



AIR AMERICA FOUNDATION

THE Provider Weekly



Greetings all. Well it has been a rough month for the Provider Weekly. It has been most difficult to get it out as a weekly over the summer.

Part of this is my fault because I changed the format from an email to this newsletter format. It takes considerably more time to produce in this manner.

Another part of the problem is that we really have not managed to make a great deal of progress over the summer. There are several reasons. First, it has been an excruciating hot summer and we just can't work in the aircraft or around it.

Being inside is like being inside a can of beans on a fire. Being outside on the tarmac is not much better. When you combine this with the reduced number of volunteers, well, progress grinds to a halt.

Then every time we turn around, there is maintenance required on all the support equipment and the actual business of the foundation, well, I think you understand.

I am thinking of taking the Provider Weekly to a monthly format during the summer months. It could end up totally a monthly publication, but we will have to see what happens.

We have managed to get a few things done however.

These items include new batteries in the aircraft. We have kept up on the Buda tug and forklift to keep them running. We have moved some equipment that we will be needing over to the aircraft.

We have relocated our propellers next to the aircraft and wrapped and sealed them as best we could from the elements until we can hang them on the aircraft. We have also relocated some of our tie downs to make sure the aircraft is securely anchored. You know, that whole hurricane season thing.

We are still chasing down a hydraulic leak inside the plane. We are losing less and less fluid, but are now looking at the accumulator. It is not an easy thing to diagnose.

We still need to finish the repairs on the prop hoist. It is not safe until we replace all the pins that are the improper size. Until then, we cannot use it to lift a 500 or so pound propeller setup.

We are planning on taking the spoilers off soon to cycle the flaps and controls. They have not been moved in quite a while.

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What's

NEW This

Week

- ◆ Message from the editor
- ◆ Saturday work update
- ◆ New work photo
- ◆ Newsweek article
- ◆ Senior Life Article
- ◆ Website link

Continued...

*The Air America Foundation
is a 501 (c) 3 organization.*

THE Provider Weekly



There are many small leaks in the aircraft that need found and plugged. Also the tires need checked from time to time as they slowly over time lose small amounts of pressure.

So you can see, we have gotten some things accomplished, but we have much more to do.

We are talking to the owners of Ponderous Polly and may take some time from our C123 to go help them get theirs back in the air. This means Cal and I would need to go up north for a week or two.

We are excited about the possibility of this partnership for both of our organizations. It should help attract members to both groups.

We could use a few volunteers as well. John brought his neighbor Cliff last week and we all had fun chatting. Cliff had an old Fairchild aircraft back in the 50's or so if I remember correctly. We enjoy having visitors as it gets us recharged again.

John is back in town and that is a good thing. Rod is back out of town and Denis is going to be on the disabled list for a while to do some maintenance on himself. We wish him well there and a speedy "get your butt back out here and help us soon."

Josh C. has been doing family stuff so has been MIA for a few weeks. We hope to get him back soon. I was out of town for a week and missed a Saturday. Time gets away from you quick.

We have some exciting announcements coming up before the end of the year. We are bringing the membership program back, so we will let you know when that happens. We are working out the last few details now.

There is more to announce, but I am going to keep everyone in suspense for just a bit longer.

Our facebook numbers are slowly growing. It is nice to see we are starting to attract interested people to our online homes. If you are on facebook look for us and give our page a quick "Like" You will be glad you did. So will we!

I am still working on the website. I hope to have a donation form that can be downloaded until we can get it setup that you can buy a membership through the website.

I am also going to try to get all the newsletters online on the site as well. All of this takes huge amounts of time.

We will be out at the C123 tomorrow and most every Saturday except holidays to try to pick up the pace and start to move forward again now that the worst of the hot weather is over for a few months. If you are in the neighborhood, stop by and say hello.

Thanks to George White over at the Senior Life Newspaper for the great article in their paper. I have included it in this issue. We love publicity.

Well I am going to end so I can get this out before it becomes September and October's newsletter.

Historically Yours,



**Got an idea?
Let us know!**

**Got a question?
Ask us!**



New batteries for the C123!
Whoo Hoo!

Volunteers chip away at repairs to historic plane

BY GEORGE WHITE

An aircraft with a unique place in military aviation history is being restored, one piece at a time, at Space Coast Regional Airport in Titusville by the Air America Foundation.

The Fairchild C-123 Provider propeller-driven transport plane is a Vietnam veteran, once serving with U.S. Air Force Special Operations. In the 1980s, it was involved with the Iran-Contra affair.

It returned to the U.S. in the mid-1990s and served in the Pennsylvania Air National Guard before falling into disrepair. It was rescued from demolition by the Air America Foundation in 2001.

