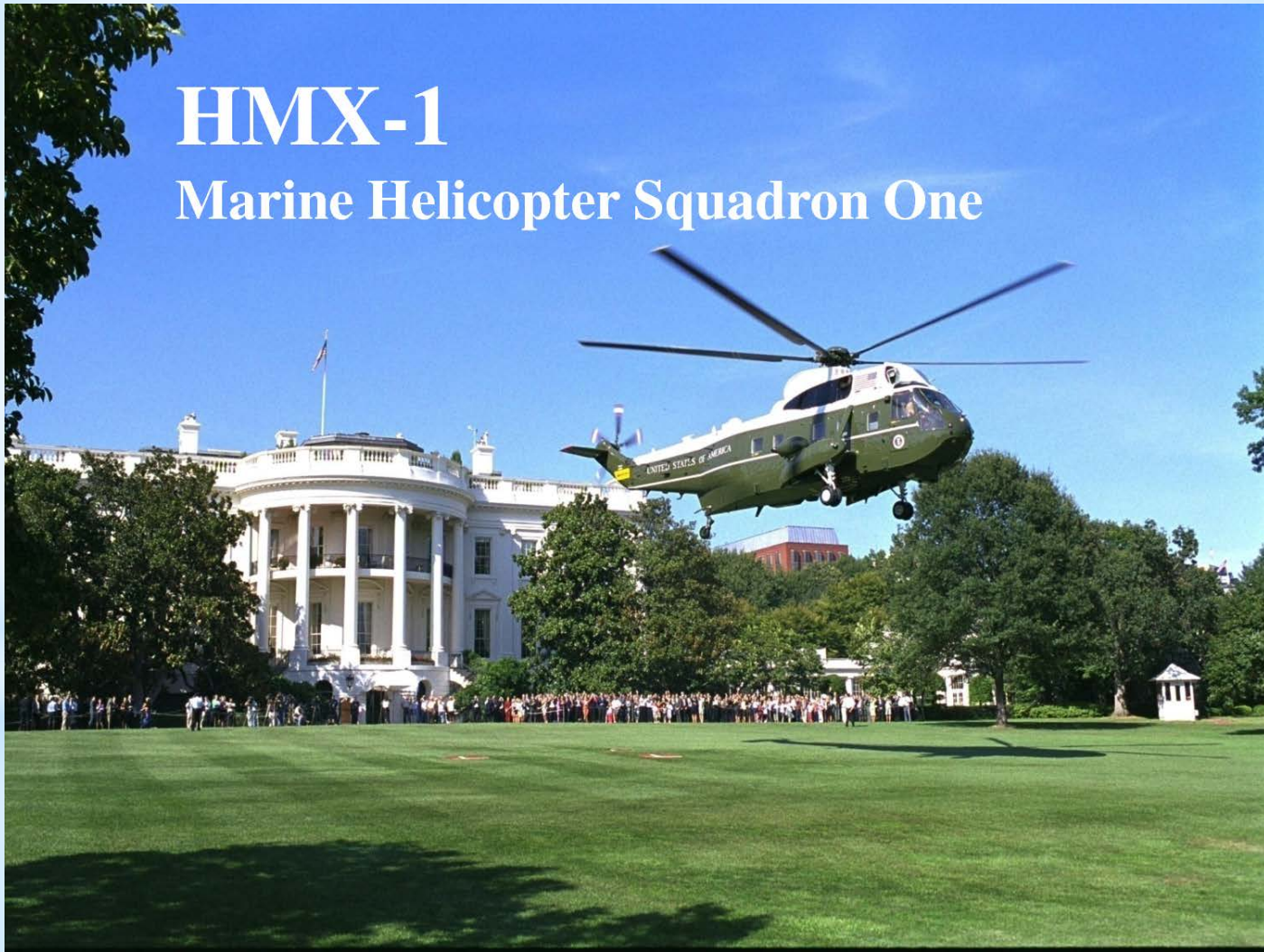


HMX-1

Marine Helicopter Squadron One



Serving the President: 1973 - 1976

Sgt. Mike O'Neill

*Duty Selection

- * I entered US Marine Corps August 29, 1972 with an 'Aviation Guarantee' and desire to be an Aircraft Structural Mechanic.
- * The guarantee did not offer a specific job (MOS), only that I would be in 'aviation' which could have included anything from avionics, to hydraulics, to ground support equipment. I lucked out and got and got what I wanted - MOS 6042: Aircraft Structural Mechanic.
- * 3 month long training was conducted at Naval Air Station (NAS), Millington, Tennessee where both Marines and Navy personnel trained together.
- * Every class in the course ended with one Sailor and one Marine being honored with top academic standing within their respective service branch. One of those two was then awarded 'Class Honor Man' status for achieving the highest class academic standing between the two branches.
- * There was always friendly 'competition' between the Marines and the Navy in this course, yet no Marine had ever graduated as 'Class Honor Man' until PFC Mike O'Neill graduated. I blew the Navy away and walked away with the 'Class Honor Man' award.
- * In recognition of this first ever achievement, I was awarded a meritorious promotion to Lance Corporal (E-3) only 2 weeks after having received a time-in-grade promotion to Private First Class (PFC E-2). I also received a visit from the liaison to the Marine Corps Presidential Helicopter Squadron, HMX-1 who offered me an invitation to come and work for the President.
- * My other option was assignment to an air wing squadron with the expectation of deployment to Viet Nam. While I did not fear Nam duty, I figured that working for the President in the nations capital would be a more 'opportunistic' path to take! I accepted the invitation.
