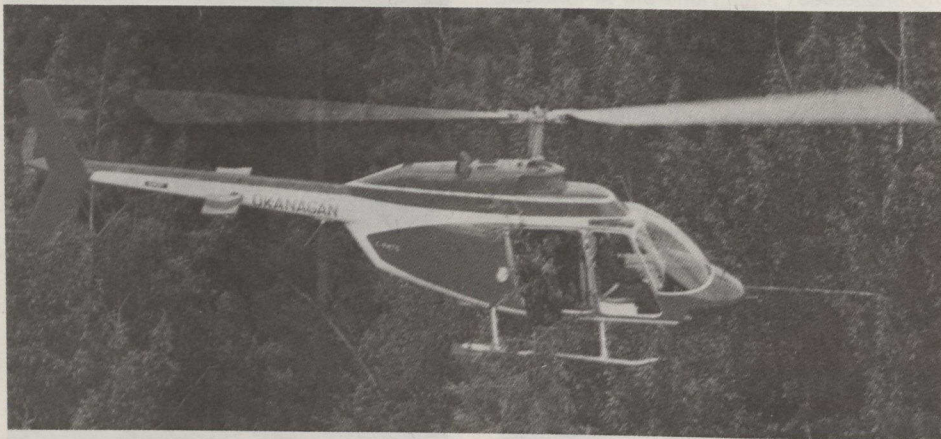


Helicopters hover to new heights of success



Okanagan's Bell 206 hovers while a forestry officer cuts the top of a spruce tree.

Okanagan Helicopters Limited, with over 100 helicopters and about 500 employees, is the largest helicopter company in Canada — and one of the largest in the world. A network of 50 bases reaches from the head office in Richmond, British Columbia to the United States, South America, Europe, India, Southeast Asia, Australia, the Middle East, Africa, Central America and, most recently, the People's Republic of China.

The company, founded in 1947 by Carl Agar, has flown well over one million hours in more than 30 nations.

Extensive capabilities

Okanagan supports many industries in its diversified operations. The smaller helicopters are flying taxis and airborne laboratories for geophysical surveys, air traffic reports, wildlife studies and environmental control.

The medium and heavy fleet is employed as aerial cranes in the construction and forestry industries; as aerial firefighters and air ambulances; and in resource industry activities where Okanagan helicopters often serve as the sole link to offshore projects, ferrying all staff, supplies and equipment and providing emergency services.

Since oil and gas exploration commenced off Canada's coasts in 1967, Okanagan and its subsidiary companies have participated in the major exploration programs of Amoco, Aquitaine, British Petroleum, Chevron, Dome Petroleum, Esso Resources, Mobil, Shell, Tenneco, Texaco, Total Eastcan, Petrocan, Home Oil, Husky and Bow Valley Industries.

In 1979 Okanagan simultaneously supported all of the eight drilling vessels operating along Canada's east coast and the three Arctic vessels positioned in the Beaufort Sea. The rugged and hostile coastline on the east coast presented some of the most challenging flying conditions in the world and the difficulties were

often compounded as the offshore locations extend to distances of 200 nautical miles from the shore. The Arctic projects in the Beaufort Sea included the movement of crew, equipment and supplies in near darkness and sub-zero temperatures.

Flying in the severe environment associated with all of these projects demands extensive instrument flying rules (IFR) operation and strict adherence to the highest safety standards. To date, Okanagan has flown over 70 000 IFR hours in Canadian offshore operations alone, and this total is rapidly increasing through offshore operations around the world.

Important developments

Okanagan has pioneered major advances in helicopter applications to the construction industry. The company's first powerline construction job, in 1959, was completed with a piston-engined Sikorsky S58 and a "bellyman" engineer lying on the floor of the helicopter, peering through the open door and relaying instructions to the pilot. Today, portable radios and vertical reference techniques

have replaced the bellyman. Turbine-powered helicopters, twin engines and stabilizing systems now enable Okanagan to survey and construct powerlines as a matter of routine.

The building industry is making increasing use of the unique aerial crane capability of the helicopter. The placement of roof trusses and the installation of roof-mounted heating and air conditioning units is becoming commonplace. Modular building units are increasing in popularity because of the significant economies that can be achieved with assembly in the factory and shipment by helicopter to virtually any location.

Recently Okanagan erected a giant oil field flare stack in Drayton Valley, Alberta, using a Sikorsky S61 to set a height record.

Innovation is also the key to forestry operations. A co-operative effort with the British Columbia Forest Service resulted in the development of the Helicopter Hydraulic Pruner, a harness-equipped craft that enables the operator to hand-clip the scions and seed material which are found at the top of genetically superior trees.

Okanagan technicians designed the Aluma Gel Heli Drip Torch in response to the need for aerial ignition for logging slash abatement, silvicultural site preparation, and backburning for wildfire control. When fires need to be suppressed, the Okanagan-developed Monsoon Bucket is used.

Medical services

Engaged in helicopter medical evacuation for many years, Okanagan joined a formal air ambulance team in 1977. Ontario's Ministry of Health launched a pilot project aimed at providing an evacuation system with support capabilities to transport critically ill patients to a hospital in metropolitan Toronto.

By 1981, a specially-outfitted Sikorsky S76, designated "Bandage 3", was sent into action on a permanent basis. Based in Thunder Bay, Ontario, Bandage 3 covers



A S76 helicopter, bound for Australia, is boarded on a Hercules transport plane.