



NAVAL HELICOPTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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USS LASSEN (DDG 82)

To be commissioned on 21 April 2001 at Tampa Bay (see article on page 2)

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PURPOSE:

The Naval Helicopter Historical Society was organized to "Gather, Preserve and Display the Legacy of Naval Helicopter Aviation." This is to include past and present helicopter operations in the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard. The timeliness of this effort was made apparent with the passing of some of the pioneers in naval helicopter operations. Action was necessary before the "corporate memory" was lost!

The collection of historically significant materials from donors will be used for educational presentations, displays, research and the eventual establishment of a museum. The initial Plank Owner startup funds will be used to acquire the myriad of items necessary to properly receive items for cataloguing and preservation.

Message from the Chairman:

Dear Members, Donors, Plank Owners and Friends of NHHS,

This was the announcement:

MARCH 14, 2001 -- SAN DIEGO: The last major regulatory approval was secured today when the California Coastal Commission unanimously approved the proposed USS Midway museum and education center. This marks a huge accomplishment in the eight-year campaign to bring the Midway to San Diego!

More than 350 San Diegans--from former astronaut Wally Schirra, Pearl Harbor survivors to high school students--attended the hearing in support of the Midway. Speakers in favor of the project outnumbered opponents 20 to 1.

With the approval in hand, all that remains is to continue working with the Navy on some details that will clear the way for formal donation of the Midway to San Diego. We remain optimistic that we can bring the Midway to San Diego later this year to begin her final tour of duty in 2002.

With those words, the future of the Naval Helicopter Historical Society was changed in a dramatic way. We can now look forward to a long and mutually beneficial association with the San Diego Aircraft Carrier Museum as we carry out our mission to "GATHER, PRESERVE and DISPLAY the LEGACY of NAVAL HELICOPTER AVIATION".

For those of you in the San Diego area this will provide an opportunity to become an active participant in areas ranging from Docent Guides to Educational Outreach to Aircraft Restoration. We'll be coming out with specific information as to how you may help.

One last item... If you or someone you know is interested in becoming an NHHS Plank Owner, now is the time. We'll be closing out this program on Midway's arrival in San Diego and we hope you'll take this opportunity to join those whose names appear below. An application appears elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Look forward to seeing you aboard Midway.

Warmest regards,
Chuck Smiley

USS LASSEN (DDG 82)

On 21 April 2001, USS Lassen --- the most technologically advanced, maritime weapon system in the world--- will be commissioned in greater Tampa Bay. Lassen is the sister-ship of USS Cole (DDG 67), the victim of a terrorist bombing attack during refueling in Aden, Yemen, October 12, 2000.

The LASSEN commissioning is a truly significant event for the United States Navy, and one that is steeped in centuries of tradition and honor. The ceremony takes on heightened significance for our entire Naval Aviation community and our nation in view of the terrorist atrocities against COLE. And the fact that LTJG Lassen was awarded the Medal of Honor for his courageous rescue of an F-4 Pilot and RIO, while in command of HC-7 CSAR Det. 104 flying from USS Preble (DLG 15).

The flight of June 19, 1968, a night Combat Search and Rescue mission, will always be acclaimed as one of the most daring feats of flying to come out of the Vietnam Conflict. Clyde Lassen, who passed away in 1994, was the first Naval Aviator to be awarded the Medal of Honor for bravery in Vietnam.

HC-7 Det. 104 flight crew consisted of:

LTJG Lassen	Medal of Honor
LTJG Cook	Navy Cross
AE2 Dallas	Silver Star
ADJ3 West	Silver Star

They are believed to be the most highly decorated crew for a single CSAR flight.

The USS Lassen will be homeported in San Diego, California.

