

The Genesis Of The Naval Helicopter Association

Article By CAPT Vincent C. Secades, USN (Ret.)

Photos courtesy of the NHHS Archives

The best way to be ready for the future is to create it.
John Sculley

This apothegm, attributed to the former CEO of APPLE Computers, could not be more fittingly applied than to the twelve pioneers who created the Naval Helicopter Association. This is their story.

The concept of rotary-wing vertical flight is as old as the famous Leonardo da Vinci notebooks and drawings originated in the early sixteenth century. However, the development of fixed-wing aircraft has preceded and greatly outpaced that of helicopters. To a young naval aviator, beginning a career flying the modern, powerful, sophisticated, multi-mission capable helicopters we have today, it must be very difficult to envision the time, just half a century ago, when the gap between fixed-wing and rotary-wing aviation was truly astronomical. At a time when airplanes, propelled by powerful turbojet engines, were breaking the sound barrier and flying to the very edge of space, helicopters, in contrast, were rudimentary machines, very fragile, poorly instrumented, day-VFR-only capable, grossly underpowered by piston engines sometimes adapted from other applications, like Army tanks.

This chasm between airplane and helicopter capabilities permeated the naval aviation community like water suffusing through a sponge. Career paths, job assignments, command and promotion opportunities, all reflected the abyss that existed in the tactical applications of airplanes and helicopters. This state of affairs was also reflected in the naval aviation advocacy organizations. The fixed-wing community enjoyed the support of several such organizations. The Tailhook Association, with its very popular annual Las Vegas conventions, and the Association of Naval Aviation (ANA), with a significant lobbying presence in Washington, were the two most influential organizations performing a very important job educating the public and our national leaders on the importance of naval aviation to our national defense, and promoting its technical development. In contrast, the naval helicopter community lacked any such advocacy organization. In the summer of 1971, a group of twelve rotary-wing professionals, one civilian and eleven naval officers, four in active duty and seven retired, embarked in a quest to correct that deficiency.

Until that year, the reunions of naval helicopter professionals had been very informal. The helicopter pilots serving with the squadrons based at the then Naval Auxiliary Air Station (NAAS) Ream Field and in local staffs had been holding annual informal gatherings, which were mainly social events, opportunities to fraternize and exchange stories and ideas. Since the first West Coast Navy helicopter squadron was established in 1948, this group arbitrarily numbered

its reunions starting with number one that year. Thus, their 1971 reunion, held on 29 January at the recently redesignated NAS Imperial Beach, was their "24th Reunion." This reunion was a bigger affair than usual. A group of helicopter pilots working in Washington, D.C., came to inform local pilots on ongoing projects. They addressed a spellbound audience in the station's auditorium. In one of the hangars, corporate participants constructed display booths. They manned the booths and offered suitable handouts. Static displays of helos and equipment were set up. They drew a good crowd.

Later that year, a small group of officers, lead by Mark Starr and Al Monahan, discussed the idea of creating an organization and formalizing their reunions into annual conventions. They invited a number of other officers in the helo community to join in the effort. Of the many invited, a few responded. Twelve men, our twelve pioneers, met at their first formal meeting on 2 November 1971 in the West Room of the Officers Club at NAS Imperial Beach. This meeting was the seminal event in the creation of the Navy Helicopter Association.

Who were these twelve farsighted pioneers who, moved by the force of a vision, took upon themselves the task of creating a Navy Helicopter advocacy organization that would be as prestigious and influential as those organizations supporting the fixed-wing community, if not more?



CAPT Alfred E. Monahan was born and raised in Northern Idaho. During the buildup that followed the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, he volunteered for naval service. He joined the Navy in July 1942. He completed flight training and received his commission in September 1943 at NAS Corpus Christi, Texas. He served in the Pacific theater while attached to VC-84, flying the F6F Hellcat. He covered the Allied landings in Northern Philippines, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa. During his service in the Pacific, he earned two Distinguished Flying Crosses, seven Air Medals, and numerous other citations. After the war, he qualified as Landing Signal Officer (LSO) and served with several air groups in the Pacific. A tour as flight instructor in Pensacola followed. There he trained students on carrier landings. In 1950 he received helicopter flight training at the Army/Air Force Helicopter Training Unit, Waco, Texas. His Navy Helicopter Pilot designation is # 250. He saw action in Korea while serving with HU-2, embarked aboard

Continued on page 9

FOCUS: THE GENESIS OF THE NAVAL HELICOPTER ASSOCIATION

Continued from page 8

USS *Leyte* (CV-32). He commanded HS-4, HS-10, and Antisubmarine Carrier Air Group 51. He was COMFAIR San Diego Staff Operations Officer, USS *Bennington* (CVS-20) Operations Officer, and ASWG-3 Staff Operations Officer. He retired in February 1971. A distinguished looking man with a sharp, at times wry sense of humor, a sagacious thinker whose carefully chosen words always carry great weight, he was the natural leader of this group.



