



Sikorsky Archives News

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Sikorsky Helicopters in Airline Service

Early in the evolution of Sikorsky helicopters, Igor Sikorsky and his team envisioned scheduled passenger flights serving major cities. The December 10, 1948 Sikorsky News told of a heliport survey flown by chief pilot Jimmy Viner in and around New York. "This futuristic and objective study was made in a S-51 helicopter with three-fold purpose: to plan for the inevitable air-mail helicopter pick-up; to establish passenger-to-airport shuttle service; and to plan for landing places for helicopters, which already travel to and from the city with passengers." The four-seat S-51 flew from Sikorsky's Bridgeport, Connecticut plant to the 36th Street pier on the Hudson River and on to New York International (today JFK International), Newark, and LaGuardia Airports, routing over waterways to comply with local ordinances.



A Sikorsky News story in 1944 reported Greyhound president Arthur Middleton Hill foresaw a helicopter-bus network serving 1,100 American towns. An S-51 was used to demonstrate the concept years later.

Sikorsky S-51s began airmail services in Los Angeles in 1947 followed soon after by Chicago and New York. The subsidized airmail runs defined paying passenger routes. When the YH-19/S-55 first flew in 1949, Sikorsky quoted a price of \$120,000 for a passenger-carrying version. The commercial S-55A was certificated by the Civil Aeronautics Authority (now the Federal Aviation Administration) in 1952. Los Angeles Airways (LAA) ordered the first two helicopters in 1951 and began twice-daily mail runs between Los Angeles and San Bernadino in June, 1952. Passenger flights from Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) to Ontario and San Bernardino started December 17, 1953. By April 1957, LAA had 17 weekday departures from LAX to 11 area heliports. *(continued on page 3)*

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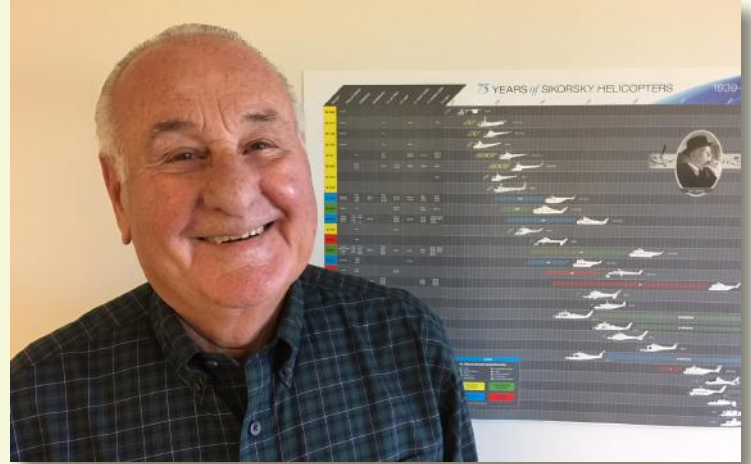
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Message from the President of the Sikorsky Archives

Dear members, donors and volunteers,

As I think back to my first year as president, January 2005, I again enthusiastically and very sincerely thank you all for your hard work and support in 2017. I also want to wish everyone a Very Happy and Healthy 2018.

October 26th, 2017 marked the 45th Anniversary of Igor Sikorsky's passing, but his aviation achievements and personal philosophies live today. In August 2017, workers of the Ukrainian civil aviation industry celebrated their professional holiday – the Aviation Day. As covered in the local media, Ukrainians couldn't help but remember that their native son was born in Kiev in May 1889. Extensive coverage was given, including memorabilia provided by the Archives.



The Archives proudly continues to preserve and publish the accomplishments of Igor and his companies; via our Quarterly Newsletter, answering queries from around the world, giving presentations to local communities and organizations and participating in events celebrating the name "Sikorsky." The highlight of the year was taking part in our 2017 Sikorsky Family Day event, held in October. There was a huge turnout of employees with their family and friends. The Archives exhibit, featuring the three careers of Igor Sikorsky and represented by the three Sikorsky brothers was the center of attention.

Finally, 2017 concluded the full corporate transition of Sikorsky from UTC to Lockheed Martin. It was our first year submitting the Archives Grant Request to Lockheed Martin. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Lockheed Martin/Sikorsky for honoring our full grant request allowing the Archives to continue our mission to preserve and make available the legacy of Igor Sikorsky and his company. Preserving "The Life and Legacy of Igor Sikorsky" is a proud undertaking and I want to again express my sincere appreciation for your continuing interest and support.

Of note, on March 5, 2018, Sikorsky will celebrate its 95th year of operations in America.

