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Fellow Twirly Birds:

Just as this newsletter was going to the printer (not really), *Vertical Daily News* included a press release announcing that Twirly Bird, Chuck Kettles, will receive the Medal of Honor, for his life saving heroic flights in 1967. Chuck is the brother of Twirly Bird, Joe Kettles, and Uncle of Twirly Birds Jim and Jon Kettles. The press release is attached to this newsletter.

During a recent trip to Iran with eleven other intrepid travelers, we spent two days in Isfahan, Iran. Isfahan is a place well known to many Twirly Birds. After the Viet Nam war ended, several of our contemporaries were hired by Bell Helicopter International as mechanics, instructor pilots and in various other roles to support the large Bell helicopter sale to the Iranian military.

During part of this program, the person responsible for Bell Helicopter in Iran was Twirly Bird, George Powell. Several Twirly Birds participated and contributed to that complex, large and challenging project. When the Shah of Iran left the country, some of the Bell employees had to scramble to get out of the country, in some cases the only way out was driving to and crossing the border into Turkey. Perhaps some of our Twirly Birds will share some stories about that interesting part of helicopter history for a future newsletter?

As my group was entered Isfahan from the south, I was recounting some of this history to my fellow travelers, who were not that interested and probably tired of my relentless helicopter stories; but, low and behold, at the highway entrance to the airbase, was a UH1 in a camouflage paint scheme on a pedestal.

Later as we left Isfahan, on the highway north, we passed what is still known as the "American Town" where many of the Bell employees lived.

We are pleased and proud to learn that another Twirly Bird has received the **Charles Taylor Master Mechanic Award**.

HeliValue\$ Press Release

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“Recently, a HeliValue\$ colleague, mentor and friend, Ralph Rosenbrock, was presented with the Charles Taylor Master Mechanic Award. It is the most prestigious award presented by the Federal Aviation Administration to an aviation maintenance technician.

The Charles Taylor Master Mechanic Award is named in honor of Charles Taylor, the first aviation mechanic in powered flight. The Charles Taylor Master Mechanic Award recognizes the lifetime accomplishments of senior mechanics.

Taylor served as the Wright brothers' mechanic and is credited with designing and building the engine for their first successful aircraft.

Rosenbrock has had a distinguished 50-year career in aviation. While working with HeliValue\$ over the past three decades as its senior technical advisor, Rosenbrock has held many other important positions in the helicopter industry.

“We are truly honored to have such remarkable contributor to HeliValue\$, Inc. And The Official Helicopter Blue Book,” said a HeliValue\$ representative.”

Many Twirly Birds remember Ralph as the go to guy when you needed someone for a committee, or a working group. Ralph contributed an enormous amount of time and work to the HAI Business Management Committee. His clear thinking analytical approach helped many of us pilots better understand the business side of the helicopter industry.

Ralph started his helicopter career as a crew chief/gunner in CH-47 Chinooks with the 147th Assault Support Company in Viet Nam. One day in 1967 he and his crew recovered a record number of downed aircraft in one day including 4 UH-1D Hueys, 1 O-1 Bird Dog, 1 OH-23, and 1 F-5 Freedom Fighter.

After Viet Nam he was with Chicago Helicopter Airways from 1968-1975; Executive Helicopters 1975-1986. Ralph served as Vice President of Safety for the Rotorcraft Association of North America 1986-1989.

Ralph formed Helitech, Ltd. In 1990 to work in tandem with HeliValues Inc., to provide safety and technical services to the Helicopter Industry.

In 1992 Ralph joined NiSource Inc., where he continues as Manager of Aviation Services.

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Ralph is the past President of the Chicago Chapter of the Professional Aviation Maintenance Association. He was awarded two Citations by the FAA for "significant contributions to safety and reliability through improved maintenance practices" he has served as an FAA Accident Prevention Counselor, and has received a Meritorious Service Award from the HAI.