CAPT Mark R Starr was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on 05 November 1923. He enlisted in the Navy in 1942, and entered flight training in 1943 as an aviation cadet. He was commissioned and designated a Naval Aviator in October 1945. Next, he served tours with VC-4 and VF-14. In 1948 Mark underwent helicopter training with USAF Training Group 3585 at San Marcos AFB, Texas. His Navy Helicopter Pilot designation number is 121. Here is a pioneer among pioneers! Subsequently, he served in HU-2, Lakehurst, N.J., HTU-1, Ellyson Field, FL., and HS-4 at Ream Field, CA. He is a graduate of the General Line School at Monterey, CA., the University of Southern California, and the Naval War College. He reported to HS-6 in March 1962 and served as Operations Officer, Executive Officer, and Commanding Officer. He assumed command of HS-10 in January 1965. He was Commander of Antisubmarine Carrier Air Group 51, and Flag Secretary to COMCARDIV-15. He served as Operations Officer and Executive Officer of USS *Yorktown* (CVS-10). A tour in the Office of the Chief Of Naval Operations, OP-3, followed. He returned to San Diego in 1971 to serve with the Staff, COMASWINGPAC. A very dynamic individual, unafraid to make decisions and bestir their implementation, he was the driving force in the creation of NHA.



CAPT Alvin F. Emig was born on 4 October 1920 in Shepard, Ohio. He grew up in Gahanna, Ohio. He attended Ohio State University before joining the Navy shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. After completing flight training he was assigned to VB-19 embarked on USS *Lexington* (CV-16). He was awarded the Navy Cross, the second highest sea service award, for his extraordinary heroism while flying dive bombers on 5 November 1944 against enemy shipping over Manila Bay, Philippines. After a tour at NAS Patuxent River, MD, he received helicopter training in Pensacola in 1952. Service in the Korean Theater followed. He is a graduate of the Naval War College. He reported to HS-8 in January 1958 as the XO, and assumed command in January 1959. He served tours at NAS Glenview, Illinois, the Philadelphia Naval Base, and Washington, D.C. He was Commander of Antisubmarine Carrier Air Group 51. His last tour was in the Staff of COMNAVAIRPAC. He retired in 1973, after 30 years of military service.



Mr. Harold Nachlin was born in the Bronx, New York, on 25 October 1918. He grew up, completed high school, and attended college in New York City. He studied aircraft maintenance at the Roosevelt Aviation School, and earned his Aircraft & Engine Mechanic license in September 1943. In November of that year he went to work for Sikorsky Aircraft as crew chief in R-4 helicopters being built for the U.S. Army. He worked in the early military and civilian applications of the R-5A, HO3S, and HO4S helos. In October 1949 he began service with the Field Service Department. He served in Venezuela, training Venezuelan Air Force personnel to maintain their R-5 helos. In July 1950 he was assigned to VMO-6, the observation squadron attached to the First Marine Brigade, fighting in Korea. In November 1950 he was transferred to COMFAIR Japan, making him available to all Navy and Marine helo units in the WESTPAC Theater. In November 1951 he was assigned to O&R North Island. In March 1954 he was temporarily assigned to the Indian Air Force, supporting their H-19 acquisition. In April 1955, back in San Diego, he was designated Western Area Supervisor, with ten field technical representatives under his supervision. At the height of the Vietnam War he had 35 men working with Navy, Marine, Air Force, and Allied Air Forces in the Pacific. In 1971, in recognition of his vast knowledge and experience in helicopter engineering and maintenance, he was invited to join the NHA founding committee.



