

The HO3S-1 and Korea: The Start of Something Big in Naval Aviation

by Harry Nachlin

As we look ahead into 1990, we realize that it will be forty (40) years in August since helicopters went to war - in Korea. As we look back to the so-called Korean Conflict it becomes apparent that what we now accept as routine roles and mission for rotary wing aircraft that had their beginnings in and around Korea.

In August 1959, I joined VMO-6 as a Sikorsky Tech Rep at Itami Air Base in Japan and moved with the squadron on August 18, to Chinhae (K-10) Korea. There the squadron began immediately to



At Kimpo, Korea 1950 - Med-Evac helo operating August to October with 60 red crosses (one for each mission) on the door. Marine pilots CAPT Farish, LT Lueddecke, CAPT Armstrong, LT Englehardt, Maint., and LT Longstaff. support the 1st Marine Provisional Brigade. After a month at Chinhae the squadron moved north to Kimpo Airport and became part of the 1st Marine Division in operations that followed the Inchon landing.

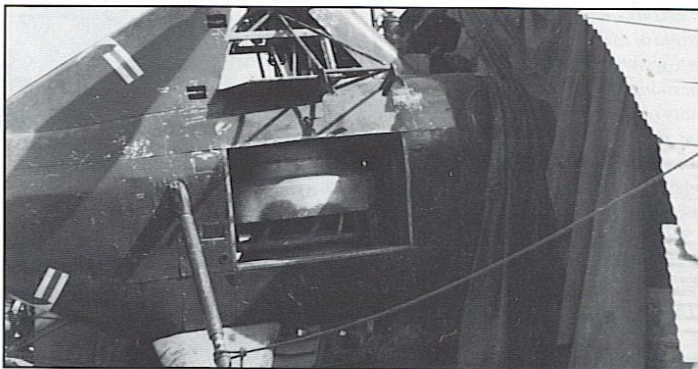
The HO3S-1 helicopter was the Navy version of the commercial Sikorsky S-51. It was powered by a P&W WASP Jr. engine rated at 450 HP. Normal aircraft gross weight was 4,850 lbs. It cruised at 70 kts and had a 200nm range. The Navy version was equipped with a hydraulically powered rescue hoist located so it could raise and lower personnel from the passenger section of the aircraft. Normal crew was a pilot and a crew chief/hoist operator. It was not an aircraft intended to get into harm's way. It had neither arms nor armor. Early versions had fabric covered,

wooden ribbed, tubular sparred main rotor blades and wooden tail rotor blades. The fuel cells were not self-sealing. As opera-

mission the Navy had in mind when it acquired the HO3S-1, but as we have learned through the years, the helicopter's versatility created unlimited demands for



HO3S-1 Aircraft aboard an LST (HU-1 UP-36 and HU-2 UR-34).



Conditions weren't always conducive to comfortable maintenance at Wouju, Korea in March of 1951.

tions continued in Korea, metal main and tail blades of a later design were retrofitted and self-sealing fuel tanks were installed. The latter installation reduced fuel capacity and increased empty weight.

None of these limitations kept the Navy and Marine crews nor the USAF 3rd Air Rescue Squadron H-5F and H aircraft and personnel from rapidly developing med-evac and "down-pilot" retrieval missions. Carrier based HO3S-1 aircraft took over plane guard duties from the destroyer and it soon became obvious that air operations would be suspended if the helicopter was not available. This was essentially the

its services.

Fortunately the aircraft was rugged, and the engine, to use an old Timex watch commercial "took a lickin' and kept on tickin'". I recall one pilot telling me, during operations around the Chosin Reservoir, that he had to use 2700 RPM to affect jump take-offs. It was the only way to get airborne at that altitude although the Redline was 2,500 RPM. I don't know how many such take-offs were made during the pressure of operations in this theater, but I recall no engine failures as a result of this situation.

The HO3S-1 had no provisions for car-

rying litters. Improvisation took over as soon as VMO-6 began operating at Chinhae. One window was removed from the right side of the cabin. A Stokes litter could then be carried with the patient's head and upper body inside the cabin and his feet and legs protruding out of the window. If necessary, a medic could accompany a critically wounded patient, or an ambulatory patient could be carried, thus evacuating two casualties per sortie.

