

FIRST NON-STOP  
COAST-TO-COAST  
FLIGHT

RILLY MITCHELL SINKS BATTLESHIP OSTFRIERLAND

1920

1921

1922

19

# Old Auntie Junkers!

## The CAF's Ju 52 Trimotor

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WB #13083



**P**arked in the field among the warbird transports at EAA AirVenture Oshkosh 2003, sat a big low-wing, tri-motor airplane with corrugated metal skin, painted in World War II German markings. By now, it's a familiar aircraft to warbird enthusiasts and regular EAA AirVenture attendees. The airplane is one of only seven flying Junkers Ju 52s in the world. This flying example of a JU 52 is operated by the Great Lakes Wing of the Commemorative Air Force (CAF) in Gary, Indiana. Since few Axis powers' aircraft still exist, this is a rare aircraft indeed.

### Early Ju 52 History

Though the Ju 52 is certainly not one of the most attractive airplanes to grace the skies over Oshkosh, the aircraft type has a significant history since its inception in 1930. Like the DC-3/C-47, the Ju 52 was built in the early 1930s and remained in service for nearly half a century. Originally intended as a



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cargo aircraft offering more capacity than earlier designs, it started life with a single engine and was designated Ju 52/1m. The first flight of this prototype flew in September 1930. When sufficient demand for a large cargo aircraft failed to materialize, Junkers planned to convert the design into a passenger aircraft. For additional safety and reliability,

Junkers decided to convert the airplane into a three-engine aircraft. Lloyd Aero Boliviano (LAB) in Bolivia became interested in the airliner design and placed an initial order for two aircraft, designated Ju 52/3m. The first flight of the trimotor took place in March 1932.

The Ju 52/3m became a success with units delivered to Finland,



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Sweden, Romania, and Germany's own Lufthansa airlines. The Ju 52/3m became the backbone of the Lufthansa fleet and remained so until the end of World War II. Following successful use of the aircraft for an "over the Alps" route from Munich to Milano/Rome by Lufthansa, the Ju 52's reputation spread around the world. Numerous orders were received from airlines in Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Ecuador, Peru, Mexico, South Africa, Denmark, Norway, Italy, United Kingdom, Belgium, Hungary, Estonia, Greece, and Spain. Junkers sold approximately 400 passenger airliners prior to the war's outbreak.

The airplane was purely a civilian aircraft until 1935 when the Nazis announced the official formation of the Luftwaffe in Germany. Initially considered for a bomber role, the Ju 52 became the first Luftwaffe aircraft used for active military service in the Spanish Civil War, working in transport as well as bomber roles. After Russian

fighters shot down several Ju 52s near Madrid, it became obvious that the aircraft was too slow, and the Luftwaffe retired its bomber role. But it had proven its capabilities as a transport and was subsequently declared the standard transport of the Luftwaffe for the remainder of World War II.

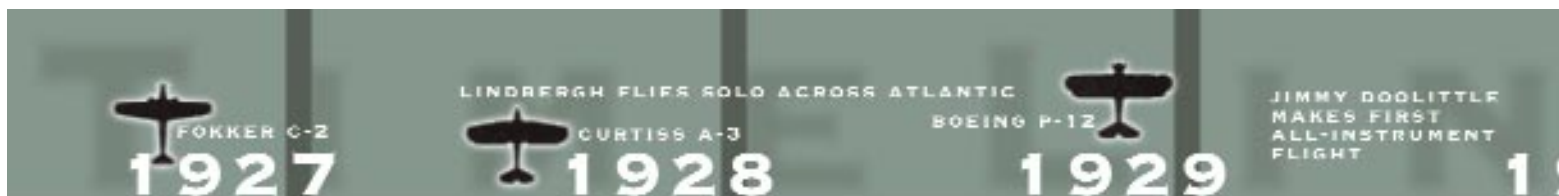
More than 5,000 Ju 52 aircraft were built between 1931 and the mid-1950s. Production of the aircraft continued after World War II in France, with 400 being built under the designation AAC.1, and in Spain with 170 built under the designation CASA 352. Ju 52s remained in active service with the Swiss air force as late as 1981.

