

September 2015



Fellow Twirly Birds:

During a recent visit to Texas, Twirly Bird Historian, former TB Treasurer, Navy Captain retired, and former Bell Helicopter peddler, Bill Yarber, and I got together for lunch and helicopter gossip. After a three martini lunch, Bill took me to the nearby University of Texas at Dallas where the Twirly Birds have endowed a Chair to preserve Twirly Bird records in The History of Aviation Collection.

Paul A. Oelkrug, Coordinator for Special Collections, was gracious with his time as he explained the extensive collection of aviation records including files donated by Twirly Birds. The Twirly Bird repository is for all Twirly Birds who may have files and documents that they would like to preserve for future generations. Let me repeat that this is not just for the Twirly Bird organization records, but for personal collections by pioneer helicopter pilots.

Paul suggested that if you have files relating to the helicopter industry that you don't want to throw out, but someone else may, put a note in your will that you want your helicopter files to go to:

Repository of Twirly Birds International  
Paul A. Oelkrug  
Coordinator for Special Collections  
The University of Texas at Dallas  
800 West Campbell Road MC33  
Richardson, Texas 75080-3021

Twirly Bird, Don Brabec recently retired, is volunteering at the History of Aviation Collection. "I'm volunteering at UTD's special collections in aviation, 'working' for Paul. Presently, I'm not working specifically on TB's memorabilia, per se. However, I'm setting up a small collection on the Cessna helicopter, donated by Emmit Koelle, who I believe is a charter TB member."

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Twirly Bird, Nancy Miller Livingston Stratford is still collecting awards. On November 14, 2015, the Aero Club of Northern California will present Nancy a National Aeronautic Association Certificate for her significant contribution to aviation. The event is the annual Crystal Eagle Award Banquet. If you are able to attend, it is always a very nice aviation gathering at the always interesting Hiller Aviation Museum, San Carlos, California. (The museum is located on the San Carlos airport, so you can fly your helicopter into KSQL, attend the banquet and stay at the hotel next door.) Nancy has indicated that she may not attend. However she might change her mind if other Twirly Birds attend.

Twirly Bird, Ron Wilkins, Hood River, Oregon, sent me an e-mail some time ago regarding his work as a volunteer at the Western Antique Aeroplane & Auto Museum (WAAAM) in Hood River. Then Ron happened to mention that he has a helicopter model collection. This summer, while passing through Hood River, I called Ron and he invited me to stop by his home and see his collection before we visited the WAAAM.

Ron's collection of more than 500 helicopter models is absolutely astounding. Many of these models are one of a kind, professionally hand crafted for manufacturers. Some are models of never produced prototypes. Several models represent the different iterations produced over the years. Ron's collection is no doubt the most extensive, impressive helicopter model collection in the world. Fortunately for the helicopter industry and future generations, Ron is arranging to place the collection in the WAAAM in Hood River. The Twirly Birds have pledged their assistance to Ron in preserving this magnificent helicopter historical treasure.

Following is an excerpt from WAAAM March 2010 Museum Newsletter.

“Volunteer Spotlight introducing Ron Wilkins:

Following my love of flying helicopters, I moved to La Grande, OR. and worked for Rambling Rotors doing agriculture spraying and Forest Service contract work. While there, I flew for the movie **"Paint Your Wagon" with Clint Eastwood and Lee Marvin**. I flew Clint Eastwood, Ed Sullivan and many other celebrities and cast members into and around the wilderness movie site.

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I went to work for United Telephone Co. (now Century Tel) in Hood River in 1973 and flew for telephone construction doing sling work, engineering, and VIP transport. Over the years, many people flew with us, including: Ken Jernstedt, Bob Packwood, Governor Dixie Lee Ray, Senator Mark Hatfield, and Mayor Kenji Nakano, from Tsuruta, Japan, just to name a few.

I retired in 1998. Although I retired from flying and aircraft work, I will always love all aspects of aviation. Throughout my career of over 14,000 flight hours, I have held the following ratings: A&P, Commercial Single & Multi-engine land, fixed-wing, instrument, single engine seaplane, helicopter ATP, CFI instrument, external loads, ag spray operations."

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We received a card from Carol Gurley telling us of the death of William Fitzhugh Gurley on April 22, 2015. Or as Mrs. Gurley so thoughtfully wrote, "the passing of "Sweet Ol Bill".

Bill served in the Navy during WWII. He joined the Army in 1951- served in Korea with 3rd Infantry Division and later served in Viet Nam. Bill soloed in September 1954 at San Marcos Air Force base, Texas. During his career he was awarded the Legion of Merit, DFC, BS, and 8 AM's. He retired in 1969 as a Lt. Col and Master Army Aviator. In 1969 he joined Bell as Assistant Program Manager, R&D. He held several positions including Program Manager for the King Cobra and AAH.

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On September 9, 2015 we lost Twirly Bird, Joe Gray. Joe soloed in an OH-23 at Ft. Wolters, Texas in January 1962. Following flight school, Joe flew for the U.S. Army Topo (Topographic) Command in Libya and then Iran. In Iran he had his "first engine failure, and rode a mule for 24 hours to get back to my camp". In 1965 Joe served with the First Air Cavalry in Viet Nam where he participated in the battle of the Ia Drang valley, (WE WERE SOLIDERS ONCE... AND YOUNG). After Joe's tour in Viet Nam, he flew in Guatemala, again as an Army Engineer/pilot assignment with Inter American Geodesic Survey, (IAGS). Upon leaving the Army, Joe went to work for Bell Helicopter in marketing, including positions in California, Texas, and Singapore. After twenty six years with Bell, Joe retired. Joe's retirement job was President of Kachina Aviation in Nampa, Idaho.

