

ARMY AVIATION

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Forever New Frontiers

Taking Your Legacy to the PEOPLE

By Sean M. Brady

From the first canvas-covered liaison planes of World War II to the high-tech, rotary-wing gunships of the present, Army aviation's contributions to our nation and its armed forces have been enormous. Yet few citizens recognize the important role that Army aviation has played in shaping our nation's history. The Army Aviation Heritage Foundation (AAHF) is working to change this historical lack of public knowledge and understanding by bringing the story of Army aviation to the American people.

In the March/April 1998 issue of *Army Aviation*, founding AAHF member MG Morris J. Brady (Ret.) discussed the mission and potential of the AAHF. At the time, the initial AAHF organizational and acquisition efforts were underway, and membership and community involvement were just getting started. Now — three years, 622 members and 22 flyable Army aircraft later — the AAHF would like to report back to the members of the Army Aviation Association of America on the success of AAHF's mission and its multiple outreach programs.

Mission and People

AAHF's primary mission is the education and inspiration of the American public through the sharing of

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the heritage of Army aviation. The driving force behind the foundation is its diverse and talented organization of volunteers, currently numbering over 600 and located across the United States. The vast majority of the foundation is composed of current or former military personnel, many from Army aviation. Yet military service is not a requirement for participation -

all that is necessary is a desire to help share the story of Army aviation.

AAHF is an all-volunteer organization and all vital functions — from maintenance to marketing to air assaults to air show narration — are performed by volunteers.

Air Shows and Aircraft

The AAHF team leads an extensive air show outreach program throughout the eastern United States and organizes a variety of educational opportunities with schools, civic organizations and Boy Scout troops. Each educational outreach effort gives the public an authentic demonstration of the soldiers, equipment and role of Army aviation in American military history, delivered with a meaningful and patriotic presentation to instill public pride and enthusiasm for the accomplishments of Army aviation and America.

The AAHF outreach program emphasizes the air show as its most effective method of educating the American public. By taking the story of Army aviation to the people via air shows, the AAHF offers an exciting and effective new method of sharing the story of Army aviation with the public.

The AAHF's current air show program is composed of three modules that represent the three main eras of modern Army aviation — World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War.

The World War II module includes an authentic L-4B "Grasshopper" aircraft and authentic WW II ground vehicles to relive the story of the birth of modern Army aviation.

The association's Vietnam-era AH-1 Cobra gunship flies over the Mall and Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C. Restored and maintained by the AAHF, the Cobra helps tell the Army aviation story at airshows across the country.

The Korean War module uses an OH-23 helicopter and borrows from the depictions of the popular movie and television series "MASH" to demonstrate the growth and development of Army aviation and illustrate the initial use of the helicopter in the Army.

The Vietnam War module combines seven of the AAHF's veteran Army helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft (AH-1, two UH-1s, an OH-6, a CV-2, an OV-1 and an L-19) with actual infantry assault teams to deliver a realistic and powerful portrayal of the use of Army aviation in a typical air cavalry troop action in Vietnam. The module includes multiple aircraft gun and rocket runs, artillery support, a low-level supply drop and an infantry air assault with a realistic ground "fire fight," complete with an opposing force and the use of blank ammunition by both sides. Realistic pyrotechnic effects support the action throughout this module to convey realistic weapons effects to the crowd.

The 2000 season saw the AAHF sharing the story of Army aviation with a combined total of 1,950,000 individuals at three static presentations and 13 flying programs. AAAA provided \$13,000 in corporate sponsorship for three of the foundation's shows during the 2000 Season.

With the AAAA's assistance, several notable performances were achieved this season. At the Fort Rucker Armed Forces Day Air Show, the AAHF executed its entire three-era program after receiving a personal invitation from the chief of Army aviation. The foundation received a rare formal invitation from the board of directors of the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) to participate in the EAA Oshkosh Air Show — the largest annual aviation event in the world, with an estimated attendance of 950,000.

