

Minutes
American Helicopter Society History Committee
Spring Meeting
March 9, 2007 – Washington (NASM)

Members in attendance:

Roger Connor
Mike Hirschberg
Jason Pereira
Gordon Leishman
Todd Hodges
John Romanski
Bruce Charnov
Tommy Thomason
Ken Bartie

Guests:

Andy Keech
Hal Andrews

Connor began by welcoming the members and guests to the meeting. The Committee has had a significant positive effect in helping to preserve, document and understand vertical flight history. The outline of the discussion is as follows.

I. Ongoing Projects

A. Recent Successes

1. Cornu Centennial – Connor wrote an article for *Vertiflite* explaining that there is no evidence to support Cornu's claim of having achieved the first vertical flight and that it had very little legacy for future work. Although Eurocopter was claiming this as the beginning of 100 years of helicopter flight, some of the hype seems to have been toned down.
2. Jim Chiles Book – Chiles is a journalist who has written an excellent history of the helicopter that includes a number of insightful stories of helicopters in action. Several members of the committee provided materials to Chiles with a positive effect. The manuscript is very good and has an extensive bibliography.
3. Kellett archival materials – A lot of Kellett Autogyro Company materials, originally belonging to pilot George Townson, was auctioned off last year. A group consisting of Connor, the AHS and American Helicopter Museum joined together in an unsuccessful attempt to purchase the materials. Although this was technically not a success, it is a good illustration of what the Committee can marshal.
 - The materials were purchased by autogyro enthusiast Jean-Pierre Harrison, who stated that he planned to have it all digitized and placed online.

- Unfortunately, the location of the actual Kellett company archives is unknown. A group tried to donate it to the Smithsonian in the 1990s, but it was too massive; the contact information for the group no longer works.

B. Continuing Efforts

1. **Liberatore Handbooks** – The 18 volumes of the “Helicopter Handbooks and History,” edited by Gene Liberatore are being collected for digitization. Although this was attempted several years ago, the failure then was partially due to the poor quality and organization of the microfilm available. Now, the volumes that can not be found in hardcopy have been printed from microfilm.
 - Hirschberg will be shipping the volumes to a vendor for scanning. The estimated cost is less than \$1000. It is hoped to have them put on a CD or DVD and sell them for a nominal cost.
 - Hodges stated that he could check the Langley and Ft. Eustis libraries to see if they had any of the missing volumes.
2. **Oral History Program** – Last year Connor spent several hours interviewing Walter Sonneborn. This year, Hodges has developed interview forms. Comments to these were incorporated and forwarded to AHS Headquarters for a review.
 - The Helicopter Association International (HAI) is also working on some sort of video interviewing project, but it is unclear exactly what they are doing.
 - Hodges will contact AHS Headquarters to get a list of attendees for Forum 63, this year in Virginia Beach. He will look for past Klemin and Nikolsky winners as prospective interview candidates.
 - The Committee decided to plan a videotaped panel of Klemin and Nikolsky winners at Forum 64 in Montreal in 2008.
3. **History Calendar** – Charnov has an extensive timeline of autogyro dates. We need to compile a comprehensive chronology of all vertical flight aircraft to include the most important dates on the calendar. The target is to have this completed for the 2008 calendar year.
 - Bartie volunteered to help champion this effort. Charnov and Pereira agreed to help contribute.

C. Forthcoming Efforts

1. **History Committee Website** – The committee again discussed the possibility of having a website dedicated to rotorcraft history (e.g. www.helicopter-history.com). Connor stated that he and Hirschberg had met with Rhett Flater, the AHS Executive Director, who was very supportive of this effort.

- Connor stated he would try to get an intern to create the website.
 - Hirschberg stated that he wanted it to be flashy, with film, photos, and maybe a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section.
 - The Committee would need to supply the material, decided what were the most important things to add. Flater had suggested a members-only section or some way to provide added value for AHS members. This could perhaps include copies of past history session papers, etc.
 - Another group, Helicopter Training Center, is also putting together course material on helicopters – including history – as part of a for-profit business.
2. Book: Paper Anthology – This was briefly discussed as a means of getting out the results of our most important research.

II. Individual Member Project Reports

1. Connor:
- showed some of the excerpts from a DVD video from The Ancient Order of the Pterodactyl (Coast Guard helicopter aviators) entitled “In the Beginning....A Film Record of Early Coast Guard Helicopter Development,” by CDR Steward R. Graham. Very impressive.
 - National Air and Space Museum just accepted their last helicopter. They are under pressure to loan out as many artifacts as possible due to their space limitations. They are sending their Avrocar to Toronto and the Pogo to San Diego.
 - The Hiller Museum is apparently in crisis. The family had apparently originally expected it to be a big money maker and was not eager to continue supporting it.
2. Hirschberg:
- noted that AIAA has had a “Historic Sites” program to recognize the most significant sites in aerospace history. Recommended that the AIAA members on the AHS History Committee nominate a rotorcraft center. Perhaps Madrid would be the most appropriate spot (first flight of the Cierva C.4, the first successful rotary wing aircraft).
 - He also noted that there is an excellent “Rotodyne: A Pictorial History” being sold on EBay that is pretty good.
3. Charnov:
- His bibliography of the Popular Rotorcraft Association's publications is over 300 pages.
 - AHS signed the agreement to web-publish his autogyro bibliography
 - Next plans to work on a catalog of the world's Autogyro/autogyro museum collections

4. Hodges: has the masters of the VTOL book by former Langley employee, John P. Campbell.
5. Romanski: showed a portion of a DVD provided by Martin Hollmann on helicopter/autogiro history.

III. Forum Business

A. Forum 63 – Virginia Beach

1. Connor had previously generated criteria for best paper selection. This would be circulated again to pick the best papers. The judges would be **Thomason, Hodges and ???**. A plaque would be provided to the selected winner.

B. Forum 64 – Montreal

1. Forum 64 (2008) will be held in Montreal. Regarding potential themes, it was suggested that we try to have more international flavor.
2. Hodges stated that he would contact Fred Phillips, the former Canadair CL-84 program manager, to see if he would be willing to give a presentation.
3. Charnov said he would contact Piasecki to see if one of the Piasecki sons could speak.
4. The "Film Festival" will go forward. It will perhaps be a ½ day to complement the ½ day Nikolsky/Klemin award winner panel on the Monday prior to the traditional start of the Forum
5. **Charnov agreed to serve as Forum Chair again.**
6. Hirschberg will be the Technical Chair for the entire Forum.

IV. Membership

- A. New Member Potentials: Looking for representation from Eurocopter.