



Sikorsky Archives News

January 2024

Published by the Igor I. Sikorsky Historical Archives

Sacred Heart University, West Campus Room 161D, 3135 Easton Turnpike, Fairfield, CT 06825

Sikorsky Recognizes Rescues



A Sikorsky YR-5A made the first hovering hoist rescue in 1944 and showed the world the life-saving power of the helicopter. (Unless indicated, all images property of Igor I. Sikorsky Historical Archives.)

Visit us at Sikorskyarchives.com

Contact us at iisha@snet.net 203.396-6001



Jimmy Viner was the first recipient of a Winged-S award for lives saved with Sikorsky Helicopters.

The life-saving power of the helicopter was clear soon after Sikorsky Aircraft began S-47 production in Bridgeport, Connecticut. In April 1944, US Army Air Forces 2nd Lieutenant Carter Harman landed his early S-47 (Army YR-4A) behind enemy lines in Burma to shuttle a downed American pilot and three wounded British soldiers to safety. On November 29, 1945, a prototype S-48 (YR-5A) crewed by company test pilot Dimitry “Jimmy” Viner and Army Captain Jack Beighle hoisted two sailors from an oil barge breaking



The Winged-S pin remains a simple honor presented to both rescue crews and the rescued.

up on Penfield Reef in Long Island Sound and delivered them on camera to Fairfield Beach in Connecticut. On February 9, 1947, Viner and Navy Lieutenant Giuseppe “Joe” Rullo flew a company-owned S-51 from the aircraft carrier USS Franklin D. Roosevelt to rescue a Helldiver pilot and radio operator minutes after the dive bomber ditched in the Caribbean.

In January 1950, Sikorsky Aircraft started honoring rescuers and the rescued with Winged-S pins and certificates. The awards continue, and they remain testimonials to aircrew determination and Sikorsky engineering.

Viner and Beigle were the first recognized with Winged-S pins in honor of their pioneering civilian rescue, the first operational use of a helicopter hoist. Harman subsequently received his pin for the first military helicopter combat rescue. Winged-S awards were sometimes long delayed. Rullo was lost in an HO3S-1 accident in 1951 but ultimately honored in 1974. Army pilot Lt. Henry Otto used an S-49 (R-6) to medevac an injured Navy officer from Yungping, China on September 2, 1945. He received his Winged-S pin and certificate at Stratford in 1977 from Sikorsky vice president Sergei Sikorsky and S-49 project engineer Ralph Alex.

In 1951, Sikorsky Aircraft, in cooperation with the Department of Defense, filmed “The Guardian Angel” documentary about S-51s (Air Force H-5s or Navy HO3S-1s) and S-55s (Air Force H-19s) in the Korean War. Rousing narration declared, “Many are the thrilling stories the pilots tell of running wounded back through small arms fire and even enemy fighters, but each time the greatest thrill is the mission accomplished, the life saved.” On January 29, 1952, Navy pilot Lieutenant (JG) J.T. Stultz earned his rescue award flying an HO3S-1 from the tank-landing ship USS Greer County into enemy fire to recover an aviator down near Hungnam, Korea.

By January 1953, Air Force H-5s and H-19s of the 3rd Air Rescue Group alone were credited with nearly 8,000 lives saved. In The Story of the



The S-51 sea deployment by Viner and Rullo in 1947 showed the Navy the value of the helicopter.

Winged-S, Igor Sikorsky wrote, "Aside from their direct and undisputable value, the rescue operations that were carried out under a variety of conditions have a great significance. They confirm the fact that the helicopter is capable of offering services in a number of cases and conditions where nothing else could be of use."

In 1952, the S-55 (HO4S-3G) gave the Coast Guard a helicopter big enough to carry two pilots, two rescue crew, and several rescued passengers, and the first helicopter instrumented for night/instrument flight. Aviation Machinist Mate Second Class Victor Roulund was cited in Sikorsky News for rescuing a Navy pilot from the Pacific on March 26, 1955. That December, he would ride the hoist repeatedly under the HO4S-3G of Lt. Henry Pfeiffer making night rescues from floodwaters in Yuba City, California. On April 19, 1955, Air Force H-19 crewmembers Capt. James Nolan, Lt. James Wells and paramedic Tech Sgt. James La Casse became Winged-S alumni for the first night rescue flight made by a helicopter north of Alaska Range mountains. They hovered for 20 minutes over the frozen Yukon River to rescue an injured nurse and child from the wreck of a light aircraft.

