

Helicopter Training

**In September of 1944
the USAAF's first Helicopter Training School
was established at Freeman Field, Seymour, Indiana**

The helicopters used were Sikorsky R-4Bs and they were flown direct from the Sikorsky plant in Bridgeport, Connecticut, to Freeman. This included a flight over the Allegheny mountains, quite daring for the time. The trip was 725 miles during which several records were set. One included the longest formation flight. The pilots were Major John Sanduski and Lt. Norbert Guttenberger. These men, along with several others from Freeman, received their initial helicopter training at the Sikorsky plant.



Sikorsky R-4B on Freeman Field

The helicopter training program was short lived because in December of 1944 it was transferred to Chanute Field, Rantoul, Illinois. It was then under the Eastern Technical Training Command.

Preparations went on for several weeks prior to the actual arrival of the helicopters. These preparations were kept under a strict lid of secrecy and the section assigned the preparation tasks was known officially as Section B - 0. Over time, these people were called the "Lifebuoy Kids". Helicopters were so new and revolutionary that people simply did not know what these strange looking craft were. It was first referred to as a "direct-lift" plane and considerable effort was made to insure that the word "helicopter" was pronounced correctly.

Sikorsky R-4 / HNS-1



In the spring of 1941 a prototype helicopter designed by Igor Sikorsky was performing well enough to warrant a contract being awarded to the Vought-Sikorsky division of United Aircraft for the development of a two-seat version, designated the XR-4. The first flight of the new helicopter was made in January 1942, and 130 production examples were soon produced. The R-4 recorded two firsts: it accomplished the first helicopter landing aboard a ship, and the first rescue by a helicopter. Twenty-five R-4s (under the designation HNS-1) were operated by the U.S. Navy and U.S. Coast Guard, and 52 R-4s were operated by the British (under the designation Hoverfly I).

Sikorsky R-4 / HNS-1

Type: two-seat training and rescue helicopter
Crew: 2
Armament: none

Specifications:

Length: 48' 2" (14.68 m)
Height: 12' 5" (3.78 m)
Empty Weight: 2020 lb (916 kg)
Max Weight: 2535 lb (1150 kg) max at takeoff

Propulsion:

No. of Engines: 1
Powerplant: Warner R-550-1 radial
Horsepower: 180 hp

Performance:

Range: 130 miles (209 km)

Cruise Speed: N/A

Max Speed: 75 mph (121 km/h)

Ceiling: 8,000 ft (2440 m)



Good Bye, Good Luck and Happy Landings are the words that seem to be indicated in Col. E. T. Rundquist's stance as he saw the helicopters off for Chanute Field last

Friday. Jurisdiction of the helicopter training program was transferred from the Eastern Flying Training Command to the Eastern Technical Training Command. Formations of the "grasshoppers" dipped low in salute to Freeman Field last Friday on the way to their new station at Rantoul, Illinois. Twingine Times, 12/22/1944



First Freeman Helicopter Class
Probably May 1944
Courtesy of Neil Corbett



Certificate awarded upon completion of Helicopter Training at Freeman Field.
Courtesy of Neil Corbett



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OFFICERS FF I ND



— Kollege Of 'Kopter Knowledge —



BE IT KNOWN BY THESE CONTENTS
THAT

Lt. Jack Zimmerman

HAVING REMAINED MOTIONLESS IN SPACE, FLOWN FORWARD, BACKWARD,
SIDEWARD, AND VERTICALLY, WITHOUT SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES,
IS AWARDED THIS CERTIFICATE FOR SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION
OF THE

HELICOPTER PILOT TRAINING COURSE
AT FREEMAN FIELD INDIANA.

ON THIS 11TH DAY OF AUGUST 1944

AND IS DULY ACKNOWLEDGED
TO BE A GENUINE HOVERBUG



John J. Sanduski
CHIEF ROTORGRAD

Fred Kelly
HOVER-STRUCTOR

