II under the C-47 designation.

"They are very easy to fly. Very safe. Only problem is landing in a crosswind of more than 13 knots. Because of the fixed landing gear and tail wheel.

"Once a Japanese fighter pilot attacked one and shot away the whole top of the fuselage and still it returned home. They were almost indestructible.

"OURS HAS 22,000 hours on the airframe but North Central or some other airline had one with 70,000 hours."

DC-3s had many nicknames. "Grand Old Lady," "Gooney Bird," and the Army set up an airborne

mini-gun weapons system for Vietnam called "Puff the Magic Dragon."

Hawaiian and Aloha airlines flew them for years.

Trans World Airlines talked Douglas into developing the DC-3 with the specifications of 1,000-mile range, 12 passengers and 14,500 pounds gross weight.

**HIATT SAID LATER** models increased weight to 23,000 pounds and Hawaiian and Aloha could seat 35 passengers.

The FAA has flown several DC-3s all over its Pacific Division, which stretches to the Asian mainland and uses them to inspect navigational aids and landing systems. It is instrumental for this kind of work and

also ferries supplies to the small detachment of Coast Guardsmen at French Frigate Shoals.

The FAA will use a Lockheed Electra and Beach Barron for this work until it gets a Boeing 727.

**WES DUNNING**, FAA operations officer for the airspace inspections, believes DC-3s are still in use by airlines or private firms in remote areas of South America or Africa, but not in the United States.

The last FAA DC-3 was built for the Navy in 1945, the year I rode one from Shanghai to Nanking. A C-47 "Hump" veteran of many Himalayan crossings, it was dirty and beat up inside and out. I wasn't sure we'd make it. Obviously we did. Great airplanes.