As combat air operations increased, helicopter pick-up of downed pilots was initiated and was quite successful, in spite of the fact that on-the-job training and development of rescue techniques was required. The HO3S-1 was not configured for night or instrument flight, so most missions were performed in sight of the enemy; yet there was a high degree of success and a relatively low helicopter casualty rate. As fighting ebbed and flowed up and down the Korea peninsula helicopters were based on non-aviation ships off shore to provide quick rescue response. Non-USN manned LSTs were deployed off of Wonsonto to provide additional platforms for HU-1 and HU-2 manned aircraft.

As the tempo of helicopter operations increased, it became obvious that a dedicated helicopter maintenance facility would be required to perform maintenance functions not possible underway. This led to establishing a helicopter maintenance detachment at NAF Oppama (adjacent to Yokosuka), where outstanding work by the detachment's personnel made it possible to perform all maintenance functions while ships were in port for R&R periods. The Oppama detachment was initially manned by personnel from HU-1, and was further supported by an aviation repair division composed of two LSTs, the FABIOUS and the AVENTINUS. Many of the shipbased helicopter personnel spent their in-port periods working with the Oppama detachment, to get their aircraft ready for the operating period. They frequently performed what would have been considered depot level work, to return damaged aircraft to a flight status.

During my travels in the operating area in December, 1950, I had occasion to meet the Chief-of-Staff of 7th Fleet, then embarked on USS MISSOURI. When the Captain learned who I was (a Sikorsky Tech Rep), he invited me to his quarters and we discussed at length the situation

regarding the helicopters. One of his comments has stayed with me through the years. He held up a stack of helicopter related messages and asked, "Why do I have the heaviest message traffic concerning an aircraft that represents the lowest number of all models deployed in the fleet?" The answer was obvious. As the Korean operation continued, more and more people found out what the helicopter could do in their area of responsibility; thus there were more tasks than there were aircraft. At that point, there were about 16 HO3S-1's deployed throughout the fleet (exclusive of the Marines). If any went down due to maintenance, damaged or parts shortages, the messages really flew until the problems were resolved.

As operations continued into 1952, VMO-6's complement of helicopters was augmented by the addition of HTL models. In the Fall of 1951, a Marine Helicopter Transport Squadron (HMH-161) outfitted with HRS-1 helicopters arrived in Korea. In 1952, VMO-6 transitioned to HO5S-1 aircraft. The Navy continued to operate the HO3S-1 for the remainder of the Korean operation and until it was replaced by the HUP.

The HO3S-1 and the dedicated flight and ground crews that operated this aircraft gained a toehold in Naval Aviation and set a standard that has been improved, refined and expanded through the years to become what the Naval rotary wing estab-

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HU-1 plane guard and rescue aircraft HO3S-1 off Korea aboard the USS Philippine Sea, CV-47.



NAF Oppama, Japan supported by two LSTs, the Fabius and the Aventus.



Changes of Command



HSL-34

Command of Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron THREE FOUR changed hands on 8 December 1989 when CDR Paul G. Sherland relieved CDR Scott L. Hendrickson at Norfolk Naval Air Station's Hangar LF-59.

CDR Hendrickson's next duty station is on board USS IWO JIMA (LPH-2).

HSL-41

CDR George Galdorisi will relieve CDR Robert Chaplin as Commanding Officer of HSL-41 on 16 March 1990.

CDR Chaplin will report to Washington D.C. for duty.

HSL-33

CDR Frederic R. Reuhe, USN, relieved CDR Thomas L. Freeland as Commanding Officer of Helicopter Anti-Submarine Light THREE THREE in a ceremony onboard Naval Air Station North Island on 26 January 1989.

CDR Freeland, whose next assignment will be as Air Officer on board USS OKI-NAWA (LPH-3) is NHA's National Vice President.

HSL-49 Establishment

The HSL-49 'Scorpions' will have their formal establishment on 23 March 1990 under the command of CDR Larry Larson.