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*Signal "Charley"

SIGNAL "CHARLEY"

We are all in 'Starboard Delta' waiting to be cleared aboard 'after the turn'. The following shipmates have received a 'green deck' and now waiting in a safe haven for the rest of the flight:

Lloyd L. Duncan; George H. Lyter, Jr.; Walter M. "Smokey" Staight; Robert S. "Bob" Vermilya; Mike White; Robert W. "Bob" Womble.

USS MIDWAY HIGHLIGHTS

by
Walt Lester, Midway Liaison

At 1723 hours on 14 March 2001, the California Coastal Commission APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY (12 to 0) the USS MIDWAY (CV-41) Project, the San Diego Aircraft Carrier Museum (SDACM). This clears the way for the

donation of the ship to the SDACM by the U.S. Navy. The process is expected to take about six months.

Towing of the ship from Bremerton, WA to San Diego should take place near the end of this year, with a stop for painting enroute.

Opening of the museum is expected in mid 2002.

The MIDWAY will be the location of the major exhibits of our organization, located in the center of the downtown waterfront, on the south side of the Navy pier. Initial parking will take place on the Navy pier, with a high-rise parking lot planned for the future.

The SDACM has an aircraft restoration facility located in hanger #805 on NAS North Island. An Aircraft Restoration Director has been "hired," and interviews are currently taking place for restoration volunteers. Helicopter wise, we have a SH-2C ready for work, and a SH-3H "on hold" at Davis-Monthan AFB in Tucson, AZ. The Navy is reluctant to release the H-3 until we have the ship "alongside," but we are working on getting it here earlier.

Plan your vacation to San Diego for the summer of 2002, and make your first tourist attraction the San Diego Aircraft Carrier Museum. After that, if you have time left, you can go to the Zoo and Sea World!!!

FROM THE ARCHIVES

THE BIRTH OF THE SEA-GOING HELICOPTER

by
Captain Frank A. Erickson, USCG

(Unpublished manuscript from the Frank A. Erickson collection provided by Barrett Thomas Beard author of, "Wonderful Flying Machines".)

(NOTE: Frank Erickson, U. S. Coast Guard helicopter pilot # 1, was trained by chief test pilot C. L. Morris at the Sikorsky factory and soloed on 10 June 1943. Erickson flight-tested and accepted the U. S. Navy's first helicopter (YR-4B)(HNS-1) on 6 October 1943 at Bridgeport, CT. He established the first military helicopter flight school at CGAS Brooklyn, NY

which trained and qualified 95 helicopter pilots between December 1943 and February 1945. The school trained USCG, USN, USAAF, RA, RN, RAF, CAA and some corporate pilots. – NHHS Editor)

The world's first military helicopter, the Sikorsky XR-4 lifted off the ground for the first time on January 14, 1942 - five weeks after Pearl Harbor. Although the machine bore Army Air Force insignia, it was the beginning for present-day sea-going helicopters.

The U. S. Navy's helicopter program began on July 24, 1942. RADM John H. Tower, Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics, directed the procurement of four Sikorsky helicopters for evaluation by the Navy and the U. S. Coast Guard.

Before the new helicopters could be delivered, the daily sinking of Allied shipping in the Atlantic reached disastrous levels. Therefore, on February 15, 1943, ADM Ernest J. King, Chief of Naval Operations, ordered the testing and evaluation of helicopters for the protection of ocean convoys. He assigned the project to the Coast Guard. VADM R. R. Waeche, Commandant of the Coast Guard, strongly influenced that decision. He believed that the helicopter not only would become an effective anti-submarine weapon, but also offered a solution to offshore rescue problems. Thus, the Coast Guard operated most of the Navy's helicopters during World War II.