We're starting off the New Year with this issue of the Sikorsky Archives News featuring the use of Sikorsky helicopters in Airline service throughout the world. I'm confident that you will find it most interesting.

Best wishes for a Happy New Year,

Dan Liberto

(continued from page 1)

The December 19, 1952 Sikorsky News reported on a study commissioned by the Port of New York Authority predicting, "Helicopters will carry over six million intercity, suburban and aerocab passengers, over 40 million pounds of airmail, and over six and one half million pounds of package cargo a year into and out of New York City by 1975." Mail-carrying New York Airways (NYA) began space-available passenger service with the eight-seat S-55 on July 8, 1953 and by the end of the year had routes covering the metropolitan airports and stretching north to Bridgeport and south to Trenton, New Jersey. That December, Sikorsky News announced New York Airways had a ticketing, baggage handling, and advertising agreement with United Airlines (UAL) and reported, "NYA President Robert L. Cummings said the arrangement with UAL would solve one of the copter line's greatest problems: getting itself known to the public."



Los Angeles Airways began S-51 heli-mail service in 1947, defining routes to be used for scheduled passenger service.



Los Angeles Airways began S-55 passenger service in 1953.

New York Airways bought four S-55s for \$150,000 each in January, 1953. By 1957 the helicopters were flying from their Hudson pier heliport to LaGuardia Airport in 11 minutes for \$5, Newark Airport in 12 minutes for \$6, and Idyllwild (now JFK) in 20 minutes for \$7. National Airlines briefly served the Miami area with S-55s in 1953 and 1954, and Mohawk Airlines shuttled S-55s from New York to the Catskills in 1954. Chicago Helicopter Airways began S-55 passenger service in November, 1956 and soon introduced the 12-seat S-58.

In Europe, SABENA World Airways

of Belgium took the lead with four S-55s, starting the first international helicopter passenger service in September, 1953. The service upgraded to eight S-58s in 1957. By 1960, SABENA helicopters connected Brussels with Antwerp, Rotterdam, Paris, Lille, Eindhoven, Maastricht, Liege, Dortmund, Duisburg, Bonn, and Cologne.



SABENA upgraded to S-58s.



Chicago Helicopter Airways S-58.

The November 20, 1953 Sikorsky News reported on a talk by Eastern Air Lines engineering vice president Charles Froesch who envisioned 30- to 50-seat helicopters. Sikorsky considered passenger versions of the big piston-engine S-56 (Marine HR2S-1) first flown in 1954. However, the twin-turbine power of the S-61 (Navy HSS-2) flown in 1959 promised new speed and safety for passenger operations. Sikorsky unveiled a civil S-61 mockup with stretched cabin in 1959.

New York Airways put the twin-turbine S-61L in service in 1969.



The 28-seat S-61L 'copterliner' first flew on December 6, 1960, and Sikorsky News that month announced, "The S-61L is quieter, smoother, carries twice as many passengers and flies 30 percent faster (136 miles an hour cruising speed) than any helicopter presently serving a scheduled helicopter airline. Los Angeles Airways has ordered five of the new



LA Airways S-61 over Disneyland.

Sikorsky turbocopters and Chicago Helicopter Airways is purchasing four." Unlike the Navy's Sea King, the non-amphibious airliner had fixed landing gear without sponsons, a forward cargo door and rear passenger air-stair on the right side, and baggage bays in the boat hull.

Los Angeles Airways took delivery of its first S-61L on January 7, 1962 and flew the airliner between LAX and Anaheim on a Disneyland Connection. New York Airways began turbine service with the 25-seat Boeing Vertol 107 in 1962, but traded up to the 30-seat S-61L-4 in 1969 with better One Engine Inoperative performance for the Pan Am Building heliport 900 ft above midtown Manhattan. Pan American World Airways provided the financial backing for NYA and actually placed the order for five S-61Ls in 1967.



SFO also operated the single engine Sikorsky S-62.

Sikorsky also developed an FAA-certificated amphibian airliner for overwater routes. The S-61N flew on August 7, 1962 with float sponsons and retractable landing gear and a sealed hull with baggage compartments accessible from the cabin. The first S-61N customer was Pakistan International Airways. East Pakistan (today Bangladesh) Helicopter Service started commercial flights on November 25, 1963. The helicopter from Dacca to Khulna cut a 21-hour trip over land to just 37 air minutes. The airline ultimately served 20 towns and cities.

