CANADA AVIATION MUSEUM AIRCRAFT

PIASECKI HUP-3
ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY SERIAL 51-16623

By Robert T. Murray
Canada Aviation Museum Research Volunteer
Introduction

This is a history of the Piasecki HUP-3 helicopter that resides in the Canada Aviation and Space Museum (CASM). It briefly describes the developmental background of this particular helicopter and gives a comprehensive chronological account originating with its acceptance in Norton, Pennsylvania, until its acquisition by the Canadian War Museum in February 1965. It also outlines the trials and tribulations of this helicopter and its crew’s activities during missions onshore and aboard Her Majesty’s Canadian Ship (HMCS) Labrador. This historical narrative also includes four separate Appendices as outlined below:

Appendix A  Description of the two Bell (Helicopter Training Light) HTL-4/6 helicopter accidents at Peter Point, Frobisher Bay, Baffin Island.
Appendix B  A detailed listing of the three HUP-3s acquired, their employment and final disposal.
Appendix C  A listing of the Commanding Officers of the two RCN Squadrons while the HUP-3 helicopters were in service with the RCN between May 1954 and February 1964.
Appendix D  A listing of the pilots who flew HUP-3, serial 51-16623.

Cover Photo Caption:
RCN Piasecki HUP-3, serial 51-16623 / NAVY 247, with the original “Buzz Bear” tail artwork, performs a netted cargo hoist from Her Majesty’s Canadian Ship (HMCS) Labrador (AW 50) during its 1955 Arctic cruise. (DND via Bob Murray Collection)
HUP-3 Development History
The single-engine, overlapped tandem-rotored HUP-3 was a follow-on to the Piasecki HUP-1 and HUP-2 Retriever models, originally designed to meet the requirements as a utility helicopter for Search and Rescue (SAR), Plane Guard, and general transportation duties for the United States Navy (USN).

The Canadian model was manufactured by the Piasecki Helicopter Corporation for the United States Army as the H-25A Army Mule model and modified to the HUP-3 configuration for the RCN. The name Retriever was formally assigned for the USN models but was not used for the RCN helicopters – these being commonly referred to as the “HUP” by those that flew and maintained them. Powered by a single Continental R-975-46, air-cooled, radial engine located just aft of the main cabin, it incorporated hydraulic boost on all controls, had a strengthened all-metal cabin floor with cargo tie-downs and modifications to facilitate the loading and unloading of stretcher patients. A large rectangular rescue hatch, 122 cm (48 inch) x 66 cm (26 inch) was fitted in the cockpit floor, off-set to the right of the pilot, through which a hoist, located overhead in the cockpit, was capable of lifting personnel and equipment weighing up to 181 kilograms (400 pounds). The HUP-3 also had an external sling with a lift capability of 454 kilograms (1000 pounds). The crew consisted of either one or two pilots, depending on the mission, and, in the main cabin, one crewman and four passengers, or up to three stretcher cases could be accommodated.

One hundred and twenty of the H-25A / HUP-3 model were built in the 1953-1954 timeframe. When production ended in July 1954, a total of 339 HUPs were built for service with the US Navy, US Army, RCN and the French Navy. All of the HUP helicopters were withdrawn from frontline squadrons by 1966.

Specifications
Rotors: Two, each 3-bladed, 7.1 meter (35 foot) diameter
Fuselage: All metal stressed skin (semi-monocoque) construction, fixed tricycle landing gear.
Length: (rotor blades turning, and folded), 17.3m (56 feet, 11 inches), and 9.75m (32 feet)
Width: (rotor blades turning, and folded), 10.7m (35 feet), and 3.91m (12 feet, 11 inches)
Height: 3.8 meters (12.5 feet)
Weight: Empty: 1,782 kg (3,928 lb)
       Loaded: 2,608 kg (5,750 lb)            Maximum Overload: 2,767 kg (6,100 lb)
Fuel Capacity: 568 litres (125 Imperial gallons)
Performance: Maximum Speed: 170 km/h (105 mph)
             Cruising Speed: 130 km/h (80 mph) at sea level
             Maximum Climb: 198 m (650 feet) per minute at sea level
Service Ceiling: 3,050m (10,000 feet)
Range: 547 km (340 miles)