A majority of the Coast Guard's pilots ridiculed the thought that helicopters could ever supplant seaplanes for offshore rescues. Navy and Marine Corps fliers were cool to the idea. The military application of autogiros had not proved useful. The helicopters, to its detractors, were a weird looking contraption, derisively referred to as "*Igor's Nightmare.*"

The detractors had been conditioned. The Navy said in 1938 that "Rotoplanes might be of some use in anti-submarine warfare, but it was a minor application and hardly justified the expenditure of experimental funds." CAPT Walter S. Diehl, the Navy's chief aerodynamicist, predicted that a helicopter could not be built that could carry a useful load. Even Wilbur Wright, in 1909 had commented about the idea of a helicopter. "If the engine fails," he wrote, "it must fall with deathly violence for it can neither glide like an

aeroplane nor float like a balloon. The helicopter is much easier to design than an aeroplane," he continued, "but it is worthless when done."

Previous Navy and Marine Corps experience had begun with the purchase in 1931 of three experimental XOP-1 autogiros from the Pitcairn Autogiro Company. Navy LT A. M. Pride tested one of the autogiros on board of U.S.S. Langley on September 23, 1931. The Marine Corps used another in field operations in Nicaragua. Neither service was satisfied with the results. In 1935, the fixed wings were removed from one of the aircraft. It became the Navy's first heavier-than-air aircraft without fixed wings, the XOP-2. However, the modification still did not result in acceptable performance.

The Army Air Force showed more interest in the autogiro than the sea services. However, the Army's accident record was not good. Brig. Gen. Franklin Gregory, USAF (Ret.), in "*Anything A Horse Can Do,*" says, while attempting to land, the autogiro tilted over so far that the rotor blades struck the ground. Because of accidents, the Army's three direct-control autogiros had to be sent back to the factory for repairs. Most of the accidents were caused by ground resonance that could tear an aircraft apart. Fortunately, none of the accidents were serious.

Army LT H. S. Nichols, at 3,500 feet with a field artillery officer on board as an observer, was flying a YG-1A at Fort Benning, Georgia. The rotor threw a blade and the out-of-balance condition snapped the pylon. The rotor flew off into space and the aircraft plummeted in a violent spin. Nichols was knocked out, but somehow cleared the fuselage. His observer struck the stabilizer and broke his arm. The two men parachuted to earth, lucky to be alive.

In spite of the failures, then LT H. F. Gregory, who became the Army's Rotary Wing Project Officer, remained faithful in his belief that the autogiro had great potential.

In Germany, Dr. Heinrich Focke designed a helicopter with two contra-rotating rotors mounted on laterally displaced out-riggers. The control was so precise that Hanna Reitsch, Germany's foremost aviatrix, flew the machine

inside the Sports Palace in Berlin. There were skeptics in the U. S. who was sure that the Germans were only propagandizing, but there were also believers. The Platt-LePage Company of Eddystone, Pennsylvania had already begun designing a similar machine. Wright Field was interested in the project, but they did not have the money for development.

U. S. Representative Frank J. G. Dorsey of Pennsylvania introduced a bill HR-8143, in Congress for funds to develop the autogiro and procure a sufficient number for service tests. The bill passed on June 30, 1938 was not limited to autogiros. It appropriated \$2,000,000 for rotary-wing and other aircraft research. The funds were put under the control of the Secretary of War. An Inter-Agency Board, representing all possible government users of rotary-wing aircraft, was created.

Funds did not become available until nearly a year later, and then only \$300,000 was appropriated. Bids for the construction of a helicopter were opened on April 15, 1940. Coast Guard CDR William J. Kossler, a member of the board, met with the others to consider proposals by Platt-LePage and Sikorsky. Kossler said that the Platt-LePage proposal was chosen because it was considered more practical although the Sikorsky single-main-rotor aircraft had already been tested in tethered flight on Sept. 14, 1939.

Less than a month after the bids were opened, the less complicated Sikorsky machine flew in free flight. Sikorsky continued to make impressive progress without government support. By the end of the year, the United Aircraft Company had sunk an estimated \$100,000 into the development of Sikorsky's first experimental helicopter, the VS-300. The Platt-LePage helicopter, the XR-1, did not make its first tethered flight until May 22, 1941. Sikorsky had already established a new international helicopter endurance record of 1 hour, 32 minutes and 26.1 seconds.