- * After some transitional duty time at both Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Cherry Point and MCAS New River, I reported for duty at MCAS Quantico, Virginia in late spring 1973.

*The Green Side

- * The Presidential Helicopter Squadron, HMX-1, is actually made up of two components: the Presidential unit with its VIP transport role, and an experimental unit which is tasked with operational test and evaluation of new flight systems for Marine Corps helicopters.
- * The experimental unit is affectionately known as the 'Green Side'. It is where Marines being assigned to HMX-1 for the first time start while waiting for their Top Secret security clearances to be obtained and then for a slot to open up in the Presidential unit.
- * The shops for the Green Side were spread across two hangers one of which was located across the airfield in a separate facility known as Larson Gym.
- * I arrived at Larson Gym in the late spring of 1973. As an aircraft structural mechanic, I was assigned to the 'Metal Shop', and it was here that I gained my first experience working on 'real' aircraft. The aircraft were actually helicopters that included an inventory of CH-53D Sea Stallions and CH-46 Sea Knights.
- * The CH-53's, made by Sikorsky, were large beasts noted for their heavy lift capability as well as their ability to cover you with hydraulic fluid just by looking at them. I enjoyed working on them as their large size allowed for ease of access, however, they were messy! The following photos show a CH-53 on the flight line as well as one with both it's main rotor blades and tail rotor folded as they would have been for maintenance while in a hanger.
- * The CH-46's, made by Boeing, had twin main rotors, were also easy to work on due to their size, and they were clean! The following photos show a CH-46 on the flight line at Quantico opened up for maintenance, as well as one with both it's main rotor blades folded as they would have been for maintenance while in a hanger.

