

AHS History Committee – Meeting Minutes

*April 28th, 2008, 7:00 – 8:30 pm,
64th AHS Forum, Montreal, Canada*

In attendance:

Roger Connor – Chair (NASM)
Mike Hirschberg – Deputy Chair (CENTRA Technology)
Jason Pereira – Secretary (U. of Maryland)
Bruce Charnov (Hofstra U.)
Todd Hodges (U.S. Army Langley, retd.)
Bradley Johnson (U. of Maryland)
J. Gordon Leishman (U. of Maryland)
Tim Naumowicz
Ray Prouty
Tommy Thomason (Bell & Sikorsky, retd.)
John Ward & Mrs. Jane Ward
Bob Wood (US Naval Postgraduate School) & Mrs. Sherry Ward

Elections:

Elections were held for the Committee officer positions for the coming year (2008—2009). The following is the new panel of officers:

Chair: Roger Connor (candidates: Connor)
Vice-chair: Tommy Thomason (candidates: Thomason and Pereira)
Secretary: Bradley Johnson (candidates: Johnson and Pereira)
Forum 65 Session Chair: Bruce Charnov (candidates: Charnov)

Calendar:

Ken Bartie has not made much progress since the last Committee meeting (Mar. 7th, 2008). Roger has spoken with Rhett Flater about it, and he is on board with the program. An industry sponsor is yet to be found for the calendar.

[Since the meeting, Tommy has elected to take on management of the calendar project.]

Helicopter-History Website:

Connor reported on the status of the helicopter-history website. There has been no change since the last meeting (Mar. 7th). It is not known if last summer's intern will continue to work on the website this summer. Right now, the website is incomplete and stagnant --- much more needs to be done with it. A possibility might be to convert it to a wiki format, so that Committee members could dynamically add and update information on it.

The Liberator handbook series contains technical specifications on several helicopters built before 1950, with up to 80 different specifications per aircraft. This information is being formatted into a vast spreadsheet that will be made available on the website. Over time, we hope to use operating handbooks and other archival materials to bring the data set slowly towards the present day.

A number of operating handbooks and maintenance manuals for Army helicopters of the Vietnam era have been acquired by Connor for the NASM Archives from the Ft. Eustis Transportation library, which is being closed down.

Forum activities:

The Distinguished Technology Panel Discussion and Historical Film Festival special sessions that were conducted by the Committee at this year's Forum were both well attended, and received positive reviews from several attendees.

Technology Special Session

Survey forms were given to the audience to gauge their response to the sessions. For the Panel discussion, three audience members submitted their responses; the average score for each survey question, out of a maximum possible score of 10, was:

Overall rating of session	9.3
How engaging was the format?	9.7
Appropriateness of session length	9.0
Effectiveness of mix of speakers	9.3
Effectiveness of moderator	10.0
Adequacy of audio/visual support	8.7
Willingness to attend this session again	9.7

One of the survey respondents recommended that the Committee increase advertising efforts for such sessions in the future, since "not many people knew about the session."

Possible themes for a similar panel discussion for next year's Forum were discussed; these included the themes of noise, failures, and problems solved (or not solved).

Connor wondered whether a more rigid historical focus was in order for next year, but the Committee consensus was that a look forward was probably more popular than a look back.

Historical Film Festival

Anecdotal reviews were good, but only one outside review form was received which complained about the arrangement of the screen in the room. The room had a capacity of 130, but an estimated 250 showed up, which will necessitate better planning for next year, especially if the Film Festival is moved later in the conference and/or is better advertised.