On December 17, 1940, with serious doubts about their first decision, the Board met to take another look at the Sikorsky proposal. The Board decided that two helicopters of different design were better than one, but only \$50,000 remained unspent of their appropriation. United Aircraft agreed to put up another \$50,000. Additional funds would have to be raised later.

The flight test program began on January 14, 1942 when the second Sikorsky helicopter, the XR-4, lifted off the ground for the first time in free flight. By April, Gregory, now a Lieutenant Colonel, decided that the XR-4 could be demonstrated before the board although the machine had only 9 ½ hours of flight time. The day of the demonstration, April 20, broke cold, gloomy and overcast with moderately strong wind gusts.

Only a few of the Board members showed up including CDR Kossler who had invited CDR W. A. Burton, Commanding Officer, Coast Guard Air Station, Brooklyn. Another interested observer was Wing Commander Reggie Brie, RAF. He had been sent to the U. S. to investigate the potential of helicopters for anti-submarine duty on board British merchant ships. Chief test pilot, Les Morris, said, "the group was; interested, yes; skeptical perhaps; courteous and open-minded, yes; but not enthusiastic!"

Morris maneuvered the XR-4 forward, backward and sideways. He flew a slowly twisting course between rows of trees, and then climbed vertically to 500 feet.

He sped by the observers at 250 feet doing tight turns and a power-off glide. While the aircraft hovered at 25 feet, a man climbed aboard up a rope ladder. He pulled the ladder in after him and the helicopter flew away. What a magnificent demonstration! An answer to the Coast Guard's rescue problem?

Morris buckled on a parachute and ascended into the base of the solid overcast at 5,000 feet. Out of visual contact with the ground, he became disoriented. The XR-4 lost air speed and began to fall. With the machine out of control and vibrating badly, Morris instinctively shoved the stick forward. He came out of the clouds, regained airspeed and went into a power glide. At 2,000 feet, he cut the power and auto-rotated into a perfect landing.

The demonstration caused great excitement at Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington, D. C., except where it counted. CDR P. A. Leamy, Aviation Operations Officer, advocated the purchase of several VS helicopters for training and experimental development. CDR Kossler thought that three should be purchased for about

\$250,000, but neither the Engineer-in-Chief nor the Assistant Commandant was convinced. "The acquisition of helicopters is not essential to the war effort," they said. Without the support of these two officers - next in rank to the Commandant - the future for Coast Guard helicopters looked bleak.

It was a discussion with CDR Kossler that won LCDR F. A. Erickson over to the team promoting helicopters for Coast Guard use. Erickson was the Executive Officer at the Air Station, Floyd Bennett Field, Brooklyn, N.Y. Kossler was bitter about the cool reception to his helicopter proposal. One of the Admirals told him, "Hell, Bill, the Navy is not interested in life-saving. They just want to kill the enemy. If the helicopter can't do that, it is not worth anything." Kossler had been on the wrong tack, trying to "sell" the helicopter on the basis of its rescue capability. A few days later, Kossler's assistant, LT Bill Henly, arrived at the Air Station. He asked over lunch if someone could fly him to Bridgeport for an appointment with Dr. Igor Sikorsky. Erickson quickly volunteered.

Erickson spent hours with Sikorsky and his Chief Engineer, Michael Gluharoff, discussing possible uses of the helicopter. He witnessed a convincing demonstration of the VS-300 repeatedly landing within an inch or two of a given point. This was an important feature if the machines were to be operated from small platforms on board ships in rough water.

Upon his return to Brooklyn, Erickson immediately began composing a proposal to Headquarters. He stressed the use of the helicopter as an anti-submarine weapon for ships in convoy. He also pointed out that the British were switching from the autogiro to the helicopter based on the recommendation of Wing Commander Brie who had earlier witnessed the XR-4 demonstration. CDR Burton strongly endorsed Erickson's proposal because the air station was deeply involved in anti-submarine warfare. In the early months of the war, the Coast Guard sank three German submarines, and before the war was over, the service would sink eight more.

