

DOUGLAS DC-3

How do you describe a true legend? Perhaps Donald Douglas described it best when in 1965 he said: "The Three is certainly the best and best-loved airplane we've ever produced, but the circumstances that made it great just happened. They were not of our making. I doubt that any airplane will have the same impact, or the same opportunity again." At the same retirement ceremony for North Central's N21728, General James H. "Jimmy" Doolittle said: "The DC-3 without question is the most versatile, fixed-wing aircraft ever built. I know of no other machine that has saved so many human lives."

In the sixty+ years since the first flight of the DC-3 in December 1935, over 13,000 DC-3, C-47, Li-2 or L-2D aircraft were manufactured. A substantial number are still flying today!

In 1932, TWA circulated specifications for a tri-motor, 12 passenger transport to compete against the Boeing Model 247. The winner of the competition was the Douglas DC-1 which had the greatest capacity, speed and range of any of the competitors. Development from testing led to the DC-2, which because of its power and sleek lines made it the instant favorite of every airline looking to be competitive. American Airlines liked the DC-2 but wanted to be able to provide sleeper service to replace the Curtiss Condors then in service. The answer was the DC-3 (a stretched DC-2) which could accomodate 14 sleeper passengers or 21 seats. With upgraded power plants producing 1,000 horsepower each, later to become 1,250 horsepower Twin Wasps, the do-everything transport commenced its illustrious history. There is hardly an air force or air line anywhere in the world that has not employed the DC-3 or some other variant in its service at one time or another!