The RCN Piasecki HUP-3 Helicopters
Three Piasecki HUP-3s, bearing US military serial numbers 51-16621 to 51-16623 were purchased especially for RCN operations from the Arctic Patrol Vessel HMCS Labrador (AW 50). On 4 May 1954, RCN pilots Marlow and Webster accepted the first HUP-3 for the RCN at the factory. The helicopters duly arrived at the Royal Canadian Naval Air Station (RCNAS) Shearwater, Nova Scotia on 18 May 1954, painted in US Army green colours. All were initially attached to heavier-than-air Helicopter Air Squadron Twenty-One (VH-21). Later, this unit was renamed as Helicopter Utility Squadron Twenty-One (HU-21).

The helicopters were repainted to conform to the standard RCN colour scheme of dark gloss grey for the upper surfaces with light gloss grey for the under surfaces. They were assigned the Squadron Numbers 945 to 947 inclusive along with typical roundels on the sides between “NAVY” and the Squadron Number.
The Museum's Aircraft
For the purposes of this narrative the side squadron numbers will be used when referring to this aircraft. The reader must keep in mind that even as these numbers changed they all pertain to the same airframe.

- Squadron Side Number 947 May 1954 to June 1955
- Squadron Side Number 247 June 1955 to November 1958
- Squadron Side Number 407 Squadron Number was used
- Squadron Side Number 923 From November 1958
- Squadron Side Number 623 November 1964, renumbered using last three digits of the serial number.

HUP 947 Operations – 1954
Initial Production
HUP-3 serial 51-16623 came off the assembly line on 14 May 1954 and was taken-on-strength by the RCN and flown to Halifax, Nova Scotia on 18 May. On completion of repainting at Fairey Aviation of Canada Limited, at Eastern Passage, Nova Scotia, HUP 947 was allocated to VH-21 on 8 June 1954. For the remainder of 1954, 947 was used for SAR, utility and for pilot and maintenance crew training prior to deployment aboard HMCS Labrador. In October and November, 947 was employed in two SAR missions.

[Image of a helicopter]

RCN HUP 116623 / 947 of VH-21, circa 1954, with the standard fin flash on the tail, is seen in its high-visibility search and rescue paint scheme, with a 91 cm (36-inch) wide Red Day-Glo search band around the forward fuselage. Later, during a mid-1955 repaint, the search band was reapplied thinner, in a new daylight fluorescent lacquer, to 48 cm (19-inches) wide and the tip of the rear tail rotor pylon was also painted in the high visibility red colour. (CASM Photo 12735)

The St. Paul Island Rescue
In October, Lieutenant (Lt.) W.E. "Sandy" James with crewman A.B. Fredericson answered an emergency call for assistance from the lighthouse keeper on St. Paul Island, located at the entrance to the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The lighthouse keeper was suffering from a fractured skull and other injuries resulting from a dynamite explosion. HUP 947 was flown to Sydney, Nova Scotia where it was refuelled, a doctor picked up and, because of the all-up weight restrictions, the crewman had to be left behind in Sydney.
The flight to St. Paul Island was undertaken in extremely adverse weather conditions with gale force winds and poor visibility. After landing on the island, in swirling snow and high winds, Lt. James had to keep the rotors turning for three-quarters of an hour while the doctor was attending to the patient and preparing to bring him to the helicopter. The return flight to Sydney was without incident and HUP 947 arrived back in HMCS Shearwater after a mission lasting eight and one-half hours. Lt. James was subsequently awarded the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE) (Military Division) for this courageous humanitarian act.

