



March 2014

Fellow Twirly Birds

The gathering of the Twirly Birds at Heli-Expo in Anaheim on February 25<sup>th</sup> was attended by more than eighty Twirly Birds and guests. The Twirly Birds sang Happy Birthday to Bill Wells who was celebrating his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. Bill was accompanied by his much younger wife, Dianne.

Twirly Bird Nancy Lematta, Columbia Helicopters Chairman, and Columbia CEO Mike Fahey shared a table with Joanne and Roy Simmons and Simmons' daughter Carolyn. Roy was the 2014 recipient of the Les Morris award.

Mike recounted Roy's many achievements and contributions to Columbia and the helicopter industry

Roy is a Marine helicopter pilot (once a Marine always a Marine). Simmons was chief pilot, FAA pilot examiner, and director of operations, vice president of flight operations, executive vice president, and finally succeeding Columbia's founder, Mr. Wes Lematta as president in 1992. Additionally, Mr. Simmons se was the Chairman of the Board of the Helicopter Association International in 2004 after serving as a board member.

In 2012 Roy and his wife Joanne made a substantial donation to the HFI Scholarship fund in the name of Libby Meade retired HAI Executive Vice President. This was not the only significant contribution by the Simmons family to the Scholarship fund.

The Les Morris Award signifies the pioneering spirit of Twirly Birds. The award is reserved for members that have made an exemplary contribution to the helicopter community over their lifetime.

---

Twirly Bird Nancy Miller Livingston Stratford joined us at the reception. Nancy shared a few stories about her career in aviation. Her recently published book is a fascinating insight of life in Great Britain during World War II, and her contributions to the war effort. Following is an e-mail that I received from Nancy prior to Heli-Expo.

"During 2010, I found an old manuscript that I had written when leaving England in 1945 (after 3 years as a ferry pilot with the British Air Transport Auxiliary)..I had written it for my father, who read it, but I then just put the "book" away---for some 60+ yrs.!!! In 2010, a friend read some of it and insisted I publish it, for historical reasons!! (Women, WWII)..My niece and another friend helped me and the book was published through [createspace.com/34779823](http://createspace.com/34779823), or Amazon, called "*Contact! Britain!* , using my row of names, "Nancy Miller Livingston Stratford" (!), ISBN #978-1453787830....It's just my story of my three years 1942-45 flying/ferrying aircraft for the RAF, Fleet Air Arm (Navy) and Coastal Command (Coast Guard), within Great Britain; one of 24 American women pilots who volunteered to join that small group of men and women ferry pilots.

Upon return from England in 1945, I earned my helicopter rating in 1947, although didn't use it until about 1956, when Arlo Livingston (HAA Pres. 1971-72, & 72-73, I think) purchased his first helicopter, and we both flew it. ...I continued flying as a flight instructor, ag pilot (10 yrs. in a

Stearman) and other duties until 1978, helicopters and airplanes---and administrative, when my hearing gave up (couldn't understand instructions from tower!).

"Contact! Britain!", Nancy Miller Livingston Stratford, ISBN#978-1453787830, -- 4 ways to order:

- 1) [www.createspace.com/3479823](http://www.createspace.com/3479823)
- 2) From Amazon.com
- 3) Special order from any bookstore with ISBN#, title and author's name (as above)
- 4) Download to Kindle, iPhone, iPad or tablet from Amazon Kindle Store (e-book)

---

Twirly Birds Bob Petite and Jeff Evans authored The Bell 47 Helicopter Story. The forward is authored by Hal Symes. Hal trained at Bell in Buffalo soloing in March 1947. One of the books generously donated to the Twirly Bird silent auction was purchased by Jacques Guequierre for an exorbitant sum.

Bob Petite sent me the following note that appeared in previous newsletter:

"My book on the Bell 47 has been printed. The Bell 47 Helicopter Story is finally ready for sale. Retail sale is \$ 89.95 US. I am selling the first 200 copies for a special price of \$ 75.00 plus postage. My website has been updated [www.helicopterheritagecanada.com](http://www.helicopterheritagecanada.com) I will send ordering information to any that is interested. I might have limited copies with me when at Heli-Expo HAI in February 2014." Bob had a table at Scott's-Bell 47 helicopter display at Heli-Expo, where he was selling bushels of books.

What Bob did not say is that this book is much more than a story about the Bell 47. This book captures the early history of the helicopter industry and the people who were truly pioneer helicopter pilots.

While leafing through the 700 plus pages, I read the forward by Twirly Bird Hal Symes, 1993 Les Morris recipient. Hal discusses his first helicopter flying job in Argentina following his training in 1947. Hal mentions fellow helicopter pilots: Harlan Hosler, 1996 Les Morris recipient, Wes Moore, long time Twirly Bird officer, and Leonard Lavassar, 2000 Les Morris recipient.