In his memorandum proposal, Erickson laid out some specifics. He suggested that five of the XR-4's being procured by the Army, be diverted to the Coast Guard. He said that 30-foot square

platforms would be needed on the ships that would carry the helicopters. The XR-4's, Erickson said, with a crew of two and a 125-pound depth charge on board, could scout for submarines for up to four hours per sortie. He also suggested an arrangement for rescuing survivors of torpedoed ships.

It was Erickson's proposal that turned the tide of thinking. The proposal arrived in Headquarters in early July 1942, immediately after one of the most disastrous months in the battle of the Atlantic. During June, 55 U. S. Merchant Ships had gone to the bottom - 289,790 tons or more than 4% of the total U. S. tonnage.

The Army XR-4's would not be coming off the production line until early in 1943. The British were already procuring them under lend-lease. CDR Kossler suggested that the British might turn a few helicopters over to the Coast Guard if requested. The proposal was immediately approved.

On July 24, 1942, the Navy Bureau of Aeronautics ordered four helicopters - one YR-4 (similar to the XR-4) and three XR-6's (a later model). The XR-6 became the Navy XHOS-1.

The Commander, Coast Guard Forces, Third Naval District, RADM Stanley V. Parker, a World War I aviator, let it be known that he would like to see the VS-300. He and CAPT Kossler flew to the Vought-Sikorsky plant at Stratford, CT on December 21, 1942. Dr. Sikorsky was delighted. It was his first opportunity to show his helicopter to an officer of flag rank.

To date, the highest-ranking Naval Officer that had seen the helicopters in action, was the Inspector of Naval Aircraft at the Vought-Sikorsky plant. He was a Commander and was not impressed. The development of helicopters, he thought, would interfere with the production of fighters.

RADM Parker, also a former dirigible pilot, was converted that day by a pull-out-all-stops demonstration by both Dr. Sikorsky and his chief test pilot, Les Morris. On Christmas Eve, Parker wrote to the Commandant: "Kossler and I saw the Sikorsky helicopter fly at Bridgeport. It is a remarkable thing, capable of flying forward, sideways, and astern. Its control is unbelievable.

It landed on the roof of a small building, on top of a pile of aircraft engine cases, on the water, and flew abreast at the same speed as a tugboat. A couple of these with each convoy might give a degree of protection, which might be decisive. A new model is being developed. Might not the Coast Guard be given the job of showing its application to convoy protection? Kossler can tell you all about it. Maybe we can get the Coast Guard on the wagon.”

As a result of Parker’s comments, ADM Waesche, the Commandant, decided to go to Bridgeport. He and several high-ranking officers arrived at Bridgeport airport on February 13, 1943. They were greeted by Igor Sikorsky and Michael Gluharoff. During the demonstration, Sikorsky flew the VS-300 while Morris flew the XR-4. Two helicopters, in precision maneuvers, impressively showed their potential for anti-submarine warfare.

“Igor’s Nightmare,” was at last being given serious consideration. Even the Inspector of Naval Aircraft allowed that, “The helicopter might be all right for the Coast Guard.”

ADM Waesche was completely “sold”. He conferred with the CNO, ADM King, who then issued a directive placing upon the Coast Guard, the responsibility for developing the sea-going helicopter. The project laid the groundwork for the Navy and Marine Corps helicopter programs that followed.

AIRCREW MEN

BILL “RED DOGG” MOSS, AFCM (AW/NAC) USN (Ret) Autobiography

Joined the Navy in Nov. 1963, Boot Camp at Great Lakes and in Feb of 1964 was assigned to ADR (A) School Memphis. June 1964 orders to NAF Naha Okinawa.

