

AHS History Committee – Meeting Minutes

Mar. 7th, 2008, 11:00 am – 3:30 pm,

[Patuxent River Naval Air Museum](#), Lexington Park, MD.

In attendance:

Members: Roger Connor – Chair (NASM)
Mike Hirschberg – Deputy Chair (CENTRA Technology)
Jason Pereira – Secretary (U. of Maryland)
Bruce Charnov (Hofstra U.)
J. Gordon Leishman (U. of Maryland)
Tommy Thomason (Bell & Sikorsky, retd.)
Ken Bartie [call-in] (Boeing)
Bob Beggs [call-in] (Boeing)
Todd Hodges [call-in] (U.S. Army Langley, retd.)
Erasmus Pinero [call-in] (Lockheed Martin)

[AHS Forum, Montreal:](#)

Rhett Flater has sent out a note to the AHS membership / Forum attendees that there will be several History-related activities on the Monday before the Forum officially starts, to encourage attendance at these events.

Film Festival, Monday evening.

Submissions have been received from Bell Helicopters and from Sikorsky, but the latter is more like trade-show material. J. P. Harrison had promised some material on the Kellett aircraft, but has not submitted the same. Therefore, Connor is assembling the montage on his own, using archival material owned by the NASM. The theme of the film is public perception of the helicopters, up to the 1960s era, including 'kitschy' material as well. Each film segment is 4—5 minutes long, or less. The entire session is 90 minutes long, with the film lasting an hour, and additional time set aside for introductions and discussion. The plan is to have it be an informal affair, and to serve food/snacks and have a cash bar. The festival will be preceded by a social, and followed by the official *History Committee meeting*, over dinner.

Nikolsky/Klemin Award-winners panel discussion, Monday afternoon.

Six people have agreed to be panelists: Frank Harris, Dan Schrage, Walter Sonneborne, Bill Wallis, John Ward and Ken Rosen. Ray Prouty had originally intended to be a panelist as well, but had withdrawn [later it was found that he will be able to participate]. Thomason, who will moderate the panel, has contacted each of the six personally. They have agreed to speak for 12 minutes each, up to the break, after which there will be an hour of open-forum discussion.

Best paper award.

6 papers have been submitted so far, and are eligible for the best-paper award. Thomason, Pereira, Connor and Hodges have volunteered to be judges. Connor is an author as well, but has not submitted his paper yet, therefore is allowed to be a judge, since his paper will not be eligible for an award. He will e-mail the scoring sheet / review form that was used last year to the other judges, who will send their scores back to him within two weeks.

Schneider Award

Elfan ap Rees was nominated by Thomason for the Schneider Award, and the nomination was accepted by the AHS awards committee. The deadline for nominations for next year's award is in ten months. The committee discussed the criteria for nomination for this award, i.e., what sort of person should this award be given to: someone who collects historical objects or someone who writes (does scholarly work) about them; someone who does work to preserve historical information / objects as part of his/her occupation or someone who does it on his/her own time and finances.

Other matters:

Helicopter History calendar

Bartie has emailed a draft of the calendar to the committee members to review. He has received material from Thomason and Charnov. He needs better, higher-resolution images --- Connor said he could provide same. "High-resolution" means 300 dpi or higher, 600—1200 dpi, if possible. Connor suggested profiling the pioneers as well as the aircraft in the calendar. Reasoning that it would not be possible to have an 18-month calendar --- which would be given out to Forum attendees --- ready in time for this year's Forum, the committee agreed that the calendar would be in a 12-month format, and would be mailed out with the Winter issue of *Vertiflite*. It was suggested that a company, such as Boeing, could be asked to be a sponsor, to underwrite some of the printing/distribution costs. The current membership of AHS totals approximately 6000; therefore, it was suggested to have a print run of 6500 copies of the calendar, with the extra copies meant for sale from the website or for complimentary gifts. This will have to be discussed with AHS headquarters.