Coincidentally Leonard Lavassar's niece just sent me a note advising of an address change for her uncle and information about his first helicopter job in Argentina, with Hal Symes and other Twirly Birds. Leonard continued flying helicopters becoming the Chief Test Pilot and Director of Flight Test during his thirty three year career with Boeing. Leonard test flew the Vertol VZ-2 entirely in a vertical flight mode on August 13, 1957. The VZ-2 is now in the Smithsonian Air/Space museum. In 1961 Leonard flew the first test flight in the Boeing Chinook (CH-47). Leonard J. Lavassar resides at Brandywine Senior Living @ Haverford Estates, 731 Old Buck Road, Haverford, Pennsylvania 19041.

---

Ken and Jim Roberts were welcomed by the Twirly Birds as associate members in recognition of their outstanding contributions to the helicopter industry.

Roberts Aircraft Company was founded by W. Lynn and Jean Roberts in 1939. The early years were focused on fixed-wing operations. Jean Roberts ran the business during WWII when Lynn Roberts was serving in the U.S. Navy as a test pilot. The middle 1950's saw Roberts Aircraft operating Bell 47G2 series and Hiller 12E series helicopters. Roberts Aircraft built Boise Air Service and was involved in helicopter and fixed-wing operations, including forestry, power line, search and rescue and general charter. Operation areas included the Western U.S.A. and extensive work in Alaska on federal programs.

In 1970, Ken Roberts came to work full time as a helicopter mechanic based out of Casa Grande, AZ. Prior to full-time employment, Ken completed a year of University education and an airframe/power-plant preparatory course, as well as nondestructive testing courses and various manufacturer helicopter airframe and engine courses.

Roberts Aircraft in 1972 acquired its first European helicopter product – an Alouette III, a relationship that continues today.

In 1973, Jim Roberts came into the company as a full time mechanic after attending Northrup Institute of Technology and various airframe and engine courses. In this period, the company was involved in operating Hughes 500 series aircraft, as well as SA315B, SA316B and Hiller and Bell aircraft. In the middle 1970's, an operating location was opened in Colorado Springs, which morphed into today's Fort Collins and Cheyenne, Wyoming locations. In the late 1970's, Jim and Ken became much more involved with management, serving as Vice Presidents.

In 1981, Lynn Roberts passed away and Ken assumed the office of President of both companies. Jim primarily ran the Arizona office and Ken focused more in Colorado. After Lynn's death and the general slowness in the industry, it was decided to focus more on maintenance and leasing opportunities and Heli-Support, Inc. was formed. It would become a Eurocopter and Turbomeca overhaul center based in Ft. Collins. Roberts Aircraft would have helicopter leasing and operations activities in various countries in South America, Europe, Asia and the Middle East. Diverse locations in various countries kept everyone busy.

Roberts Aircraft owned and supported the SA330J Pumas operating the initial U.S. Navy VERTREP Program and progressed with several operating companies until the expiration of the last engine lease in support of the program in 2013.

With the issue of name similarity between Roberts Aircraft Company and Roberts Aircraft, Inc., Roberts Aircraft, Inc. changed its name to Trans Aero, Ltd. Today, Trans Aero, Ltd. Operates AS350B2, B3 helicopters, Bell UH1 and Bell 212 aircraft. It is operating on USFS, US Park Service, and various commercial contracts, as well as some international operations.

In 2009, Roberts Aircraft Company sold Heli-Support, Inc. to Heli-One, but maintained ownership of its helicopter lease fleet, leasing to Trans Aero, Ltd. and various operating companies.

---

Twirly Birds!!!!!! The criterion for a Twirly Bird Associate member is: "An outstanding individual, who is not a rotary wing pilot, but has made significant contribution to the industry for at least 20 years". Please provide us with the name someone you know who should be considered for a Twirly Bird Associate membership.

---

Twirly Bird Lewis "Lew" Erhart, Lt. Col. USAF Retired, took his final flight on 21 January, 2014. Lew passed quietly with his son Little Lew and daughter Monika at his side. Lew is survived by his son and daughter, five grandchildren, two great grandchildren and many nieces and nephews. Lew's wife Dorothy passed away in June 2009. Born of immigrant parents, Lew grew up in Wyoming County, New York. He attended the University of Alabama for two years before entering Army Air Corps in June 1942. Lew's military career spanned the globe. Between 1942 and 1966, Lew proudly served his country in Libya, Italy, Illinois, California, Texas, and Alaska. Between 1950 and 1952 Lew served as Operations Officer at Ladd Field in Fairbanks, AK. March 1952, found Capt. Erhart, piloting a ski-equipped SC-47 during the military's expedition to the T-3 ice island in the Arctic Ocean. The expedition flew from Fairbanks, AK, to Barter Island, AK to

