Due to safety concerns, C-119 fire-commanded it for fire-fighting, including the installation of a fuselage wing center sections from Fairchild C-119B USAF 48-0352 arrived at Dover AFB, Delaware, on 30 August 2018 after completing the 2700-mile trek from Edwards AFB in California. The aircraft’s destination at the base was the Air Mobility Command (AMC) Museum, where it will be restored and added to the museum’s already impressive collection.

The C-119 is one of only two surviving C-119Bs and the second oldest C-119 in existence. It’s the only survivor of the eight C-119s that airdropped M2 Treadway Bridge sections to US Army X Corps troops retreating from the Chosin Reservoir in December 1950. Prior to USAF retirement in December 1966, bomber, the auxiliary jet engine was removed and the aircraft was painted in USAF markings.

The two-truck Worldwide Aircraft Recovery convoy, carrying the fuselage and wing center sections from Fairchild C-119B 48-0352, arrived at Dover AFB, Delaware, on 30 August 2018 after completing the 2700-mile trek from Edwards AFB in California. The aircraft’s destination at the base was the Air Mobility Command (AMC) Museum, where it will be restored and added to the museum’s already impressive collection.

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After almost a decade of storage at Davis-Monthan AFB, the Flying Boxcar was sold at DoD auction to Aero Union of Chico, California, in 1975 and registered N13746. Aero Union modified it for fire-fighting, including the installation of a fuselage mounted auxiliary jet engine. The airplane was later sold to Hemet Valley Flying Service, where it saw service as Tanker 87. Due to safety concerns, C-119 fire-

The combat veteran C-119B in service with Hemet Valley as N13746/Tanker 87. Shortly after arriving with the C-119 from Edwards, the Worldwide team began the task of reassembling KB-50J 49-0389. (Michael Leister)

bombers were grounded in 1987 and the aircraft’s civilian registration was canceled in 1992.

Subsequently, the twin-boom veteran was moved to Edwards AFB to become part of the Air Force Flight Test Museum collection. Sometime after being retired as a fire-bomber, the auxiliary jet engine was removed and the aircraft was painted in USAF markings.

After arriving at the museum, 48-0352 was set aside and stored for many years in deteriorating condition. It was offered for sale by GSA in January 2016 as a “scrap aircraft” with final bids due on 2 February (not much time for anyone concerned with the historical aircraft’s survival and guaranteeing the only interest would come from scrapers). By 23 January, only two bids had been received — with the highest being $1000. In the eleventh hour, the National Museum of the USAF (NMUSAF) realized that the aircraft was worth saving because of its unique history and decreed that the AMC Museum would be the best location for its restoration and eventual display. The museum originally planned on transporting the entire aircraft from Edwards to Dover by air and, to that end, a team traveled to Edwards in the fall of 2016 and completed the task of disassembling and preparing the aircraft for air shipment. In December 2016, a Lockheed C-5M Super Galaxy operated by Dover’s 709th Airlift Squadron arrived at Edwards and the first shipment was loaded aboard and flown to Dover. Due to a number of factors, it was decided that the fuselage, wing center sections, and engines would be transported to Dover separately by road. The move was completed with the arrival of those components last August with the aircraft’s two R-3350 engines following on 5 September.

The two-truck convoy prepares to depart Edwards AFB with the C-119 fuselage pod and wing center sections. (Matt Beaty)

Worldwide Aircraft Recovery was contracted to move the aircraft some 2700-miles to Dover AFB. (Via Doug Fisher)

The C-119 fuselage pod is carefully removed from its transportation trailer. (AMC Museum)

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The AMC Museum plans on restoring the aircraft to its Korean War era configuration, which the museum’s director John Taylor estimates should take about 2.5-years. John stresses that this is just an estimate as restoration projects involving old aircraft face many challenges including “surprises” found during restoration, the scarcity of parts, and the need to do much of the restoration outdoors exposed to the elements. The dorsal fins and extended vertical stabilizers will be removed as they were modifications performed after the aircraft’s Korean War Service. New outboard horizontal stabilizer extensions will be hand-crafted and installed. If a single wheel C-119 or C-82 nose landing gear assembly can be found, it will be retrofitted as well. The aircraft has R-3350 engines instead of the original R-4360s, but an engine switch will probably not happen… at least not right away. Finding appropriate R-4360 radials in long enough for 48-0352, the same cannot be said for the oldest surviving C-119. Fairchild C-119B 48-0322 was sold for $10,400 to scrap dealer Harold Sheppard Jr. in January 2016. While it’s the oldest surviving C-119, it didn’t have the same historical significance that saved 48-0352. After retirement from USAF service, the aircraft was modified as a fire-bomber and saw service with Hemet Valley Flying Service as N13745/Tanker 82.

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While there’s a happy ending for 48-0352, the same cannot be said for the oldest surviving C-119. Fairchild C-119B 48-0322 was sold for $10,400 to scrap dealer Harold Sheppard Jr. in January 2016. While it’s the oldest surviving C-119, it didn’t have the same historical significance that saved 48-0352. After retirement from USAF service, the aircraft was modified as a fire-bomber and saw service with Hemet Valley Flying Service as N13745/Tanker 82. After retirement, it was donated to the now defunct Milestones of Flight Air Museum at Fox Field in Lancaster, California.