

WHERE PROPLINERS REFUSE TO DIE!

OUR PROPLINER EDITOR MAKES AN EXTENSIVE TRIP TO THE 49TH STATE TO VIEW THE WORLD'S LARGEST COLLECTION OF "BIG PROPS"

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY THE AUTHOR AND HARALD HORNI



Everts main hangar at Fairbanks with a variety of jets and propliners.



My most recent trip to Alaska had been in the works for some time. It had been six years since my 2019 visit and I certainly expected to see a change in the number of Propliners. I was pleasantly surprised that this wasn't the case and things hadn't changed all that much. Changes included the discontinuance of scheduled Everts Air Cargo DC-6/C-118 flights from Anchorage; the end of Alaska Air Fuel flight operations after the tragic loss of DC-4 N3054V; and the total eradication of the famous Brooks Fuel compound at Fairbanks International Airport. You'd never know it was ever there! One change from 2019 is that everything seems to have gotten way more expensive. If you're planning to visit Alaska during the warm months, be prepared for sticker shock!

EVERTS AIR OVERVIEW

Everts Air is currently the largest Propliner operator in the world with a sizeable fleet of DC-6 and C-46 aircraft.

Everts operates DC-6s and C-118s interchangeably and, for the purposes of this article, I'm going to refer to these aircraft as DC-6s unless referring to a specific aircraft. Everts Air Cargo is a Part 121 airline operating scheduled and charter flights throughout Alaska utilizing DC-6, C-46, and MD-80 type aircraft. In addition, a Laredo, Texas, based MD-80 operates flights in the lower-48, Canada, and South/Central America. Everts Air Fuel is a Part 125 airline operating bulk fuel flights throughout Alaska utilizing DC-6s and C-46s. The fuel operations are conducted out of Fairbanks and Kenai and, while some cargo operations are conducted out of Fairbanks, most cargo is handled at the company's Anchorage facility. Aircraft maintenance

is conducted at the company's two large hangars in Fairbanks.

A third component of the company is Everts Air Alaska, a Part 135 airline based in Fairbanks providing cargo and passenger service to interior Alaska utilizing smaller aircraft such as the Pilatus PC-12, Cessna 208, and Cessna 408.

Everts Air Fuel was formed in 1983 by Cliff Everts with Everts Air Cargo formed in 1995 by his son Rob. Everts Air Fuel currently operates five DC-6s and two C-46s with Everts Air Cargo currently operating three DC-6s and one C-46s. A fourth DC-6 is currently being restored and will enter service after being grounded for many years. In addition, about a half dozen MD-80s

are operated by Everts Air Cargo.

I had made arrangements with Karen Wing to visit the three main

Everts operations and first on my schedule was a stop at the Everts Air Cargo freight terminal in Anchorage. As I was driving along the airport boundary road (Boeing Avenue), I rounded a curve and found two rather large moose standing in the middle of the road. The standoff ended when they decided it was time to move on and I was able to continue my journey... only in Alaska!

During my first visit to Alaska in 2005, the ramp outside Everts freight terminal was the total domain of

Propliners with nary a jetliner in sight. By my 2019 visit, there were only two DC-6s based in Anchorage flying

scheduled flights and this number has decreased to a single aircraft, which is dedicated to military charter flights. I had hoped to see C-118A N747CE but my escort Keith Silver told me that it had departed an hour earlier for nearby Elmendorf AFB to pick up cargo going to military installations at Utopia Creek and Fort Yukon. The main reason the DC-6 is still operating for Everts is its ability to land on short gravel runways.

Keith said that for load/

flight planning purposes, the DC-6 needs a minimum runway length of 3500-feet while the MD-80 needs 5900-feet. MD-83s N965CE and N967CE were on the ramp, with the latter finishing up loading cargo for a flight that departed to Dillingham a few minutes after I arrived. While an MD-83 is not a Propliner, it definitely qualifies as a "classic" since they have all but disappeared from airline use in the United States.

With not much to see with regards to Propliners, it was time to move on to Desert Air Alaska, which operates a number of classic and turbine DC-3 type aircraft.

DESERT AIR ALASKA

Desert Air Alaska DC-3s have been a familiar sight around Anchorage International Airport

Harald Horni photographed Desert Air DC-3 N44587 landing on Anchorage's Runway 15. Although the company operates two turbine Gooney Birds, business is brisk for the "original."