Thule Greenland then, eventually on to T-3. Known as Project Icicle, the expedition was featured in March 31, 1952 edition of Life Magazine. Between 1957 and 1962, Lew served as Director of Combat Operations at Aviano Air Base Italy. From 1962-1967 he was Director of Operations Plans and training Vandenberg AFB, California, where he retired with the rank of Lt. Colonel

After retiring from the Air Force, Lew worked for ERA Helicopters where he flew various fixed-wing and rotor-wing aircrafts in Alaska, the Lower 48 states, and Central America. In 1973, the Helicopter Association of America honored Lew as a "Recognized Pioneer in the Helicopter Industry". Ever eager to fly, Lew retired from ERA Helicopters only to move on to Alaska Helicopters then Evergreen Helicopters before hanging up his commercial flight suit in the late 1980s. Lew loved to introduce people to flying and was a patient instructor. Seasoned veteran or neophyte, nobody flew with Lew without manning the controls. Scores of military and commercial pilots learned to fly under Lew's tutelage. Many others made their first solo flight in Lew's 1974 Taylorcraft while he patiently sat in the gravel beside Goose Bay Strip. Lew's flight log bears entries for time spent in many categories of aircraft, from the utilitarian Taylorcraft to single engine jets. A recently found document states he'd flown "All WWII Fighters-bombers-transport" with his logged time, as of 1970, exceeded 16,000 hours. Lew was kind-hearted and generous to his friend and family. Always smiling and positive, he had hugs and kisses for the girls and a hearty handshake for the men. Lew was the first to lend a hand and get the job done. Lew grabbed life like a wet towel, wrung it dry, and snapped it to get out the last drop we'd all do well to follow his example of friendship and taking care of family in a loving and devoted manner. Erhart was loved by one and all. May he enjoy the freedom of flight with an angel's wings. A celebration of his flights was held at the Alaska Aviation Heritage Museum, at six the evening February 15

---

Carol Nokes sent me a note advising that Bob passed away in December at his home in San Antonio, Texas. Bob received his army aviator wings in 1955. He had 18,000 accident free hours worldwide, including Southeast Asia with Air America, several seasons in Alaska, and as an S-58T demonstration pilot for Sikorsky. Later in his career, Bob was renowned for his expertise in Sikorsky product support.

---

The following was written by Twirly Bird Elfan ap Rees about Twirly Bird Charles Thomas Hosegood known by most as "Sox". Elfan shared some of his thoughts and memories of "Sox" with us at the Twirly Bird reception.

“ADDRESS BY ELFAN AP REES – DEPUTY LEADER, NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL – CHAIRMAN OF TRUSTEES THE HELICOPTER MUSEUM AND A HELICOPTER PILOT TOO

I am truly sorry not to be here today to pay tribute to Sox, but I know he would understand, as I am at a Helicopter Convention in the United States and marking his last flight with the Twirly Birds Association of pioneer helicopter pilots – of which Sox was an early member. I first met Sox about 50 years ago, when he was chief test pilot for the Bristol Aeroplane Company helicopter division at Weston-super-Mare and I was newly starting out in the helicopter industry. Whilst our paths rarely crossed in those days except by coincidence around the factory, my interest in helicopter history soon led me to research Sox's involvement more closely. That soon showed me a picture of a popular and pioneering pilot and a marvelous raconteur who – right to the very end – could retell the highlights of his long career – and what a career

that was.

Whilst Sox began his flying career as a seaplane pilot with the Fleet Air Arm in 1939 he soon saw the light, especially after his ship was torpedoed in 1943 and my role today is to recall his long career in helicopters. Sox was actually one of the very first British helicopter pilots, one of an elite band sent to the United States in 1944 to master the primitive Sikorsky R4 helicopter, a number of which had been ordered for anti-U-boat convoy defense. Whilst the Atlantic weather proved too much at the time for shipboard operations, Sox soon became involved in evaluating the use of helicopters for the Royal Navy, Air Force and Army at the Airborne Forces Experimental Establishment at Beaulieu, before joining the Bristol Aeroplane Company in 1948 to help develop the Sycamore helicopter.

In this role he carried out most of the test flying to obtain the first Certificate of Airworthiness for an all-British helicopter as well as the carrier flying trials necessary to clear the Sycamore for the Royal Australian Navy. He also demonstrated the Sycamore and the value of helicopters in cities across Europe, and in 1953 took a Sycamore to the Netherlands to help in the flood evacuation work after the great North Sea Surge. That actual helicopter is now in the Helicopter Museum at Weston.

