

## R44 Scores with Operators as Production Reaches 5000

As the 5000th R44 gets ready to fly off the assembly line, its reputation continues as a stalwart performer in the light helicopter market. Handling, maintenance and reliability received outstanding marks in an operators' report conducted by *Rotor & Wing Magazine* (June 2009).



*Rotor & Wing* surveyed more than two dozen current operators (minimum of 50 hours in type), posing a specific set of questions. They were asked to rate each aspect using a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being the best and 1 representing complete dissatisfaction. To ensure honest, thoughtful answers, each respondent was promised anonymity.

Reliability earned the highest marks in the survey and drew comments such as, "It never quits" and "You just can't kill the thing." Very few respondents experienced any unexpected maintenance issues.

Pilots called the R44's handling stable, smooth, and almost effortless, "Just think about what you want it to do, and she'll do it," commented one pilot. Airframe and powerplant mechanics said working on the R44 is very straight forward. Scheduled maintenance is logical and easy to accomplish.

While a few minor problems were reported, respondents were generally very pleased with the overall performance, giving it eights, nines and tens. The R44 was FAA certificated in December 1992 and the first production ship was delivered in 1993. The R44 Raven I was introduced in 2000 followed by the fuel-injected Raven II in 2002.

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## China Buys 10 R22s

Shanghai King Wing General Aviation Company purchased ten R22s for training purposes, through PTE Systems, Robinson's dealer in China.



*R22s destined for King Wing General Aviation, China*

With only an estimated 125 civil helicopters in China, compared with more than 10,000 in the U.S., the acquisition of ten R22s represents significant  
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## Barbara Robinson 1955 -2009

Barbara Robinson 53, Frank Robinson's wife and a former vice president of Robinson Helicopter Company passed away on 13 August 2009 after a 12-year battle with breast cancer.

Barbara joined Robinson Helicopter in 1978 in an administrative position and eventually became Vice President of Marketing. Barbara was instrumental

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## R44 Raven II Goes Off-Roading



Mike Bilek Racing with Bilek's R44 Raven II. Mike Bilek stands in the back row, second from the right.

Off-road racing through the deserts of Arizona, California and Nevada requires more than just a skilled driver and a fast car. Traveling at speeds of 85-135 mph over miles of rough terrain and blinding dust requires an experienced team. An essential component to Mike Bilek's team is his R44 Raven II. Bilek's R44 follows close behind his car monitoring every mile from a bird's-eye view.

The helicopter crew is limited to three (pilot, videographer, and paramedic) to allow for emergency medical equipment. Injuries in desolate areas can be serious and while the R44 is not equipped to provide medical transport, it is reassuring to Bilek to know that a paramedic is always close by to render assistance whenever necessary. When Bilek rolled his car during a race, his crew was able to respond immediately and when another team's vehicle crashed, Bilek's helicopter was there administering aid until medical transport arrived.

Bilek has over thirty years of experience in desert racing and has logged approximately 700 hours in his R44. Bilek Racing Team sponsors the Silver State 300, a 300-mile race held in Nevada.



The R44 Raven II lands to lend assistance when Bilek rolled the car during a race.

## R44 Makes Commute Shorter and Safer

Rick Shelly, managing director of mine construction company RD Services, travels from Mackay to the Bowen Basin in his R44s. The Bowen Basin is the largest coal mining area in Australia, extending over 60,000 square kilometers of Central Queensland.

Shelly spent countless hours driving from Mackay to Collinsville to Oakey Creek racking up an estimated 80,000 kilometers a year before purchasing an R44. His R44s (a Raven and a Clipper) take him from Mackay to the mines in about 30 minutes. Not only has he reduced his travel time considerably, but Shelly believes he is safer in the air since the highways surrounding the mines can be dangerous.

## R44 Offers Students Unique Learning Experience



Student gets hands-on experience with aerial filming.

SAE Institute, a media school located in Byron Bay, Australia, acquired an R44 Raven II to provide students with hands-on aerial cinematography experience.

Before taking to the air, students prepare storyboards detailing the shots they plan to film. Then armed with cameras, storyboards, and aerial maps, they each receive one hour of flight time to film. A pilot from Helibiz Goldcoast, a Robinson Service Center, flies the helicopter for the school.

SAE president Tom Misner said the helicopter was bought to give students invaluable aerial photography and filming experience. "As far as I am aware, we are the only media school in the world who can offer students this kind of opportunity."

## R44 Pilot Sets World Record



World record holder Josef Rydl with his R44 Raven I.

Josef Rydl, Czech Republic, established a new world record with his R44 Raven I for speed in a closed circuit for Class E-1b helicopters. His speed of 194.8 km/h eclipsed the previous record set in 1961 of 119.07km/h.

## Missionaries Fly R44 to Far-Flung Villages

Wycliff Bible Translators in association with JAARS acquired an R44 to transport translators, support personnel, and linguists to and from remote villages in Cameroon that would otherwise be inaccessible.

Cameroon's terrain is rugged with dense rain forests, swamps, savannas and arid plains. During the rainy season, the dirt roads turn to mud, making the mountainous, northwest section inaccessible for months. Many areas lack adequate transportation infrastructure and often there is not enough suitable land to create an airstrip, making a helicopter the only viable means of transportation.