CDR Hugh F McLinden, Jr., was born in Maspeth, Long Island, N.Y., on March 22, 1920. He joined the Navy in September 1941 in the V-5 aviation cadet program. He completed flight training and was commissioned in October 1942. He flew dive bombers with VC-24, based in the Solomon Islands. A veteran of 26 combat missions, he received the Distinguished Flying Cross, six Air Medals, and numerous other citations. After the war, he qualified as Landing Signal Officer and performed LSO duties at sea until July 1950. Next, he completed helicopter flight training at Connolly AFB, Waco, Texas (Navy Helicopter Pilot designation number 312). Hugh then reported to HU-2, Lakehurst, NJ. From there he went to VX-1, Key West, FL., as senior pilot in the OPDEVFOR program to develop dipping sonar capabilities in the HO4S-1.

Continued on page 10

FOCUS: THE GENESIS OF THE NAVAL HELICOPTER ASSOCIATION

Continued on page 9

A tour with HS-3 followed. There he was the prime mover in putting the first ASW helicopters on an ASW carrier for an operational exercise. He was also instrumental in putting the first ASW helo detachment aboard an ASW carrier for deployment. He was Executive Officer of HS-6 in 1956, followed by duty with CARDIV-15, embarked on USS *Princeton* (CVS-37). After a tour as BUWEPS Representative at Boeing Vertol, Philadelphia, he went back to sea in the Staff of CARDIV-19 aboard USS *Yorktown* (CVS-10). His last tour was as Assistant Head of the Rotary Wing Section, BUWEPS, Washington, D.C. He retired in July 1965. After going back to school and obtaining a Masters and a Teaching Credential, Hugh launched his second career as a high school mathematics teacher in Chula Vista, CA. Yet, he remained very closely associated with the helo community for the rest of his life.



CDR Walter "Smoky" Staight was born in Fort Wayne, Indiana on 8 February 1921. He joined the Navy in 1942. After completing flight training he served as a ferry pilot in the Naval Air Ferry Command until 1945. He was a flight instructor in Pensacola in the early 1950s. During his tour in Pensacola he received helicopter flight training. It was there that he was nicknamed "Smoky."

Upon returning from a forest fire observation flight, his squadron mates detected the smoky aroma about him. They began to call him "Smoky." He liked the sobriquet, and it stuck with him for the rest of his life. After Pensacola he moved to NAS Agana, Guam, where he flew search and rescue. Next came a tour with HU-1. He deployed to the Antarctic aboard the icebreaker USS *Staten Island* (AGB-5). A shore tour at NAS Grosse Ile, Michigan, followed. He was the Officer in Charge of the Naval Recruiting Center in Western New York, and the CO of the Naval Reserve Training Center in Houston, Texas. His last tour was with the Staff of the Commandant, Eleventh Naval District, San Diego. He retired from active duty in 1969. A very gregarious person, with an open, friendly visage and a full head of white hair, he was loved by all who knew him. He remained actively involved with the naval helicopter community, as attested by his role in the creation of NHA.



Richard Walloch was born in Tomahawk, Wisconsin. He grew up in the Milwaukee area. After his High School graduation in 1942, he enlisted in the Navy's V-5 aviation cadet program. After completing that program and subsequent training in the PV-2 *Harpoon* medium bomber, he was assigned to Kaneohe, Hawaii in May 1945. The day he was scheduled to be

transferred to Okinawa for combat duty, 15 August 1945, the Japanese capitulated. In November 1945 he was released from active duty and transferred to the ready reserve. He was recalled into active service in January 1952, and sent

to Pensacola as a flight instructor. Assigned to Ellyson Field, Richard completed helicopter training in June 1953 (designation number 1631). In May 1954 he reported to HU-1 at Ream Field. His first assignment was aboard the icebreaker USS *Burton Island* (AGB-1) deployed to the North Pole. His next assignment was as Officer in Charge of the helo detachment embarked on USS *Hancock* (CVA-19) deployed to WESTPAC. The 5th of December 1955, while flying near the carrier, his HUP suffered a control failure and crashed into the sea. Richard suffered a serious back injury. After surgery and a long convalescence, being unable to remain in flying status, the Navy discharged him in May 1957. Although he was a LCDR, he had not accrued the 20 years of active duty required to be able to retire with pay. It is a measure of the man that, although he had every reason to feel bitter about his lot in the Navy, he remained engaged with the helo community and continued to participate in its social gatherings and other activities, including the founding of NHA.



