Delford Smith
by Martin J. Pociask

The following HAI Heritage Series interview was conducted with Mr. Delford Smith, founder of Evergreen Aviation and Evergreen Helicopters, by Martin J. Pociask, HAI’s Communications Director and Editor of Rotor magazine, accompanied by David Osborne, HAI’s Videographer, who recorded the event. The interview took place on June 12, 2007, at Evergreen Helicopters’ headquarters in McMinnville, Oregon. Mr. Smith has been a major figure in the development of the commercial helicopter industry.

Rotor: Delford, you had a very different childhood than most kids. Can you tell us about your early childhood years?

Smith: I believe I was blessed. I had a lot of adversity. Sometimes I think adversity strengthens character. I was an orphan, and I was adopted by a saint. A mother of modest means, but she had strong spiritual values, and believed in hard work and honesty. What we lacked in material wealth, she made up for with a tremendous power of love. She taught me many good habits. She taught me to set goals and to be willing to go the extra mile, and to surround yourself with good people; believe in yourself; believe in your maker. At an early age I realized that I needed to contribute to all of our needs. I learned to work at an early age. The story is often told that I borrowed money from a bank when I was seven, which I did, to buy a $2.50 lawn mower to mow lawns. I borrowed a second bank note and paid off the first one, and acquired a second lawn mower and enteredprise. At age 11, I was able to make a down payment on a home for my mother and myself. I worked through high school in the woods. I made money to go to college to learn to fly. I worked through college. I graduated from the University of Washington, and then served in the Air Force as an officer, and had a Pathfinders Squadron. After I got out of the Air Force I
continued to fly with Dean Johnson and traded crop dusting flying for a helicopter rating. At that time I believed in the helicopter as an angel of mercy, and an industrial workhorse. We were brought up here in the Northwest. As I mentioned I worked in the woods. I had a keen interest in forestry and thought possibly of majoring in forestry but I chose business. There was such an abundance of timber that was being harvested without proper regard for reforestation. At a very early age, I got a patent on a seeding configuration that you could put on an airplane or a helicopter with accurate distribution of the seed, the amount, per acre. You could calibrate your air speed and your swath. We did a tremendous amount of reseeding and our start with helicopters was agriculture. We were challenged and felt that we could serve God and mankind in many ways. The ships had a limited performance capability in the early years. Most of it was agriculture work and then in 1968 there was the crude oil bay discovery. That was about the time you could acquire the medium-sized helicopters, the Huey which was the commercial 205. We built up to 50, and then progressed with Bell 212s, and then [Bell] 412s. In 1971 we acquired the Sikorsky S-64s. We knew we could fight fire and we knew we could reseed the forest and do good reforestation work. But our prayer was at some time to harvest timber. In 1964, we made that a reality.

**ROTOR:** Your interest in aviation started really early. I understand you built models in the Cub Scouts, and you hung around the airport, which wasn’t far from the dog kennels where you worked. You polished the planes and you ran errands in exchange for flying lessons.

**Smith:** Yes, if you were industrious and worked hard at the airport, you could trade work for flying lessons. That’s how I got started.

**ROTOR:** At age 17 you made your first solo flight in a Piper J-3 Cub?

**Smith:** No, I think it was a little younger than that. But anyway, it was a good learning experience, and it helped build a career path.

**ROTOR:** You said after high school you enrolled at the University of Washington where you joined the Air Force. Tell us more about this.

**Smith:** Yes, I got a commission, and then went in the Air Force and was a pathfinder. I then came back and flew commercially. It was fun to be in the pioneering years of building the helicopter industry. I would like to point out that it was a team effort. There were many of us who worked together in harmony. I have a genuine respect for the other men that started at an early age — all our competition. They likewise have been industrious. Evergreen started up in 1960. Prior to that, we flew for Dean Johnson. Then we started with Hiller models and it was a breakthrough to get the 12E. Then in 1968 we were able to buy the first commercial Bell 205 and build that fleet up. In 1971 we acquired the Sikorsky S-64s and harvested timber. So, our mission with timber maintained constant. We were anxious and eager to get into the oil patch, which we did, in the early sixties over in Madagascar. We’ve since worked in just about every oil patch in the free world.