Was on Okinawa for about 5 weeks when they decided I needed to go to NAF NAHA DET TANGO in Tainan, Taiwan. Sent TAD to Taiwan for 30 days... Drove Gas trucks in support of the VP Detachments there. P2V's from Iwakuni, Barbers Point and Whidbey Island. Spent 120 days on a 30 day TAD and with the Per Diem Rate at \$5.50/day, it was a

select set of orders, especially for a young strapping ADRAN making about \$78.00 a month. November 1965 TAD ended and they made everybody in Tainan PCS and I had the opportunity to meet ADR1 Charlie Haupt who later became the AFCM Detailer.

I went back to Naha and began my Naval Aircrew career. Started out as a Plane Captain on a UC45J. Made ADR3 and they made me the senior Plane Captain for all 3 of them and I had a couple of ADRAN's and AN's working for me. Flew all the support for COMNAVRYUKUS. Began training on the HU16C Albatross as second Crewchief. (As a footnote to this the senior Pilot and Crewchief both flew with my dad in WWII on PBY's in VP14B. Lt Bill Crowder was the Pilot and ADR1 Bill Watson was the Crewchief). Made many a water landing at White Beach and Sasebo where you had to land in the sea-lanes and taxi up on the ramp.

NAHA was tasked to support the P5M squadrons assigned to the Gulf of Tonkin so the HU-16 from Naha became the Ships COD for the assigned Tender and flew in and out of Saigon for Mail, Personnel and Parts...December 1965 assigned to VP-46 as a maintenance type... Performed scheduled and unscheduled maintenance on P3B type Aircraft.

Was supposed to rotate to shore duty when LBJ froze all the orders and I made the deployment to Naha and then on to Sangley Point enroute to Utapao, Thailand. Relieved VP-16 in the Tents and Trailers of Utapao with its dust, dirt, snakes, scorpions and Rats...BIG RATS. We did both North and South (Red and Blue) tracks out of Utapao and I believe VP-46 was the first VP squadron with a "Kill"... We Identified a North Vietnamese Junk off the coast and called in the coordinates and the Coasties came out and sunk it.

Caught the Freedom Bird home in June of 1967 and was assigned to HT8 at Ellyson Field Fla. as an ADR2. Worked as a Check Crew supervisor on the UH-34's at Ellyson... The first months in the Helicopter Community took some getting used to after being in the fixed wing community for so long. Funny thing was the fact that several of my shipmates from ADR “A” school were there when I checked in... and had been there since “A” school. Here I am coming off of 2 tours in WESTPAC and really couldn’t under-

stand the East Coast Navy and its way of thinking. These guys were happy they didn't have to go anywhere... I never would adjust to that mindset and I was here on a 60 month tour!!

ADR1 Bill Lee, who I had known on Okinawa when he was flying 34's for VC-5 Det. B, came to me on the hanger deck one day soon after I got there and said he was looking for some experienced crewman. He knew I had flown on Okinawa and would I be interested in becoming a SAR Crewman! I jumped at the chance.

As I worked nights, and the only time you flew was when you worked, it was a good deal. I volunteered to fly. Went thru the SAR swimmer course that they had at Ellyson and began what was to be a long career in and out of the SAR community. My original Aircrew Card (when they had them) was signed by J. J. Jaburg CO, HT-8.

Did a lot of student training and flew a lot of Starboard Delta time off the USS Lexington Detachments. One of my favorite training flights was the "rocks and blocks" external load flights out at Ferry Pass. They would land and let the crewman out and we would direct the pick up with hand signals. It took an "on top" hover or the load would snatch the Helo over the top of the load. Many a new student had his attention got trying to maneuver the 34 over the load exactly to prevent being jerked and getting his butt chewed by the IP for "overstressing" the hook and airframe!!

