



March – April 2020



## A Message From the President



*Randy Rowles*

Fellow Twirly Birds,

Wow...what a year 2020 is turning out to be. A year of memorable change. COVID-19 leads the news with people sheltering in place as the Government works through the fact and fiction of the pandemic. At the time of writing this newsletter, the world remained at a standstill. What comes next is both frightening...and exciting!

The helicopter industry is in a state of flux. All sectors of the industry are experiencing challenging times. Although aviation was declared an essential industry, many of the critical systems to support our industry are not available; the most important being the FAA. Although some relief on regulatory requirements to include annual pilot proficiency checks have been provided, the ability to get more complex approvals is almost non-existent.

My history in the commercial helicopter industry is a short 32-years. Many of our Twirly Bird members have been engaged with commercial helicopter operations much longer and often reflect on the challenges they've experienced in our industry during our conversations. One fact remains...the helicopter industry is resilient!

The airline industry experienced a pilot shortage beginning only a few years ago. It wasn't too long before the airlines realized the experience and quality that helicopter pilots bring to the industry. Airlines began hiring helicopter pilots to the point the helicopter industry had a shortage all its own.

Today, only a few short months later, the airlines have parked much of their fleet due to the impact the COVID pandemic has had on the economy. Many of the newly minted airline pilots are being furloughed. All those helicopter pilots that went to the greener pastures of the airlines...well they're back looking for work!

In January, the annual Twirly Bird meeting was held during Heliexpo 2020 in Anaheim, California. The meeting had great attendance with plenty of new members joining. *The Brass Book* was on display for all our membership to peruse. We've included pictures in this newsletter of the 2020 Twirly Bird annual meeting. Please visit [www.TwirlyBirds.org](http://www.TwirlyBirds.org) for all the pictures of this year's event.

Our Twirly Bird family had a few members "Gone West" in 2020. In this edition of the newsletter, I've included excerpts from industry partners highlighting the lives of our sunset-bound Twirly Bird members.

Please excuse my tardiness preparing this newsletter. As a helicopter operator, we too have been dealing with the challenges of the COVID pandemic. I promise to be timelier with our June 2020 newsletter.

Stay safe, healthy, and happy! Life is good...

Randy

 *Twirly Birds Annual Meeting Pictures - HeliExpo 2020 Anaheim, CA*



*Welcome Twirly Birds*



*Sergei Sikorsky with The Brass Book*



*A Great Turnout!*



*Randy Rowles and Sergei Sikorsky*



*Opening the Meeting*



*Jim Viola and Tony Barson*

To see all the Twirly Bird Annual Meeting Pictures,  
visit [www.TwirlyBirds.org](http://www.TwirlyBirds.org)



## Les Morris Award



### Twirly Birds Recognize Past President Steve Sullivan with The Charles Lester Morris Award

Steve Sullivan, past president and longtime Twirly Bird member, was recognized as the 2020 recipient of The Charles Lester Morris Award. As the humble man that he is, Steve reluctantly accepted the award which was presented to him by his longtime friend and fellow Twirly Bird, Mr. Lowell Tucker.



From your Twirly Bird family...Congratulations Steve!



*Steve Sullivan, Randy Rowles, Lowell Tucker*



## Industry Happenings



*Jim Viola*



### HAI President and CEO Jim Viola Speaks at Twirly Bird Meeting

The Board of Directors of Helicopter Association International (HAI) was pleased to name James A. Viola as the organization's next president and CEO effective Jan. 16, 2020. Viola replaces Matthew S. Zuccaro.

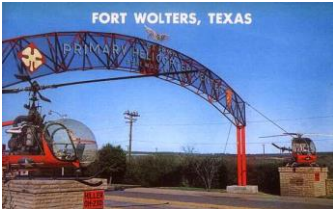
Viola most recently served as Director of General Aviation (GA) Safety Assurance for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). In this role, he oversaw 78 Flight Standards District Offices (FSDOs) and 2,500 employees across the United States and was responsible for maintaining consistency and standardization in the application of safety oversight activities for the GA community. Additionally, he ensured stakeholder and public needs were met quickly and efficiently and was responsible for starting the US Helicopter Safety Team (USHST), serving as the initial government co-chair.