Twirly Bird Jim Wisecup is mentioned in the January 2016 Special Operations Association magazine. Jim was the aircraft commander of the lead helicopter inserting a "Hatchet force" into Laos on July 20, 1970. Jim's aircraft was hit with a rocket propelled grenade that did not detonate, but damaged the engine and triggered a fire. Jim flew the aircraft out of the immediate area before it crashed. Wisecup and other survivors were rescued by a second helicopter that dropped a ladder and ropes through the jungle canopy. Wisecup, crew members, and other survivors climbed the ladder into the rescue ship. Twirly Bird, Jim Wisecup is a Regional Aviation Director for Air Methods and serves as the Assistant Treasurer on the HAI Board. .

Twirly Bird, Marty Pociask did a great job of interviewing Twirly Bird Roy Morgan, founder of Air Methods, in the spring issue of ROTOR magazine published by the Helicopter Association International. The interview relates how Roy overcame lots of personal and professional challenges to establish what is now the world's largest aeromedical transport company.

Twirly Bird, Bob Petite, captures an important bit of helicopter history in the June/July issue of VERTICAL Magazine. "Buckets and Belly Tanks" traces the early development of helicopter support to fire fighting. What we see on the summer news, with increasing frequency, had its beginning in 1945 on the Angeles National Forest. As usual, Bob has done a terrific job of researching and sharing a very visible and dramatic part of helicopter history.

Twirly Bird Nancy Stratford celebrated her 97th Birthday on June 12th. If you have not read her book, Contact! Britain!, (available on line), you should. It is Nancy's personal account of a woman ferry pilot's life during WWII in England with the British Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) service.

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The following was" borrowed" from the Alaska Dispatch News. Rex Bishopp is a Twirly Bird.

"Legends in Alaska Aviation: Rex Bishopp

Early Years

Rex Bishopp was born in Farson, Wyo., on his family's ranch. After high school, he left Wyoming for Monterey, California, to live with his aunt and uncle Ricklefs while attending Salinas Junior College. After college, Rex became involved in the trucking business and was soon working for his cousin Jim Ricklefs, who owned and operated Rick Helicopters of San Francisco, Calif.

Every summer Rick and Rex would come to Alaska and work out of Merrill Field in Anchorage. Rex generally drove the truck from California to Alaska with two helicopters on the back. "We would travel up to Alaska in the summer with the piston machines." He says. "Those early Bell 47 helicopters had a very short transmission overhaul time, so we trucked them up and back. It was cheaper than changing the transmissions when we got there!"

Jim Ricklefs and Carl Brady, owner of ERA Helicopters, started flying helicopters in Alaska about the same time in the late 1950's. After a few cocktails, it was always a lively debate between Rex, Jim, and Carl as to who truly was the first helicopter operator in Alaska.

"We used to come up to Alaska years and years ago to fly the U.S. Geological Survey folks around in the summer." Rex recalls. "In the fall we would take the helicopters back down to the San Francisco Bay area and do agricultural spraying."

"In 1967 Rick Helicopters had a chance to do some Alaska flying in the wintertime on the North Slope. Back then we only had piston engine helicopters and pilots had to take the batteries to bed with them, drain the oil and take the oil inside to warm it up," Rex chuckles as he shakes his head. "I guess we lost about \$25,000 that winter! Later we got turbine helicopters and they worked fine in the colder temperatures on the Slope and surveying the pipeline."

Helicopters on the frontier

Rex helped with innovations early in his career at Rick Helicopters. Aircraft had skins removed to increase lift capacity, and he was an engineer on the projects. It always got attention from bystanders when the Piasecki Vertol flew a lift job.

Alaska Airlines also operated its own helicopter branch back then. Soon they decided it was not a good fit and sold that portion of the business to Jim Ricklefs. He purchased the certificate and the last helicopter they were operating, then renamed the company Alaska Helicopters and operated from Merrill Field. In 1964 they moved into a new, large hangar at Anchorage International Airport.

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Rex and Ruth Bishopp purchased Alaska Helicopters from Jim Ricklefs in 1967, and decided to move to Anchorage to run the growing business. Rex had to get up to Anchorage right away, so he bought a plane ticket and flew. He asked his wife, Ruth, to put the kids in the car and drive up the Alaska Highway. Ruth just about killed Rex, but she did it.

At one time Alaska Helicopters operated a prosperous base in Fairbanks. Rex told his wife that they had quite a bit of business in Fairbanks and perhaps they should move up there. "Bishopp," Ruth said using his last name, as she did when she wanted to be sure to get his attention or make a serious point, "You can go to Fairbanks if you want, but when you expect to see me and the kids you're going to have to come to Anchorage!" They never moved.

