



**PRESS RELEASE**  
*For Immediate Release*

CONTACT: Loretta Conley  
(310) 539-0508, ext. 235  
[pr@robinsonheli.com](mailto:pr@robinsonheli.com)

13 November 2022

## **Helicopter Pioneer Frank Robinson Passes**

**Torrance, CA** — On November 12, 2022 Robinson Helicopter Company bid a final farewell to its founder, Frank Robinson. Robinson, 92, passed away peacefully at his Rolling Hills, California home.

One of the most recognizable names in the helicopter industry, Frank Robinson was a pioneer, a man not driven by reward or accolades but by a vision that redefined the industry and forever changed general aviation.

Robinson will be remembered for the design and manufacture of the R22, R44, and R66 model helicopters. Known for their simplicity and reliability, the popular helicopters have a distinct profile and can be spotted easily and frequently all over the world.

Robinson's fascination with helicopters began in 1939, at age nine, when he saw a picture in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer of Igor Sikorsky hovering his VS-300 helicopter, an image that captivated Robinson and set the course for his life's work.

He earned a BSME degree from the University of Washington, later attending Wichita State University's graduate aeronautical engineering school. His career began in the late '50s with Cessna and continued through the '60s working for many leading aerospace companies, including Bell and Hughes. In 1973, at age forty-three, unable to interest any of his employers in the idea for a simple, personal helicopter, he resigned from his job at Hughes and founded Robinson Helicopter Company in his Palos Verdes, California home. Six years later, defying critics and overcoming enormous obstacles, Robinson was granted FAA certification for his two-place, piston powered R22 helicopter. The unknown helicopter company delivered its first production R22 in October 1979. By 1989, the R22 had gained a foothold in general aviation, opening a previously untapped market for private helicopter ownership.

In the early '90s, realizing the potential for a light mid-size helicopter, Robinson introduced the four-place piston powered R44. Orders for the R44 quickly piled-up and the company became a recognized player in the aviation industry. In 2010, Robinson once again expanded his line with the five-place, turbine powered R66.

Robinson's relentless determination earned him the respect of both colleagues and competitors. Affectionately called a rock star in certain aviation circles, Robinson retired in 2010 at age 80.

The list of awards and honors bestowed on Robinson is long. Most notable:

- 2013 Daniel Guggenheim Medal – AHS International
- 2011 Lifetime Aviation Engineering Award – Living Legends of Aviation
- 2010 Cierve Lecturer – Royal Aeronautical Society
- 2011 Inducted into the U.S. National Academy of Engineering
- 2004 Howard Hughes Memorial Award – So. California Aeronautic Association
- 2000 Named Laurels Hall of Fame Legend - Aviation Week & Space Technology
- 1997 The Doolittle Award - Society of Experimental Test Pilots
- 1992 Laurels Award – Aviation Week & Space Technology
- 1991 & 1990 Igor I. Sikorsky International Trophy – American Helicopter Society

Today, the company continues under the leadership of Frank's son, Kurt Robinson and, to date, has delivered over 13,000 helicopters worldwide.

-###-