CDR Philip W. Nicholas

is a native of Southeastern Kansas, where he was raised in a dairy farm. From an early age aircraft fascinated him. A very gregarious young man, he enlisted in the Navy's V-5 aviation cadet program on 3 June 1942. He completed Lighter-than-Air training and received his commission in July 1943. Two years flying blimp ASW patrols off the West Coast followed. He went back to flight training in July 1945,

and completed the multiengine pipeline in March 1947. His next assignment was with VP-7 flying the P2V *Neptune*. In 1950 he returned to Pensacola as a flight instructor. There he transitioned to helicopters. He then served with HS-3 at NAF Weeksville, N.C., flying the HO4S in the ASW role. After a staff tour in Norfolk, General Line School in Monterey, and Armed Forces Staff College back in Norfolk, he was assigned to the Naval Ordnance Test Station at NAF China Lake, CA. He assumed command of HS-4 in August 1960. Under his leadership, HS-4 demonstrated the HSS1-N night sonar dipping operational capabilities, becoming the first HS squadron to become 24-hours mission ready. After a tour in the staff of

Continued on page 11



CAPT Monahan presenting the 1972 Pilot of the Year award to LT Steve Milner with Mrs. Milner at his side.

FOCUS: THE GENESIS OF THE NAVAL HELICOPTER ASSOCIATION

Continued from page 10

the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA., he retired in August 1966. One of the very few members of the rare breed of naval aviators who had ASW operational tours in blimps, airplanes, and helicopters, he has remained actively engaged with the helo community in the San Diego area.



CDR Donald J. Hayes was born in Brooklyn, New York on 8 February 1924. A slim, quiet man with a steeled character behind an easy smile, he started his naval career in December 1942. He completed flight training in October 1945. By then the war had ended. He was transferred to the reserves. In 1952 he was recalled to active duty. After refresher flight training, he was assigned to VU-2, NAS Quonset Point, R.I., flying various fixed-wing aircraft. After tours with the Bureau of Aeronautics and NAS Guantanamo Bay, in early 1961 he transitioned to helicopters. After a short stint with NASA, he served with HS-4, was XO and CO of HS-2, and CO of HS-10. During his HS-2 tour, he pioneered helo in-flight refueling from destroyers at sea, and the use of cabin-mounted fuel tanks to extend the range and endurance of search and rescue missions. Under his leadership, HS-2 earned the Navy Unit Citation for its performance while conducting combat search and rescue operations over enemy territory in Vietnam. He was Operations Officer and XO of USS *Iwo Jima* (LPH-2). While serving on the staff of COMFAIR San Diego, the worsening of an old back injury forced him to retire in June 1971. His helicopter experience included the H-13, H-19, H-34, and H-3.



CAPT Charles B. Smiley is a native of Oklahoma City, OK. He entered the naval service in 1952. After completing flight training, he served a tour in VP-19 flying the P2V *Neptune*. In 1960 he received helicopter training. A tour with HS-8 followed. He participated in the development of helicopter ASW tactics, including night operations. In 1962 he was selected as the initial Helicopter Exchange Pilot with the Royal Australian Navy. There, he assisted in the introduction of the first turbine powered helicopters operated by the RAN. He assumed command of HS-4 in September 1969. During his HS-4 tour the squadron performed the at-sea recovery of the spacecraft crews in the first five Apollo Lunar missions, with Chuck as Prime Recovery Pilot for the Apollo 10 and 13 missions. In 1971 the Commander, Naval Air Forces Pacific nominated him for the Harmon Trophy, the international trophy awarded annually to world's outstanding aviators. In January 1972 he became CO of HS-10. A soft-spoken, unassuming individual of average height and build, nothing else is average in this extraordinarily capable organizer and inspiring leader.



CAPT Joseph M. Purtell is a native of Brooklyn, New York. A physically powerful man with a bright mind and a commanding presence, he completed the NROTC program at Holy Cross College and was commissioned in 1954. After completing flight training he served a tour with VX-6 during Operation Deep Freeze in the Antarctic. He was sent to Ellyson Field, Pensacola, for helicopter flight training. Back at VX-6, based at *Little America V*, the U.S. Antarctic outpost, he flew the HRS-1 and HUS-1L helos, and the UC-1 *Otter* airplane. Next, he served with VU-4 flying the HUS helo, and JD-1 (B-26) and F9F-8 airplanes. He earned a Masters degree in Financial Management at the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California. His first payback tour was with the Bureau of Naval Weapons, Washington, D.C., in the Budget and Plans Division. He returned to sea duty with HS-5, flying the SH-3A off several aircraft carriers operating in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. He moved up to be Operations Officer with Carrier Air Group 54. After attending the Naval War College, Newport, R.I., he came to the West Coast. He was XO and then CO of HS-2, and became CO of HS-10 in January 1971.