It was during this time that the Navy had lost a pilot with a deployed chute. Chute had pulled him under and he had drowned. There was no method to save him...At that time you basically put the Rescue Seat in the water and had him climb aboard. Or you put the SAR crewman on the seat and he rode it down with the Swimmers Horse Collar and the Reverse Jaws cable clamp. He rescued the pilot and got him into the seat and then clamped his Horse collar above the pilot or rode the seat with him and the crew chief pulled them into the Helo. The rule was never to hook a pilot with his chute attached.

Well after we lost one there was a determination that hooking a pilot with chute attached could be done. Crises always bring change. We flew a 34 down to Mainside Pensacola and met the EOD guys.. They dressed one of their guys out

in a chute and we briefed what we were gonna do. Basically hook the chute and fly the guy out. (Later this would become known as a Short-Haul in the Inland SAR community). We performed this and several variations right in the area where the I-10 bridge is now, off the end of the runway at Ellyson.

Much later ADCS Bill Nalley, the Enlisted SARMM, would question if anybody had ever done this because the thought process had gone back to do not hook a pilot with a chute connected and they lost a A-7 Skipper or XO in the Indian Ocean because the crew did not hook his vest to the hoist because the chute was still attached. To hook it would have been a violation of SAROPS. When I told Nalley to check his archives that there were a bunch of pictures of us doing the "Short-Haul" with the chute taken that day. So 10 years or so later they find the pictures taken in '67 and changed the SAR Manual to read you can hook the pilot's vest to the hoist in order to keep his head above water and facilitate removal of the chute. Another lesson learned.

After a year and a half of East Coast Shore duty I decided I had had enough and terminated shore duty to return to WESTPAC. In 13 months I had accumulated roughly 400 hours in the H-34 and spent 4 months flying SAR off the Lexington. The ADR2 detailer was looking for a body and I was it!! He had to fill a Line Petty Officer billet at..."some little detachment way the hell out in Taiwan"... did I want it??? "Bet your sweet..." was my answer. So with orders to NAF NAHA DET TANGO Tainan, Taiwan in hand, I re-enlisted as an ADR2 and sold back 45 days leave and picked up that big reenlistment check for \$958.00. It was March 1969 and the first Jet-Rangers were on the Hanger Deck at Ellyson. There to replace the Bell H13 as a primary trainer.

Checked into Det. Tango. (After an exciting bout with food poisoning in Taipei and a rough train ride down Island). What a place, 15 Sailors and 500,000 Chinese. We were on one end of the Chinese Air Force Base and Air Asia (Air America's Maint. Facility) and the US Air Force was on the other end. Three and one half acres of best kept secret in the USN. We were the stop-off point for anything going from Danang, Sangley, Cubi, and point's south enroute to Naha, Iwakuni, or Atsugi.

The Ramp was usually feast or famine. Some days there would be VQ-1 EC121's and VW-1 Typhoon Trackers all in there together and we could expect the VQ-1 A3 and usually a C118 from VR-21 and a C130 from VQ-3.

In '69 there was the last P2 deployment. I believe it was VP-2. VR-21 and their VIP C118 crews were in there with ADRC's Jim Ward and "Andy" Devine, ADR1's Frank Costello and Tom Tjohn and numerous others that flew the Coal Haulers whose names escape me. As a footnote, when I left Tainan C118 #609 VR-21 was in overhaul in Air Asia. Five or so years later it made the last "Red Label" run to Barking Sands Hawaii where I was the Line PO.

The year 1970 was interesting... Viet Nam was hot and there were a lot of Naval Aircraft cycling in and out of Air Asia. Everything from C118's to OV10's to UH1E's. The Air force had a Test Pilot Facility set up at Air Asia (Det. 9-AFCMC) for their Airplanes: F105 Thuds and F100's and some other go fasters. The Navy had nothing until COMFAIRWESTPAC decided that it needed at least 2 Naval Aircrewman to fly test flights on the UH1E's and OV10's that had been sent to Air Asia for repair. (Most of these airplanes came to Air Asia as Combat Battle Damage, CBD, and usually in 4 boxes or so). The first OV10 that was sent in was put back together to a point then sat on the hanger deck waiting on 150 NORS items. I flew observer in that airplane 4 months later.