The Grand Manan Rescue
On 10 November, Lieutenant Commander (LCdr.) R.F. “Roger” Fink with LCdr. O. Jack Lewry as navigator were requested to fly a woman, who was having prenatal complications, from Grand Manan Island to the hospital in Saint John, New Brunswick. To quote LCdr. Fink:

“We filled up with fuel and were just about to take-off when we received a call from “Flag Ops” (Flag Officer Atlantic Coast, Operations Room) to take some blood plasma from the Royal Canadian Naval Hospital (RCNH) Halifax, to the station hospital at HMCS Cornwallis, near Digby, N.S. I agreed to fly into the Parade Square at HMCS Stadacona and very nearly didn’t get out over the high buildings. We dropped off the blood at HMCS Cornwallis and headed out past Digby and over the Bay of Fundy. It looked pretty black over the Bay and I was pleased that Jack Lewry was along. He had brought along a nautical chart and was able to decipher the occulting and flashing coastal navigation lights. At Grand Manan they had cars out lighting a small airstrip – we took on some fuel, picked-up the patient and a nurse and flew them to hospital in Saint John. We then went to the Saint John Airport where we fuelled and flew back to HMCS Shearwater.”

HUP 947 Operations – 1955
Disaster Averted
The utility and training role continued into 1995. On 21 April, HUP 947 flown by LCdr. R.V. “Rod” Bays with Crewman Chief Petty Officer (CPO) W. “Bill” Shorten were attempting to transport a fourteen-foot aluminium boat to the tidal flats at Chezzetcook Bay, Nova Scotia. This was the scene of the crash of Grumman Avenger AS-3 serial number 69303 (Squadron Side Number 334) on 20 April. The boat was suspended from the external sling with a steadying hand line held by CPO Shorten. Just after take-off, while transiting to forward flight speed, the boat started to take charge gradually swinging more and more violently from side to side and, for safety of flight reasons, the boat had to be jettisoned. By this time the HUP was just past the Officers Mess heading Southwest at an altitude of about 61 meters (200 feet). The trajectory of the boat carried it into the Naval Stores Building parking lot where it landed on top of a car owned by Petty Officer (PO) Peter Britton, illegally parked next to a “No Parking” sign, crushing the vehicle. PO Britton’s call to his Insurance Agent to report that a boat had hit his car was said to have been hilarious. He was advised to go home, “sleep it off”, and call back the next morning.

HMCS Labrador (1955 Arctic Summer Cruise)
HU-21 Detachment (Det.) 2 was formed on 9 May at HMCS Shearwater consisting of three helicopters, a HUP-3 and two RCN Bell HTL-4 helicopters, four pilots and seven maintenance personnel. From 9 to 14 May, HUP 947 was flown in the HMCS Shearwater local area preparing for deployment to the Arctic.

On 16 May and again on 18 May, HUP 947 took part in a practice fly past for the visit of the Chief of Naval Staff (CNS), Vice Admiral E.R. Mainguy, OBE, CD RCN. On 16 May, HUP 947 was flown by Lts. John G. Laurie, and A.T. “Bud” Service and on the 18th the pilots were LCdr. F. Roger “Rog” Fink and Lt. Bryan “Crash” Hayter.
A minor inspection was carried out on HUP 947 on 19 May, it was test flown on the 20th and compass swung on the 24th. Also on 24 May, LCdr. Edward A. "Ted" Fallen was appointed to the RCN icebreaker, HMCS Labrador, as Officer-in-Charge (OIC) HU-21 Detachment 2.