The AAHF's invitation represented the first known time that any representative of Army aviation — active, reserve component or civilian — had ever been asked to

The foundation's UH-1 Iroquois is one of its most popular display aircraft. Here it is seen saluting the crowds at the Experimental Aircraft Association airshow in Oshkosh, Wis.



Air show selection committees are able to choose from the three-module menu as desired. In combination, however, all three modules tell the unfolding story of Army aviation through Vietnam. With the recurring support of active and reserve-component units, however, the AAHF has been able to share the history of Army aviation through the present day at many air shows. The combination of exciting, realistic, live-action sequences and patriotic, informative narration has produced overwhelmingly positive reactions to the AAHF's efforts to share the story of Army aviation. The safety, professional presentation and effectiveness of the foundation's performances have also established the AAHF as a highly sought after air show organization.

The foundation's initial season, completed in 1999, reached a combined total of 380,000 members of the public through nine static presentations and one flying program. Based on this initial success, the AAHF was able to greatly expand its outreach efforts during the following year.

be a part of the official air show program at Oshkosh. During the Detroit (Selfridge) Air Show (the second largest civilian air show in the country, with an attendance of 700,000), the AAHF was asked to provide the closing performance in place of the Blue Angels demonstration team. The foundation's 1999 and 2000 air show seasons were covered by a variety of publications and featured on several national television specials, including the Discovery Wings program and on the SpeedVision cable channel.

Perhaps the most moving event in which AAHF has been involved was the Independence Day 2000 fly-over of vintage helicopters conducted in Washington, D.C., during the annual meeting of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association (VHPA). Eight aircraft — four UH-1s, two AH-1s, an OH-6 and an OH-58 — flew over the Mall near the Vietnam Memorial. Cheered by some 3,000 VHPA members, their families and guests, the helicopters were an airborne tribute to all of those whose names are inscribed on the memorial.

The Future

Based upon its early and quick success, the future of the AAHF is bright. Although the foundation has only committed to six major air show programs for its 2001 season, these six shows will reach an estimated 2,100,000 people. The AAHF has already been invited to begin the Army program at the annual Andrews Air Force Base,

Md., Joint Services Open House on Armed Forces Day. The foundation will also lead the Army show during the private performance before the president of the United States, members of Congress and senior Pentagon officials.

Due to the increasing size of its airworthy fleet — currently more than 20 flyable Army aircraft — the AAHF is also beginning the

process of expanding to a larger, permanent facility. And as the AAHF's size and capability continue to grow, new possibilities are being discussed. One such opportunity would be the reinstatement of a helicopter precision demonstration team, similar in mission to the Air Force's Thunderbirds or the Navy's Blue Angels.

The tremendous positive response to the foundation's efforts indicates that there is an emerging hunger in our country to recognize and remember the heritage and legacy of Army aviation, the Army and our armed forces. In its own way, the AAHF is helping to motivate the public to re-establish the American soldier as an active member of the American family. Our soldiers and their stories should not be forgotten when they are gone. Their machines should not be kept from the skies when they retire from frontline service.

The AAHF is helping to bring Army aviation's story to the American people unlike any other existing organization. If you would like to become a member of the foundation's team, or help support our efforts through your contributions, please call (770) 897-0444 or visit our web site at www.armyav.org. AAHF is an IRS-designated non-profit public education foundation, and all donations are fully tax deductible.

Whether active duty, retired or just a public-spirited citizen, help the AAHF bring the story of Army Aviation to the American people. Having already reached, or secured commitment to reach, a combined audience of 4.4 million people in 36 aerial and static demonstrations during its first four years from initial conception — imagine what the Army Aviation Heritage Foundation's future may hold in support of Army aviation, the Army and our nation.



Sean M. Brady, grandson of founding AAHF member MG Morris J. Brady (Ret.), works with the foundation at its headquarters in Hampton, Ga.



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