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Richard D. Neumann  
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Dear Dick:

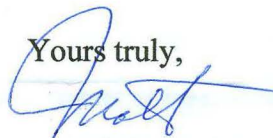
Thanks for your letter of July 29<sup>th</sup> concerning the history of a particular C-54. Sorry to be so long in replying but have been extremely busy at work. I appreciated the update on the Condor project. The big biplane was the latest in luxury until Mr. Douglas and his DC planes came along. I'd sure like to see it restored. Re the floats in Missouri, a number of Condors flew on floats in South America and I believe Admiral Bird's plane had a set at one time as well. They are most likely Edo floats and if you have the model number I might be able to do a little research on them for you. They could have been used on the Curtiss SB2C Helldiver as a number of aircraft were tried with floats early in the war before the island-hopping campaign in the Pacific became so successful.

To answer Lee Carey's question, the C-54 in question had USAAF serial number 42-72496. It was a C-54D-1-DC with Douglas serial number 10601. It was built at the Douglas plant in Chicago (then Old Orchard Airport, now O'Hare Airport). Even though it was procured on a Fiscal Year 1942 contract (hence the 42-), it was not delivered until March 8, 1945. It was immediately assigned to the U S Navy as an R5D-3 and assigned Bureau number 56493. It remained in service until March 23, 1971 when it was flown to Davis-Monthan AFB in Arizona and officially Struck Off Charge on May 25, 1971.

The Navy versions of the C-54 were usually not as heavily utilized as were the USAAF models so there was some life left in the old bird. In September 1975, the plane was sold at auction to Biegert Aviation, Inc. of Phoenix and assigned FAA registration number N44910. Biegert was engaged primarily in aerial fire fighting but I don't know right now if this airplane was converted to a water bomber or was used for parts, etc. It apparently was stored in Chandler, AZ for a number of years while owned by Biegert.

Biegert sold the airplane to Brooks Fuel, Inc. of Anchorage, AK in December 1997. Brooks primary job was hauling fuel to remote villages in Alaska using various aircraft modified with fuselage fuel tanks (usually from KC-97s). It does not appear that the airplane in question was so modified. I am told that this aircraft began the scrapping process in late 2004 and this was completed in mid-2005 although some identifiable parts are still visible.

Hope the above will be of help. I grew up in the Chicago area myself so I am familiar with Des Plaines (located next to O'Hare Airport) and Maine Township High School. In those days, it was not infrequent that "donated" aircraft were suitably inscribed with the name of the donors (even if only temporarily, e.g., "Spirit of Maine Township High School, etc.) so it would be interesting to learn if there was any kind of ceremony held when the aircraft was delivered.

Yours truly,  


Matthew E. Rodina, Jr.