The first HUP deployment to HMCS Labrador occurred from 28 May to 21 November 1955, when HUP-3 947 joined Bell HTL-4/6s serials 300 and 302, both fitted with floats, to make up the ship’s helicopter complement. On 28 May, LCdr. Roger Fink flew HUP 947 aboard HMCS Labrador, then in Halifax harbour. Two other pilots, LCdr. Fallen (OIC) and Lt. John Laurie were available for flying duties. Lt. William H. "Bill" Frayn, who was part of the ship’s company undergoing watch keeping training, was also available for flying duties when relieved from his bridge watch keeping duties by one of the detachment Officers. Eight maintenance personnel, under the supervision of CPO Lew Turner, formed Detachment Two. These personnel included Petty Officer (PO) Youl, Leading Seaman (LS) G. Brooker and Ross, along with Able Seaman (AB) Shand, McArthur, Laszewski, Umphry and Smith.

On 25 May, Lt. Frayn with co-pilot Lt. Laurie flew HUP 947 for an hour of sequences at HMCS Sheanwater. LCdr. Fallen arrived in Halifax on 27 May and, the next day, with LCdr. Fink did an hour flying refresher, along with some water work and a few deck landings aboard HMCS Labrador in the Bell HTL-4 and later flying HUP 947.

On 31 May, the day dawned with the ceiling and visibility below the visual flying rules (VFR) standards. In order to embark the helicopters aboard HMCS Labrador, an "operational flying clearance" had to be first approved. All helicopters were flown aboard in just over an hour from take-off of the first HTL-4. The helicopters and spares were lashed down and secured for the sea voyage by noon.

On 1 June, the ship set sail at 1500 hours, en route Hudson Bay / Foxe Basin to support the construction of the Canadian / United States Distant Early Warning (DEW) Radar Line. HMCS Labrador would be required to erect navigation beacons, select and survey harbours, clear beach approaches of obstructions and escort the United States Transportation Service (MSTS) convoys, carrying the equipment and workers to construct the radar sites, through the vast frozen ice fields. Final ship's stores like signal pistols and cartridges were flown aboard HMCS Labrador by a RCN HO4S-3 "Horse" helicopter as the ship sailed out of the Halifax Harbour. Also on this date, there was seen a change in the official numbering system for the squadron aircraft. All of the large Squadron Side Numbers for the HUP and HO4S helicopters were changed from the "900" series to the new "200" series meaning, for example, that HUP-3 "947" would then become number "247" and similarly, HO4S-2 "961" would become number "221".
While RCN HUP-3 116623 (247) is in a low hover with the main wheels just clear of the deck, a crewman attempts to attach a cargo net to the helicopter’s external sling for supply crate hoist from the deck of HMCS Labrador. (DND via Bob Murray)

HMCS Labrador sailed off to Stephenville, Newfoundland (Nfld.) on 5 June. The two Bell HTL-4/6 helicopters were used to transport Captain (Capt.) O.C.S. Robertson GM, RD, CD, RCN, Commanding Officer (CO) of Labrador and USN LCdr. Fred Kelly the USN Liaison Officer to USAF Base Harmon Field located in Stephenville. The purpose was for meetings and a visit to the Base Exchange. Also four members of the ship’s company were flown to Harmon Field and given three days local leave.

On 8 June, HUP 247, flown by LCdr. Fallen and Lt. Laurie, made two flights to take Chaplain T.L. Jackson and the Supply Officer, Lt. Smith, to Harmon Field and then return to pickup Capt. Robertson, LCdr. Kelly, and the mail.

Weather precluded flying the HUP until 13 June when all pilots carried out local flying exercises and some deck landing practice while HMCS Labrador was carrying out oceanographic surveys off the coast of Greenland. A deck handling accident while moving HUP 247 damaged the cockpit’s Perspex bubble that required an “A-25” (Accident Report) action. All four pilots were again airborne in HUP 247 on 20 June, carrying out ice reconnaissance (“recce”) in the Labrador Sea and on the approaches to Hudson Strait. The strait usually remains filled with drifting ice until August when the outflow from Hudson Bay and Foxe Basin stops.
The ship was located off Cape Dorset, on the southern side of Foxe Peninsula, next to Baffin Island on 21 June. Capt. Robertson was flown ashore, by a Bell HTL, to visit the settlement of Cape Dorset. The Captain requested that the ship’s Medical Officer, Surgeon Lieutenant (Surg. Lt.) Derek Kidd, be flown ashore, as the wife of the communities’ male nurse required medical attention. In the afternoon, HUP 247, flown by LCdr. Fink was used to fly a geodetic survey team and their equipment to the southern end of Salisbury Island, at the western end of Hudson Strait. The survey team was picked up the next day.