Jim is a supporter of the Twirly Bird organization. On behalf of the Twirly Bird family...Thank You Jim and all-the-best at HAI!



 *Industry Happenings (continued)*

## Fort Wolters Historical Committee Releases New Website



The Fort Wolters Historical committee has been working on the new website for awhile. Please go to the website below for a history tour of Fort Wolters...past and present!

<https://fortwoltershistory.org>

For those Twirly Bird members that attended Fort Wolters, the Southern Airways Annual Reunion is always a great time. Go to the website for more information on the reunion date and time.

## NASA's Urban Air Mobility...*Times Are Changing!*

NASA has signed Space Act Agreements with 17 companies in the aviation industry to advance plans for the first in a series of technology demonstrations known as the Urban Air Mobility (UAM) Grand Challenge. The goal of the challenge is to test the capabilities and readiness of vehicles and systems that could revolutionize mobility in and around densely populated metropolitan areas.



*Bell*



*Airbus*



*ettang 216*

When fully implemented, UAM will provide a safe and efficient system for passenger and cargo air transportation and could include such innovations as small package delivery within dense urban areas; personal taxi service by air; air medical services, such as patient ambulance transportation; and cargo delivery to underserved communities.

The NASA-led Grand Challenge series, which these new agreements support, will bring together companies intending to develop and/or operate air vehicles or airspace management services within the larger UAM ecosystem.

“With this step, we’re continuing to put the pieces together that we hope will soon make real the long-anticipated vision of smaller piloted and unpiloted vehicles providing a variety of services around cities and in rural areas,” said Robert Pearce, NASA’s associate administrator for aeronautics.

 *Twirly Birds Gone West**Sunset Toast, Presented at 2020 Twirly Bird Meeting in Anaheim, CA**Alec von Voight**Jacques Guequierre**James Meade***Elling B. Halvorson**

Founder and Chairman of the Board of Papillon Grand Canyon Helicopters in Boulder City, Nevada, died Apr. 16, 2020, at the age of 88. With the opening of his helicopter tour company in 1965, he is credited with creating the site-specific helicopter tourism sector.

**Matt Zuccaro**

CEO and President (Retired) Helicopter Association International (HAI) died February 25, 2020 at the age of 70. Matt was elected to the HAI Board of Directors in 1987 and served as chairman in 1991. He was named president of HAI in 2005 and retired in January of this year. During HAI HELI-EXPO 2020 in Anaheim in January, Matt was honored with the FAA's Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award, recognizing his 50 years of professionalism and skill as a pilot.

**William H. "Bill" Wells Jr.**

President and owner of Cascade Helicopters in Cashmere, Washington, died on Apr. 15, 2020, at the age of 86. In addition to flying and running a helicopter business, Wells was active in the industry on a national and international scale. He was involved in Helicopter Association International, based in Alexandria, VA, and served on the Board of Directors and as Chairman in 1994 to 1995.

See *SunSet Toast* *HighLights* on Page 7



## Twirly Birds Gone West



### Keep Your TB Family Informed

Over the years, we've lost Twirly Bird members only to find out months after their passing they've Gone West. Each Twirly Bird member is cherished among our group and as with any family, we want to share their stories and experiences.

At the Twirly Bird Annual Meeting, we celebrate the life and industry contribution of each Twirly Bird Gone West by presenting a "Sunset Toast".

We need your help to stay informed of our Twirly Bird family. To facilitate this request, we ask that members and family send us any information known on the status of a Twirly Bird member that would be appropriate to share.



## Update Your Twirly Bird Membership Information

Name:		
Address:		
City:	State:	ZIP:
Phone:	E-mail:	
Date Soloed:	Instructor (Optional)	
Make and Model Helicopter you soloed:		
Where did you solo?		
Additional Qualifications or Information (Optional, but feel free to attach photos, clippings, biographical info., etc.)		
<p><i>Print this page, fill out and mail</i>          Please include an initiation fee of \$20          plus 1 year annual dues of \$10  <u>Make check for \$30 payable to:</u>          Twirly Birds</p>		<p>Mail application to:  <b>Dennis MacBain, Secretary/Treasurer</b>  <b>4525 Leon Street</b>  <b>San Diego, CA 92107</b></p>



## Next Newsletter...

### We Want Hear From You!

The Twirly Bird Newsletter is for ALL our members. If you know of a good story or historical event that your fellow Twirly Birds would enjoy...let us know! We're here for you.