Sikorsky CH-53



Boeing CH-46



*The Metal Shop

- * I was initially assigned to the Green Side 'Metal Shop' located at Larson Gym. It was a large shop well equipped with virtually every tool and piece of machinery needed to repair or fabricate any structural metal component needed by the helicopters including an industrial sized metal lathe and a hydraulically operated brake for bending sheets of metal. The back section of the shop had a large paint area fully equipped with ventilation fans conducting the paint overspray and vapors through a large waterfall.
- * Given the nature of the flight operations conducted by the experimental section of HMX-1, most of our work fell into the inspection and preventative maintenance categories. On occasion we would need to change out a windshield in one of the birds or replace a bad cam lock (a quick release cowling or panel fastener). The most significant repair that I can remember needing to be done was when a hydraulic mechanic dropped a screw driver puncturing the sponson on one of the birds.
- * In this Metal Shop that I learned that metal set and blade tape could be used to fix just about anything that man has ever invented, including helicopters. 'Metal set' is a 2-part epoxy 'glue' that is silver in color and can join practically any two parts together, while 'blade tape' was used for exactly that purpose...to repair or cover small imperfections in the helicopter rotor blades (or anywhere else on the helicopter where we thought we could get away with using it). 'Blade tape' is known to the rest of the non-aviation world as 'duct tape' and now comes in many colors besides the silver variety that we used. I also learned that MEK (Methyl Ethyl Ketone) is a wonderfully dangerous solvent that can 'clean' just about anything imaginable.
- * The metal shop facilities were made available 'after-hours' to all the shop members to pursue their own personal projects. Given the nature of the available equipment, automobile restoration and re-painting were among the most popular after-hours uses of the shop. The restoration of a small, 1960's, forest green MG sports car was undertaken by our shops' head NCO, while Sergeant Hershey busied himself repainting his 1948 Chevy sedan. He painted it chocolate brown...of course!
- * I busied myself with the construction of a control line model airplane - a Mustang profile stunt kit which used a Fox .35 stunt engine.



1974 - The Green Side Metal Shop: Working on a 'real' airplane!



*The 'Cage'

- * The physical area that encompasses the Presidential section of HMX-1 is known as the 'Cage' due to the chain link fence, topped in sections with barbed wire, that surrounds or runs thru the hanger that houses the Presidential helicopter fleet. The goal of most everyone assigned to HMX-1 is to eventually be assigned to work in the 'Cage' since that means that you get to work on the Presidential fleet itself.
- * To get assigned to the 'Cage', one first has to be selected for duty with HMX-1, then be granted a 'Top Secret' security clearance...a process that can typically take up to 6 months. Finally, one has to wait for a slot to open in the shop that you would be qualified for and you need to be selected over anyone else who also may be waiting for such a slot to open. I met all those conditions and a slot opened up during early 1974 at which point, I was selected and transferred to the 'Cage'.
- * Even though it has been 40 years since I moved to the 'Cage', and I am sure that a lot has changed during that time, I feel that it would be a security violation to talk in a public forum such as this blog about a lot of the specifics relating to the aircraft and maintenance and flight procedures that were employed by the Presidential unit. Therefore, my comments related to my experiences with the 'Cage' will be general in nature.
- * The hanger that encompassed the main portion of the 'Cage' was most notable for the high gloss shine of the hanger floor! I have worked in or visited a lot of aircraft hangers over my life and have yet to find any with as many layers of gloss sealer applied to it as were applied to the floor of the 'Cage'. The shine of the floor was rivaled only by the glossy shine of the paint on the Presidential birds themselves.
- * In the 'Cage', the 'Metal Shop' was referred to as the 'Paint Shop'. Contributing to the 'Paint Shop' moniker were the facts that the bulk of our structural maintenance work was actually focused on maintaining the paint on the aircraft as opposed to doing much actual metal work and the fact that our shop was a small brick building which was nothing more than a glorified paint booth located outside the main hanger. That 'Paint Shop' became my work place until I completed my enlistment and left HMX and the Marines two years later in August of 1976.
- * During the time that I was assigned to the 'Cage', the primary aircraft flown by the Presidential unit of HMX-1 were the VH3A Sea King and the VH-1N Huey.

