

# Sikorsky H-19

Designed and built by Sikorsky, the H-19 came along just in time to see action in Korea. The prototype first flew in late 1949 with deliveries to Air Force Rescue units in Korea, beginning early in 1951. Third Air Rescue Squadron crews, flying H-19's to snatch downed aircrews from imminent capture, won the first Presidential Unit Citation awarded to any outfit in Korea.

Other exploits by units equipped with this piston-powered chopper in Korea included counter-intelligence operations and the first retrieval of an aircraft by a helicopter. In one instance, an ARRS crew landed 35 miles behind enemy lines with a team of South Koreans who quickly dismantled most of a Russian-built MIG fighter. The straining helicopter climbed out of "MIG Alley" with the heavy load slung underneath. Despite intense enemy ground fire, the chopper kept flying and the crew made it back safely.

Combat missions weren't the only achievements that brought the H-19 worldwide notoriety during that time, however. In 1952, two H-19s nicknamed "Hop-O-Long" and "Whirl-O-Way," made the first transatlantic helicopter flight. Taking off from Westover AFB in Massachusetts, the two hopped their way across the North Atlantic, stopping five times for fuel. They flew over 3,500 miles from Westover to Prestwick, Scotland, in 42 hours, 25 minutes.

After the war, H-19 crews continued rescuing people from foundering ships and hoisting flood victims from precarious rooftop perches. They finally began to be replaced by newer turbine-powered helicopters in the 1960s.

One of the most unique features of the aircraft was the angular mounting of its engine in the nose. Two big clamshell doors afforded easy access for engine maintenance at ground level. The first production models were powered by Pratt & Whitney R-1340 radial engines rated at 600 hp. Later copies had Wright R-1300 engines capable of producing 700 hp, which increased the useful payload beyond 2,200 pounds. In later military models equipped with the R-1300 engines and all civilian versions, the tail boom was sloped down slightly to increase the clearance between the tail and the main rotor blades, which tended to flex down during rough landings.

With a fuselage length of about 42 feet and a max gross weight of 7,500 pounds, the H-19 normally cruised at a modest speed of around 70 knots. It had room for 10 passengers or six litters in the cabin.

Over the years, the H-19 accumulated an impressive record of accomplishments. But being the instrument by which so many lives were saved is perhaps the most meaningful measure of its contribution to the airlift legacy.



The Airlift Legacy

*Tommy Laughlin '57*

HOPALONG

The MAC Flyer

16

The illustration shows a close-up, dark-toned view of the Sikorsky H-19 fuselage. The text "The Airlift Legacy" is written in a large, white, stylized font across the middle. Below it, there is a signature "Tommy Laughlin '57". To the right, the word "HOPALONG" is visible on a white section of the fuselage. The overall style is that of a hand-drawn or painted illustration.