## SunSet Toast HighLights

Elling B. Halvorson, founder and chairman of the board of Papillon Grand Canyon Helicopters in Boulder City, Nevada, died Apr. 16, 2020, at the age of 88. With the opening of his helicopter tour company in 1965, he is credited with creating the site-specific helicopter tourism sector.

Elling was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, on Jan. 2, 1932. His father was in the construction business, and the Halvorson's moved from state to state for his work. After high school, Elling attended college in Iowa and Idaho before graduating from Oregon's Willamette University with a degree in economics and "what you might call a minor in civil engineering," as he said in a 2011 interview with ROTOR magazine.



*Elling B. Halvorson*

Following college, Elling followed in his father's footsteps and owned a construction company, one that specialized in geographically remote, difficult projects. In 1960, for one particularly challenging project for AT&T in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, Elling bought his first helicopter, a Bell 47G-3B-1, to ferry workers and light construction materials up and down the mountain.

But the project that spawned Papillon Helicopters in 1965, and its focus on providing aerial sightseeing tours, took place in the Grand Canyon, where Elling and his team used helicopters to help build a buried 13.5-mile water pipeline connecting the North and South Rims of the canyon. Traditional construction equipment at the time was too large for the project, so Elling designed and built many of the pieces of project's excavation equipment.

Providing personnel, pipe sections, and other construction supplies to the remote parts of the project was part of Elling's construction plan, and he again determined that helicopters were the solution. Over the course of the project, Elling and his company used a variety of rotorcraft on the project. "We leased large helicopters. We had a Sikorsky S-61, a Bell 204B, and the Sikorsky S-55. We used all of those machines and a fleet of Bell 47G-3B-1s and Hiller SL-4s," he recalled.

Nearing the end of the project, a massive flood destroyed most of the construction equipment and swept away nine miles of the completed pipeline. While surveying the damage in Bright Angel Canyon, near its entrance to the Colorado River at Phantom Ranch, Elling's helicopter struck a wire radio antenna. Elling sustained critical injuries in the crash, and his recovery took six months.

From the early stages of the pipeline project, the Grand Canyon had provided Elling, his crews, and visitors with an awe-inspiring backdrop. According to the History section on Papillon's website, "as Halvorson and his team flew colleagues and clients to work sites within the canyon, the majestic scenery was so captivating that workers began requesting chartered helicopter flights during off hours. Halvorson recognized the golden opportunity that lay in front of him."

To satisfy this new demand, he established Papillon, the first aerial sightseeing company to fly the Grand Canyon. The company now flies an estimated 600,000 tour passengers each year.

Innovation and safety were central to Elling's success. Throughout his career, he told HAI, Elling sought out the toughest, most unusual construction jobs that demanded innovative thinking to complete, including, in addition to the Grand Canyon pipeline, projects in the Arctic and the Aleutian Islands. "We were innovative from the beginning. With the challenges of each project being in a different geographical area, we grew more capable as time went on."

Sensitive to the concerns of those visiting the Grand Canyon, Elling challenged the top helicopter manufacturers of the time to develop quieter aircraft. He developed the Whisper Jet helicopter, for which he created a muffler using passive noise cancellation as a noise-reduction technology.



In his 2011 ROTOR interview, Elling explained his success this way: “Confidence is an important element of being successful. However, together with self-confidence, it is necessary to have a business plan that will work.... We evaluate as carefully as we can the economics and business opportunities. Then we go into it full throttle.... Success is a process of working at something and tweaking it and improving it until it does work.”

Elling was a strong advocate of giving back to the helicopter industry. Ever the pioneer, he in 1986 cofounded the Tour Operators Program of Safety, a group bringing together air tour operators to develop operating standards and recommended safety practices that exceed regulatory requirements.

A long-time member of HAI, Elling served two terms as chairman of the association’s Board of Directors. He was also active in other organizations, including the National Business Aircraft Association, American Helicopter Society, National Parks Overflight Advisory Group, US Travel Association, and the US Air Tour Association. He was inducted into the Vertical Flight Hall of Fame as part of the 2016 Living Legends of Aviation Awards.