Sikorsky's big, twin-engine S-56 (H-37) made its first rescues in 1957 when two Army H-37A Mojaves at Fort Carson, Colorado for high alti-



The S-55 gave the Coast Guard a helicopter big enough to carry rescue crews and multiple passengers.

tude tests were called on to evacuate injured patients from extreme landing zones, the first a Boy Scout at 10,000 ft near Rock Springs, Wyoming and the second a man seriously injured on Pike's Peak. Maj. Willie Barrios, chief of the Army Aviation Board's aircraft test branch received his Winged-S pin for a confined area landing in the thin air at 9,500 ft.

In November 1958, Sikorsky News reported "Membership in the Sikorsky Winged-S Rescue club now numbers nearly 3,000, with members from among civilian and military airmen of the United States and foreign countries." Royal Hellenic Air Force Capt. Ioannis Pharmocoris and his S-55 (H-19) crew were recognized for rescuing sailors from a steamer sinking in stormy seas off the Greek coast on February 13, 1959.

The S-58 (Army H-34, Navy HSS-1, Marine HUS-1) brought greater capability and, in later versions, automatic stability equipment to assist pilots on rescue missions. In August 1955, Sikorsky pilot Jack Keating and ad-hoc rescue crewman Horace "Honk" Worcester flew an S-58 from the factory to rescue 45 people in one day during Connecticut floods. Germany received its first S-58s (H-34Gs) in 1958, and by 1959 the first Heeresflieger squadron saw two pilots awarded Winged-S pins for the speedy evacuation of an injured soldier. As an H-34 pilot or co-pilot, Capt. Siegfried Prem collected 11 Winged-S awards from 1960 to 1963. US Marine Corps HUS-1 pi-



The S-58 recovered the Freedom 7 space capsule with astronaut Alan Shepard aboard. (NASA)

lots Lieutenants Wayne Koons and George Cox earned Winged-S awards on May 5, 1961 by recovering the Freedom 7 space capsule from the Atlantic and setting it down on the carrier USS Lake Champlain with astronaut Alan Shepard aboard.

Turbine Times

Production of the piston-engine S-58 in Stratford gave way to lines of turbine-powered S-61s and S-62s with far better rescue performance. The US Coast Guard put the boat-hulled single-turbine S-62 (HUS2S-1G or HH-52) into service in January 1963. HH-52 pilot Lt George Garbe earned his eighth Winged-S award on December 1, 1964 when he rescued six sailors from the ironically christened Liki Tiki in high seas 50 nm southeast of Cape May, New Jersey. Pitching masts made hovering over the sinking schooner impossible, so the helicopter crew deployed a raft to evacuate the sailors and then hoist them aboard. Coast Guard Aviation Association historian John Moseley later wrote, "The HH-52, with over 15,000 lives saved in its 26 years of service, has the honor of having rescued more people than any other helicopter in the world."

Twin-turbine S-61s went to war with both the U.S. Navy (SH- and HH-3As) and Air Force (CH-3Cs and HH-3Es) in Vietnam. Sikorsky News

reported on a brutal combat rescue on February 2, 1967 that earned Air Force Capt. Leland Kennedy both the Air Force Cross and his third Winged-S pin. The Jolly Green Giant helicopter pilot and his crew made five passes under fire to rescue a Phantom pilot down in North Vietnam. Exchange pilot Lt. Cdr. Roderick Martin tallied no less than 19 Winged-S awards between Coast Guard peacetime and Air Force combat rescues. He told Sikorsky News, "In the Coast Guard, we search. This isn't the problem here in Vietnam. Our problem is making a dash in, getting the guy, and getting out of there. It's a pure matter of survival."

International S-61 operators made dramatic rescues as well. In a Stratford ceremony, Sergei Sikorsky presented Royal Danish Air Force Captain Keld Willumsen and fellow aviators Winged-S pins for rescues around the sinking Norwegian ferry Skagerak in early September 1966. Danish Air Force S-61A pilot Capt. Hans Aerkesen claimed 29 Winged-S rescues from November 1967 to September 1978. Rescue crewman 2nd Lt. S. Langhoff was credited with 36 from September 1973 to October 1978.

The S-61 gave the US Coast Guard its big HH-3F medium range recovery helicopter. When



The turbine-engine S-62 became the Coast Guard HH-52, here making a Louisiana rescue in 1965.



