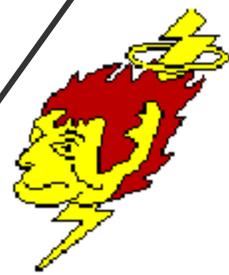


# The Ugly Angel

## Memorial Foundation Newsletter

Volume 10, No.4, September, 2005

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### Returning to our Roots

By Tom Hewes

In an editorial titled Ugly Angels at the Crossroads in the April 2005 edition of the Ugly Angel Newsletter, I described what we would have to do as a group to support our Ugly Angel Memorial Foundation Strategic Plan. The piece specifically addressed the issue of ways and means to raise the necessary funds, and asked each of you to vote on which option you preferred – a dues or pledge system.

While many of you have responded with uncommon generosity, it is now apparent, some six months later, that the majority of Ugly Angels are reluctant to support the Strategic Plan under either fund raising option. Whatever your reasons, it is blindingly clear that most of you don't like the plan. More importantly, it indicates that those of us who participated in its development misread how most of you see the purpose of the UAMF.

Well, we may be a bit slow but we're not stupid.

As a consequence, we are turning back the clock to what worked when we first organized in 1996. Those of you who were present at the creation will remember the emphasis was on reuniting and remembering those we left behind. The evidence of how well it worked may be found in our attendance at Pop A Smoke Reunions, the number of subscribers to the Ugly Angel Newsletter, in YL 42 at the National Museum of Naval Aviation, and at the Ugly Angel Memorial on MCB Quantico.

Accordingly, the UAMF will henceforth concentrate on four primary objectives:

1. Funding a scholarship in memory of the Angels who died in Vietnam.
2. Publication of a periodic newsletter.
3. Preparation of a written and oral history of the Ugly Angels.

4. Organizing periodic meetings (read reunions) of all members of the UAMF.

Apart from fully funding the scholarship, we are already working the other objectives so the only change you will notice will be more emphasis on getting together and having fun, and less wear and tear on your wallet.

Since a slimmer, trimmer UAMF doesn't require a seven member Board of Directors to guide it, we are also in the process of reverting to a three-member board. To this end, all current directors have resigned except Vice President, Ben Cascio, who is now de facto President. Under the UAMF articles of incorporation, a functioning President is necessary to constitute a BOD. Thus Ben will appoint two new members. It is expected they will be me and Bob Skinder, both of whom were members of the BOD upon incorporation in 1998. Good Lord willing and Texas drying out, it is anticipated that Rusty Sachs will continue to function as Treasurer, Bob Skinder as Editor/Historian, and Bill McNair and Romy Myszka as Reunion Coordinators.

Once it is reconstituted, and a measure of stability attained, the BOD will address itself to a number of questions, including whether the dues system now in effect will be terminated and dues refunded, moving the Ugly Angel Memorial to the Heritage Center, completing the Ugly Angel website, and such other issues as may arise in connection with the changes described herein.

It is also expected that Ben Cascio, whose law practice is expanding, will step down as Vice President in the near future but remain on the BOD. Barring a rebellion by the membership, it is probable that I will once again have the honor of acting as your President.

You may therefore expect the same lovable, tactful, and inspired leadership – not to mention bullshit – to which you were accustomed in the early years.

Semper Fi,

Tom

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### **Reunion**

This editor's promises are becoming increasingly worthless. I had promised the Board of Directors that I would publish every third month, September being one of those. I think I was close to getting this one out on time when the changes, Tom referred to took place. At any rate, there should be another issue in December and again around February or March. After that we will speed up to once a month or every six weeks heading towards the Reunion in Fort Worth in August. The latest word that I have heard is that the

reunion packages won't be sent out until after Christmas. That should also be when you will find out which hotels are gonna let us in and what the cost will be

**Join Pop A Smoke now.** Here is the official word from Buz Shantry, the Pop A Smoke Admin staff weenie: "As you know, the membership year runs from 10 Nov thru the following 9 Nov. There are no hard and fast rules. But, generally we have a 'grace period' of 120 days for all who are paying before 10 Nov. In other words, the expiration date would be bumped to the following year. e.g.; pay the annual membership amount (\$35) today and your expiration date would be 2006." That means not only do you get more than a month for free, but you can also go to the reunion or at least get all of the information about it. Without belonging, you get nothing from them. It's a pretty good deal now, being considerably less than a tank of gas for some of us.