When Rex and Ruth Bishopp purchased Alaska Helicopters, the sale included eight Bell 47G-2s helicopters. Rex recalls, "I got into the aviation business because I thought aviation would be a lot more fun than the trucking business, but it sure wasn't much easier! I enjoyed the helicopter business and had a lot of fun. We had a lot of great people that worked for us."

By the start of the pipeline, Alaska Helicopters operated twenty-five aircraft that included the Bell 206B Jet Ranger and seven turbine-powered Hiller FH-1100 helicopters.

In the spring of 1978, Alaska Helicopters joined forces with Rex's longtime friend and business associate, Wes Lematta, the founder of Columbia Helicopters of Portland, Oregon. Columbia Helicopters was, and still is, a worldwide leader in heavy-lift, precision-placement helicopter operations.

The merger between Alaska and Columbia Helicopters was mutually beneficial. Columbia operated a large fleet of Boeing Vertol 107 and Boeing 234 Chinook helicopters, and Alaska Helicopters operated light and medium lift helicopters. The merger allowed Alaska Helicopters to bid on construction contracts in the State of Alaska that required heavy lift helicopters. The merger also allowed Columbia Helicopters access to lighter helicopters to support their heavy logging, construction and power line jobs.

The larger Boeing Vertol 107s moved heavy loads like mixed concrete and power line towers, while the lighter helicopters moved construction workers and linemen. It was the perfect marriage between the two companies, and it lasted for nearly twenty years. Wes passed away in December 2009, but the two families remain close today.

Alaska Helicopters operated independently under a separate Part 135 certificate held in Anchorage between 1978 and 1995.

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In December 1975, Alaska Helicopters filed to raise their hourly rates for helicopter service because their workers compensation insurance rates for pilots and mechanics more than doubled in less than one year, and the Anchorage Daily Times carried the news. Aviation, like nearly every other industry, faced regulatory and insurance challenges that continue to this day. Aviation regulations in the 1970s stipulated that companies could not raise their fees without filing for a new tariff rate.

Business Expansion

In 1981, Rex broke ground on a new, 18,000 square foot hangar facility in South Airpark at Anchorage International Airport. In addition, Alaska Helicopters offered outside maintenance from this hangar. Tommy Craig, chief of maintenance, handled the maintenance part of the business. Tommy Craig came to Alaska with Rex and stayed with Alaska Helicopters.

Alaska Helicopters modified aircraft for specific missions. They had two internal tanks installed in the Boeing 234 Chinook helicopters to provide long range ability.

Alaska Helicopters used the Chinooks to shuttle crews to the Navarin Basin, 400 miles offshore from Nome. Those two internal tanks gave the aircraft the capacity to go 335 miles from the Arco base on St Paul Island.

Alaska Helicopters also had a barge anchored half way out into the Bering Sea as a safety precaution in case it was ever needed. Good safety practices insured that it was never needed during Alaska Helicopter's service.

In the mid 1980's, Alaska/Columbia Helicopters operated a Boeing 234ER (Extended Range) Chinook Helicopter in support of offshore exploratory oil operations for Amoco Production Company from the Navarin Basin in the Bering Sea. In six months, from St. Paul Island, the helicopter ferried crews and supplies to the SEDCO 708 semi-submersible rig, located nearly 400 miles from the shore.

In the 1980s Alaska Helicopters upgraded its fleet of Bell 205 helicopters and purchased Bell 212 aircraft from Taiwan. The aircraft were used extensively for fire-fighting efforts and external sling loads.

Alaska Helicopter's played an important, long-term role in the formation of Alaska's business and industrial future, one that we enjoy today. It served countless customers in the mining, oil exploration, government, construction and pipeline industries for more than 40 years.

Recognition and Retirement

Clint Johnson, Rex's stepson, worked for the family business for nearly fourteen years, as a company line pilot and in various management

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positions. In 1995, Alaska Helicopters was purchased by ERA Helicopters. As part of the sale agreement, Clint and other company principals, were required to sign a three-year non-compete for more than 40 years.

