



The Dakota Hunter: In Search of the Legendary DC-3 on the Last Frontiers

Hans Wiesman

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This book tells the story of a Dutch boy who grew up during the 1950s in post-war Borneo, where he had frequent encounters with an airplane, the Douglas DC-3, aka the C-47 Skytrain or Dakota of World War II fame. For a young boy living in a remote jungle community, the aircraft reached the proportions of a romantic icon, as the essential lifeline to a bigger world for him, the beginning of a special bond.

In 1957 his family left the island, and all its residual wreckage of World War II, and he attended college in The Hague. After graduation he started a career as a corporate executive, and met the aircraft again during business trips to the Americas. His childhood passion for the Dakota flared up anew, and the fascination pulled like a magnet. As if predestined, or maybe just looking for an alibi to come closer, he began a business to salvage and convert Dakota parts, which meant first of all finding them.

As the demand for these war relic parts and cockpits soared, he began to travel the world to track down surplus, crashed or derelict Dakotas. He ventured deeper and deeper into remote mountains, jungles, savannas and the seas where the planes are found, usually as ghostly wrecks but sometimes still in full commercial operation. In hunting the mythical Dakota he often encountered intimidating or dicey situations in countries plagued by wars or revolts, others by arms and narcotics trafficking, warlords and con men.

This book describes his multiple expeditions in search of the remains of the Dakota legend. It takes the reader to some of the remotest spots in the world, but once there one is often greeted by the comfort of what was once the West's apex in transportation?however now haunted by the courageous airmen of the past.

REVIEWS

Hans Wiesman takes us on an intercontinental crusade, country to country, island to island; and it's fair to say his story could count as one of those likeable books you can pick up and put down as and when. By its very nature the story is episodic but do not take this as a criticism. The writing is assured and well paced and you can feel the enthusiasm of the author at the turn of every page. The photography is well captioned and, of course, the pix are all fascinating. Just about everyone has seen those internet snaps of Dakotas used by scuba divers and all this stuff and more is included in the author's story. His passion is beyond doubt and his knowledge and experience in the field of seeking out aircraft could well be unrivalled. His contacts book must be huge and I presume he has to get people in to help write all his Christmas cards for him. The book finds a fitting conclusion with our man Hans helping to save the DC-3 now on display at the Merville Battery in Normandy. He gets the chance to mix Dakotas with his passion for Harleys and you cannot help but come away with the idea that this is pretty cool. In fact, if I needed to find the briefest of reviews for this book, then "pretty cool" would do it. I suspect the author would be satisfied with that if he ever finds time to slow down. It's a big if!

Mark Barnes, War History

"...a daring adventure story as he explores for these survivors and tells of their histories. It is almost like an adventure novel except it is true and makes for a very exciting story as the author goes in search of the legendary DC-3 on the last frontiers
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Lorenzo Davis:

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