(Continued next issue)

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FRANK J. LEETS, ADC (AW/NAC) USN
"US NAVY Search and Rescue Aircrewman"
BORN WET!!!

I was asked to write a short story of the accounts that occurred May 28, 1997 while on deployment with a helicopter detachment from HC-8 embarked aboard USS Seattle (AOE-3). I was the detachments QAR as well as one of three crewchiefs. We had a compliment of two CH-46D helicopters. The detachment was on work-ups in the Caribbean Sea performing vertical replenishment as the ship conducted underway replenishment. The crew consisted of a senior Helicopter Aircraft Commander (HAC) a very

junior Co-pilot (H2P), senior crewchief and brand new second crewman.

My crew launched at 0455 into the early morning skies to complete an ammunition upload of the USS George Washington (CVN-73) during COMPTUEX. After conducting an "OPS-Normal" check of all systems and receiving clearance to commence VERTREP operations, the HAC made his first approach at 0500 to pickup a load on the Seattle, which was in CONREP position abeam the USS George Washington.

I assumed the forward position in the rescue hatch, facing aft so I could train my second crewman who was in the aft position facing forward. I cleared the helo into position and connected the first load pendant to the cargo hook. I heard the co-pilot say our NR was at 90% (minimum transit is 88%) so I released the load and called "load clear wave-off, wave-off". The #1 Engine had rolled back and was producing minimum power.

We faced a flight deck completely fouled with 3,000-pound bombs and various other munitions. Our NR was rapidly decreasing through 80% and the HAC heeded the call for wave-off and attempted transition to forward flight. With the carrier less than 100 feet away and directly in the wave off flight path the HAC was forced to slide aft and fly under the carrier's fantail, perpendicular to the wind-line.

During the transition the co-pilot called for and armed the emergency throttle and then started the Auxiliary Power Unit (APU) at the same time I secured the rescue hatch with my second crewman. I grab my second crewman and we ran up front to assist the pilots. The NR soon decayed beyond 70% and the generators tripped off line. The cockpit went completely black and quite then we hit the water. The rescue hatch blew open and a geyser of water began to fill the after station. The second crewman and I ran back and secured the hatch as best we could. I heard the engine's ingesting salt water and the NR start to scream as the HAC pulled power and got us airborne again.

NR dropped again by the time I made it back to the cockpit. I grabbed the APU crossover switch and tried to get some kind of power back. Nothing... and we hit the water again. The

geyser blew into the rescue hatch and this time the dry suit blower motors were arching sending blue electric trails along the inside of the aft cabin area and a bright flash every now and again. The second crewman and I stood on the door because the latches were completely broken. It stooped the water somewhat. The NR spun up and we were airborne again.

I knew we wouldn't last long because the rotors labored worse than before. I made it back to the cockpit in time to grab the APU start switch and push it forward twice before we hit the water again. I ran back to the after station and my second crewman and I tried to lock down the hatch. I started thinking systems. I knew it was our last chance. I checked the battery bus circuit breaker and it was in. I ran back to the cockpit and hit the APU start switch, nothing happened. Though the cockpit was black I could still make out the switches. I started from scratch. I reached forward grabbed the battery switch and pulled it on. All the lights in the cockpit eliminated and I started the APU crossed it over and restored full electrical power.

The HAC armed Emergency throttle and regained full power from both motors. He popped us off the water and transitioned to forward flight. We were pretty heavy with all the water and our NR was again dropping pretty rapidly. The race was on to get single engine airspeed. The HAC porpoised the helicopter milking the NR a mile and a half landing safely on the back of the USS George Washington.

My HAC didn't quit so I wasn't gonna leave him hanging. **Go as a team -- come back as a team.**

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