

## Bell 47 Helicopters Featured at Rotors Over Mentone

**David Slone**

Times-Union Staff Writer

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BY DAVID SLONE

Times-Union Staff Writer

dslope@timesuniononline.com

MENTONE – Bell 47 helicopters were featured at the Rotors Over Mentone fly-in event Saturday.

The fifth annual event was held at the Lawrence D. Bell Aircraft Museum in Mentone.

"It's the annual event and we're featuring the 47 helicopter, specifically we have a G and an H," said Marsha Scott, museum board member.

The Bell 47 helicopter went through a series of models and the G and the H are two of the models developed, according to Jahn

Luke, Bell 47 Helicopter Association member and friend of the Bell Aircraft Museum.

Lawrence D. Bell, born in Mentone, was the founder of Bell Aircraft Corp. The company began developing helicopters in 1941, and one of the company's early models, the Bell 47, became one of the most recognizable aircraft in history.

Guest speaker Joey Rhodes, of near St. Louis, Mo., and president of the Bell 47 Helicopter Association, said Bell didn't know the 47 was being made. Arthur Young was the inventor of the 47. Bell wanted all the helicopters to look like cars, but Young wasn't happy with that. Once the 47 was demonstrated to Bell, however, he had his company begin making the helicopters.

There were 6,632 Bell 47s made from 1945 to 1973, Rhodes said, and 28 different models. The helicopter had 1,986 variants over the

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Photo by David Slone, Times-Union

Pictured is the Lawrence D. Bell Aircraft Museum in Mentone from the air during the Rotors Over Mentone fly-in event Saturday. The photo was taken from inside an Enstrom F28F helicopter owned by Steven R. Johnson, Goshen Helicopter Inc. More information on Goshen Helicopter can be found on its website at [goshenhelicopter.com](http://goshenhelicopter.com)

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# Bell

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years.

Now there are 1,209 Bell 47s registered in the U.S. The Bell 47 Association has 700 members, with 639 actively licensed and flying.

Rhodes has been president of the association since it was started in 2001. He spoke three times during the six-hour fly-in event, including a talk about the television show "The Whirlybirds," which he appeared on.

The original "Whirlybirds" aired from about 1956 to 1960, Rhodes said, and was produced by Desilu Studios. Desilu was a television production company co-owned by Desi Arnaz and Lucille Ball.

Rhodes said they have six episodes on the Internet now so they can introduce a new generation to the Bell 47.

Luke said the old show "probably recruited lots of pilots to fly the Huey (helicopter)." He remembered staying up until 9 p.m. as a child to watch the show. Rhodes said the show featured a lot of good actors and directors.

Another way the association tries to get new generations interested in the Bell 47 is by going to children's hospitals, air shows and museums. Rhodes said the Bell 47 was the first "Angel of Mercy."

"Really, it's just a legend," Rhodes said. "It was the first commercially certified helicopter."

Saturday's program started with welcoming remarks by museum board President Tim Croy. He thanked everyone for coming and the sponsors.

Billy Steele gave the invocation, with the placing of colors by the Warsaw Ameri-

can Legion Post 49 Color Guard. Tippecanoe Valley High School band members played the national anthem, and museum board member Ron Barker recognized the veterans present.

"For those who have served, you know it takes a special person to serve today and in the past, we really appreciate what you do," Barker said.

Sue Pyle, board member, announced the winner of the free helicopter ride from the museum shoe fundraiser. Anyone who brought in 10 pairs of shoes had their name put into a drawing for the free ride. The winner was Rita Price Simpson.

Scott then introduced Rhodes as the guest speaker.

Rhodes talked about how the Bell 47 rescued over 25,000 men off the battlefields of Korea.

Bell had bought hundreds of engines but he wasn't sure why. When the Korean War broke out, Bell was able to quickly get helicopters to the battlefields, Rhodes explained. If Bell wouldn't have bought those engines, which ended up in the helicopters, thousands of men would have died, Rhodes said.

He discussed the ways the helicopter changed over the years, including the addition of turbochargers and crossbars to stabilize the helicopter. To help increase the pilot's visibility, the helicopter "bubble" was created, Rhodes said.

The bubble on some models is very hard to find and can cost anywhere from \$3,100 to \$3,500.

Bell wanted a helicopter for executives, so the "H" model was created, Rhodes

said.