The HH-3E Jolly Green Giant gave the Air Force its first air-refuelable rescue helicopter in Southeast Asia.

HH-3Fs became operational at Coast Guard Air Station St. Petersburg, Florida in February 1970, Sikorsky vice president Paul Holt presented five Winged-S awards to officers who had logged rescues in earlier helicopters. Air Station executive officer Cmdr. John Hancock already had four rescue pins and soon earned two more in the HH-3F in June and December 1970. A decade later, HH-3F pilot Lt. Jimmy Ng received a Winged-S for rescuing 17 sailors from a foundering merchant vessel off Alaska. On Aug. 17, 1980, he flew 200 nm in darkness under ceilings less than 500 ft and in winds to 70 knots to drop water pumps to the ship to buy time to hoist crewmembers aboard the helicopter. Ng's helicopter hovered at the scene for three hours and returned with minimal fuel.



The HH-3F was the Coast Guard's Medium Range Recovery helicopter from 1970 to 1994.

Even bigger Sikorsky S-65s (CH-, HH-, and RH-53s) extended the reach of Marine Corps, Air Force, and Navy squadrons. Notably, Air Force "Super Jollies" flew combat rescues all over southeast Asia. As an Air Force Lieutenant, future Sikorsky test pilot Rusty Stiles earned his first of five Winged-S citations for the wartime rescue of a B-52 crew. On peacetime assignment with the 6594th Test Group on 18 June, 1976, he flew an HH-53C far out over the Pacific from Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii to the Japanese fishing boat Choka Maru to evacuate a sailor with a ruptured appendix.



The HH-53C, here refueling from a Hercules tanker, further extended the reach of rescue squadrons. (US DoD)

The lead aircraft on the mission had to turn back when its air refueling probe failed, and Stiles recalled, "I had refueled at least six times to get out there." Hovering over the fishing boat, the American helicopter crew could not get the Japanese captain to turn his vessel into the wind. "We had to tell them to shut the engines down. They turned sideways, not into the wind, rolling back and forth with the waves. . . . What was difficult about it was there was a mast sticking up about 5 ft from my chin window, rolling back and forth, back and forth." An Air Force parajumper nevertheless rode the rescue hoist to the rolling deck, put the patient in a Stokes litter, and returned to the helicopter. By the time the crew landed at the Hawaiian island of Hilo, they had been airborne for nearly 15 hours.

The twin-turbine S-76 was Sikorsky's first helicopter designed for the civil market, and successive versions found global success in search-and-rescue



The S-70/UH-60 Black Hawk flew frequent Medevac operations, Dust-Off under fire, in Afghanistan and Iraq. (US DoD/DVIDS)

(SAR) operations. When the mountainous Sichuan province of southwest China was devastated by an earthquake on May 12, 2008, pilots Li Fuwen, Ma Qin, Gao Jian, and others from Zhuhai Helicopter Company, China Southern Airlines, and Eastern General Aviation Corp. used their S-76C+ and S-76C++ helicopters to airlift the injured and deliver supplies. Winged-S citations recognized them and others for saving more than 100 lives after the disaster.

Hawk Rescues

The rugged, powerful Sikorsky S-70 (UH-60) joined the US Army in 1978 and spawned a line of Black Hawk and Seahawk versions used by all the US armed services and international operators. The first HH-60J Jayhawk was delivered to the US Coast Guard in March 1990. On October 28, 1991, a Coast Guard crew including Lt. Paul Lange, pilot, Lt. j.g. Dave Morgan, Petty Officer Duane Jones, and Petty Officer Andy Julian launched from Air Station Elizabeth City, North Carolina on a distress call from the sailing vessel Anne Kristine sinking in rough seas and high winds 300 miles east of Cape May, New Jersey. The Jayhawk crew refueled enroute aboard the aircraft carrier USS America, proceeded to the scene, deployed the rescue swimmer, and hoisted nine sailors aboard to refuel again from the carrier

and return to base. Sikorsky Lifelines reported, "To perform the hoists, the helicopter repeatedly dipped between the wave crests." The crew and the rescued met again at the Sikorsky plant that December to receive their Winged-S awards.