On 23 June, HUP 247, flown by LCdr. Fink and Lt. Laurie flew Capt. Robertson, Surg. Lt. Kidd and the Chief Engine Room Artificer (CERA) to the Inuit village of Ilugivik, on the Quebec side of the west end of Hudson Strait. A twenty-year-old Inuit girl was suffering from trichinosis and required medical attention. At the same time, the CERA checked the main power generator used for communications with the outside world. Then, from 25 June to 3 July, HMCS Labrador and her helicopters operated near Coral harbour, on Southampton Island, where the Foundation Company of Montreal, the prime contractor for the eastern sector of the DEW Line, had established a temporary-staging base. The eastern sector stretched from the middle of Boothia Peninsula (Shepherd Bay) in the west, to Cape Dyer on the East Coast of Baffin Island, topographically a nightmare of precipitous mountains and rocky gorges. HUP 247 was used for ice recce, transporting personnel, carrying some navigation beacons ashore to assemble and erect, and to clear the beaches and survey sites in preparation for the arrival of the MSTS convoy. Activities then moved north into Foxe Basin for the remainder of July and the first week of August. Foxe Basin was a very hazardous area to work in, as it was a body of water where hydrographic data was scanty and the waters only crudely charted. These activities were also further aggravated by much “rafting” and “hummocking” and a carry-over of old ice from one year to the next that made this area one of very rough ice to sail through.

It was during this period that Lt. John Laurie suggested constructing the Electronic Position Indicators (EPI) navigation beacons aboard HMCS Labrador and then air lifting them ashore by the HUP. Prior to embarking the helicopter, the beacons had to be taken ashore by Landing Craft Vehicle Personnel (LCVP) to assemble on shore, a somewhat difficult and time-consuming task.

Plans were finalised for airlifting the seven tons of EPI equipment to Cape Fisher, on Southampton Island, if the LCVPs were unable to get into shore due to the ice. To support this evolution, shipwrights constructed a davit (hoist), on the forward corner of the flight deck, in order to lift the heavy gear from the quarterdeck for the planned airlift.

On 5 July, while HMCS Labrador was icebound in Foxe Basin, HUP 247, flown by LCdr. Roger Fink and Lt. John Laurie carried out practice cargo hoists with three different types of nets carrying 226.8-kilogram (500-pound) drums of water. Wire rope nets were considered unsatisfactory, so the Boatswain (Bos’n) was instructed to make six more eight-foot-square rope nets. For safety during the hoisting operations, the two Bell helicopters were landed on an adjacent ice flow.
The ship was still icebound on the morning of 6 July. An aerial ice reconnaissance was carried out and a lead was discovered about 16 kilometres (ten miles) ahead, which allowed HMCS Labrador to finally get underway about noon en route Cape Fisher to erect the EPI navigation beacon station.

HMCS Labrador was again icebound on the morning of 7 July, 56 kilometres (35 miles) east of Cape Fisher. Captain Robertson was flown ashore for the preliminary selection of an EPI site. Midmorning a US Navy Lockheed P2V Neptune flew overhead and passed on an ice reconnaissance report of Foxe Basin. The ship was underway again about noon and all helicopters were used during the afternoon in transferring personnel ashore for the final selection of the EPI site. Operation "Shotgun", the airlift of EPI equipment, was scheduled to get underway first thing in the morning.