**ROTOR:** Amazing. After you graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree you went on to earn honorary doctorate of aeronautical science and doctorate of business administration degrees from Salem College in West Virginia and Johnson and Whales College in Rhode Island. That’s a lot of schooling. Can you tell us what prompted you to expand your education?

**Smith:** Those were honorary degrees. I don’t want to tell the world I was a scholar. I was more of a crop duster and a helicopter pilot than a postgraduate scholar. I did get honorary degrees though. Thank you.

**ROTOR:** After you left the service, you spotted a helicopter on a trailer near
your home in Centralia, Washington, and you found out that a man by the name of Dean Johnson was offering ex-servicemen a chance to learn to fly helicopters in exchange for work. Tell us what you had to do to get hired.

**Smith:** I think Dean Johnson was a good surrogate dad to an awful lot of helicopter pilots. He wanted us to exchange crop dusting time for riding in a helicopter. I respect him very much. I think he’s one of the heroes of the Northwest in aviation. In 1960 I chose to start on my own and you had to wear a lot of hats. You had to hustle the revenues, fly the helicopter, and participate in the maintenance.

I was blessed with a saintly lady on the financial side. I think I was more blessed than some others in that respect. We consistently made a profit, and we were taught that profitability was your future. We always believed that safety should be your number one priority. We believed that the customer is the purpose. Agility is your opportunity. We had an excellent financial base, and we maintained a profit every year. In the late sixties and the early seventies every oil patch and every industrial project that required helicopters, required airplane support as well. There were only 121 operators that were highly regulated by the Civil Aeronautics Board. It was a battle between the ‘have s’ and the ‘have nots.’ One pioneer whose license was signed by Orville Wright was Bob Johnson up in Montana. In 1971 we learned that his health was failing and that there was a possibility that he might sell that authority. By 1974 we were competing with General Curtis Lamay, and US Steel, and Consolidated Edison. In the early thirties the laws were such that anybody who owned railroads couldn’t own helicopters, our government didn’t want a monopoly or a trust situation where they had a right in the skies. After a lot of battles we were allowed to acquire that authority. The major truck carriers wanted to kill the authority, and they hoped that Mr. Johnson would pass away before that authority was transferred. All the major carriers would attempt to kill your chances of acquiring that. After three years and $3 million, President Ford signed that authority in 1974. We acquired Johnson and the fleet was a zoo. We had a Curtis Commando, and we had a Billy Mitchell, and we had six Avengers, and we had three Lockheed Electras. We wanted to bring that fleet current. The price wasn’t the total cost. There were a lot of payables that had not been managed properly in the past. There was a big hearing conducted by the CAB for fitness. We won that. To this day we have the best safety record. That airline has flown over one million hours and it has a perfect safety record. Our helicopter record is the best in the world and that can be verified with Lloyds of London. But we immediately worked the Electras and acquired DC-s, and worked DC-9s for the post office and the military. Two years later we acquired DC-8s and worked them internationally on cargo routes. In 1985 we acquired a fleet of Boeing 747s. We currently have bilateral in all countries of the world other than Iraq and Iran. We provide military logistics to the Middle East and then fly to China. China is the global workshop. We go from the Middle East over to China — Shanghai or Hong Kong — and then bring a load to North America, and then start the cycle again. We currently have 13 Boeing 747s flying around the world. At the same time we’re operating 77 helicopters. It’s a diverse fleet. We believe in diversity. Twenty-five percent of our revenues are in oil production. About 25 percent is the timber industry, and about 20 percent is search and rescue. We do a fair amount of UN work. We’ve been in West Africa for 36 years, and we started with 13 governments, 13 republics, the Ivory Coast, Ghana, many others. There was a population base of 25 million. Six million of these 25 million were blind. The cause of the blindness was the black fly. It would breed and propagate in the rivers. Our desire, our interest was to work with the World Health organization and eradicate the black fly. We had a big target. It was 1,800 miles east and west, and about 2,000 miles north and south. After 35 years we’ve taken that blind count down from six million to two hundred thousand. It’s the most successful world health project in history.

**ROTOR:** That’s the ONCO Program [Onchoceriasis Control Program] right?
Smith: Yes. Right now our desire is to launch and eradicate malaria in Africa. With our big fixed-wing, as well as our fleet of helicopters we know that we can eradicate malaria in a matter of two or three years in Africa.