The VH3A (D) was used to transport the President and other VIP's



The VH-1N's were primarily used to transport Presidential support personnel but could be enlisted for actual Presidential duty as needed



* Working on Marine One

- * One aircraft was designated as Marine one yet multiple birds could be used as Marine One. Several are staged in Washington area for extraction purposes. Birds were rotated between Quantico for primary Presidential flight duty, Washington staging, and factory maintenance work.
- * Most hanger maintenance work consisted of routine inspections and maintenance...and cleaning the birds.
- * Significant repairs, annual maintenance and overhauls were performed by Sikorsky at their Bridgeport, Conn. factory.
- * Primary paint work involved repainting sponson strut fairings which were prone to paint cracks in a very visible location
- * Exterior cleaning routine:
 - * 409 aircraft (bugs and engine exhaust)
 - * Windex aircraft (remove 409 film)
 - * Wax – 1 to 3 coats as needed
 - * Rivet Brush wax buildup around rivets and access panels
 - * ~ 45 minutes depending on flight time and # of cleaning crew
- * Crew Chief cleaned & restocked interior
- * Crew Chiefs were very 'possessive' of their aircraft

June 20, 1974 - HMX-1 Maintenance Squadron
Photo taken outside the 'Cage' hanger
(I am standing in the back row, 4th in from the left)





Oct. 1974 - Rotor work on Marine One outside the 'Cage'

- Paint Shop visible behind helicopter near corner of hangar
- Photo taken from enlisted barracks

11/27/73 - Promotion to Corporal by Presidential Pilot and HMX-1 Commanding Officer Col. Perryman

- CH-46 in background



* Travelling with the President

- * Travelling with the President was considered the highlight of Marine One duty.
- * Maintenance personnel travelled on every Presidential trip at home or abroad. Participation in the trips was rotated thru the maintenance personnel.
- * Birds and crew travelled in advance of the President in order to ensure that Marine One was staged and ready for the President after arrival by Air Force One.
- * The birds were broken down and transported by Air Force cargo transports for overseas duty where they were then reassembled.
- * The Air Force also proved heavy lift cargo transport on domestic trips. Travel companions on all trips were typically Air Force personnel and Secret Service agents.
- * A high standard of conduct for maintenance and flight operations was always maintained during trips but after hours duty was an opportunity to enjoy the local 'attractions'.
- * President Ford made many skiing trips to Vail, Colorado and Japan. I never made it on these trips but did travel to Traverse City, Michigan; Boston, MA; and San Juan, Puerto Rico.



April 1975 - Boston: Marine One and Air Force One staged for Presidential use





I certainly got the 'hairy eyeball' from the black Secret Service Agent next to the President. I think he suspected my camera!

April 1975 - Boston: President Ford greeting onlookers and waving from Air Force One





June 1976 - Puerto Rico: VH-53's and VH-1N staged for transport

Mike with Huey. Note: we were not allowed to wear typical Marine uniforms while travelling with the President



June 1976 - Puerto Rico: Air Force One arrival and VH-1N's departing on transport





June 1976 - Puerto Rico: British Concorde SST on arrival and take off





This P-47 was rescued from South America where it ended up after WWII. The Puerto Rico Air National Guard restored and maintained it.

June 1976 - Puerto Rico: Vintage P-47 Thunderbolt

The P-47's Crew Chief was delighted by my interest in his plane. He was glad to grant my request to sit in the cockpit and walked out to the wingtip to take this photo!



Marine One on display at Naval Aviation Museum
Pensacola Naval Air Station, Florida

(This was the actual bird that served as Marine One while I was with HMX-1...I know it well!)



Interior seating arrangement with Presidents seat on right



View of the cockpit and instrument panel



Marine One - All waxed up one last time!