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**RTB, Mike Melin, Class of 65-66**

We have learned of the passing on or about August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2005 of our brother Ugly Angel, retired UAL Captain and Yachtsman, Michael Sterling Melin from his good friend and fellow Marine, "Cort" de Peyster.

Mike was on a holiday in Argentina with some of his sailing buddies from Sausalito when he suffered a brain aneurysm. He was rushed to the hospital where he succumbed 2 days later.

Cort reported that he was able to escort Mike's wife Patty to the airplane. She evidently made it in time to be with him before he died.

With regard to the Wake/Celebration of Mike's life, 07 October has been confirmed. It looks like early afternoon at the Sausalito Yacht Club, located two miles north of the Golden Gate Bridge. The Zip code is 94965, to help finding a motel etc.

Any Ugly or Archie's Angels in the area are encouraged and welcome to attend.

Friends can contact Patricia Melin, (415) 388-3168, 104 Ricardo Rd, Mill Valley, CA 94941 or "Cort" at F.V. de Peyster, 127 Lopez Road, Lopez Island, WA 98621 (360) 468- 4774 or [CortReno@aol.com](mailto:CortReno@aol.com)

"He was a great guy and we have lost a dear friend."

This newsletter will attempt to print or pass on to Mrs. Melin any stories about Mike that you think worthy of sharing. Two are included later in this issue.

## **Aircraft for Sale**

### **Solid Mahogany UH-34**

Madilyn got me one of these for my 62<sup>nd</sup> birthday. It is a lot bigger (about 20 inches long) and heavier than it looks and is gorgeous on my bookshelves at work. The workmanship is very good but there are a few idiosyncrasies almost all of which you can see just in front of the right strut; namely, the stack is on the wrong side and the foot holds are convex rather than concave. I think that someone was working from a photo. I got over the few minor discrepancies in a few moments. Shipping was within a week. Robbie Robertson got his recently and seemed pretty pleased.



Our H-34 Choctaw Model is Officially Licensed, Approved & Endorsed by Sikorsky Aircraft Corporation.  
\$95.00 plus s&h from <http://www.exoticwoodsltd.com/ch34choctaw.html>

After I wrote this, the thought occurred that perhaps if we bought enough of these, the company might give us a price break – so I asked them. Their answer follows:

**Thanks for writing to us. We have our standard DOD/Military Discount of 20% which we typically offer in situations like this. However, given the nature of your membership, the Units' collective sacrifices and contributions, I would like to offer additional incentives.**

**Bob, I am going to offer your membership community an unprecedented 30% Discount for ANY ITEM from our website or our retail stores. Anyone wishing to take advantage of this offer must enter the following Coupon Code on our web site Order Page, or mention the code in our stores, or on the phone for phone orders.**

**YOUR COUPON CODE: HMM362 (Not original, but nonetheless appropriate)**

**The Coupon Code has no minimum or maximum purchase, and has no limits on it's usage. It is active as of this writing, and is currently set for "No Expiration". We will revue this on an annual basis, and the Code, the discount amount, the Coupon itself and it's validity is subject to change at each annual usage revue.**

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### **Who Kilt the Water Buff?**

When the great Ugly Hero/Pilot Roger Cook passed on, Sachs reported on one of the great stories that contributed to Roger's legendary status the hauling of a young working buffalo from Ky Ha to Tam Ky. Well, it seems like there is more of an Ugly connection than one would have guessed at.

In a recent phoncon (read: exclusive interview) with Pete King, he confessed everything. Somehow Pete got separated from his two trusty sergeants, Ed Chenkus and Bobby Rehders and wound up as a FAC with 2/5 near Tam Ky. One of the grunts came up and told him that a water buffalo had zoomed on him as they were coming down the trail. As the buffalo went past him, the kid shot but only wounded the beast. He came to Lieutenant Pete to get help for either himself or Fernando the bull.

