



Flower Power for Seriously Ill Children

At first glance the DC-3 looks like a throwback to the psychedelic days of Flower Power. Huge multi-colored flowers blossom over the fuselage like a floral version of the old Partridge Family bus.

Is this the work of some aging hippy?

Actually, it's the work of thousands of children who are experiencing catastrophic and chronic medical problems. They and their families painted the floral designs as part of a unique therapy program called Portraits of Hope. The symbol of the program is a 6-pointed flower that represents joy, life, beauty, hope, inspiration and healing, the heart of the program's message. The plane is named "Garden in Transit—Airborne."

Some 270 pounds of paint were used to create the flowers on more than 10,000 square feet of self-adhesive panels, which were then applied to the airplane. The flowers range as large as 14 feet by 14 feet in size, providing a huge canvas as an outlet for the children's struggle against illness and disease.

Portraits of Hope worked closely with FAA to ensure that the procedure for applying the graphics to the airplane met safety standards. Although Richard Kiang, an aviation safety inspector from the Greensboro, N.C., Flight Standards District



Seriously ill children produced the floral design on this plane as part of a therapy program.

Office, was touched by the children's efforts, he couldn't let it interfere with his work. "You can't take that emotion and let it affect the safety of the aircraft."

Kiang ensured that none of the plane's leading edges were exposed in such a way that might cause the adhesive to peel off and potentially jam a flight control surface. He checked that no material covered the pitot static system, which senses the plane's airspeed and altitude, or covered the flight control surfaces.

Special consideration was given to the positioning of the registration and tail numbers so they adhered to FAA regulations without marring the floral design.

With the help of the FAA, the Garden in Transit—Airborne was one of



Individual sections of the adhesive panels are signed by the children who painted them.

only 100 aircraft that flew in a special ceremonial fly-by during the Centennial of Flight to honor the Wright Brothers.