CDR H. Vernon Pepper was born in San Diego, California, in 1922. A big young man with a stern countenance, in 1942 he enlisted in the Navy's V-5 aviation cadet program. He completed his flight training in March 1945. His first assignment was flying the F4F *Wildcat* with VC-92, based at NAF Point Mugu, Oxnard, CA. He saw action in Korea, flying 67 combat missions in F9F *Panthers* while attached to VF-781, embarked aboard USS *Bon Homme Richard* (CV-31). During this tour, he earned the Distinguished Flying Cross and three Air Medals. In 1954 he received helicopter flight training at Ellyson field, Pensacola. A tour with HU-1, at NAAS Ream Field followed. His next tour was as Assistant Operations Officer on the Staff of Utility Wing Service Force, Pacific. He was then assigned to HS-5, NAS Quonset Point, R.I. He deployed aboard USS *Lake Champlain* (CVS-39) flying the SH-34J. He reported to HS-11, Ream Field, in 1961 as XO, and assumed command in July of 1962. During his command, the squadron deployed aboard USS *Wasp* (CVS-18). He became CO of HS-10 in August of 1963. A tour as Operations Officer, USS *Valley Forge* (LPH-8) followed. His next tour was with the Staff, Chief of Naval Air Technical Training, Memphis, Tennessee. He was assigned next to OPNAV (OP-56) in Washington, D.C. His last tour was in NAVAIRSYSCOM as Project Officer in the X22 Program. He retired in April 1968. He went to work for Sikorsky Aircraft in Stratford, Connecticut. He kept in close contact with the helicopter community in San Diego. When invited to participate in the creation of NHA, he eagerly accepted and frequently commuted to San Diego to participate in the meetings and to

Continued to page 12

FOCUS: THE GENESIS OF THE NAVAL HELICOPTER ASSOCIATION

Continued from page 11

contribute all he could.

These twelve men came together at that historic November meeting and decided to do something about the failure of the Navy's officer corps in general, and the aviation community in particular, to recognize the untapped potential of the helicopter in naval operations. They decided that an association should be established to carry out their objectives, with membership opened to all persons willing to support those objectives. They envisioned this association to be an active duty organization, with the retired members providing support and assistance.

The twelve founders created a Board of Trustees for the emerging association, with themselves as the initial members. They approved the set of by-laws previously drafted. These by-laws established the classifications of membership. Membership would be by registration, with an accompanying fee of one dollar, this figure subject to future adjustments by the Board of Trustees. Furthermore, this registration was for life. The grumbles from the early members when this provision was later changed to an annual membership fee can still be heard! CAPT Alfred Monahan was elected the first National President of the Association.

CAPT Mark Starr wrote the first NHA Mission Statement, to wit: "The Navy Helicopter Association is a nonprofit Navy-wide professional and social organization whose purpose is to provide recognition and to enhance the prestige of the U. S. Navy helicopter community, promote the use of helicopters in the U. S. Navy, keep the members informed of new developments and accomplishments, and to meet socially with members of the Association." Here lay the challenge. These men were convinced to the core of their souls that helicopters had capabilities far beyond what had been recognized by the Navy hierarchy. And they had the prophetic vision to foresee the tremendous potential of helicopters in naval warfare. But, how could they convey this knowledge and this vision to a skeptical and even inimical Navy hierarchy?

They agreed that their annual reunions needed to be elevated to full-fledged professional conventions, not just occasions to socialize and have fun. Professionalism would be the core of their conventions. They would be "Symposiums" where industry and professional organizations would have the opportunity to display exhibits and present professional papers on their products and advances in technology. An effort would be made to gain the attention of the Navy's power structure and attract the participation of its members. Additionally, the involvement of wives and other female members would be solicited and encouraged, and events promoted for their participation.

They decided to establish a set of awards to provide recognition for the professional accomplishments and superior performance of the officers and enlisted of the naval helicopter forces.

