



vertiflite Commentary

From the Past to the Future

By Mike Hirschberg, Executive Director

The Annual Forum & Technology Display is always an inflection point for the AHS International staff, and was especially so this year. Somewhat akin to Santa's elves — busy all year for a single, culminating event in a flurry of activity that brings excitement and pleasure to those involved — the small AHS staff works hard all year to plan, direct and execute the breadth of programs taking place during the Annual Forum. This year had particular gravity, as it marked a turning point in many ways, with connections between the past and the future.

Kay Brackins, the AHS Deputy Director, retired after 13 years as part of the staff, and more than 40 years of involvement in AHS publications. Her replacement as the Director of Technical Programs is Julie Gibbs, who returns to AHS after serving as the Director of Membership from 1995-2005. (See pg 46.)

Rhett Flater and Kim Smith — the immediate past Executive Director (1991-2011) and Deputy Director (1993-2011), respectively — collaborated on a landmark paper and presentation entitled, "Advancing Vertical Flight: A Historical Perspective on AHS International and its Times." The paper highlights the leadership role and the incredible impact that AHS has had on vertical flight technology over the decades (see www.vtol.org/history).

One of the Forum 72 attendees was John Islin, who served as the second head of AHS (Aug. 1975 to Oct. 1977). Islin oversaw the move from New York City to Washington, D.C., and revamped and rejuvenated the Society at a critical time. Islin, who had agreed to lead AHS through the transition, also expanded membership by 20% and added the word "International" to AHS —



recognizing that we were so much more than our name implied — before taking a management position at Sikorsky's then-new West Palm Beach facility. Islin was succeeded by Lynn Kesten (1977-1981) and then John Zugschwert (1981-1991), before Flater took over as the fifth head of AHS. After not having attended a Forum for nearly 40 years, Islin — now an Emeritus Member of AHS (having first joined in 1962) — was effusive in his praise of how far the Society has come, particularly Vertiflite, the AHS Journal, and the Annual Forum.

June 1 was the fifth anniversary of my tenure as the AHS International Executive Director and Forum 72 was the 20th anniversary of my first Forum in 1996. As a young 27-year-old engineer, I was awestruck, and have continued to be amazed by the technical community at each of my 20 Forums . . . not just because vertical flight is so exciting, but because our members are so passionate and caring. It has always been the

people that have been the biggest draw to AHS.

AHS is not only about the experts of our community providing their insights and passing on their knowledge, it's also about exciting and inspiring the next generation of leaders in vertical flight — they who will be imparting their wisdom to future generations. Their participation and engagement in AHS is vital. We ask our members to help get young engineers excited about vertical flight and engaged with AHS, just as I was 20 years ago.

Having transformed the Society again and again over the decades, we are now modernizing anew to meet the needs of today's young professionals. Over the next several months, you will notice a number of significant improvements in our online offerings, with improvements to our website and social media outreach; expansion of our online vertical flight library in the AHS Online Store; a new membership database and meeting registration system; Vertipedia, our online fact files of vertical flight aircraft; a renewed emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) pre-college outreach; online communities and discussion forums; and much, much more.

With AHS International now nearing its 75th anniversary, we are working to better serve the technical community, and are redoubling our efforts to ensure our leadership and effectiveness in advancing vertical flight for decades to come.