Elling was also dedicated to helping his community through donations and support for the Evergreen Hospital in Kirkland, Washington, where the Halvorson Cancer Center is located, as well as the Seattle Union Gospel Mission and the family’s nonprofit, the Halvorson Charities Fund.

Elling and his wife, Barbara, first met in high school and were married in 1953. Together, they had five children: Brenda, Kent, Lon, Randal, and Rodney, as well as eight grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren. Brenda currently serves as CEO of Papillon Grand Canyon Helicopters and Grand Canyon Scenic Airlines, and Lon worked with his father in Papillon Helicopters and is CEO of Rainier Heli Lift International and several other entities doing heavy lift work.

Matt Zuccaro, CEO and President (Retired) Helicopter Association International (HAI) died February 25, 2020 at the age of 70. Matt was elected to the HAI Board of Directors in 1987 and served as chairman in 1991. He was named president of HAI in 2005 and retired in January of this year. During HAI HELI-EXPO 2020 in Anaheim in January, Matt was honored with the FAA’s Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award, recognizing his 50 years of professionalism and skill as a pilot.

“Matt was one of a kind in our industry,” says current HAI President and CEO James Viola. “Helicopters were part of his life, beginning with his US Army service in Vietnam. Throughout his career, he made safe helicopter operations his priority, and we are a better, stronger, and safer industry today because of his efforts on behalf of rotorcraft. Speaking on behalf of our industry, we have lost a good friend who will be missed. We extend our deepest condolences to his wife, Doreen, and his family.”

An HAI member since the early 1980s, Matt was elected to the HAI Board of Directors in 1987 and served as chairman in 1991. He was named president of HAI in 2005 and retired in January of this year. During HAI HELI-EXPO 2020 in Anaheim in January, Matt was honored with the FAA’s Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award, recognizing his 50 years of professionalism and skill as a pilot.

Among his many accomplishments, Matt may be best remembered for a column he wrote for ROTOR magazine in 2013, encouraging pilots to “land the damn helicopter” in situations where proceeding would endanger themselves and passengers. From that column, HAI’s Land & LIVE program was born, saving countless lives around the world—a fitting legacy for a man who was passionate about safety in the industry he loved so much.



*Matt Zuccaro*

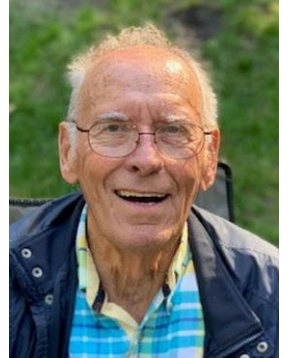




## *Twirly Birds Gone West* HighLights (Continued)

William H. "Bill" Wells Jr., president and owner of Cascade Helicopters in Cashmere, Washington, died on Apr. 15, 2020, at the age of 86.

Bill was born on Feb. 25, 1934, in Seattle, Washington. He joined the military in 1953 as an Alaska Communications System specialist in the US Army Signal Corps. In 1958, he and his family moved to Yakima, Washington, where Bill attended Perry Technical Institute, receiving his A&P license in 1960. The following year, he earned his FAA certificate as a private pilot, fixed wing, and in 1962 joined Cascade Helicopters as a pilot trainee and mechanic. He obtained his FAA commercial rotorcraft license in 1963 and his CFI license in 1964.



*William H. "Bill" Wells Jr.*

Over the course of his career as a pilot, Bill logged more than 11,500 accident-free hours in various capacities, including agricultural spraying, search and rescue, fire suppression, government contracting, and transmission-line repair, to name only some of his many duties. He once said the rescues he was able to perform were "what being a helicopter pilot was all about."

Bill was a dedicated HAI member, serving as the association's chairman from July 1, 1994, to June 30, 1995, after having served on the HAI Board of Directors as assistant treasurer and vice chairman. He also sat on the association's Government Safety Committee (as chairman) and Government Contracting Committee and was the master of ceremonies for HAI's awards banquets for several years in the 1980s.

In 2001, Bill was honored for his outstanding achievement in the industry with HAI's Salute to Excellence Pilot of the Year Award. Bill is survived by his wife of 66 years, Diane Wells; son Steve Wells and daughter Shelley Winterer; five grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren.