When Pete found the animal, it was apparent that its jaw had been pretty well destroyed. It was also surrounded by the rest of the herd; maybe three or four beasts in all. The thing was suffering and Pete, having been trained by NCOs had become a kind person. He would put it out of its misery with a quick shot but it wasn't going to be that easy. Pete says, he still remembers how the others kept coming between him and the wounded one, trying to protect it. Eventually Pete got a couple of shots in; Fernando went down which, of course, led to getting the Mayor and then Colonel Johnson and ultimately Roger all involved in getting #2 shot, only this time, in the air. So far as I know, that shooter has never been correctly identified. Turn yourself in, you'll feel better.

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### **Charlie Chibitty RTB**

One of the best part of our reunion at the Hail's was getting to meet and be blessed by Charlie Chibitty an 83 year old Comanche Code Talker. He, along with 16 other Comanche Indians, was part of an Army company of code talkers who befuddled the Germans during the invasion of the beaches of Normandy, France. He, along with 16 other Comanche Indians, was part of an Army company of code talkers who befuddled the Germans during the invasion of the beaches of Normandy, France. Well, even 83 year old Comanche Code Talkers pass to the other side. Charlie went in July. One thing we can be sure of is that Charlie is entertaining a lot of folks wherever he is. I know, I'll never forget meeting him.



Many thanks Lillie and Gerald!!!!

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**Did you know Lantie?**

I'm trying to find people who may have known Lantie Harris. He was killed in a "friendly" helicopter accident on 10/10/68. I was his fiancé. I didn't get to attend his funeral because of my parents. I just found out where he is buried and now want to work my way backwards. Not real interested in the accident.

Did you know Lantie? Thanks for any and all help. God Bless.

Katie Mullen Campbell [camp7575@bellsouth.net](mailto:camp7575@bellsouth.net)

**Mysterious Bill Franklin**

Al Barbour, Pop A Smoke Historian was contacted regarding the Pop A Smoke listing of William Franklin as one of ours who was killed in action.

Shortly after we dedicated our memorial, THE WING, at MCB Quantico I became obsessed with determining how each of our brothers died. As we all know, we each knew how some died but no one had a hold on how everyone died. I don't recall the exact details but it was one of my first jobs as historian. Soon after the dedication, it became apparent that although there were 33 names on the marble, HMM-362 had actually lost only 31. Coincidentally Ron Janousek had just transferred into the Scarface Hueys the same week that I was assigned to that squadron and for the same reason; the Uglys were standing down. Ron's name was carved into the stone at the request of his many Ugly friends.

William Franklin's story was not so clear until just recently when Al Barbour, Pop A Smoke Historian was contacted by folks at the Virtual Wall, a wonderful website. Al then wrote to me and I responded. My letter to Al and the inquirers is as follows:

Gentlemen:

William Franklin's name appeared on our earliest list of casualties and eventually wound up on our memorial, THE WING, at MCB Quantico. At the time, we were perhaps overly concerned about being sure that we had all squadron members listed and were not concerned with any extra names.

It appears in retrospect that when Tom Hewes conducted the first memorial service at the 1996 reunion, that name was given to him by a relative of Cpl. Franklin's who thought that Tom was requesting names of anyone KIA whereas he was asking for members of the squadron.

I believe it is the Ugly Angel's opinion, that we welcome his name on our memorial and it will remain there forever. We certainly appreciate your additional information. I will post it in the next newsletter.

Thanks for all your work and best wishes.

Bob Skinder -- Historian and Newsletter Editor, HMM 362

Cpl Franklin was a member of Co. D, 1<sup>st</sup> Recon Battalion. He was one of three from 1st Recon "Team Cowhide" who were killed on February 5, 1967. The other two were Cpl. Roger Vincent Paul Burke and PFC James Allen Angermiller,

I hope the Corporal's family know that he is memorialized with our guys at MCB Quantico. He's in fine company.

The fellow who brought this to our attention is Ken Davis <[virtualwall@alltel.net](mailto:virtualwall@alltel.net)>, obviously of the Virtual Wall. It's something to know that people like Ken are still working to make sure that everyone is properly and correctly accounted for.