(Twirly Bird, Clint Johnson, is the Chief of NTSB Regional Office in Anchorage.)

In 1987, in recognition of his selfless leadership in aviation safety and formation of the association, he was awarded the Arlo Livingston award by the Alaska Air Carriers Association, which represents over three hundred aviation companies serving Alaska. "We were concerned about keeping the aviation community together, improving safety, and having serious clout in Juneau and Washington," Rex recalls. "The helicopter industry in Alaska was having an especially rough year in 1969. It was very busy with pre-pipeline work and all of the helicopter operators experienced multiple accidents that year. Back then, the equipment being flown, and the overall aviation infrastructure was nothing like it is today."

Rex knew early on that something needed to be done, and he was tireless in finding like-minded individuals to improve the industry. Rex Bishopp was a founding member of the Alaska Aviation Safety Foundation. "There was no other acceptable option: industry needed to improve safety."

He was instrumental in creating the Alaska Air Carriers Association in 1966. Rex served on the AACA board for more than a decade and held the officer positions of president, secretary, and treasurer during his tenure.

Rex and Ruth sold the business in 1995 and retired. Rex Bishopp not only led his own company safely and professionally, but he took multiple opportunities to give back to the aviation community and to contribute to aviation safety in a very substantial way." **Author Joy Journeyay**

Twirly Birds! We need to bring new Twirly Birds into the group. You must know someone who is qualified as either a regular or associate member. Please take the time to recruit at least one new member.

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

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

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If you receive this newsletter via the postal service, please send your e-mail address to Dennis MacBain, macdennis@att.net, so that we can add you to the e-mail list.

Please take a few minutes and send me a story, news item, or just a suggestion for the newsletter. I would really appreciate hearing comments regarding the newsletter. My e-mail is srs@jma.com.

KEEP YOUR ROTOR IN THE GREEN!
Steve Sullivan

ATTACHED: KETTLES MEDAL OF HONOR

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Vietnam War helicopter pilot to receive Medal of Honor 49 years after saving wounded soldiers

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This 1969 photo shows Charles Kettles with an Army UH-1H helicopter in Vietnam (U.S. Army)

WASHINGTON – Some five decades after he led a platoon credited with rescuing dozens of soldiers pinned down by enemy fire, a Vietnam War veteran will be awarded the nation's highest military honor for valor, the White House announced on Tuesday.

In May 1967, Army Maj. Charles Kettles led several helicopter trips to help evacuate wounded soldiers near the district of Duc Pho. He returned to the landing zone without additional aerial support to rescue stranded soldiers pinned down by enemy fire. The White House says Kettles helped save the lives of 40 soldiers.

Kettles retired from the Army in 1978 as a lieutenant colonel. He resides in Ypsilanti, Michigan, with his wife, Ann.

The Army said next month's White House ceremony is the culmination of an effort that began in 2012.

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William Vollano of the Veterans History Project launched a formal campaign to upgrade Kettles' Distinguished Service Cross to the Medal of Honor.

As part of that review, several men from his company and the 101st Airborne Division sent letters validating Kettles' actions. Lawmakers also got involved. Longtime Democratic Rep. John Dingell of Michigan sent a letter to the Pentagon asking for reconsideration so that Kettles could be awarded the Medal of Honor.

Then, after Defense Secretary Ashton Carter determined that Kettles' actions merited the nation's highest military honor, Rep. Debbie Dingell and Sens. Gary Peters and Debbie Stabenow, all of Michigan, introduced legislation waiving a time limitation for the award and paving the way for Obama to make the final decision.

The Army also announced that Kettles will be inducted into the Pentagon's Hall of Heroes on July 19, one day after the White House ceremony.

The Army said that despite a heavily damaged helicopter, Kettles was relentless in his efforts to ensure that every soldier was extracted.

On one particular flight out of the landing zone, a machine gun sprayed the helicopter Kettles was flying, but "Maj. Kettles coaxed the helicopter and managed to fly us back to base camp," said Roland J. Scheck, an Army specialist who was serving as a door-gunner on Kettles' crew.

"Kettles personifies the Army's 'Warrior Ethos' - never leave any soldier behind," said Secretary of the Army Eric K. Fanning.