Following Joe's death, his wife Edie sent his friends a very touching and poignant note that is attached to this newsletter.

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Twirly Bird, Bob Petite, continues his efforts to preserve helicopter history. Bob's stories can be found in Vertical magazine. Vertical is generous supporter of the Twirly Birds. You can also receive Vertical's daily helicopter news through their web site [dailynews@verticalmag.com](mailto:dailynews@verticalmag.com)

The April/May 2015 issue of Vertical included a story entitled "Above The Finest" which many of you will recognize as the motto of Ft. Wolters, Texas, Ft. Wolters was U.S. Army primary helicopter training school. Authored by Bob Petite, with photographs provided by Twirly Bird, Don Brabec, this piece certainly captures a bit of history that many of us treasure.

A group of volunteers in nearby Mineral Wells, Texas has constructed and continues to develop, a very comprehensive museum dedicated to the Primary Helicopter Training school at Ft. Wolters. The museum and grounds are well worth a visit for any Twirly Bird.

Twirly Bird, Marty's Pociask, HFI Heritage Series is published in HAI's Rotor. Recently Marty has been working with long time, well known, Twirly Bird, Phil Fillingham, to preserve Phil's records and photographs.

On the other side of the "pond", Twirly Bird, Elfan Ap Rees, Chairman of the Trustees, (and founder), of the Helicopter Museum in Weston Super Mare, England, is proceeding to expand the museum, which is the largest helicopter museum in the world. Elfan's tireless, and often self funded, dedication to the helicopter industry can be acknowledged by buying Elfan an adult beverage at the next Twirly Bird reception in Louisville, Kentucky.

We should also note that Elfan is the publisher of Helicopter International, a publication every Twirly Bird should subscribe to and read. A recent edition contained a detailed early history of Bristow Helicopters, founded by Twirly Bird, Alan Bristow.

Thank you, Bob, Marty, and Elfan for your hard work and dedication to the preservation of helicopter history that is intertwined with the contributions of so many Twirly Birds.

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Twirly Bird, Bob, "Bobby", Mulhall, who had retired as the respected Chief Pilot of the Pasadena, California police department passed away on June 27, 2015.

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From the Twirly Bird bylaws:

“GENERAL MEMBER: Those who have soloed a helicopter or other vertical take-off aircraft in sustained complete flight over 20 years ago.”

Twirly Birds! Please introduce a qualified friend to the Twirly Birds; better yet buy him, or her, a membership as a gift.

“ASSOCIATE MEMBER: Those who have been selected by a duly appointed committee of General Members as having made significant and noteworthy contributions to helicopter or other vertical take-off flight through exemplary dedication and devotion.”

Please nominate a qualified individual as an Associate member. There are many non pilots who have contributed so much to this industry. The Associate Committee will consider all who are nominated to join as Associate members.

The award committee is also soliciting nominations for the Les Morris award. This important and prestigious award recognizes a fellow Twirly Bird for their outstanding contributions to Vertical Flight. Please send me your nominations: [srs@jma.com](mailto:srs@jma.com) or call 408 348 5780.

Please send us your news, and updates for this newsletter. Your fellow pioneer helicopter pilots would appreciate hearing from you.

DUES: Annual dues are \$10.00. Dues are used to pay for mailing the newsletter to those Twirly Birds who do not have an e-mail address. Dues are also used to buy TB pins, TB certificates, and partially fund the reception at Heli-Expo. Please send your dues to Treasurer Dennis MacBain, 4525 Leon Street, San Diego, CA 92107

(Life time memberships are available for \$500.00.)

KEEP YOUR ROTOR IN THE GREEN!  
Steve Sullivan

If you are not receiving this newsletter via e-mail please send your e-mail address to Dennis MacBain, [macdennis@att.net](mailto:macdennis@att.net), so that we can add you to the e-mail list.

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**Joe Gray**

## Joe celebrated his life!!!

On 9/11/15 He was at Grapevine High School and he had just finished swimming for one hour and was taking his shower. As he came out of the stall, he slipped and suffered a major head trauma. 911 were called and he was taken to the hospital. He had told us he did not want to be on life support, so at 7pm that same day, he peacefully went to be with the Lord. I found this quote with his things.

“If you must bury something, let it be my faults, my weaknesses and all my prejudice against my fellow man. “

“Give my soul to GOD. If by chance you wish to remember me, do it with a kind deed or word to someone who needs you. If you do all I have asked, I will live forever.”

Author, Robert Test

His body was given with “Love” from me and his family to Science Care body donation and will be sent to one of the top major medical universities to be studied. The staff in the hospital had never seen anyone like him in such great shape on no medication at his age (85). He is an inspiration.

He would love all of his loved ones and many friends to celebrate their lives too.

A celebration of life for all of his loved ones and friends will be in the future.

If you would like, we ask that you donate to your local church or favorite charity. The family’s needs are all meet.

His loving wife,

Eddie Gray and his family.