In October 1964, the S-61L and N became the first transport helicopters FAA-approved for Instrument Flight Rule passenger operations. An NYA S-61N was sold to San Francisco and Oakland Helicopter Airlines in 1965. SFO eventually had four S-61Ns running between the San Francisco and Oakland airports and connecting San Francisco with Sausalito, Berkeley, and the Emeryville heliport. Sikorsky News in December 1970 reported “Sikorsky Aircraft’s S-61N and S-61L commercial helicopters, flown on regularly scheduled routes, have passed the four million passenger mark.”

Greenlandair, Ansett ANA in Australia, Elivie in Italy, and other international operators used S-61Ns in scheduled services. British Caledonian Helicopters ran an S-61 Airlink between Gatwick and Heathrow airports from 1977 to 1987. British European Airways Helicopters received two S-61N-2s in 1964 and began scheduled passenger service between Penzance and the Scilly Islands archipelago 28 miles off the southern tip of England. BEA Helicopters became British Airways Helicopters in 1974 and in 1986 was sold to a new owner who continued to fly two S-61Ns as British International Helicopters (BIH). BIH carried the four-millionth passenger on the Penzance run in 2010. The airline logged 90,000 passengers a year and 12 flights per day by 2011 but ended with a real estate dispute in 2012.

The vision of helicopter airlines drove Sikorsky advanced concepts. A study by the Los Angeles Department of Airports and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, for example, considered a Skylounge. Sikorsky News in December 1966 explained, “The unique system proposes to use a 40-passenger vehicle to pick up passengers and baggage at points in downtown Los Angeles. It then would be driven to a central pickup station where a crane-type helicopter would airlift the vehicle, passengers and baggage directly to Los Angeles International Airport. . . Sikorsky’s role in the study will be to provide detailed information on performance of the S-64 crane-type, heavylift helicopter which will airlift the lounge.”



S-61Ns flew scheduled runs to connect the south of England with the Scilly Islands for 48 years.



Helijet has operated scheduled S-76 services between Vancouver and Victoria British Columbia since 1986 and recently expanded commuter service to Nanaimo on Vancouver Island.

had carried 2.26 million passengers. Vice president Rick Hill credited location and demographics for sustained success. "Vancouver BC is the largest city in British Columbia, and Victoria BC is the Provincial Capital of BC located on Vancouver Island, separating the two by a large body of water, the Georgia Strait. With a high propensity of business travel between the two cities and the convenience of being able to offer quick and efficient service to/from the city cores, the helicopter is a valuable tool for the busy Government and Business sectors." He added, "The S-76 aircraft offers the smooth, fast and reliable attributes that are expected by the business community. With its 12-seat capacity, it is the right size for the mission and offers the speed and comfort needed to deliver a high-frequency commuter-type operation." Helicopter airlines remain viable only on niche routes not easily served by fixed-wing aircraft.

By design, Sikorsky's successful S-92 was sized and equipped for oil rig support, executive transport, search and rescue, military transport, and commuter airlines. Most of the fleet serves in high-intensity scheduled charter operations. However, when the S-92 prototype first flew on December 23, 1998, it carried a clear if now-forgotten name -- Helibus.

For all their promise, most helicopter airlines fell victim to business challenges. The December 1972 Sikorsky News reported on the long-forgotten Island Helicopter service from Garden City, Long Island to New York City heliports with single-turbine S-62s. US Helicopter began twin-turbine S-76 service between Manhattan and New York airports in 2006 but shut down in 2009. Significantly, Helijet in British Columbia continues the Vancouver-Victoria S-76 shuttle begun in November 1986. The helicopter airline expanded commuter service to Nanaimo in March 2015. By October 2017, Helijet



Sikorsky S-92 departs the Downtown Manhattan Heliport.

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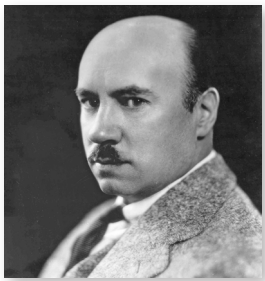
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Sikorsky brothers Igor Jr., Nikolai and Sergei (all seated) with the archives volunteers at the Igor I. Sikorsky Historical Archives display at October's Sikorsky Family Day.

Prepared by Frank Colucci and John Bulakowski with graphic art and layout by Jodi Buckley.

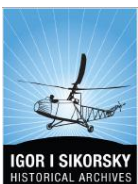


“Los Angeles Airways started an airmail service using S-51 helicopters on October 1, 1947. This was the first helicopter airmail service in the world. They also poineerd routes that led to ... passenger service in 1954.”

Igor Sikorsky — The Story of the Winged-S

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