On 8 July, flying commenced at 0800 with both of the small Bell helicopters and the HUP being used to move personnel and cargo. The first HUP sling load threatened to become unmanageable but was, in the end, successfully transported ashore. From then on everything went smoothly and by early evening the "Atwell Hut", most of the EPI station, a tide gauge and 15 personnel, including a National Film Board (NFB) crew, were airlifted ashore. The airlift could have been completed on the 6th but was delayed until the next day to allow the crew ashore to catch up on the erection of the EPI station.

The remainder of the EPI gear, fuel and food were flown to the site the next morning and, late in the afternoon, the erection crew and NFB personnel were flown back aboard. A total of 13,154-kilograms (29,000-pounds) of cargo and personnel were transported ashore in two days. HUP 247 worked very satisfactorily using the external sling; the heaviest load being 272-kilograms (600-pounds). On 10 July, the ship was enroute Cape Queen, on Baffin Island, to establish another EPI site. HMCS Labrador carried out oceanographic stations during the transit.

Operation "Shotgun II" got underway on 12 July using all of the helicopters. The complete "Atwell Hut" and part of the EPI gear was transported ashore by 1900 hours as well as sufficient personnel to start erection of the site. Flying commenced early on 13 July with the remainder of the EPI gear and part of the diesel oil supply flown ashore. Flying was secured by mid-afternoon. The airlift could have been completed but Capt. Robertson delayed transfer to the following day when the remainder of the diesel oil, spare EPI antenna and fresh provisions were flown ashore. The station was completed and functioning correctly, and all personnel back aboard by midday on 14 July. HMCS Labrador sailed enroute Hall Beach (Site 30) at the north end of Foxe Basin, 644 kilometres (400 miles) north of Coral Harbour.
HUP 247, piloted by LCdr. Ted Fallen, was flown to Hall Beach, Site 30, on 21 July, to pick up and deliver mail. The mail was very welcome, as the ship had not received any mail for three weeks. The 22nd of July was another red banner day in helicopter / icebreaker operations. The large Daymark beacons were erected on the flight deck, picked up by HUP 247 flown by LCdr. Laurie, and transported ashore where LCdr. Fink guided the placing of the beacon in its exact location. Each of these large beacons weighed approximately 340 kilograms (750-pounds) and stood 4.6 meters (15-feet) high with a triangular base of 2.4x2.4x2.4-meters (8x8x8-feet).

On the next day a planned morning flight by HUP 247 to Scarpa Lake (Site 29), on Melville Peninsula, a distance of 96.5 kilometres (60-miles), was cancelled due to adverse weather – low visibility, rain, snow and expected high winds. In the afternoon the HUP was used to bring Colonel Genshaw, USAF, OIC Military Air Lift, Eastern Section Dew Line, Mr. Loman, Senior Representative, Western Electric Company, Eastern Section Dew Line and Mr. Mullins, District Manager for the Foundation Company of Montreal aboard HMCS Labrador for a conference with Captain Robinson. Following the conference, the visitors were flown back ashore to Hall Beach later in the day.

On 26 July, HUP 247 was used to transport a Camp Supervisor from Hall Beach to Scarpa Lake where they picked up some welcome mail. Later they flew Surg. Lt. Kidd ashore to help aid a worker with suspected heart failure.

The next day, LCdr. Ted Fallen and Lt. John Laurie flew Surg. Lt. Kidd, in 247, to the Inuit village of Igloolik in search of art treasures, but found that the male members of the community were hunters and had little time for works of art. Doctor Kidd held sick parade and found the inhabitants in reasonably good health. On the return flight, Father Fornier, a Catholic Priest was flown to Hall Beach. HUP 247 was used on 29 July to airlift a drum of aircraft engine oil to the Foundation Company at Hall Beach for onward delivery to Keith Bay (Site 27), to repair a grounded Noorduyn Norseman.