The War on Terror put lives on the line and Army Black Hawks and Air Force Pave Hawks in harm's way. Army pilot Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jason Lacrosse and flight medic Sgt. Antonio Gattis received Winged-S awards for rescuing 12 German soldiers in Afghanistan in 2010. Their pins were presented at the Berlin Airshow by Sikorsky vice president Robert Kokorda and Sergei Sikorsky on September 11, 2011. The Black Hawk also became a lifesaver for international operators. On January 4, 2019, Sikorsky recognized the crew of a Turkish Gendarmerie Black Hawk for rescuing 12 people stranded on an islet in the rising Tigris River. A Brazilian Navy Seahawk crew received Winged-S honors for evacuating a dangerously ill crewmember from a tanker ship on December 18, 2019.



With high performance and integrated SAR flight controls, the S-76 saved lives around the world.

The military S-70 provided the basis for Sikorsky's civilian Firehawk. At the 2016 Helicopter Association International exposition, Sikorsky president Dan Schultz recognized a Firehawk crew from the County of Los Angeles Fire Department Aviation Unit Firehawk for rescuing an injured driver on August 14, 2015 from a Simi Valley crash site and putting out the brushfire caused by the crash. The big, long-range S-92 gave operators around the world a highly capable search-and-rescue helicopter for government and commercial search-and-rescue operators. In May 2017, a



Romania is the latest customer for life-saving Black Hawks, now the S-70M from Sikorsky Mielec in Poland.



The S-92 gives commercial and government operators a powerful, long-ranged SAR platform.

Bristow S-92 under contract to the UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency launched from Prestwick, Scotland to rescue a surfer from the North Sea. The mission took more than six hours and earned aircraft captain Andy Pilliner, co-pilot Frans Porrenga, winch operator Rob Seall and winchman/paramedic Duncan Tripp Winged-S awards.

At the 2019 Heli-Expo, Sikorsky President Dan Schultz recognized a CHC S-92 crew for a successful search and rescue mission launched from Staffjord, Norway. In November 2018, the

helicopter crew responded to a distress call from two sailors adrift in 32 ft high waves and winds to 70 kt. Patrick Gerritsen, CHC Norway's SAR chief pilot and senior officer recounted, "The mast of the sailing boat was sweeping dangerously, while the boat was being rocked sideways by the waves." Within 20 minutes of the helicopter's arrival, both survivors were receiving treatment. The boat sank shortly after their rescue.

Helicopters made by Sikorsky Aircraft saved 2,190 lives in 2023. Last November, Winged-S awards were presented to 15 soldiers of the Idaho National Guard for five Black Hawk missions flown from 2018 to 2023. Included were Chief Warrant Officers 4 Eric Dillman and Nate Spaulding and Sgt. 1st Class Ryan Nelson for their rooftop rescue of a 90-year-old woman from floodwaters around Grangeville, Idaho in 2019.

The family of Sikorsky rescue operators grows. On November 11, 2023 the first of four new S-70M Black Hawks built in Poland by Sikorsky Mielec was delivered to Romania's Ministry of Internal Affairs to fly maritime and land search-and-rescue, firefighting, and emergency medical support missions. Igor Sikorsky's life-saving legacy continues.

Help Us Preserve the Igor Sikorsky Legacy

Memberships and Donations enable us to continue the Archives mission of acquiring, managing, protecting and disseminating historical documentation associated with Igor Sikorsky and his legacy

Please contact us at iisha@snet.net
or see our website
www.SikorskyArchives.com
for details on how you may help us

Thank You

A 501(C)(3) Non-Profit Organization



On 14 October, the Igor I. Sikorsky Historical Archives formally opened its new home at Sacred Heart University (SHU) in Fairfield, Connecticut. Above, Sergei Sikorsky, the eldest son of Igor Sikorsky, speaking before Sacred Heart, Sikorsky Aircraft and Sikorsky Archives guests.

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



"If a man is in need of rescue, an airplane can come in and throw flowers on him and that's just about all. But a direct lift aircraft could come in and save his life. Even if a helicopter cannot land the helicopter can use a hoist or a cable to contact any place on the ground on a roof, on water, in a treetop-absolutely any place." Igor Sikorsky

Igor Sikorsky — His Three Careers in Aviation — Frank Delear

Please note our new address and telephone number.

*Igor I. Sikorsky Historical Archives
Sacred Heart University
West Campus, Room 161D
3135 Easton Turnpike
Fairfield, Ct. 06825
(203) 396-6001*



Sikorsky Archives News

Sacred Heart University, West Campus, Room 161D, 3135 Easton Turnpike, Fairfield, CT 06825



Visit us at Sikorskyarchives.com