The Bell 47 engines range from 178 horsepower to 305 HP. Some have turbines in them. The average Bell 47's engine has 270 HP, about what one finds in a car, he said.

The most expensive part of the helicopter is the screws, Rhodes pointed out. The metal blades of the helicopter, at one time, was priced at \$179,000.

"Our association members didn't like that and we shared that view very vigorously. Now you can find them for around \$50,000," he said.

The engines are about \$31,000.

If a person had to buy all the parts today, Rhodes said it would cost \$300,000.

The association was founded to protect the Bell 47. When it was started, Rhodes said they received calls from people complaining they were being ripped off. Since law enforcement was on the association's board, he said they found out they could investigate certain allegations. Good vendors started selling the parts at more reasonable prices.

At Rotors Over Mentone, people also could pay to ride either a U.S. Army UH-1 Huey, courtesy of the American Huey 369 Organization, or an Enstrom F28F helicopter flown by Steven R. Johnson, Goshen Helicopter Inc.

The Huey helicopter was first used by the military in 1959. Its maximum length from the tip of the main blade to the tip of the tail rotor blade is 57 feet.

The Huey at Mentone was the "803/Warrior 11" Bell UH-1H 63-08803. The American Huey 369 Museum is at 1697 W. Hooster



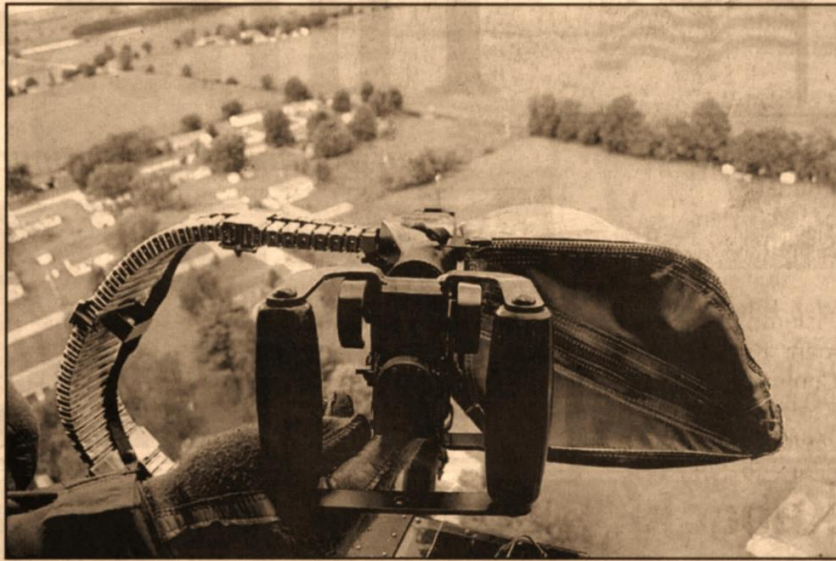


Photo by David Slone, Times-Union

A view of Mentone from the "803/Warrior 11" Bell UH-1H 63-08803, which provided rides to people at the Rotors Over Mentone fly-in event Saturday. The fifth annual event is put on each year at the Lawrence D. Bell Aircraft Museum, Mentone.



Photo by David Slone, Times-Union

Guest speaker Saturday at the fifth annual Rotors Over Mentone fly-in event at Lawrence D. Bell Aircraft Museum was Joey Rhodes (L), Bell 47 Association Inc. president, St. Louis, Mo. He is pictured with members of the American Huey 369 Organization. Behind them are a Bell 47 H, a Huey and a Bell 47 D-1.

Blvd., Montgomery Aviation, Mich. It has 225 HP, a piston of it today would be about Hanger 11, Peru, Ind. engine and is turbocharged. \$525,000.

For more information on the helicopter or the American Huey 369 organization, visit the website at [www.americanhuey369.com](http://www.americanhuey369.com) Its service ceiling is 12,000 feet, and has a maximum speed of 112 mph but may reach faster speeds with the wind. The fuel capacity is 40 gallons usable, and it burns 16 gallons per hour. The cost of it today would be about \$525,000.

The Enstrom F28F was built in 1987 in Menominee, 16 gallons per hour. The cost of it today would be about \$525,000.

More information can be found at [goshenhelicopter.com](http://goshenhelicopter.com)