During the ship’s return to Coral Harbour, a new system was instituted wherein the First Officer-of-the Watch (OOW) and, when it was convenient, both OOWs flew an ice recce just prior to taking over their watch to give them a feel for the ice conditions in the area. LCdr. Fink and Lt. Laurie made cargo transfers, using HUP 247, to the EPI stations on Wildbird Islands on 3 August and Cape Fisher on the 6th of August. Ten barrels of fuel and about 680 kilograms (1500-pounds) of provisions were airlifted to Cape Fisher. On completion, the HUP commenced its first shipborne minor inspection.

On 8 August, Bell HTL-4 serial 200, flown by LCdr. Fallon with CPO Lew Turner as crew and HTL-4 serial 202 flown by Lt. Laurie with Surg. Kidd aboard were deployed to Coral Harbour to search for a lost American soldier. Apparently the soldier, who had too much to drink, got lost when he went for a walk on the tundra. He was located at about ten o’clock in the evening, a little worse for wear but very happy to have been found.

The ship arrived in Coral Harbour mid-afternoon of 13 August to collect mail and embark passengers prior to a rendezvous with a USN convoy in Evans Strait, south-east of Coral Harbour between Southampton and Coats Islands. HMCS Labrador, accompanied by the USN icebreaker USS Edisto (AGB 2), commenced the convoy through Foxe Basin en route Hall Beach. The convoy was formed in two columns, HMCS Labrador leading one column and the USS Edisto the other, to allow for manoeuvring room in the scattered ice. The HTL-4 helicopters were used for ice recce, mail and personnel transfers between ships as they fought their way north through the pack ice. The 440 nautical mile voyage took seven days. During one 24-hour period the convoy only made good 12.8 kilometres (8 miles).
The minor inspection on HUP 247 was completed on 18 August when the helicopter was test flown and found to be serviceable. The convoy arrived at Hall Beach on 21 August, where the ship anchored for the first time since leaving Halifax. HUP 247 was then flown ashore for the mail. The remainder of the month was spent off-loading stores and building materials to construct the main radar station at Hall Beach.

All of the helicopters were used to transfer personnel, equipment and the mail to and from Hall Beach. The Bell helicopters were experiencing starting difficulties, so they were fitted with partial winter cowlings and a "Herman Nelson" heater was used prior to the first start each morning.

On 31 August, LCdr. Fallen flew three senior United States Military Officers, Rear Admiral Redfield Mason, General Voorhees and Captain Pryce from Hall Beach to the ship to meet with Capt. Robertson. The visitors were flown back ashore the following day.

During the month of September, HUP 247 was used extensively to transfer personnel, equipment and mail between the ship and Hall Beach, Rowley Island (Site 31), and Longstaff Bluff (Site 33) on Baffin Island. On 1 September the HUP was flown to Rowley Island with a "Herman Nelson" heater to start the Bell HTL-4/6 serial 200 which had been grounded by fog since 28 August, and would not start. Excessive heat from the "Herman Nelson" then caused a crack and some distortion of the Perspex bubble on the Bell serial number 200.

The HUP was used to good advantage on 5 September while working with a beach survey party erecting beacons on rugged terrain near Longstaff Bluff. HMCS Labrador then departed from Longstaff Bluff early on the 6th of September to rendezvous with the USS Rushmore, Dock Landing Ship (LSD-14) and the MSTS cargo vessel Lt. George W. G. Boyce (T-AK 251) to escort them to Longstaff Bluff. The HUP failed to start on 7 September possibly due to a sticking primer solenoid and was still unserviceable the next day after the installation of a new solenoid. A fault was subsequently discovered in the primer switch wiring and this problem was easily repaired. The HUP was used later in the day to erect some Daymark beacons on a high bluff.