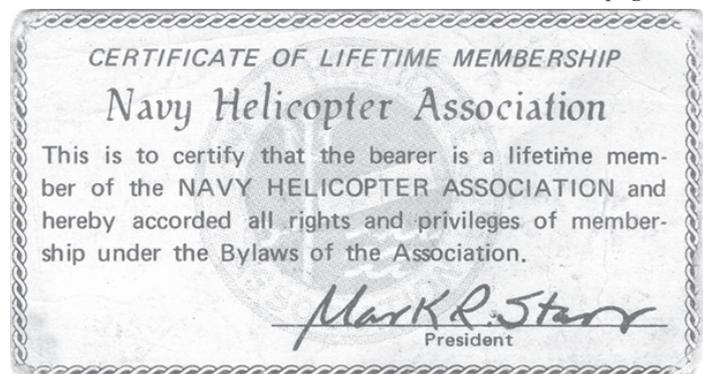
They decided to schedule the 25th reunion, which would be the First NHA Annual Symposium, for the week

of 11 March 1972. Each of the twelve founders contributed twenty-five dollars to establish the initial working capital for the Association. They established a committee to plan, organize, and manage the Symposium. CDR Don Hayes was named Committee Chairman. Don and his committee immediately started the Symposium planning. They mailed out 200 survey questionnaires to members of the helo community to solicit their ideas and objections. They also sent a call for professional papers in trade journals and in company newspapers. The response from the aerospace industry was overwhelming. Although the Symposium was held at the Town and Country Hotel Convention Hall, Don Hayes ran out of wall space to accommodate the panoply of industry exhibits to be displayed. Frank Piasecki, founder of the Piasecki Aircraft Corporation, and one of the great pioneers in the design and development of helicopters, was the principal guest speaker. Two other great helicopter design pioneers, Charles Kaman, and Sergei Sikorsky, the son of the legendary Igor Sikorsky, also attended the Symposium. All the helicopter squadrons in the area held a general stand down to allow their personnel to attend the Safety Symposium. About 500 people attended the event. VADM Paul H. Ramsey USN (Ret.) presented the first NHA Lifetime Service Award to CAPT Frank Erickson, USCG (Ret.) before a capacity crowd. NHA was on its way!

CAPT Mark Starr succeeded CAPT Alfred Monahan as National President in 1973. Don Hayes assembled a staff of volunteers. They helped him and his committee to organize and run the Symposium in 1973 and in following years. With each passing year, the Symposiums became bigger and better. The exhibits were moved to a huge room for which the contractors paid enough to offset some of the overall cost of the Symposium.

The rest is history. NHA was incorporated as a nonprofit professional organization in California in 1978. Its activities grew and multiplied. Its prestige continuously increased. Congressman Bob Wilson, the powerful Chairman of the House Armed Forces Committee, a most important man in the affairs of the Department of Defense, was the guest speaker at the 1978 Symposium. His appearance captured the attention of the Navy hierarchy. NHA was realizing the dream

Continued to page 13



The first NHA Membership Card

FOCUS: THE GENESIS OF THE NAVAL HELICOPTER ASSOCIATION

Continued to page 12

of its founders. Their message was being heard.

The Marine Corps and Coast Guard rotary wing communities were included under the NHA umbrella from its beginning. Changing the Association's name from "Navy Helicopter" to "Naval Helicopter" in 1987 formally recognized this fact.

Many of the founders continued to serve the Association and the helicopter community in various capacities. Don Hayes chaired the Symposiums in 1977 and 1978. After incorporation, he was elected to the Board of Directors. In 1980 he was elected Chairman of the Board. He is a recipient of the NHA Distinguished Service Award. He is a member of the Board of Directors and the Treasurer of the Naval Helicopter Historical Society (NHHS).

Al Monahan received the NHA Lifetime Service Award in 1973.

Mark Starr took command of FASOTRAGRUPAC in June 1974. He retired from active duty in 1976 after 34 years of service. After his retirement he served in the Board of Directors of the San Diego Aerospace Museum. In 1977 he became President of the Museum. When the Museum was destroyed by fire in 1978, Mark Starr provided the leadership needed to rebuild a bigger and better Museum. He continued to serve in the Museum Board until 1985.