Helicopter History website

There has not been much change since the last meeting. The current project is a spreadsheet of technical information about the various aircraft that will be linked to the website, so that updates can be 'published' automatically. A volunteer is currently going through the *Liberator* handbooks and adding the data from there to the spreadsheet. 700 digital images have also been prepared for uploading to the website. Meanwhile, word is spreading about the existence of the website; for example, Leishman's paper on the Cornu helicopter has been noticed by several people, including an individual from England who had previously had plans to author a book about 100 years of helicopter flight. The future of the site is a concern as the intern who developed it will not be able to provide much more in the way of support. U of Md. Grad students would seem to be likely candidates. Is there a better way of updating the site?

Oral history video interviews

Hodges is going to interview Bob Houston. Needs to confirm the legality of the release form with Rhett Flater (AHS' legal counsel). [This was confirmed.]

Miscellaneous

- The Library of Congress has expressed interest in acquiring the Piasecki papers. For long-term storage, the LoC would be a better repository than would the American Helicopter Museum. It is worth reminding people that the LoC is also a good source for technical works, since many are not aware of that, or simply do not associate the LoC with technical documents.
- A plaque commemorating Frank Piasecki --- who passed away recently --- was put on display at both the NASM facilities; the one at the Udvar-Hazy center is still on display. A well-written obituary for him was printed in the New York Times.

- The committee had a discussion about the durability of various media formats.
- This year is the 50th anniversary of NASA. Hirschberg requested that someone write an article for *Vertiflite*, about 3000—6000 words long (approx. 10 pages), on NASA's contribution to vertical flight. Hodges volunteered to look into this.
- Hirschberg and Pinero were able to get two sites, associated with vertical flight, selected for AIAA's Historic Sites program: Getafe air base in Madrid (Cierva Autogiros), and Dunsfold in the U.K. (Hawker P.1127 and Harriers). Hirschberg plans to write an article for *Vertiflite* about this. Suggestions for nominations for next year were Bell Aircraft's test site in Garden City, NY, and Vought-Sikorsky Field in Bridgeport, CT. Pinero suggested that a site be selected that had long-term historical contributions/significance, and not one that was famous merely for a one-time event.
- Charnov possesses a film of the first successful rotary-wing flight in America, that of an autogyro.
- Hirschberg noted that there are very few good books on the more 'common' helicopters, other than the Huey --- and now, the Black Hawk. On the other hand, there are several books published on the more unconventional aircraft that have been designed/built. For example, there is no good book about the Chinook.

Individual member projects:

Charnov is continuing to work on an autogyro timeline , bibliography, index of museum exhibits, and collection of magazine covers. He proposed to work on a new project investigating the autogyro/gyroplane movement in Scandinavia, and its effect on the popular rotorcraft movement in Europe. He also suggested an alternative project, one investigating Martin Hollman's revolt against the Popular Rotorcraft Association (PRA) in the USA, but the committee agreed that the former topic would be more worthwhile area of study.

Thomason has recently published a book: [*U.S. Naval Air Superiority: Development of Shipborne Jet Fighters - 1943-1962.*](#)

Leishman spoke about his research into the work of Cornu. He has gotten in touch with Francois Cornu, nephew of Paul Cornu, who is currently 84 years old and residing in Normandy, France. He sent Leishman a transcript of his grandfather's log book, and confirmed that no movie was made of any 'flight' --- there was just the one still photograph of the machine with its rotors spinning and the rear wheels lifting off the ground. It was mentioned that students at Toulouse University in France have recently built a replica of the Cornu machine, but have so far not been able to get it to fly. Leishman has also gotten in touch with Christian Pescara, and will be meeting him in France in a few weeks. Leishman's next project is to research the work of d'Ascanio.

Connor will be giving a talk at NASA Langley in the near future, on rotorcraft-related work conducted by NACA between 1920 and 1945.

Pinero has made contact with Doman, who is now involved in the wind-turbine industry.

The meeting concluded with a tour of the museum, guided by the lead docent, Mr. Chuck Kerr.
