



GIANT DC-4 stands on runway at the Cape May County Airport for a final check before taking off on a test flight around the Cape May County area.

## Major Construction Job Accomplished By Cape May Men At County Airport

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE, Oct. 29—Employees of the United States Overseas Airlines this week completed work on the conversion of a C-51 Naval Air Transport plane to a passenger-cargo DC-4, which is believed to be the largest major rebuilding project ever attempted on a large airplane.

The work was done in the hangar at the Cape May County Airport, utilizing the labor drawn from the Wildwood area, calling on former service men who were connected with aviation, or civilians who did aircraft work during the past war.

The rebuilt plane is at present getting final check tests both on the ground and in the air, and will soon be put into service by the airline on the California-Korea airlift along with four other company DC-4's hauling freight for the Korean war effort.

Work was originally started on the plane a short time after it was purchased from the War Assets Administration. The airline located the plane, which had been "cannibalized" of all usable parts and pushed off the runways of the McArthur Airport, on Long Island, into a field.

**SHIPPED BY BOAT**  
The plane had not crashed, it was explained, but the government had stripped it of all parts which were usable in repairing and replacement work on other airplanes.

Too large to be shipped to the airport by truck, the plane was disassembled, with the center section removed from the fuselage, and shipped in pieces to the local airport on barges. The plane sections were landed at the Cape May Coast Guard Base, through the co-operation of authorities there, and brought to the airport on large trailers.

About the time the plane was brought to the hangars the Korean War began to make itself felt, and much of the company's time was devoted to the operation of a fleet of airplanes on the air lift. It was only during the past year the stripped-down plane was reassembled, and work started on the interior and exterior of the ship.

Some of the parts needed for the plane were purchased from the Douglas Aircraft Company, while many were fabricated in the shops at the Cape May County airport.

The rebuilding job was as complete as construction of an entire new plane.

### LOCAL MEN IN CHARGE

The electrical system was torn out, and every piece of wiring needed in the operation of the giant four-motored aircraft replaced. Heading the extensive electrical operation was Richard Davis, Wildwood.

Davis, a veteran of 15 years in the aviation field, in addition to several years of service with the U. S. Air Force, got his start in aviation on the Wildwood beach, working for a concern which flew tow banners over the local resorts.

Matthew Tomlin, councilman in West Wildwood, and Russell Naylor, both with wide experience in the instrument field, supervised or handled installation of a new instrument panel in the DC-4.

Naylor, a veteran of four years of service with the U. S. Air Force, and six years in the Navy Reserve in instrument work, attended four service schools on instruments, and during two years of employment by TWA, attended several TWA instrument schools.

James Hampshire of Cape May Court House, another veteran, with service in the U. S. Navy, supervised the replacement and rerigging of the control cable system which is vital to the operation of the plane.

James McGill, also from the local area, has been designated as the Civil Aeronautics Authority inspector on the rebuilding job. He has been working on the ship since the rebuilding started, and has made the required inspections.

In addition to the rebuilding many of the modifications which have since been developed for DC-4s for safety and for convenience, have been added.

Two new gas tanks were installed, converting the system from six tanks to eight tanks. The plane is of the "wet wing" variety with the fuel carried in the wing itself.

Plywood floors were placed in the cabin with stainless steel skid strips added to decrease wear from sliding of cargo in and out of the ship.

### 70,000 MAN HOURS

Four rebuilt Pratt and Whitney R-2000 Horsepower engines have been installed to power the 117-foot wingspan, with a gross take-off load of 70,700 pounds. Gas consumption is 200 gallons per hour.

In anticipation of possible return of the plane to passenger travel, heating systems for the cabin have been installed, and two rest rooms have been provided for. Stainless steel for cleanliness and durability have been built into the rest rooms.

The cost of rebuilding the plane from a stripped down hulk into its present condition, ready for the air, has resulted only after the expenditure of an estimated 70,000 man hours of work, and an untotaled amount of money for parts and equipment. It is known, however, that the cost of rebuilding the plane is well below the purchase price of a similar ship on today's market. Selling price for DC-4's is estimated at from \$600,000 to \$650,000 at the present time.

The U. S. Overseas Airlines got its start in 1946, when the Wildwood Aviation Maintenance Corporation began operations at the county airport, servicing planes. The company rented a hangar with floor space of 48,000 square feet and an additional 18,000 square feet of space for shops and offices.

### KOREAN SERVICE

Later, Ocean Air Tradeways and the Wildwood Aviation Maintenance Corporation merged to form the U. S. Overseas Airlines. For several months, planes from the company made regular flights to Europe, carrying supplies to the Army troops garrisoned in Germany, and at the onset of the Korean war, the planes were transferred to the west coast operation.

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