Chuck Smiley's last active duty assignment was as Chief of Staff, COMASWWINGPAC. He was the NHA National President in 1975. He received the NHA Lifetime Service Award in 2003. He was the Founding President of NHHS. He is also a Member of the Founders Circle and Board of Directors of the San Diego Aircraft Carrier Museum (USS *Midway*).

Joe Purtell, after tours with USS *New Orleans* (LPH-11) and COMFAIRSD, went to NAVAIRSYSCOM as head of the Rotary Wing Design Branch. There he played a vital role in the design of the CH-53E, H-46 fiberglass rotor blades, SH-3H weight reduction program, AH-1T and *Hellfire* missile integration, and perhaps the most portentous helicopter program of our era, the LAMPS MK-III weapons system. After a tour as CO of NAS Jacksonville, CAPT Purtell returned to NAVAIR as LAMPS MK-III Program Manager. He retired from the Navy the same day the entire LAMPS MK-III system was declared operational, 30 June 1984.

Hugh McLinden served in the Board of Trustees of NHA and was Vice President of its Scholarship Fund. He also served as Director and Historian of NHHS.

Harry Nachlin remained in his job as Sikorsky Aircraft Western Area Supervisor until his retirement in June 1977. He served in the Board of Trustees of NHA. He also served as a member of the Board of Directors of NHHS.

Phil Nicholas served as NHA Secretary and Treasurer until he left San Diego temporarily in 1973.

Where have these remarkable men gone? Eight of the twelve are still with us. Of those eight, Joe Purtell retired in Jacksonville, Florida. The other seven are retired in the San

Diego metropolitan area. Four have passed away.

Mark Starr died on 01 January 1995. He and his wife Pat, who from the beginning was an ardent supporter of NHA, are buried at Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery, Point Loma, San Diego, CA. To honor the memory of this legendary leader in the naval helicopter community, NHHS created the 'Mark Starr Pioneer Award,' which is presented annually to the individual, organization, or group that makes a major contribution to naval helicopter history.

Walter "Smoky" Staight died on 28 June 1998. He and Anna Mary, his wife of more than fifty years, are also buried at Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery.

Al Emig died on 28 September 2001. He is buried in the Mifflin Township Cemetery, Franklin County, Ohio.

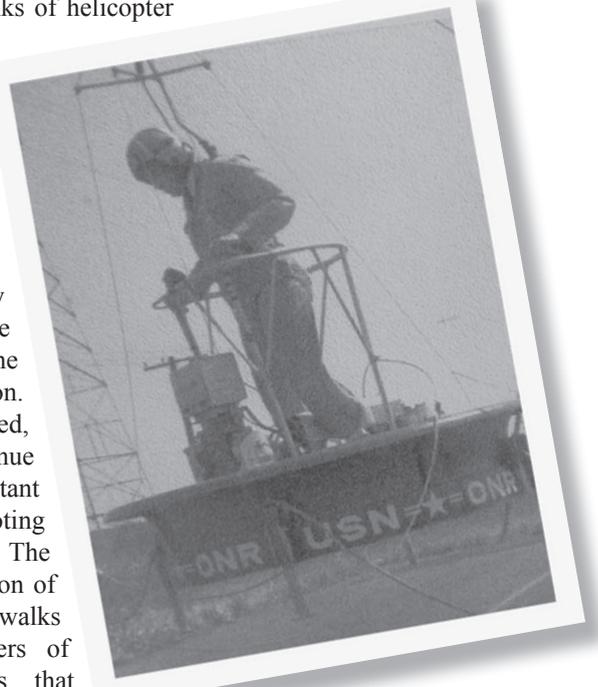
Hugh McLinden died on 30 August 2002. He is buried at Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery.

The naval helicopter community has come a long way since its humble beginnings. Modern helicopters are formidable fighting machines that play vital offensive and defensive roles in war at sea and on land. Today, helicopter pilots command aircraft carriers and naval task forces. The ranks of helicopter

pilots who achieve flag rank continue to swell.

We may not have achieved parity with the "Go Fast" community yet, but we are heading in the right direction. NHA has played, and will continue to play an important role promoting these advances. The present generation of naval aviators walks on the shoulders of the generations that preceded it, first and foremost the

early pioneers. The NHA founders, the twelve visionaries who endeavored to create a better future for our community shall always occupy a niche of honor in the rolls of those pioneers. 🚁



(The photo above) CDR McLinden flying the Hiller Flying Platform on April 6, 1955 during one of its operational tests.