However it is Sox's work on tandem-rotor helicopters with Bristol's for which he is probably best known. He carried out the first flight of the Type 173, the world's first twin-engine tandem-rotor helicopter in January 1952 – when it would only fly backwards, survived a spectacular accident in the second prototype during an Air Day at Filton after the helicopter had a centre of gravity problem and dug the nose probe in the runway, and then went on to carry out trials on the carrier HMS Eagle in the English Channel, which resulted in an order for 100 improved Type 191 helicopters for the Royal Navy.

Whilst that contract was later cancelled in 1956 as a result of government cuts (floods and cuts – ring any bells?), Sox went on to carry out the first flight of the similar Type 192 Belvedere in 1958 and saw it enter service with the RAF, before leaving the company to set up the UK's first helicopter power line inspection and repair support unit for the South Western Electricity Board – now Western Power Distribution – at Lulsgate Airport. Here again he pioneered this work until his eventual retirement.

For me personally it was not just his career that I admired but also his enthusiasm and support for the Helicopter Museum that I will always remember – he came to the official opening by HRH Prince Andrew 25 years ago, and visited several times subsequently for reunions and media interviews alongside what I regard as HIS Sycamore and Belvedere.

Even very recently Sox gave generously of his time to record for posterity the highlights of his test flying for the museum archives.

So, over the years Sox made his mark in many ways - He was a founder member of the Helicopter Association of Great Britain, an Upper Freeman and Master Pilot of the Guild of Air Pilots and Navigators, took part in every Farnborough Air Show, from 1949 until 1960 – surely a record in its own right- set up new records for point-to-point helicopter flights between the London and Paris city centres and was especially proud to have been awarded the Alan Marsh Medal in 1961 by the Royal Aeronautical Society- recognition indeed of his pioneering flight test work over the years.

Rest in peace Sox."

---

Andy Astad sent the follow e-mail:

Thanks for your note. It's been six weeks since my robotic heart bypass operation and I'm doing just fine. Modern medicine is a huge advantage for us old guys today. Glad to hear that Jim Ricklefs is celebrating his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. Please give him my regards the next time you see him, I have always had a tremendous respect and admiration for him.

As for the Twirly Bird reception I 'm pleased that it has become a more important motivator and role model in the helicopter industry. Its growth over the years has been an outstanding accomplishment.

Keep up the good work.

Andy Aastad 717-464-4222 [aastad@comcast.net](mailto:aastad@comcast.net)

---

Several Twirly Birds attended Jim Ricklefs 100<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration at the Hiller Museum in San Carlos, California on March 9<sup>th</sup>. Twirly Bird Jim Meade who was one of Jim's first mechanic/pilots traveled from Fortuna, California for the party. Jim Meade shared a few memories and stories with the group about the early early days of helicopter operations. Jim Meade presented Jim Ricklefs with a picture of an early Bell 47, (serial number 19), that they had rebuilt in 1947. The pictured helicopter has "Rick Helicopters" painted on the door. Jim Ricklefs was offered the opportunity to become a "Life Time Member" of the Twirly Birds. He accepted the Lifetime Member pin and told us that the "check was in the mail".

Jim Ricklefs received the Les Morris award in 1999. Jim has received numerous aviation awards including the H.A.I. Lawrence Bell award and the Aero Club of Northern California Chrystal Eagle. Jim was a founder and first president of the Helicopter Association International. Twirly Bird and 2004 Les Morris award recipient, Jean Tinsley, joined Jim at his table for the celebration.

The Twirly Bird web site has a 16 page History entitled [Looking Back At HELICOPTER PIONEERS And the Birth Of An Industry](#). It is a fascinating firsthand account written by Jim Ricklefs that should be required reading for all Twirly Birds.

Twirly Bird Roger Gould has devoted a huge amount of time, effort, and his money to develop the Twirly Bird web page, please take the time to open the web page and read about the Twirly Birds. ([twirlybirds.org](http://twirlybirds.org)) Thanks again Roger.

---

Twirly Bird Jon Kettles, son of Les Morris recipient, Joe Kettles, gave an outstanding presentation on Aviation Law at Heli-Expo. Jon clarified a lot of issues regarding the NTSB, Aviation Insurance, FAA and basic legal information that every pilot should know. The room was filled, the questions

and answers were informative and Jon was still answering questions long after the session ended. Jon practices aviation law in Dallas.

---

The HAI quarterly magazine ROTOR is available at no charge, courtesy of HAI and the advertisers. Go to rotor magazine or rotor.org click on subscribe. You will have to provide some information and can receive either the digital or paper edition.

If you have not paid your 2014 dues, (\$10.00) please send them to Secretary/ Treasurer Dennis MacBain 2654 Hill Park Drive, San Jose, CA 95124

Keep your rotor in the green!

steve