ROTOR: Speaking of spraying and going back in time, when you began flying commercially, you patented a system called the Case Spreader, which reseeded harvested timber land with the use of helicopters. Can you speak about that process?

Smith: Yes, I did that while I was in college. It was a very remarkable unit. It would calibrate accurately the 600 trees per acre that the timber company wanted. About 85 percent of all the timber that had aerial reseeding was done by Evergreen. Our competition had a lot of seed configurations that would bat the seed like a ball hitting a baseball bat. That obviously wasn’t what was best. We’re proud of that achievement. Now we and two or three other helicopter companies, our good friends Wes Lematta and Jack Erickson, harvest a fair amount of timber, both good operators and good guys.

ROTOR: You founded Evergreen Helicopters, Inc. in 1960. The company now has 100 worldwide bases and more than 4,500 employees. That’s no small accomplishment. Do you want to tell us about that?

Smith: Thank you. The acorn that grew the oak tree was the helicopter. We saw other opportunities. The team that created all this, and I want to share what has happened with many employees, we’re all entrepreneurial so we scrambled to Alaska and made sure that we had operating authority there. We built a helicopter base on the Gulf of Mexico and we chased the world globally. We have a good global sales organization. As I mentioned earlier, the need for airplanes was always the case. We would go into these oil patches and they needed industrial work airplanes. We liked to do industrial projects. We did the heavy lift on the last third of the Alaskan pipeline. We built power lines from Hong Kong to Kanji. We built the entire transmission system for the Swedish government. At the same time there was a need to bring in supplies so we always had cargo airplanes. We put the oil fires out in Kuwait the day after the war. We flew the logistics for the military to the war, and we were singled out as the most patriotic and the most reliable carrier among all forms of transportation, not just airline but rail, road, and water. We achieved this recognition upon the freedom or liberation of the Afghanistan people. We built an airline, and it had all the same struggles and challenges of building each department: your flight, your maintenance, your ground systems, your material, your marketing group, your administration, human resources, finance. The airline has done very well, and is stable and profitable, and the helicopters likewise. We saw foreign carriers coming in here and not having good ground support. They knew of our safety record. They knew we were responsible. All Asian carriers gave us their business like the Europeans, Lufthansa, and British Airways. In the first couple of years, two percent was third party, and ninety-eight percent was Evergreen. Now it’s about two percent Evergreen and ninety-eight percent third party. So that was the third big company. In 1975, right after President Ford gave us the 121 authority we acquired the Marana Maintenance Center, and we called it Evergreen Maintenance Center. It was a property of the CIA. We are very patriotic and we do a lot of military flying with our big airplanes. We think that our country and our military need the airlift. They have a limited number of 141s. They virtually expired, and the count of C5As are down and the 117 is not an ocean airplane. It doesn’t have the range, doesn’t have the lift. So we’re very active in the CRAFT program, the Civil Reserve Airlift for the military.

ROTOR: You touched on the ONCO program, but Evergreen also formed Evergreen Humanitarian Relief Services. This officially recognizes Evergreen’s commitment and support for local and international relief projects. Can you tell us why you chose this form for your relief efforts?
Smith: I think everybody on earth should do their best to serve God and mankind. I don’t think we should just be local citizens. I think you need to be global citizens. We’ve always responded to the global needs. It was ONCO, the Blind Project in Africa. It was when Emperor Haile Selassie was assassinated by his own palace guard. We did all we could to provide Ethiopia in 1975 with medical needs and food needs. But when we would land in Addis Ababa it was lush. There was no natural starvation, just a manmade starvation by the communist government. We supported our need over there, the pilgrims that traveled to Sudan. We flew in and out of Albania — 450,000 living in the mud and cold in the high mountain elevations of Albania. We carried medical needs. We were in and out of Calcutta when Mother Theresa was alive. We moved helicopters at our expense to Sri Lanka, and to Singapore, and to Indonesia. We’ve never touched the money. We would just tell the senior bank of the state to handle the money and the supplies. That way we could never be accused of profiteering over a mercy flight.

ROTOR: That’s great. You have another subsidiary. It’s Evergreen Life Line, which is one of the nation’s largest emergency Medevac operations. Can you tell us more about this?