NAS Mayport

CAPT John S. Meserve was relieved by CAPT Morris G. Steen, Jr. as Commanding Officer, Naval Air Station Mayport, Florida on 2 February.

A retirement ceremony was conducted for CAPT Meserve immediately following the change of command.

HS-5

CDR Michael K. Murray was relieved by CDR George E. Kovach as Commanding Officer of Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron FIVE on 16 November, 1989, onboard Naval Air Station Jacksonville, FL. CDR Murray's next assignment will be as Navigator, USS NIMITZ (CVN-68).

USS CONSTELLATION

CAPT Jack Zerr was relieved by CAPT Leonard N. Oden on 29 January aboard the USS CONSTELLATION at NAS North Island.

CAPT Zerr's next assignment is SHAPE Headquarters in Belgium

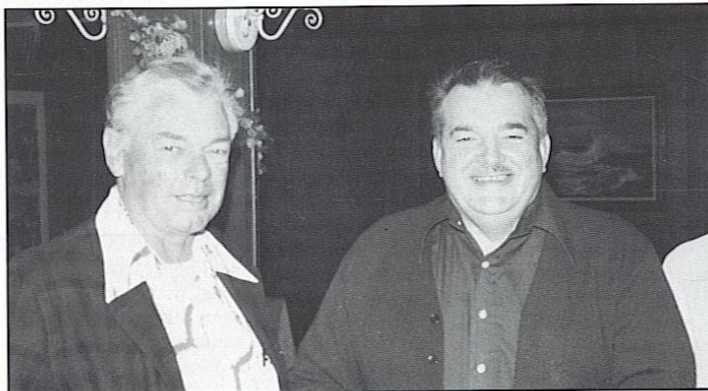
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The guest speaker at the Workshop was VADM Paul Ramsey USN (Ret), who had been involved in early helicopter development. The workshops continued on the 11th.

On Saturday, 11 March, there was an Open House with Static Displays. Lunches and refreshments were available at

planning directive for the procurement of helicopters for Navy and Coast Guard operations. In addition, awards were given in categories similar to those awarded at the "23rd Annual".

A Board of Trustee breakfast meeting was held at 0900, Saturday, 11 March 1972 in the Commissioned Officer's Mess



Trustees Charlie Hamilton and Hugh McLinden

all clubs. Vern Pepper, equipped with photos, hammer, nails, and timber created the first exhibit in a hangar to go along with the static displays. The no-host Cocktail Party and Awards Banquet was held at the Town and Country Convention Center. CAPT Frank Ericson, USCG (Ret) received the NHA Award for his 1942 evaluation of helicopter for military use and for continued promotion of helicopters in the Naval Service. His early efforts resulted in a Bureau of Aeronautics

Mess, NAS Imperial Beach. Records show a total of thirty-five Trustees were registered in 1972. Amendment ONE to the NHA By-Laws, incorporation, location of the 1973 convention, and election of officers were agenda items. Rules for absentee voting were promulgated along with the invitation to attend the breakfast.

The 24th Annual Navy Helicopter Association Convention closed with thoughts of the future. A meeting in May was scheduled to finalize and vote on the By-

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lishment is today. It was my good fortune and privilege to be a part of the team as it developed.

Historical Editor's note: Harold Nachlin, Sikorsky Rep was known as Korea's 'Copter Doctor'. CAPT A.F. Caleb, USMC, VMO-6 said of Harry Nachlin "Without him we could not have accomplished what we did. He was the doctor who kept the 'copters hopping." Sikorsky helos in Korea evacuated or rescued over 1200 United Nations personnel by the end of 1950. To quote Harry, "For my money, everyone who participated should have gotten a medal."

Laws. The subject of incorporation was to be considered by the 1972-73 President, Mark Starr and the Board of Trustees.

Historical Editor's Note: When Phil Nicholas became the first treasurer of NHA on 2 November 1971, the job of creating the By-Laws was assigned to Chuck Smiley. The "24th Annual" was produced under "new management"; The Navy Helicopter Association. It was successful and indicative of things to come.