According to Pilot Eric A. Wolf, some villages are a three-day walk from the nearest road. The R44 gives missionaries access to the most remote communities, provides emergency assistance, and delivers food and other essential goods.



Wycliff Bible translator arrives in Cameroon village.

## Malaysia's First Female Commercial Helicopter Pilot Flies an R44

Christine Lalo, an R44 pilot with Solaire Helicopters, Robinson's Malaysian dealer, is the country's first woman commercial helicopter pilot. She is also the first female pilot to complete a ferry flight from Kuala Lumpur to Kota Kinabalu over the South China Sea.

Lalo flies a Robinson 44, conducting aerial surveys and doing sight-seeing flights over the islands, mountains and jungles of East Malaysia.

The only other female helicopter pilots in Malaysia are in the country's armed forces. Lalo says being a woman in a male-dominated profession isn't easy, but it's enabled her to go places she never thought possible.



Solaire Helicopters' Lalo at the controls of an R44.

## R44 Pilot John Rachor Finds Missing Hiker

John Rachor again used his R44 to find a missing person in the Oregon wilderness.

A Jacksonville, Oregon woman spent the night in the Applegate wilderness after she lost her way and injured her knee while hiking. Coreen Clark, 34, called 911 at 8:00 p.m. on Easter Sunday to report that she was lost somewhere on Mt. Baldy. An exhaustive all night ground search by the Jackson County Sheriff's Department failed to find Clark. The following morning, Lt. Pat Rowland launched an aerial search, but it was volunteer John Rachor, in his R44, who spotted Clark at about 8:45 am in an area known as Little Gray Back.

Rachor is the same pilot who found the Kim family in December of 2006. Rachor, at his own expense, used his R44 to find Mrs. Kim and her children alive in the wilderness of southwest Oregon after they had been missing for a week.

## Spencer-Bower Honored



Spencer-Bower has flown more 13,000 hours in R22s.

Simon Spencer Bower, Wanaka Helicopters, received the 2009 Greg Vujcich Memorial Award from the New Zealand Airline Pilots Association in recognition of his excellence in general aviation flight instruction.

The award was created in memory of Greg Vujcich, a well respected airline flight instructor and recognizes a lifetime of outstanding work and professional service.

Spencer-Bower has amassed more than 18,000 hours in both fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters. He has logged more than 10,000 hours as an instructor and is perhaps the world's highest time R22 pilot with 13,000 hours.

In 1992, he established Wanaka Helicopters in the Southern Lakes area of the South Island. The flight school is internationally known for its mountain flying courses.

## Barbara Robinson *continued*

in marketing the newly certificated R22, developing Robinson's worldwide dealer network, and establishing Robinson as an internationally recognized brand.

In 1983, Barbara earned her pilot's license and became Whirly-Girl #385. That same year she married Frank Robinson.

Barbara remained a key figure at the growing company before retiring in 1992 to devote more time to her family and philanthropic endeavors.

A lifelong resident of the South Bay area of Los Angeles, Barbara supported local efforts to preserve the area's historical heritage. In 2005, CBS News named Barbara Robinson its first "Woman of the Week."

She is survived by her children, Mark Robinson 23 and Cindy Robinson 22.

# Rotor & Wing's Report

R44's Report Card	
Performance	B
Reliability	A
Engine Performance	B+
Response to AOG Issues	B+
Flight Handling	A
Cabin Comfort/Visibility	B+
Engine Support	A
Aircraft Support	B+
Maintenance	A
Costs	B+

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## China Buys 10 R22s

momentum in the helicopter training market and should promote overall growth in China's general aviation.

General aviation is in its infancy in China with about 800 general aviation airplanes. In comparison, the U.S. has approximately 220,000 general aviation airplanes.

Two factors hamper general aviation in China: (1) the military restricts access to airspace, and (2) the lack of infrastructure. There are few small airports, and most of these are either unable to handle or not permitted to service general aviation aircraft.

The devastating 2008 Sichuan earthquake had a significant impact on China's civil helicopter market. With the rail and ground infrastructure damaged beyond use, helicopters provided the only access into the afflicted area.

China's demand for helicopters is expected to surge in coming years. Flight training accounts for much of China's general aviation, while business, personal, and sport aviation make up a very small percentage of operations within China.

## ROBINSON 2010 CALENDAR

Robinson is accepting photos for its 2010 calendar. Send as many photos as you wish. Include a description and the photographer's name. **Deadline is 7 November 2009.**

Please send high-resolution TIF or JPEG files (600 dpi at 9" x 12"). Bitmap (bmp) or graphic image format (gif) files are not acceptable, as they cannot be enlarged without loss of image quality.

For further instructions, please email [pr@robinsonheli.com](mailto:pr@robinsonheli.com).




**ROBINSON.**  
HELICOPTER COMPANY  
2901 Airport Drive  
Torrance, CA 90505 USA  
Phone: 310/539-0508  
Fax: 310/539-5198  
[www.robinsonheli.com](http://www.robinsonheli.com)