Smith: Yes. It’s just making the flying machine a medical transport — an ambulance. We do a lot of medical work and we try to give lifts to individual patients that need to be transported to medical centers that relate to their needs. We carried the burn victims out of Kuwait at our own cost to Switzerland. We carried the amputee victims out of that war and out of that fire project over to Germany. We’ve been in and out of Russia many, many times. I think we’re the only ones that have ever flown food and other necessities into North Korea. I think we’re the only carrier in America that has been in North Korea since the close of the Korean War. So a lot of orphanages need lifts as well. We went into Hungary when they were warehousing the children and they needed to be lifted.

ROTOR: Going back again, after your friend Dean Johnson was killed in a crop dusting accident, you combined Johnson’s company, MT Base, Johnson Flying Service with your own. Tell us about Johnson’s rich firefighting traditions and how they were and still are incorporated into Evergreen’s daily operations.

Smith: It happened to be coincidental. We did acquire three companies by the name of Johnson. When Dean had his fatal accident we acquired that company from the principals. This gave us the base. Years later, 1971, we started buying the Johnson Flying Service of Masoula. He was the pioneer of aviation in the state of Montana. He was 88-years-old when we acquired that company. But the Dean Johnson Company gave us a home base and it was an ideal environment for families to raise children. As you folks well know, the helicopter is an access vehicle. Usually it finds work in remote environments, the Arctic, the jungle, or the deserts. But this was a perfect location for children. They did a large amount of timberwork, and crop dusting out of there, and then expanded into oil and international construction, and international peace keeping. We’re down in Honduras on a UN mission. We’re currently in Afghanistan and Sudan, and we’re in an Islamic/Christian conflict over in the South Philippines. So we work globally.

ROTOR: Since 1991 Evergreen Air Center has been contracted to provide full time maintenance for two NASA Boeing 747 shuttle carrier aircraft in Marana, Arizona. Can you tell us about this demanding task and what it requires?

Smith: Fortunately for Evergreen, the agency had an unlimited repair authority. I’m not sure that’s achievable in this day and age. But unlimited means you could work on any make and model, any manufacturer’s aircraft worldwide. You weren’t limited to wide bodies, narrow bodies, Boeing, McDonald Douglas. You could work on the Fokker, the airbus, and all the other equipment. That’s been an excellent support element for our airline. We maintain our [Boeing] 747s at the maintenance center in Arizona. We also store all the airplanes that the lenders, the lease companies, and the banks buy because there’s no sales tax, no property tax, and no use tax for aviation. They all store their airplanes — there’s no humidity.
down there. There’s no trespassing because they have high security. They have no corrosion, and they have a tax freedom, and then they have an unlimited repair station to bridge their airplanes to their next assignment.

**ROTOR:** The Evergreen Aviation Museum opened its doors in 2001 in McMinnville. The new facility measures 121,000 square feet and hosts more than 200,000 guests a year. It has more than 80 aircraft and artifacts. He had a mission: to educate and inspire young people, preserve the aviation history of America, and salute the veterans that created the freedom that we all enjoy currently. He wanted to collect these artifacts. It was his vision, his dream. In the seventies and the eighties we started picking up P-38s, P-51 mustangs, and 109 Messerschmitts. We were building a Japanese Zero. Everything is a flyer so they are in mint condition. We had a B-17 that we acquired when we purchased the maintenance center down in Arizona. We have continued to add artifacts. My son presented demographics of the Northwest and made a very formal presentation to the estate trustees of Howard Hughes. He had very tough competition. He was competing with all the major museums, plus other elements that wanted to make roadside attractions out of the “Spruce Goose.” Anyway, he won the hearts of the Hughes estate and the Aero Club of California. He told them that he wanted to be the shepherd and the guardian of Mr. Hughes’ aircraft. He won that. He and I wanted to fly it home, but they didn’t want anybody to upstage Mr. Hughes so we had to unbutton the engines. The Disney Corporation wanted it out of that geometric dome. They gave us six weeks. The wingspan is the length of a football field plus. It is 319 feet. We had to put airbags in its kennel in the middle. It was never designed and built for disassembly. The empennage was a real challenge. We had two senior dads down there that liked fun.
They called us up and told us that they had discovered Mr. Hughes’ will. Naturally they were the beneficiaries of it. But anyway, we got the empennage off and the timber industry was moving timber down to Los Angeles and San Diego. We asked these barge operators if we could hitchhike home. They said if it doesn’t delay the barge more than one day. So we prepped everything and then they came in to Long Beach. We loaded in one day and started our journey up the coastline. We got to the Columbia River and then we had to change barges to get into the Willamette. Then going up the Willamette was a slow process because you had to have enough draft for the barge, but if the water was too high, then you couldn’t clear the bridges. So you just moved one bridge at a time. But anyway, we got it here, and then tragedy struck. Michael was killed in an automobile accident as a passenger. That delayed us starting. But all the members of Evergreen have been supportive to perpetuate that dream. We collectively have built the first museum. It is the number one attraction in Oregon, and the closest competitor has 50 percent of our attendance. To complement the museum, we built an IMAX theater with some office capability. Now we are building a Space Museum, and it is going to be awesome.

