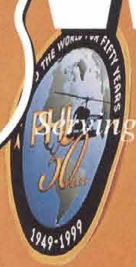


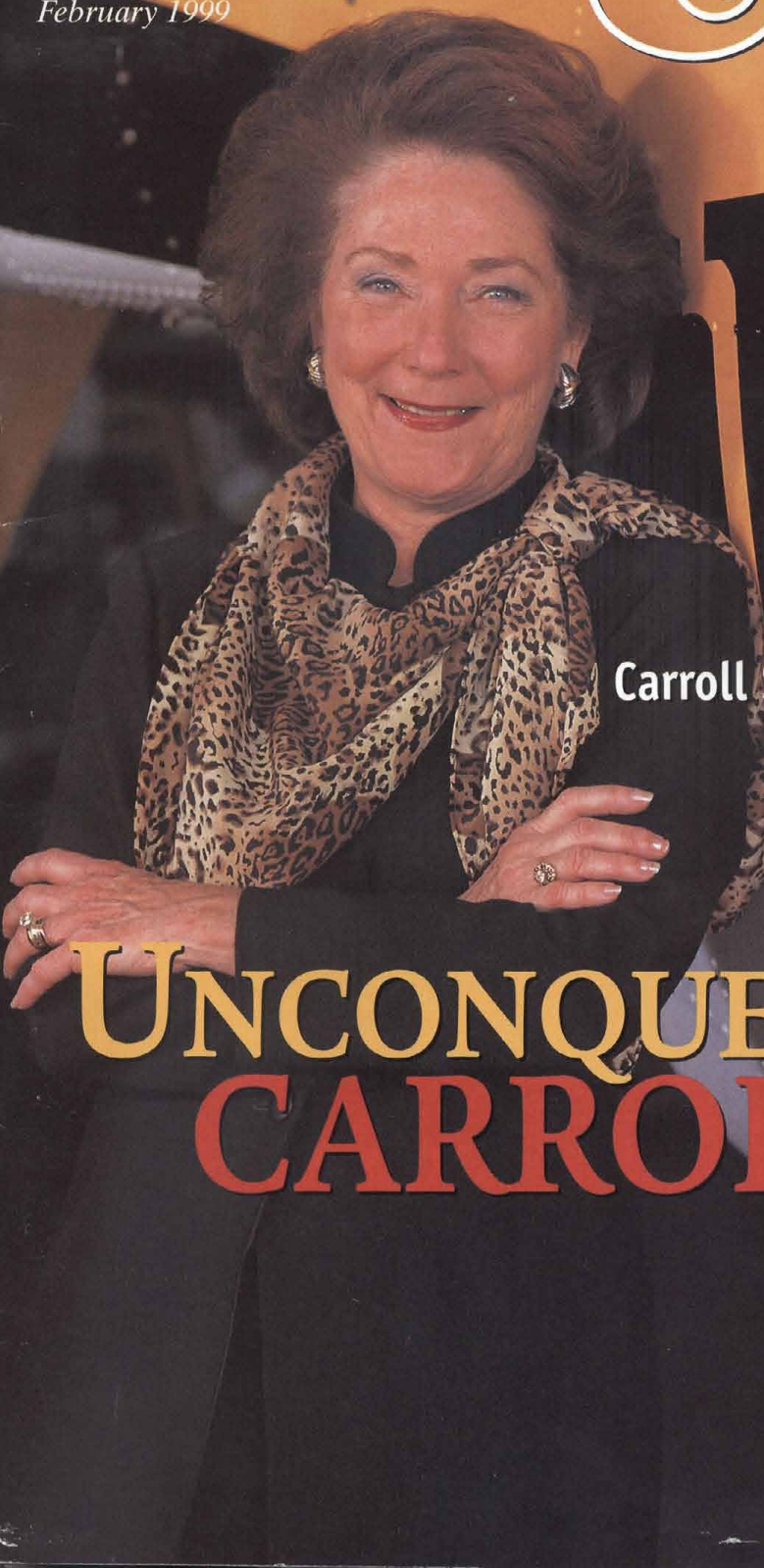


rotor & wing

February 1999



Serving the Worldwide Helicopter Industry



Carroll Suggs, the no-nonsense CEO of Petroleum Helicopters, Inc., discusses the harsh new realities of offshore support.