Air America was an American passenger and cargo airline established in 1950 and covertly owned and operated by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Special Activities Division through 1976. It flew cargo into Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia as well as top-secret missions into Burma and China, transporting cargo as well as civilians, diplomats, spies, refugees, commandos, doctors, war casualties, drug enforcement officers and even VIPs such as Richard Nixon all over Southeast Asia.

Under the slogan "Anything, Anywhere, Anytime, Professionally," in 1970, Air America delivered 46 million pounds of food in Laos with short takeoffs enabled by the addition of jet pods on each wing.

"The name Air America is only a



SENIOR LIFE George White
Volunteers for the Air America Foundation are restoring the C-123 transport plane at Space Coast Regional Airport in Titusville. From left are foundation president Ed Kindle, John Plotnicky, Brad Byron and Cal Crocker.

II," according to foundation president Ed Kindle. After the end of WW II, the Civil Air Transport (CAT) was created to airlift food and supplies into mainland China. In the late 1950s, the CAT morphed into Air America owned by the CIA. Kindle said that the goal of the Air America Foundation is restoration and preservation of the large aircraft, with volunteers working every Saturday morning in an area near the former Outer Marker Café.

"We just don't have the funds to make it flyable," he said.

The plane is stored outdoors on Taxiway Delta because there is no hangar on the airport big enough to handle its 110-foot wingspan and 34-foot-tall tail section. The foundation was created by the late Paul Vasconi, who passed away in 2009.

"He saved the plane from the big scrapyard in the sky. Now we have work to do, but we desperately need volunteers and funding. We plan to start a membership drive soon," Kindle said.

For more information, call 321-514-0096 or visit airamfoundation.org. ☞



SENIOR LIFE George White
Air America Foundation President Ed Kindle in front of the C-123 transport plane being restored at Space Coast Regional Airport in Titusville.

small part of the story of this aircraft because it goes back to the all-volunteer group, the Flying Tigers in World War

AIR AMERICA: ANYTHING GOES

It doesn't pipe Mantovani into its cabins, dress stewardesses in colorful Puccis or serve *boeuf bourguignon* on any of its flights. And yet Air America is one of the largest U.S. airlines, ranking behind National and ahead of Northeast in the number of its planes and personnel. Air America can afford to be indifferent to the extras provided by other airlines because it has only one customer to please—the United States Government—for which it performs a wide variety of services connected with the American military involvement in Southeast Asia. As a rule, these services go unpublicized. Recently, however, Air America came into the spotlight when it flew several hundred Thai troops into Laos to help the CIA-sponsored "secret army" of Gen. Vang Pao defend the outpost of Long Cheng from Communist attack.

Although in practical terms it is an operating arm of the CIA, Air America is owned by a private aviation-investment concern called Pacific Corp. Its managing director and chief executive, a large, affable man named George Doole Jr., laughs heartily when questioned about dealings with intelligence organizations—but hedges his answer. "I don't know all of our customers' private business and relations," he said last week. "So help me, that's a fact." But while that may be so, Air America's motto, "Anything, Anytime, Anywhere—Professionally," suggests the company plays by rather free-wheeling rules.

"I guess we carry about everything except bombs under our wings," says Air America Saigon manager E.J. Theisen. And in fact, the range of the company's activities almost lives up to its motto. CIA agents working in the Phoenix program—

a campaign to ferret out Viet Cong operatives in South Vietnam—fly Air America when they need to move a high-level prisoner. Green Berets use the airline to carry supplies to Montagnard mercenaries. And according to Theisen, even the U.S.'s supersecret Special Operations Group in Saigon, which works almost exclusively behind enemy lines, relies on Air America for some of its transport needs within South Vietnam.

Contract: At present, though, the bulk of the line's work is in Laos, where it drops tons of rice to Meo tribesmen under a contract with the Agency for International Development, carries troops to the front and evacuates refugees. But when it comes to discussing operations behind Pathet Lao lines, only miles from the North Vietnamese border, Vientiane manager James Cunningham Jr. is not giving away any secrets. "We operate on a you-call, we-haul basis," he said. "We don't go into details."

For its varied operations, Air America uses a fleet of some 150 planes—mostly unmarked twin-engine Volpar Beechcrafts and Swiss-built Pilatus Porters. Its 600 pilots, many of them Vietnam veterans, make as much as \$25,000 a year—and earn every penny of it. Under all kinds of weather—and often under fire as well—they fly into remote jungle airstrips no bigger than football fields and wear thick gold bracelets which they can barter for food and medicine in case of forced landings in remote regions. But in spite of the risks they take, the pilots are rarely the daredevil Steve Canyons one might expect. "They're in it for the money," comments one old Asian hand. "These guys all read Barron's for stock-market tips."



Evacuation flight in Laos: 'You call, we haul'