**ROTOR:** The museum is dedicated to Michael, isn’t it?

**Smith:** Yes, Michael and another F-15 fighter pilot who was killed in the same accident.

**ROTOR:** You have named a Kid’s Bank after Michael; can you tell us more about this?

**Smith:** It is a bank that Mike started at an early age. Somebody was visiting and they asked how I happened to borrow money at age seven. I said the laws were better. Children learned to work. They learned to be industrious — learned to be entrepreneurs. Unfortunately today a child younger than 18 years old cannot borrow money. So we said let’s get a trust. We went to the Governor and asked [for permission]. I think that bank is structured on a trust basis, but we call it The Kids Bank. It’s very popular. Kids come in and want to print T-shirts or they want enough money to buy a bicycle to deliver newspapers. A lot of 4-H kids want to buy five cows in the spring and put 1,000 pounds of weight on them and then sell them in the fall. So it is teaching young children to enterprise and to manage a small business.
Metromorphismosis

noun (met•rõ•môr•phô•sis)

The transformation of a new or used helicopter into a fully mission-equipped aircraft. Standard vocabulary for quality and service in aircraft completions, modifications and operations.

- Completions & Modifications
- Maintenance & Manufacturing
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**ROTOR:** Can you tell the **ROTOR** readers more about the Space Museum, which is set to open in 2008?

**Smith:** Okay. It’s going to have every capsule. There are four shuttle vehicles. You know the Smithsonian’s going to get one, and the Air Force at Wright-Patterson will get one, and Houston NASA will get one. So we are competing for the fourth one. We have the Titan II, which was the peacemaker from 1966 to 1986 that kept things quiet during the Cold War. They have excellent training simulators over there. These kids who are six, eight, ten, twelve, can file a flight plan and fly that “Spruce Goose” from McMinnville to Lake Hood in Alaska. But I’ve got simulators over there for several makes and models of aircraft. It’s amazing how quick they pick it up. There are a lot of training aides. We built another airport over there in the back of that museum where radio controlled aircraft can be flown. That seems to be the mecca for all of the radio activity in Washington, Idaho, Oregon, and Northern California. That’s very popular. Then the CAP comes in there. It’s home base for all the Boy Scout troops within a one hundred mile range of McMinnville. I think we have a good training program where one thousand Boy Scouts get an aviation merit badge, and there are several other merit badges that they work on over there. There are 278 volunteers, and they are the heart and soul of that museum. They come out here. There’s a day captain, and there’s probably 20 a day, and then there’s an outstanding restoration shop. They have built several makes and models. They refurbished a 1986 Sabre, an A-4, a Buckeye, Navy trainer, and several helicopters: a Sikorsky, a Cayman, and a Bell. They do excellent work. There are 80 aircraft over there now.

**ROTOR:** Another part of your company supplies international markets with grains, grass seeds, Christmas trees, and wine grapes which are grown on many of Evergreen’s 8,000 plus acres. I heard you have a wine tasting room as well on the grounds of the museum. Can you tell us about that?

**Smith:** Well, growing up as a crop duster, when I was a kid you could buy an acre in the flat for $100. You could buy an acre on the side of a hill for $50. Now it’s $10,000 an acre. I don’t think many of us had a farming background or an agricultural background, but we bought 8,000 acres of land. We’re probably the biggest hazel nut grower in America. Our competition is Italy and Turkey. We have vineyards, and we’re very good at that. We’re the best. We win all the top awards and medals.