### **The CAF's Ju 52**

But what about the airplane parked on the field and flying in the skies over Oshkosh? This airplane, like so many warbirds today, has an interesting background. Marvin (Left) Gartner of the Confederate Air Force purchased the aircraft in 1976 from

the Materiel Disposal Agency of the Spanish air force for 750,000 pesetas (about \$16,500 US). In 1980 the aircraft was flown from Madrid, Spain, to Royal Air Force base Biggin Hill in England for the installation of temporary auxiliary fuel tanks. Assigned U.S. ferry registration N-99059, the aircraft left Biggin Hill in July 1980 and arrived at the CAF's Texas headquarters 10 days later, with stops in Scotland, Iceland, Greenland, and Quebec. It first touched down in the United States at Bangor, Maine, and finally completed its journey, after several more stops, in Harlingen, Texas.

Initially, the CAF's Colorado Wing and the Southern Lake Michigan Wing (SoLaMich) carried out restoration, maintenance, and flying until the aircraft was assigned to the SoLaMich Wing in 1982. The airplane was stripped and repainted as a Ju 52 of the 7th Staffel KGzbV1 (1st Bomber Wing of Special Operations). After further research, the CAF personnel



added the identifier 1Z+AR and the markings of the invasion of Crete (on May 21, 1941). Lt. Franz Lankeau, who flew the original aircraft with those markings on approximately 250 missions, in Poland, Norway, Netherlands, France, Greece, Crete, and Russia, donated a copy of his logbook to the CAF and supplied much of the information required for the restoration. At an air show in Geneseo, New York, in 1990, 81-year-old Lankeau had a very emotional reunion of sorts, sitting in the cockpit of a familiar aircraft in his markings.

Saddled with the nickname *Alte Tante Ju* (meaning Old Aunt Junkers), the CAF's Ju 52 became well known throughout the country while being flown at approximately 20 air shows per year until engine problems grounded the aircraft in 1990. The airplane underwent extensive restoration over the next eight years including the conversion of its engines to geared Pratt & Whitney 1340 engines and three-blade props.

During this period of restoration the Southern Lake Michigan and the Great Lakes wings of the CAF merged and the plane moved to its current Indiana home. The first flight of the restored aircraft took place on May 16, 1998, and the newly restored Junkers continues to entertain and educate thousands of visitors at approximately 18 to 20 air shows each year. Not only is the CAF's Ju 52 one of seven flying examples in the world and the only one flying in North America, but it is also the only flying Ju 52 restored to military configuration.

Upon purchase from the Spanish air force, the airplane was documented and believed to be a



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CASA 352L, serial number 67, built in May 1950. Recent investigation has revealed a second dataplate, inside the cabin under multiple layers of paint, which matched a second dataplate on the outside of the fuselage indicating serial number 77 with a construction date of January 1949. CAF member David Fairbrother is presently researching the exact origin of the aircraft through documentation and correspondence with the Spanish Air Force Museum.

### The Ju 52 in the Air

On the ground at EAA AirVenture, the airplane is cared for by David and Great Lakes Wing member Regina Kania, and the two sell memorabilia, guide tours, and tell the history of the Ju 52. In the air, the duties go to Bob Bos and Leigh Smith, who ferried the aircraft from Gary to Oshkosh. Along with Bob and Leigh, piloting the aircraft during the EAA AirVenture air

shows is Jim Rosater, who also piloted the Orbis DC-10 parked at show center during this year's convention.

CAF pilot Gary Metelak, a captain with Northwest Airlines, shared some of the unique flight characteristics of this interesting aircraft. "The big girl is as docile as a Piper Cub, about as aerodynamic as a barn in cruise, and stable but demanding on final approach" said Gary. "For some strange reason, if you are not set up early on final and anywhere above a 3-degree glide-slope, your approach will not be stabilized. You will hold +20 knots and float halfway down the runway during the flare. Precise airspeed

management is a must, and keeping the engines loaded during the approach is a priority for long engine life. We fly our approaches initially at 18 inches MP (manifold pressure) and 1800 rpm. On final, on the glideslope, you transition to no less than 15 inches and 1500 rpm."

Regarding ground handling, Gary added, "At 21,000 pounds with flaps at 40 degrees, 65 knots approach speed, and a 55-knot threshold speed, I have three-point landed the aircraft and stopped within 1,300 feet. It definitely can do what it was designed to do. If the landing was on grass, it would have easily stopped in less than 1,000 feet. Just what the book says."

With diligent care, the CAF crew at Gary will keep *Alte Tante Ju* flying for many years to come, bringing a rare piece of a long past history to life for thousands of spectators and curious enthusiasts. ✈