UNCONQUERABLE CARROLL

OPERATION RESTORE HISTORY



An assortment of aviation historians and military personnel has taken on a new mission — to create living museum displays from Army aviation's past. by Cliff McKeithan

AT A SMALL AIRFIELD south of Atlanta, a diverse group of individuals have come together to preserve the heritage of U.S. Army aviation and to educate the public about its accomplishments.

This group—the Army Aviation Heritage Foundation (AAHF)—comprises individuals from all walks of military life: active-duty soldiers and retirees, Marines and Coast Guardsmen, enlisted men and warrant officers, commissioned officers, and even civilians from industry. Based in Hampton, GA, AAHF brings together

their various backgrounds for a common purpose: to promote, preserve and restore historical helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft representing five decades of Army aviation.

No one pulls rank here. A retired lieutenant colonel holds an access panel open for a retired sergeant as he adjusts a control mechanism. In one corner, a small group labors over a pile of parts that one day will become an OH-13 Sioux again. In another corner, two men pore over technical manuals, hoping to provide the most accurate information available to aid the wrench turners in their mission to make a helicopter live again.

Rapid progress

Few military branches have had as much dynamic growth over so short a time as Army aviation. Despite many distinguished achievements in helicopter design, tactics, capabilities and performance, few Americans know the full story. When asked about Army aviation, most people focus on the fixed-wing aircraft of the Army Air Corps (or Army Air Forces) during World War II, or they can tell you something about the present-day Air Force, but few are aware that these helicopters and airplanes, which made history, are disappearing rapidly.

Those who grew up after the Vietnam



The Army Aviation Heritage Foundation restores historical military aircraft to flyable condition. Above: A 1966 Hughes OH-6A Cayuse (LOH) bears the original markings of 2/17 Cavalry, A Troop, which served with the 101st Airborne (Air Assault) Division in Vietnam. Below: An AAHF team "de-civilianizes" the LOH early in the restoration process.



War know little about the periods that came before; once those aircraft are gone, their stories left untold, their legacy will be lost forever.

"I echo that sentiment, because I found that to be the case with virtually everyone in the post-Vietnam age group," says AAHF advisory board chairman Lt. Gen. Harry W. O. Kinnard (Ret.). "The foundation has particular meaning for the people who are going to restore the aircraft, but it also has great meaning for those who need to know more about that period."

In 1997, founders Michael J. Brady and

retired Army Maj. Gen. Morris J. Brady (who is also Michael's father) incorporated AAHF and registered it with the Internal Revenue Service as a non-profit public educational foundation. This status also qualified the organization to receive government surplus property and equipment that's essential in restoring old military aircraft.

Michael Brady launched the foundation after selling his interest in a number of airlines that he owned. Northwest Airlines bought out a group of commuter operations serving as Northwest Airlin,

leaving Brady able to retire in his late 40s. Now, at age 50, Brady has a new vocation—to ensure the foundation's survival.

"If there's a core to this thing, that core is Michael Brady. He works at this 10, 12 hours a day," says co-founder Morris Brady, who is also a former board member for Southeastern Airlines.

Because a historical foundation would require the expertise of a diverse group of individuals, many of them ex-military, the Bradys created an advisory board to help decide just what kind of a museum the foundation would create.

The AAHF Board of Advisors, led by Kinnard, decided that they would not only restore the aircraft for static display, but would restore them to *flyable* condition. This would give future generations a sense of how the aircraft operated, what they sounded like, and what their capabilities were. They based their restoration and flight operations at Tara Airfield in south suburban Atlanta.

A unique aspect of this museum is that the displays are able to travel to the public, rather than forcing the public to travel to a fixed location.

"I think that is the primary purpose of the foundation," Kinnard says. "You can talk about aviation history or write about it all you want, but if you can kick the tires and watch them fly, then that's quite different."

Another problem was fundraising. The foundation restored the first aircraft using private donations and thousands of man-hours of donated time. Once built, the fleet had to maintain its operations. There was fuel to buy, inspections to carry out, routine maintenance to perform. To keep the museum going, AAHF holds a series of flight demonstrations and static displays each year. The aircraft are all flown by veteran military pilots.

Some of the aircraft are privately owned, but leased by the foundation. "We have use agreements," says Morris Brady. "If an aircraft belongs to a member, we lease the aircraft from him, he keeps the insurance, and we maintain and operate it. Those aircraft that don't have use agreements are owned and operated by the foundation."