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### **Mike "Mush" Melin - "Water Landing Expert of the Free Western World"**

Editor's Note: I'm not too sure how Mush felt about departing this planet but I'm darn sure he would be pleased to have two of his buddies recount his pretty amazing record; three times in the drink in 3 months. This could be a record. First version by Mike Severson and second by Jack Lodge.

Mike Melin survived THREE (3) Engine failures off the BOAT all on our three month tour on the Valley Forge/Princeton.

As I recall the first was on takeoff at full power lifting off the deck. He and Larry Byers went down like a stone ! Larry & crew popped up pretty quick but Melo went down deep and many had given up watching when he literally exploded from the Sea. I'll bet he shot up 15 feet in the air.

The second was a rough runner coming back to the Ship. We heard his melodious voice say "aw shit I'm goin in the DRINK AGAIN" Don't remember who was with him but they all got out QUICK ! Greg Lee swooped in to pick them up and from what I heard got them and his crew a little wet again but got them on board anyhow. All's well that ends well.

Mikes' third one was a bright sunny day in Subic Bay with Dave Good. Just an "oh shit not again !" and down they went. Both were very ready to get out and jumped out as the blades stopped, popped their Mae Wests and landed in water UP TO THEIR KNEES ! Not quite as dramatic as the previous two but engine failure and autorotation gets the blood pumping just fine. I thought I had some pictures of our recovery of that bird, but can't find em' (and a lot of other things)

We accused Melo of doing these things on purpose to get the Doc's BOOZE at this point. He said the Booze WAS GOOD.

Brow ( aka Mike Severson)

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“Mush” was a gregarious guy. The only helo driver I know that survived, and celebrated, three engine failures over water. I viewed the first one from an aft spot on the deck of the LPH we were operating from. We had just landed and shut down when Mike launched in front of us. He no more than cleared the deck when the engine quit. With a huge splash the bird hit the water, rolled, and shortly disappeared. As the flotsam, jetsam and a couple of visible flight helmets floated by, we knew at least one crew member was missing. The water of the South China Sea was very clear and I saw bubbles rising to the surface. All of a sudden Mike appeared through the bubbles shooting to the surface. As he later told the story, when his bird hit the water, the pilot side window slammed shut. He was a long way under water when he finally kicked the window out, cleared the cockpit and pulled the toggles on his mae west. Other than bleeding from his nose and ears, Mike didn’t suffer and serious damage. Nor did the rest of the crew – as was the case in all three of his “water landings”.

I don’t recall the particulars of his second adventure, but I had the duty the day of his third. When notified we had a bird in the water and told that, once again, it was “Mush” Melin, I called the Skipper, Jim Aldworth, and the flight surgeon. They appeared on deck awaiting the return of the rescue chopper.

The flight surgeon turned to Col. Aldworth and expressed his concern over, not only the physical well-being of the crew, but the mental state of Melin since this was his third “water event”. When the rescue bird landed on deck, there was Mush hopping down with that big chest thrust out, he proclaimed himself the “water landing expert of the free western world”.....’Nuf said about his mental health.

Jack Lodge

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### **George Curtis, Vice President of Pop A Smoke – RTB**

Word just in that another old pal has gone on. You probably know George from the reunions and from the Pop A Smoke web site, particularly all of the work he did with the photos. If you are as old as I am and moist of you are, you might remember seeing a Leatherneck back in the sixties with a burning H34 on the cover. That was George’s bird. Well, I had the pleasure of working three separate tours with him. The first in 69-70 when we were both in Scarface. I was a sergeant then and he a lance corporal crew chief. Later when I was a reserve gunny, he showed up at NAS South Weymouth as a real gunny and then came back a few years later as a Master Gunny. Never screw with Lance Corporals!! You never know who or what they might become.

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### **Archie’s Angel Found**

We recently heard from a fellow who wants to turn his missing dad in. He is :

Gerald Thompson

2221 W. Whitehall Rd.

State College, PA. 16801

Home Phone: (814) 238-1610 or through his son, Mark, at [mat113@psu.edu](mailto:mat113@psu.edu)

### **Incoming, Mail, News, etc**

**Charlie Appleton** sent a nice letter. A stack of photos and a checks from my old boss. Now all we tin-benders need to do is figure out how to get him to a reunion. Apparently he is more stubborn now than he was in 66.