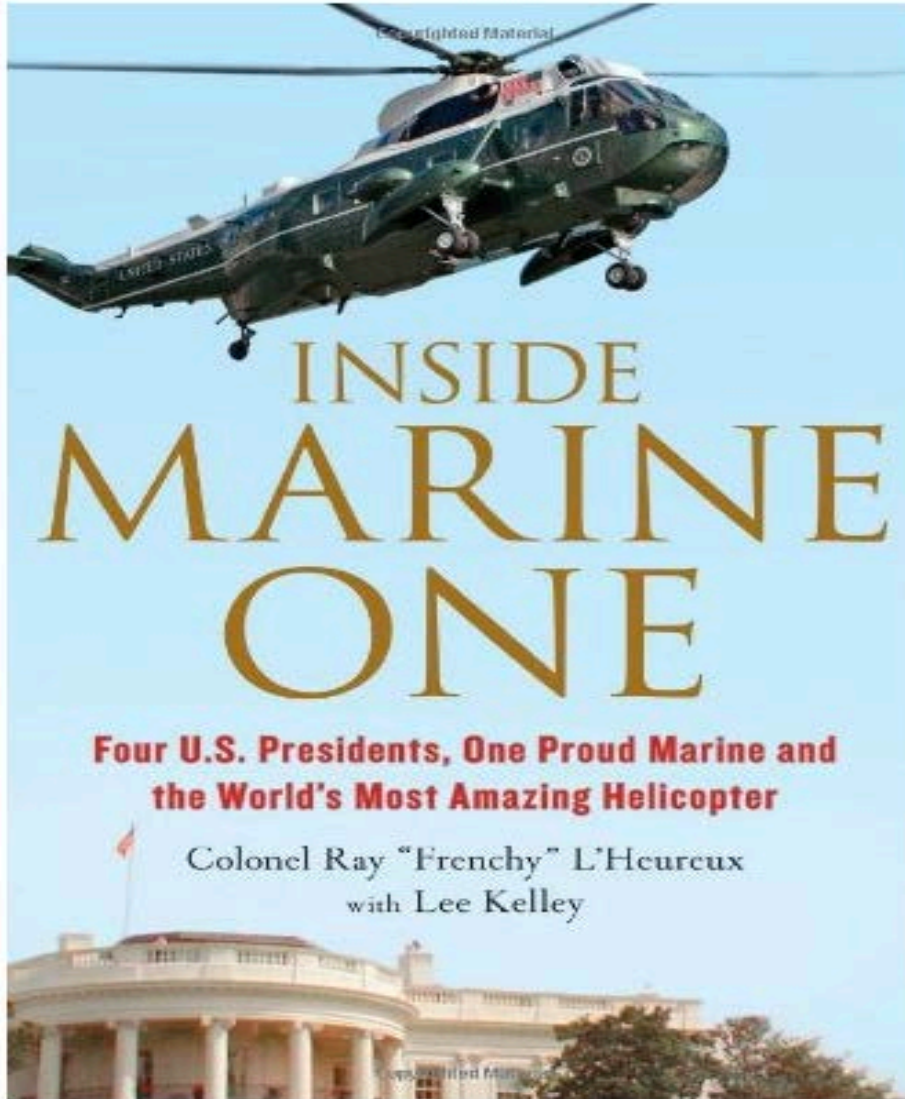


The New Marine One: Sikorsky S-92









The Navy contract covers the construction of six helicopters, with the number eventually likely to rise to 21. Sikorsky will build the helicopters in Stratford, Connecticut, while Lockheed Martin will install mission systems in Owego, New York.

Inside Marine One: Four U.S. Presidents, One Proud Marine, and the World's Most Amazing Helicopter






FlyBoyz features blog posts about real and model aircraft and other aerospace related topics

The screenshot displays the FlyBoyz website interface. At the top, there is a grid of four featured articles with thumbnails and titles: '3D Printing and Aero Modeling' (818 views), 'We've Been Airborne For One Year!' (400 views), '7th Annual Worldwide Ringmaster Fly-A-Thon' (770 views), and 'Control Line Flying at the STARS Field' (400 views). Below this is a dark navigation bar with the FlyBoyz logo and menu items: 'FULL SCALE Full Scale Airplanes', 'MODEL Model Airplanes', 'BRIEFING Pilot Briefing', 'PIX & VIDEO Aviation Media', and 'STORE Shop FlyBoyz'. A secondary navigation bar includes 'HOME', 'ABOUT', and 'SUBSCRIBE'. A promotional banner for AMP features a mobile phone and the text 'Your phone never sounded better. \$99 retail. \$49.95. LEARN MORE'. The main content area features a large image of a snowy field with a date stamp '02-01-2015' and the title 'Event Report – STARS 2015 Snow Fly'. The article text reads: 'The snow packed residents of Central New York don't despise winter (well, some of them don't), we embrace it! And that is just what the Syracuse Thunderbirds Aero Radio Society (STARS) did today with their annual 'Snow Fly' event. There was a lot of speculation leading up to the event as to whether or not [...]'. Below the article is a sidebar with 'FLYBOYZ MEMBER ACCOUNT' containing 'REGISTER' and 'LOGIN' options, and 'BLOG CATEGORIES' with a search box. At the bottom, there is a 'FLYBOYS on FlyBoyz' section with a movie-style thumbnail and '4 days ago' timestamp, and a 'RECENT POSTS' section showing the 'Event Report – STARS 2015 Snow Fly'.