The format of the film festival was discussed, with an emphasis on whether or not the current format of primarily short newsreel clips strung together in a larger narrative is worth repeating or whether a departure is in order. It was suggested that making the film-festival more interactive for the audience might be a worthwhile idea. The format of the film festival needs to be decided by the Fall meeting of the Committee. Connor feels that this format worked well, but would like to consider other avenues as well. Particularly, whether we should again attempt to issue a "call for clips" and run the session as a panel as had originally been suggested for this Forum. This did not occur because of a lack of participation and because, of the three "submitters," only one (Bell) came through with a useable product. The consensus within the Committee runs towards the panel approach. Some thought that the 75-minute presentation was too long and should be pared back to a total run time approaching one hour.

[Connor: After the Forum, I used a slightly pared down version of the film festival (minus the "humor" segments) for the "Night at the The Museum" program at the Udvar-Hazy Center and ran it back to back

three times. It was remarkably successful and I was astounded to see a large number of people sitting through the entire presentation.]

Bob Wood informed the Committee that he possesses a film, narrated by Les Morris, about the early development of – and design ideas for – helicopters at Sikorsky. Charnov said that he could put together a series of film clips about autogiros, about 8—9 minutes long in total. Connor noted that there is no dearth of film footage available; but that the real work lies in the editing of the clips into a well-paced story-line.

The production of this year's film festival cost \$2000.00. The costs were borne half by the AHS and half by the Smithsonian Institution. The cost to obtain reels from the National Archive and digitize them is \$200/reel. Abe Karem has offered to sponsor both the Technology Special Session and the Historical Film Festival for next year's Forum.

Wood suggested that the History Committee have a booth in the Technology Display of subsequent AHS Forums, to increase awareness about the Committee. The booth could display, for example, small hardware items from historically significant aircraft. Wood himself has some components – blade actuators and other items – from NASA/Army tests on a modified OH-6. These could also be donated to the American Helicopter Museum.

Member updates:

Charnov has given the AHS (1) an annotated bibliography of autogyro literature, (2) an autogyro/gyroplane timeline, and (3) a collection of digitized images of magazine covers illustrating autogiros. The governing agreement between Charnov and the AHS is that the AHS retain copyright of the information, while citing Charnov as the original author.

Leishman has begun his research of the work of d'Ascanio. During a recent trip to France, he met with Christien Pescara – the only surviving son of Raoul Pescara – who confirmed that his father and Cierva knew each other. Leishman will be writing a Vertiflite article about his meeting.

Connor announced that the Hiller Flying Platform is now in the Garber restoration facility.

Naumowicz reported that the Sikorsky RSRA and X-Wing aircraft are in storage at NASA Ames, but the ABC aircraft is finally being rescued from possible destruction by Sikorsky.

Hirschberg has written a Vertiflite article about the two sites successfully nominated by himself and Mike Pryce (Dunsfold, UK) and by Roger Connor and Erasmo *Pinero* (Getafe Airfield, Spain) for the AIAA Historic Sites

Don *Leighto* (?), a member who was unable to attend the meeting, had recently donated three computer programs for calculating helicopter performance to the AHS. Wood conveyed his regards to the Committee on his behalf.

Other topics of discussion:

Ken Brentner, the new Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of the AHS, made a brief appearance at the start of the meeting to speak of his desire to include papers about rotary-wing history in the Journal, and to encourage the Committee to submit same.

John Ward has agreed to consider writing a Vertiflite article on NASA's contribution to rotary-wing flight. [Subsequently, he declined to take the lead, but is willing to assist.]

The Committee expressed some concern at the lack of updates regarding the status of the American Helicopter Museum as no representatives have attended the Committee meetings for some time. Members

expressed concerns over the apparent disappearance (or possibly a lack of organization) of materials from the AHMEC archives and that a professional curator or archivist has not been added to the staff.

Charnov noted that the flapping hinge for a rotor blade was actually invented not by Cierva, but by Bartha and Madzsar, who have a patent that pre-dates Cierva's work. Cierva can, however, be given credit for 're-discovering' the flapping hinge.

Next meeting:

The next meeting of the committee will be held at the SI/NASM's Paul Garber restoration facility in Suitland, MD. The tentative date will be in early October.
