

March 2018



Fellow Twirly Birds:

The good news is that those Twirly Birds attending Heli-Expo in Las Vegas had enough money to return home,,,or at least we have not had news of Twirly Bird failing to return home.

Heli-Expo 2018 was big and busy; occupying a million square feet of floor space. Of course there were the usual Las Vegas distractions which may have contributed to a low turnout at the Twirly Bird reception. Unlike all previous years in my memory, the Twirly Birds had to rustle up their own room for the reception and it was not convenient, nor cheap.

Next year's Hel-Expo will be in Atlanta and we will make every effort to obtain a convenient Twirly Bird reception location, and we will try to do a better job of informing and reminding all Twirly Birds of the date, time and location.

Lowell Tucker nominated a highly qualified member of the industry for an associate Twirly Bird membership. Our newest Twirly Bird is Scott Smith, President of Vision Air Services LLC (VAS) located in Scottsdale, Arizona. VAS holds over 500 FAA PMA's. Scott is an FAA Repairman and is an FAA Designated Maintenance Inspection Representative. Some of you will recall that Scott worked his way up to Senior Vice President and company manager of Air Services International where he was employed from 1971 until 1993.

Esteemed, and ever eloquent, Twirly Bird, Sergei Sikorsky presented Scott with his Twirly Bird Pin.

Sergei then took the podium to share his memories of Les Morris, who, after Sergei's father, Igor Sikorsky, was the first helicopter test pilot and the first helicopter instructor pilot. After the reception several Twirly Birds and guests told me that they could have listened to Sergei's stories all night.

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The following day, at an HAI Chairman's luncheon, Sergei's stories were being retold.

Following Sergei's presentation we were treated to a heartwarming and moving introduction of the 2018 Les Morris award recipient, Roy Morgan, by Aaron Todd, CEO of Air Methods.

Aaron graciously took the time to attend the reception and reflect on Roy's many accomplishments, overcoming adversity, and conveying to the group how Roy is so respected and admired by all who have come in contact with him.

Sergei Sikorsky presented Roy with the Les Morris award that was especially meaningful after hearing Sergei's stories about Les Morris. Sergei's father Igor and Les Morris were founding members of the Twirly Birds

Twirly Bird, Greg Maitlen took the stage to recount a few "Roy stories". Thanks Greg for adding some entertainment to the program and reminding us that Roy is a "real helicopter pilot".

Twirly Bird, Jim Wisecup will assume the duties of Chairman of Helicopter Association International in July 2018. Jim is the Assistant Chief Pilot at Air Methods. Jim is married to Jessica, they have five children. Previous newsletters contained a short story about Jim's experiences as a helicopter pilot in Viet Nam, supporting Special Forces "MACV-SOG" missions.

Twirly Bird, Randy Rowles also serves as an HAI Board member. Randy is the vice president of Night Flight Concepts and resident of Fort Worth, Texas. Recently, Randy's accreditation as a Master CFI (Certificated Flight Instructor) was renewed by Master Instructors LLC, the international accrediting authority for the Master Instructor designation as well as the FAA-approved "Master Instructor Program™." He first earned this national professional accreditation in 2005 and is the first aviation educator to earn the new Master CFI-Helicopter designation.

To help put these achievements in their proper perspective, there are approximately 93,000 CFIs in the United States. Fewer than 700 of those aviation educators have achieved that distinction thus far. The last 15 national Flight Instructors of the Year were Master CFIs while Randy is one of only 32 Texas teachers of flight to earn this prestigious "Master" title.

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Twirly Bird Life member, Gian Franco Blower sent us his regrets for missing Heli-Expo and the Twirly Bird reception this year. Past HAI Chairman Blower noted that this was the first Heli-Expo that he has missed since joining HAI in 1977.

New Twirly Bird Life Members

Ken and Jim Roberts of Tran Aero Helicopters generously helped the Twirly Birds with the unforeseen Las Vegas reception expenses. Ken and Jim were to receive their Life Member pins at the reception, unfortunately because of time constraints we did not make the presentation. Thanks Ken and Jim. "The pins are in the mail".

In recognition for his long service as the Twirly Bird web master, The Twirly Bird Board of Directors unanimously voted to award a life member pin to Roger Gould. Roger had hoped to join us in Las Vegas, but at the last minute chose to avoid the evil temptations of Las Vegas.

Recently while assisting Twirly Bird, Jim Ricklefs' daughter clean out his office I stumbled on a note typed by Jim in 2008. The note is attached to this newsletter. Jim passed away in 2016. At the last reception we offered attendees copies of a Rick Helicopters advertising brochure from 1956 and a copy of Jim's recollections about helicopter pioneers whomt he knew. We will make those interesting collectibles available to Twirly Birds at the 2019 Atlanta reception.

We do not send out dues notices because all Twirly Birds are honorable people, but if you have forgotten to send Dennis MacBain your check this would be a good time to do so. We will reluctantly begin to purge the membership list in a few months.

Please take a few minutes and send me a story, news item, or just a suggestion for the newsletter. I would really appreciate hearing comments regarding the newsletter. My e-mail is srs@jma.com. Or if it is easier, just call me at 408 348 5780

KEEP YOUR ROTOR IN THE GREEN!

Steve Sullivan

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In 1948 – 60 years ago – I was instrumental in forming a helicopter operator's association which later became known as HELICOPTER ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONAL. I was elected the first president and served as president for the first three years. I am still an honorary board member.

There were 12 of us around the table in 1948. At our most recent 2008 convention held in Houston, TX we had an attendance of 17,000 people who came from all around the world.

About 2,500 people attended our Awards Banquet where I was introduced as the first president. I received a standing ovation from the membership. – Quite a success story; from 12 to 17,000 in 60 years.

Our association owns its own building in the Washington, DC area where it has a staff of 37 people serving the membership.

I think you will enjoy reading the attaching history of HAI which includes a number of photos and stories of me and my organizations Rick Helicopters, Inc. and Alaska Helicopters, Inc.

Best regards,

Jim Ricklefs
Feb. 2008