FlyBoyz  **FULL SCALE**  **MODEL**  **BRIEFING**  **PIX & VIDEO**  **STORE** 

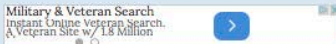
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Marine One (5)


This blog category is dedicated to following my involvement with the Presidential Helicopter Squadron (HMX-1) while serving in the United States Marine Corps.


 **The New Marine One: Sikorsky S-92**
9 months ago 132


 Military & Veteran Search
Instant Online Veteran Search.
& Veteran Site w/ 1.8 Million

 **Marine One – The 'Cage'**
1 year ago 2 66

 **Marine One – The 'Metal Shop'**
1 year ago 2 61

 **Marine One – The Green Side**
1 year ago 1 89

 **Marine One – Duty Selection**
1 year ago 2 31



FLYBOYZ MEMBER ACCOUNT





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BLOG CATEGORIES

Marine One (5)

RECENT POSTS

-  **Event Report – STARS 2015 Snow Fly**
2 days ago
-  **FLYBOYS on FlyBoyz**
4 days ago
-  **Berkeley Focke-Wulf 190 – Build Report 03**
10 days ago
-  **FAA Unveils Drone Rules**

My Marine One story can be viewed as a series of posts on FlyBoyz







There are even EAA related posts on FlyBoyz!



The screenshot displays the FlyBoyz website interface. At the top, there are four featured posts with thumbnails and titles: "3D Printing and Aero Modeling" (818 views), "We've Been Airborne For One Year" (400 views), "7th Annual Worldwide Ringmaster Fly-A-Thon" (770 views), and "Control Line Flying at the STARS Field" (400 views). Below this is a navigation bar with the FlyBoyz logo and menu items: FULL SCALE (Full Scale Airplanes), MODEL (Model Airplanes), BRIEFING (Pilot Briefing), PIX & VIDEO (Aviation Media), and STORE (Shop FlyBoyz). A secondary navigation bar includes HOME, ABOUT, and SUBSCRIBE. A promotional banner for "All Inclusive Trip" by vacation express is visible, offering a stay in Riviera Maya with non-stop flights from Buffalo.

The main content area features a gallery of posts on the left, including "Event Reports, Full Scale Airplanes" and "Civil Air Patrol, EAA, flyboyz". The central focus is a post titled "EAA Chapter 486" with a large image of a red biplane in a hangar. The post text describes a meeting at the Oswego County Airport in Fulton, New York, on a dark and dreary night. It mentions a presentation by the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) and a brief overview of the blog given by the author. The post is dated 12-05-2014 and has 103 views.


On the right side, there is a "fly.com" advertisement for kayaking with the text "Why kayak when you can fly?" and a "Find Cheap Flights" button. Below the ad is a "FLYBOYZ MEMBER ACCOUNT" section with "REGISTER" and "LOGIN" options. Further down is a "BLOG CATEGORIES" section with a "Select Category" dropdown menu. At the bottom right, a "RECENT POSTS" section shows "Event Report - STARS 2014 Snow Fly".

'Inside Marine One' is available in the FlyBoyz Store

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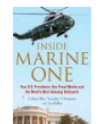






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

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