**ROTOR:** What kind of brands do you have?

**Smith:** Mostly pinot. But it’s eight different wines. We have labels to meet the needs of the customer. Bell buys our wine, and we will put their latest make and model on the bottle.

**ROTOR:** That’s really neat.

**Smith:** We’re big into blueberries. I think we’ve got 300 acres of blueberries. We have 2,000 acres of hazel nuts and we have Christmas trees.

**ROTOR:** Two thousand acres is huge.
Smith: We sell it globally. The Germans buy a lot of hazel nuts. The Chinese buy a lot. We have a large nursery and we sell to the entire United States. The big months for planting are March, April, and May and then our other big months are in September and October. The berries are grown during the summer. We have agriculture revenues 12 months of the year. We sell $2 million worth of Christmas trees in the fall, November and December. All that land is paid for, but we teach self-reliance to each and every company. We believe that you need to have stability and profitability. We believe in performance. I think we’re probably more oriented to discipline than some.

ROTOR: You know, Evergreen is such a large company and you’ve remained as Chairman and 100 percent owner, and that’s pretty unusual in this day and age. How have you managed to handle such a large responsibility and still keep business moving?

Smith: Well, we believe in intensive management. We have a management meeting every Monday morning. This morning we had a finance meeting at seven o’clock. Tomorrow will be human resource at seven o’clock. We address every problem; Wednesday is human resources, Thursday is machines, and Friday is market. We currently have about 4,000 employees. We believe in profitability. We have zero tolerance for excuses. We believe in performance. We commit to growth each year. Our commitment to growth is 15 percent a year, with a pivot of 15 percent pre-tax.

ROTOR: You’ve been a big part of the history and growth of HAI. You’ve served as Chairman of the Board of Directors. You founded HAI’s economics committee. You were awarded HAI’s Lawrence D. Bell Memorial award in 1990. In addition, Evergreen Helicopters has been an HAI member since 1971. Can you tell us more about your role with HAI and why you chose to get involved?

Smith: Well, I think you’ve got to be a good citizen to your industry. I think that every operating company should contribute to the well being of the association. I felt that an omission in that structure was a priority on economics and business. But I think that you need legitimate professionals to assist the industry. So I just think that more needs to be done on the economic front by HAI.

ROTOR: You have received numerous other awards throughout the years. The Horatio Alger Award for Distinguished Americans, the Wright Brothers Memorial trophy, Napoleon Hill Gold Medal Award for entrepreneurial achievement, Professional Pilot Aviation’s Humanitarian of the Year Award, Museum of Flight Pathfinder Award, the National Transportation Award. Those are just a few. However, you also received a Frederick L. Feinberg Award for a heroic rescue that you performed. Can you tell us about the rescue?

Smith: There was severe flooding. A young lady was stranded on an island where the water level was increasing, and it was in the dark of night. I found her where I didn’t want to find her, right in the thick of a lot of brush, willow, and alder. But anyway, I was able to sneak in there and get her. I think everybody has had their share of awards. What I want to say is those awards need to be shared by every member of the Evergreen family. It was a team that achieved those awards.

ROTOR: What’s your vision for Evergreen?

Smith: I think the helicopter industry is where the DC-3 was in 1936. I think that right now we have the auto hover over in the United Arab Emirates. We go in the dark of night for a search in the Gulf, the Arabian Gulf as it’s called today, or into the deserts. It’s a fourth axis. Everybody knows about pitch, and roll, and yaw, but we can control within six and eight inches of vertical axis. You turn the collective over to an automated system. It’s awesome. I think you’re going to see a lot better technology in the rotor systems. I just think the advances are going to be unbelievable.

ROTOR: Is there anything you want to particularly talk about or address that we haven’t covered yet?