**Marc Sohm** wrote a real nice letter back about a few dogs he has owned. He sounded good and wrote real well but said it took awhile to write back as he had been pretty depressed. He described where he was as a lot like what you saw in "Cool Hand Luke" "you just do your job and do your time."

He was real grateful to those who wrote. His address is in the last newsletter or you can drop me a line and I'll send it to you.

**Rich Houghton** sent an article from the September, 2005 issue of *Aviation History*. On page 51 of the magazine there is mention of the incident when an Air Force RB-57 went down. Rich, as crew chief of YL31 and Dick Moser as pilot were part of the crew that recovered one crew members body on September 19, 1966. After delivering the remains to D Med, they returned to the SAR pad at Chu Lai and , in his words, "When shut down, "Terri E" revealed an unsettling and amazing sight. Evidently, we had unknowingly hit something either landing or taking-off from the crash site. Two main rotor blades had bent spars, and the other two had a couple pockets ripped off each. The damaged spars and pockets just happened to be on blades exactly opposite each other. The damage had evidently balanced out as "Terri E" had flown smoothly on. A test pilot brought a replacement helo from Ky Ha and flew "Terri E" back there where the next day her rotor head and all four main blades were replaced."

It would be good to know the other crewmembers and the test pilot's names. It is always a treat to get a note or letter from Rich. They are always type written, error free and embossed. No one else that I know of does that any more.

### **Incoming Money**

If you sent money to me or Rusty Sachs, it has been deposited. That should include Uglies Sproule, Appleton, Zacker, Thomas, Cooper, Bloomer and David Jones.

Those of you who sent checks to John Burns should have received notes from him explaining how the checks were forwarded from New Orleans just as Katrina was making land fall and payment should be stopped. We apologize for the inconvenience. If you feel compelled to send a check, please send it directly to me and I'll forward it.

### **Making History with the Boss**

Several months ago, I got note from Jim Richmond advising me that Texas Tech had a Vietnam Archives site at <http://star.vietnam.ttu.edu> containing much military information. It has proven to be an enormous boon to me, personally, since I also serve as the unit historian. I have used the site to fill in many pages from the Command Chronologies that Curt Grey and I had missed in our respective raids on the Marine Corps Historic Center.

I had looked at the after action reports but had been more interested in the Chronologies. However one night when I was really bored I started nosing around and saw that they had listed April 67 as one the months where we could see After Action Reports. Ed Tatman had previously mentioned visiting the school and had seen a record of him and I being on a mission together and getting shot at to boot.

Well that was true enough but what was much more of a surprise was to discover that I had flown as Willie Sproule's gunner just a few days earlier and on that mission he had spotted about 25 VC. How in the world I had ever forgotten that is beyond me. Imagine, flying with one of the greatest Marines in Helicopter History and you forgot.

Anyway I sent him a copy of the entry. He said, "now we're two old retired Marines and we're history." You oughta take a look. You're probably history, too. Just go to the website and click on Search Virtual Vietnam Archive. Type HMM 362 in the Keyword space and happy hunting.

### **What's the story on Olaf?**

I recently met an old Ugly buddy for dinner and was surprised and a little horrified to see that he had an orange Ugly Angel decal on his car. It was one of those weird ones with a guy who looked like a Scandinavian warrior. I had seen these before but always thought that the younger, Heavy guys commissioned them. I would like to make sure that I am right about this and if I am I think we need to let Sgt Grit and Mike Leahy know that these should not be sold as HMM-362 decals or patches. If you have any information, please let me know.

### **History Project (65-66)**

As soon as I get this in the mail, I will start working on the next segment of our history. I already have scanned the Command Chronologies for 65-66. Now I need to get them edited and out to the participants. I have decided that each year will pretty much run from September through August of the following year as the Aldworth folks arrived at the end of August 65 and we departed RVN in August of 69.

Look for it and be ready to participate. Start by finding photos of yourselves and friends. You are the one group without a cruise book. Also find those old letters, log books, diaries, etc.

### **Final Word on Mush from "Brow" Severson**

#### ***Michael Sterling Melin***

Mike's wife Patty, Daughter Ingrid and Son Stephen planned and executed a wonderful "Celebration of Life" at the Sausalito Yacht Club on October 7, 2005.

