

Mark Starr Pioneer Award – 1999:

(The following remarks were made during the presentation of the award.)

The MARK STARR PIONEER AWARD for 1999 is being awarded to all Navy/Marine and civilian personnel who served in support of naval helicopter operations in the Korean Conflict during the period 27 June 1950 to 27 July 1954. This includes the pilots, crew chiefs, air crew, corpsmen, maintenance and administrative personnel, civilian technical representatives, and other support personnel who were stationed in Korea, with 7th Fleet ships off shore and in maintenance and supply/support units in Japan.

Starting with a blank page these people wrote Naval Helicopter History as they developed and refined the many missions that were laid on the helicopter. These included plane guard, ditched pilot recovery, combat SAR, gunnery spotting, mail and supply runs to non-aviation ships and mountain peak outposts, medevac (combat & non-combat), holy helo, and mine spotting and destruction. For the first time complete units, up to and including a whole battalion of Fighting Marines and their equipment, were projected ashore and another unit was returned. It was also during the Korean conflict that the first night helicopter troop lift in history was recorded.

It is fair to say that the bold and dedicated actions taken in this era of helicopter employment by all involved personnel caught the attention of senior officers at every level and spurred the development and procurement of more sophisticated rotary wing aircraft that were later made available for service in Vietnam and the Middle-East operations. Many of the missions in which those of you here are currently involved were conceived and developed by the Korean War Veterans we honor by this award.

Accepting the award on behalf of all those who served in naval helicopter operations in Korea is **Commander Charley C. Jones, USN (Ret.)**. Charley is a pioneer Helicopter Pilot in the true sense of the word and holds helo designation # **229** dated April 21st, 1950 (49 years ago, today). He was a member of HU-1 which, during the period July 1950-July 1953, effected the rescue of 429 personnel, many under hostile fire. Charley has seen the rescue business from both sides. Following one rescue, his helo was so damaged by small arms fire that he was forced to ditch it in the Han River inside enemy territory. He and his crewman took to their life raft, paddled to an island in the middle of the river and were picked up by another HU-1 helicopter. Charley made a total of 20 rescues in Korea and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.