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CF-CPY, "The World's Largest Weather Vane" Whitehorse, Yukon Territory

by [Murray Lundberg](#)

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When I first flew into Whitehorse in 1985, the young fellow who fueled up my plane pointed up to an old DC-3 on a stand in front of the airport and told me that it was "The World's Largest Weather Vane." I didn't take it seriously until the next day. I was looking the plane over when the wind shifted direction. Slowly and silently, the graceful old lady shifted position until she was again pointing into the wind, as if hoping for just one more takeoff, one more flight over the incredible wilderness that surrounds the capital city of the Yukon Territory.

Built in August of 1942, Douglas serial No. 4665 spent the first three years of her life in the camouflage colours of the United States Army Air Force (USAAF), flying transport missions in India and China.

In April 1946, she was among the C-47s bought by Grant McConachie's newly-formed Canadian Pacific Airlines, to replace the Lockheed Lodestars then on mainline service. Converted to civilian DC-3 configuration with seating for 28 passengers, she was issued the Canadian registration CF-CPY and began a fifteen-year career with CPA. She flew the company's scheduled routes throughout Canada during the mid-1950s, but as CPA upgraded their mainline fleet to Convairs and DC-6Bs, CF-CPY found herself on less glamorous domestic routes such as the run between Whitehorse, the silver-mining town of Mayo and the legendary gold-mining centre, Dawson City.

In April 1960, CF-CPY was sold to Connelly-Dawson Airways of Dawson City. For the next six years she worked as a bush plane, operating on wheels or skis, hauling supplies into remote places such as Old Crow and the oil exploration camps in the Eagle Plains area.

From 1966 until her last flight in November 1970, CF-CPY was again based in Whitehorse, serving the scheduled and charter routes of Great Northern Airways. When GNA declared bankruptcy, she passed into the hands of Northward Airlines, but never flew again. Used for parts for a while, she was finally donated to the Yukon Flying Club in 1977.

Although her total flying time of 31,851 hours is not unusually high for a DC-3, most of that time has been logged either in the Yukon or on connecting routes to the Outside.

Starting in 1977, the Yukon Flying Club restored this northern veteran to its Canadian Pacific Airlines colours for permanent display at the Whitehorse airport. The restoration took four years, but in 1981, she was raised onto the pedestal built by master welder Al Jacobs. Pivoting on its mount, CF-CPY always points into the wind, just as she would have while lined up on the runway for takeoff. Due to the fine balance point, it only takes a 5 knot wind to turn her.

In July 1998, she was brought down from the pedestal for another restoration by the Yukon Transportation Museum ([click here](#) for some photos). Following about 1,500 hours of volunteer labour and \$20,000 in materials, a pair of cranes lifted her back into position in September 2001.

In July 2009, "Charlie Papa Yankee" once again was brought down from her pedestal, this time to be moved a few hundred meters to a new location at the

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constantly-expanding Yukon Transportation Museum. There, she remains one of the most popular attractions in Whitehorse.



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The video below shows the plane in her new location, swinging beautifully on a sunny, gusty day.



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