Smith: Yes, I would preach safety. I would preach safety and economics. I think safety has to be a company’s religion. It has to be a passion. It has to start at the top. I think a lot more needs to be done. We are great supporters of the HUMs, and we like the twin-engine configuration. We don’t object to two pilots on the flight deck. I think anything that needs to be done to ensure better safety should be done. Don’t always wave the safety flag. I’d wave the profitability flag also. I respect the vendors that have an honest warranty program. If they have a faulty component then you should be able to return it. I’m really disappointed with some of the manufacturers that don’t honor a warranty program. I think you are partners with the manufacturer. I think that we have the cutting edge of unmanned vehicles right now. We are ahead of the pack. I think that the
same desire to prove the validity of the unmanned vehicles needs to be applied. All of this starts with where the helicopter could work and be productive and contribute. I think that part has been pioneered very well. Our next front is going to be the pioneering of the unmanned flying vehicle. For our last big project, which along with the large cargo freighter is a swing tail, Boeing is going to outsource their manufacturing to Japan for the wings and Western Europe (Italy) for the fuselage, with a stop in South Carolina and one in Wichita. So collectively with Boeing and Evergreen we put a new bonnet on that basic 747-400 frame. It is ten feet higher and thirty feet wider. We have increased the cube by 300 percent. We're excited about that program. Another program we're excited about is making a workhorse for oil spill, firefighting, and radiation knockdown. What we are currently doing is building a 747 tanker. We call it the super tanker. It is very good for firefighting. Along with being a good firefighting vehicle, we know that it can decontaminate biological and chemical poisoning. In addition, we believe we can modify weather. These hurricanes start over on the west coast of Africa. They are no bigger than a teacup when they start, but by the time they get to Florida or the Gulf of Mexico, they are 500 miles wide. We think we can collapse hurricanes if we can get on top of them fast enough, but it’s going to take some research. We built this tanker, and we spent $50 million of our own money. We haven’t had a nickel of support. We’re going to pursue it, and right now we think that we’ll build a fleet of ten or twenty of these tankers. Our next project is to expand that fleet of large cargo freighters up to six. We’re going to build ten super tankers. That doesn’t mean we’re going to neglect the helicopters because we just bought ten Sikorskys last month. We’re going to buy more AW-139s and I think we’ve bought six 412s in the last twelve months. We’re going to grow our helicopter fleet and do justice to it. So it’s super tanker, a large cargo freighter, and we were talking to Bill Gates about eradicating mosquitoes to stop the spread of malaria. That group wants to build a vaccine, and Blythe said that we are the vaccine if we get started. I think with that super tanker plus a large fleet of helicopters we can totally eradicate malaria in Africa. So we’re after a big health project. We’re after a knock down program in the event of radiation. We want to build a tanker, and then build a terminal facility to house those chemicals that are not perishable that you can put in the tanker and fly in event of a terrorist attack. That’s our future. We’re where the airplane was in 1935 with helicopters. I think it’s going to amaze everybody. I think there’s a lot of ways you can improve the helicopter. I don’t think we’ve got efficient blades for one.

**ROTOR:** Delford, on behalf of HAI, I want to thank you for allowing us to conduct this interview. I congratulate you on your extraordinary career in the helicopter industry. Is there anything you want to say in closing?

**Smith:** Yes. I’d like to salute the HAI, and I’d like to remind the industry that God gave us the gift of life. We owe God our best performance. When you start in an orphanage, they teach you initiative because they know you don’t have a dad or a mother. So they remind you frequently that ‘if it’s going to be, it’s up to me.’ One thing that I believe is a setback could be a launching pad for something bigger and better. I don’t feel I was disadvantaged by being in an orphanage. I think that setback fires you up and makes you do more. You see it in life on a daily basis. I just believe that if you have too many advantages it could be a disadvantage.

**ROTOR:** Someone once told me that a boot is a boost in life.

**Smith:** Yes, it sure is and let me just tell you this. Persistence is important. We preach this frequently to our sales people. Eighty percent of all sales are made after the fifth call. Forty-eight percent of the sales people give up after the first call. We see that time and time again. We bought an operating authority when we went up to Alaska and moved right on into Dead Horse and built a hanger. The old salty oil contractors said, “Kid, when I see this hanger and see your hardware in the front, that’s when I’ll give you a job.”

**ROTOR:** I really appreciate you taking the time to give us this interview.

**Smith:** We appreciate you folks.
HAI is proud to offer two exciting new programs. Developed and validated in such demanding environments as air combat and offshore Search and Rescue operations, these programs have dramatically reduced human error and mishap rates. Now these cutting edge risk control programs are commercially available through the Pilot and Maintenance Reliability Certification™ programs. Traditional human factors programs fight purely defensive battles, missing the opportunity to aggressively attack error at its source – the individual. These programs mark a strategic shift in the battle. In today’s highly competitive marketplace, reducing human error translates directly into reduced mishap rates, fewer product defects and increased productivity.

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