AAHF made its most recent addition to the fleet in December—a Bell H-model Huey that formerly served with the Alabama National Guard.

Every era

The fleet represents almost every era in Army aviation: World War II, Korea, Vietnam and present day. Nearly half the fleet is composed of helicopters; the remainder are light fixed-wing aircraft. A 1943 Piper L-4H Grasshopper represents World War II, while a 1951 Hiller H-23B Raven and a

Restorations



The old workhorse meets the next generation as modern Air Cavalry crews inspect the finished LOH at Fort Campbell, KY.

1948 Ryan L-17B Navion represent Korea.

It's fitting that most of AAHF's Vietnam fleet are helicopters—in addition to the UH-1H, a 1966 Hughes OH-6A Cayuse (LOH) and a Bell TH-13T Sioux. Rounding out the displays in the post-Vietnam Era are a 1976 Bell TAH-1P Cobra and two Beech fixed-wing aircraft. Some of the aircraft, such as the LOH, have been fully restored to “show quality” condition, while others are still awaiting full restoration.

When it was brought to the AAHF facility, the OH-6A had been pressed into civilian service. The helicopter was “de-civilianized” by stripping off its civil paint scheme and returning it to Army milspec.

Once fully “militarized” again, the LOH was given historically accurate markings. AAHF voted to use the unit markings of the 2/17 Cavalry, A Troop, to honor the troop's commander—AAHF advisory board member Lt. Gen. Teddy G. Allen (Ret.). Advisors Don F. Pratt and Rex Boggs assisted with historical details, and aviation artist Joe Kline, a helicopter crew chief in Vietnam, painted the markings.

Two of the display aircraft saw actual combat. The L-4H served with the U.S. Ninth Army during the 1944-45 Berlin Campaign in World War II, and the LOH served in Vietnam with the 101st Airborne (Air Assault) Division from October 1968 to November 1971.

Ghosts revisited

Already, the OH-6A has uncovered valuable sources of anecdotal historical information. Last July, when the LOH appeared at the “Gathering of Eagles” air

show at Fort Campbell, KY, one of the spectators, Bill Savedge of Newport News, VA, recognized the helicopter. He was the first pilot to fly it for the 101st in Vietnam.

“It was quite a shock and very emotional. Kind of like seeing a ghost,” he says.

The LOH served as an unarmed command-and-control ship, call sign “795.” Savedge picked it up in Quinhon, South Vietnam on May 18, 1968, and delivered it to a nearby maintenance battalion designated “Camp Eagle.”

One of the most dangerous tactics he says the Army performed with the helicopter was to fly back and forth over the enemy to draw their fire so that American artillery could home in on the enemy guns and destroy them.

Did they lose many helicopters that way?

“Surprisingly, no. We never had any of our ships shot down while I was there,” says Savedge, who now works for a medical supply distributor in Richmond, VA. “You did a lot of innovative things and a lot of stupid things. Mostly stupid things. Sometimes you wondered how in the world you were able to get back.”

Savedge says he wants to fly his old helicopter one last time, and AAHF has given its approval. He's just waiting for the foundation to let him know when the helicopter will be available.

Foundation officials say that one of their later-model helicopters, the TAH-1P Cobra, is the only civilian-registered airworthy Cobra in the eastern United States and one of only nine Cobra trainers procured by the Army. Once fully restored, it

will become an F model.

A restoration team has concluded that the Cobra is in good mechanical condition, and is now focused on restoring the cockpit and obtaining some external parts. The advisory board also is requesting information on official markings for the years 1978 to 1982 from former members of the 229th Attack Helicopter Battalion.

Monuments to heroism

AAHF is negotiating for several other historical helicopters, including two UH-1Ms. The group also is seeking sources for an OH-58A+ or C-model Kiowa.

According to AAHF President Michael Brady, donations can be earmarked to support the restoration and operation of specific aircraft. Because of the foundation's status under Section 501(c)(3) of the federal tax code, all donations are tax deductible.

The aircraft project teams that are doing the restoration work don't seem to mind the long hours bringing these olive-drab ghosts back to life. They remain focused on the immediate task at hand, certain that they're doing more than reconstituting helicopters from spare parts. They're creating educational tools for future generations—moving, hovering monuments to generations of men and women who contributed their service, and sometimes their lives, to their country. **PAW**

Cliff McKeithan is an AAHF member. For more information on the foundation, contact him at the AAHF Website, www.armyav.org, or call 770-897-0444.