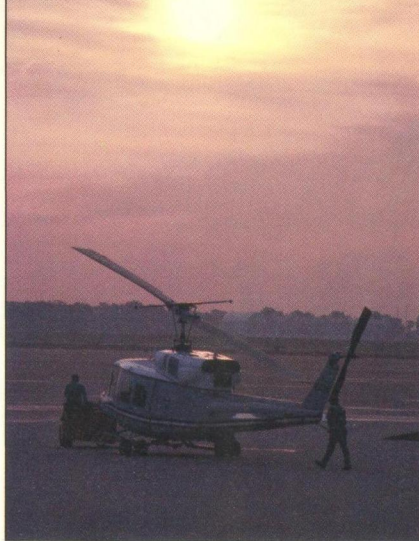


A Family Affair



Last year was a great one for the 1st Helicopter Squadron. But then, if your parent unit is the 89th Military Airlift Wing and your sister squadron is the 1st Military Airlift Squadron, the one that flies just about everybody who's anybody in Washington D.C., having a banner year is just a matter of, well, keeping up with family tradition.

"I'm proud of the squadron! It does a super job," said the 89th's wing commander, Col. John F. Sievertson.

One needn't look beyond the flight line to find proof of how well the 1st Heli did last year.

Its fleet of nine UH-1H and four CH-53E helicopters were flown 4,330 hours in 1982—equivalent to 180 days of solid, round-the-clock flying. And every hour was accident free, which of course for the 1st Heli is par.

In 25 years the squadron has logged more than 100,000 hours of accident-free flying—a record no other Air Force helicopter unit can come close to laying claim to.

The 1st Heli's primary mission is the support of several contingencies that call for the transportation of top government leaders. The unit also provides aerial transportation on a daily basis for high-level Department of Defense officials.

That role can include such missions as flying the secretary of defense from the Pentagon to a waiting plane at Andrews AFB, or the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to a naval base at Norfolk, Va.

And according to the squadron's commander, Lt. Col. Donald Morrissey, the unit has never missed a departure from Andrews. He gives credit for the almost unheard-of feat to the squadron's maintenance team.

"Occasionally one of our aircraft couldn't make a departure when it was off station where our maintenance people weren't there to effect a quick fix or substitute another airplane, but we've never missed a mission from home station. I'd stack our maintenance crews against anyone's."

CMSgt. Donald Paczynski, the squadron's maintenance superintendent and



a veteran of nearly 30 years in the career field, agreed. "It takes a lot of dedication and, like the rest of the Air Force, we strive to provide high-quality maintenance. Because of the kind of people we fly, we also have to provide that extra spit and polish."

He also attributed the unit's success to involvement. "Everybody is cranked into the mission—getting the VIPs to where they're supposed to be."

Involvement isn't unique to just the 93 members on the maintenance side of the house, according to the chief. "Because of our operational commitment we carry a huge bench stock to support operations, and we have great supply people in-house. When we say we need something—fast—they know why."

Sgt. Cheryl Ashley, one of the supply specialists assigned to the 1st Heli, said that "being here, I can see that when the maintenance people say they need something, they mean it. When I worked in another base supply unit, I didn't really sympathize with the maintenance people. My attitude has changed because I can see how my efforts help on the flight line. I'm involved."

How does the squadron keep the feeling of involvement at a constant peak?

TSgt. Silven Vialpando, a newly arrived

jet engine mechanic, said it starts on day one. "I was taken to each shop and introduced to everyone. They all greeted me warmly and I could tell these were outstanding people. It made me anxious to get to work."

Not just newcomers receive the "get involved" pitch, according to Chief Paczynski. "Supervisors encourage the people who've been around awhile to attend a periodic squadron mission briefing. It's a way of recharging their batteries."

"We also encourage participation in the squadron's sports program. It helps people get noticed who aren't normally in the limelight. They get recognition and the team camaraderie flows over into the squadron."

And, after all, the family that plays together . . . —Capt. Ron Fuchs