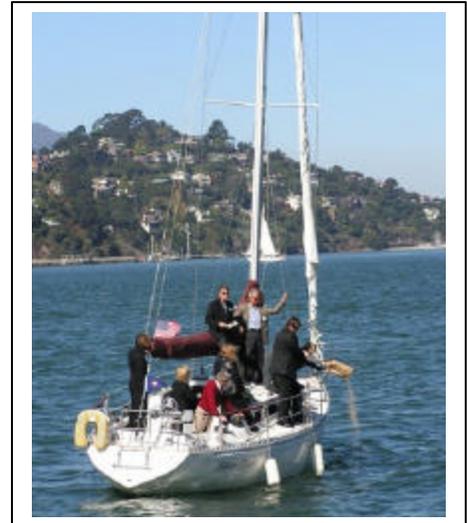
On a perfect sun drenched fall day with the Golden Gate Bridge as a backdrop. Mike's ashes and a wreath were scattered in the Bay, by his Family onboard their 36' Sloop "Silver Cloud", at his favorite racing mark. Taps were played in the background by Bill

Hogan, a Vietnam Era Marine Infantry Captain along with readings by F.V. “Cort” de Peyster, both dear friends of Mike.

The small flotilla then returned to the Sausalito Yacht Club where five Marines, from 23<sup>rd</sup> Marine Regiment in San Bruno, honored Mike’s service to his Country with a flag presentation and taps. As if to punctuate the day, the “Blue Angels” practiced in the Bay and gave us a mini Air Show. (I guess Melo and other fallen Ugly Angels arraigned that one.)

The Bar was open and testimonials to the fullness of Mike’s Life began and, as those who knew “Mush” can imagine, continued for some time! His friends, varied, loyal and many, all echoed how much we miss him and how much LIVING he packed into his life. The gathering lasted for a number of hours and I’m sure Mike was pleased many even stayed late and bought their own drinks to toast him with.

Bill McCluskey (362-1965/66) and I along with Dick Lewer and Larry Adams (361-1965/66) carried on the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots’ traditions to the best of our abilities.



I’m sure our Brother Michael “Mush” Melin was looking down with that patented smile of his with Our Skipper Jim Aldworth and other fallen Ugly Angels at his side.

It was a wonderful tribute and a fine sendoff for one great Marine, Friend and Aviator.

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### **Want to Restore an H-34?**

Tom Hewes and Lew Barnes are meeting out somewhere in the Pacific Northwest where one attempts to trick salmon into coming home with you. Between fish, they will probably be discussing how this reorganization will shake out. In Tom’s message on page 1, he lists what the UAMF will attempt to accomplish.

In a message from Lew, he has informed me that he will be putting all of his effort into restoring the UH-34J that he had hoped that the UAMF would take over. When that seemed unlikely, he went ahead and started a similar foundation whose goals are to get the 34 into fighting trim and memorialize our fallen brothers. The new organization will be called the HMM 362 Veterans Association. Hopefully we will continue to work together until the last one of us is standing and hopefully this newsletter will serve both organizations till then.

**Here's an idea:**

Earlier, I introduced you to the wooden models made by exotic woods and threw in a 30% discount, which I think amounts to about \$28.50. How about if you order one and get the discount, you send the \$28.50 to me. If you want it to go towards this organization, make the check out to the Ugly Angel Memorial Foundation. If you want it to go to the H-34 project, make it out to the HMM 362 Veterans Association. I'll make sure they get to where they need to go.

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**Requirements to be a Helicopter Squadron Historian**



are a lot more stringent than you would expect. To get the job I had to prove a heritage and although Tom gave me the job based on the promise that I had such a heritage, it was only this past weekend when my younger daughter showed up with documentation. It was taken when I was 9 years old and my brother - later a USN CWO-4, 2 years younger in 1952 at the Brockton, Massachusetts Fair.

I got ahold of a 52 copy of Jane's Aircraft and it has the bird listed as a Bell YH-12, Air Force or Model 48 civilian. My question is, I know Archie flew Helos in the Korean War but can anyone else document helo experience earlier than 1952? Let me know, okay?

Look for the next edition in December, really.

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