On 13 September, Lt. Cdr. Laurie with crewman PO Youl flew HUP 247 to 1524 meters (5000 feet) to photograph the Rowley Island site. Then HMCS Labrador rendezvoused with the Surveying Ship USS Pursuit (AGS 17), USS Thurban (AKA 19), MSTS cargo vessel and aircraft ferry Lt. James E. Robinson (T-AKV 3), and the USS Lindenwald (LSD 6) to lead them through Frozen Strait to Repulse Bay. HUP 247 was used to transfer nautical charts to all of the ships in the convoy. On 22 September, John Laurie, this time with crewman A.B. Smith, airlifted Inspector McNeil, RCMP, and two army patients requiring medical assistance, to Coral Harbour for air evacuation south.

LCdr. Bill Maxwell, the ship’s Air Engineer Officer, CPO Lew Turner and LS Gerry Brooker were sent to the USS Pursuit on 25 September to work on a USAF Grumman SA-16 Albatross amphibious aircraft that had experienced propeller trouble. An LCVP towed the disabled Albatross to the Labrador where it was secured astern. However, the seas were too rough to continue trouble shooting. Foul weather continued the next day cancelling beacon transfers by the HUP and further trouble shooting on the Albatross. Later in the day, the Grumman aircraft was towed to the USS Rushmore, where it was hoisted aboard for transport back to the United States.
HMCS Labrador departed Frozen Strait on 28 September en route Hall Beach. Weather in Foxe Basin deteriorated with winds to 60 knots causing the ship to roll heavily. The flight deck crew was required to keep watch during the night to check on helicopter security. The ship arrived at the northern end of Foxe Basin on 1 October and anchored off Bray Island (Site 32) to conduct further surveys of Rowley and Bray Islands and Longstaff Bluff. The helicopters proved of great value on the survey of Longstaff Bluff as the rough terrain would have made this survey formidable with any other means of transport.

On 5 October, LCdr. Laurie flying HUP 247 flew a total of 20 personnel on sightseeing flights to Longstaff Bluff. Personnel transfers were carried out with HUP 247 on the 3, 5 and 9 of October to Brey Island and Longstaff Bluff by LCdr. Fallen, LCdr. Fink and Lt. Frayn. On 16 October, LCdr. Laurie used HUP 247 to airlift navigation beacons from HMCS Labrador to Rowley Island.

Captain Robertson was suddenly taken ill during the night of 27/28 October, suffering from a perforated ulcer. The decision was made to medevac the Captain. The ship then proceeded towards Coral Harbour at full speed. On 29 October, HUP 247, flown by LCdr. Fallen with Surg. Lt. Kidd, airlifted Capt. Robertson to Coral Harbour from where he was then flown south by a RCAF Search and Rescue Douglas DC-3 Dakota to a hospital in Montreal, Quebec for emergency surgery. Cdr. Leeming, CD RCN assumed command of HMCS Labrador for the remainder of the deployment.

HMCS Labrador departed Hudson Bay on 1 November and commenced survey operations in Hudson Strait near Diggles Island. The following morning it was planned to fly the two Bells into the settlement of Ivujivik but high winds, rain and low ceilings curtailed Bell flying until later. The ship entered Ivujivik Harbour where Surg. Lt. Kidd was taken ashore by LCVP to medically examine and treat some of the local inhabitants.

On 5 November, both of the Bell helicopters were flown to Cape Dorset with Surg. Lt. Kidd to examine and treat, as required, the Inuit Community. Bad weather continued until the survey and oceanographic commitment in Hudson Strait was completed. The ship re-entered Hudson Strait for a medical emergency at Lake Harbour. The ship arrived just 32 kilometres (20 miles) off Lake Harbour on the morning of 9 November and Surg. Lt. Kidd was flown ashore by one of the Bells to examine a RCMP Corporal. Bell 247 was not flown until 15 November when LCdr. Laurie with crewman LS Gerry Brooker and Surg. Lt. Kidd airlifted PO Robinson to USAF Base Harmon Field, in Stephenville, Newfoundland. PO Robinson was later flown to the Royal Canadian Naval Hospital (RCNH) in Halifax via a RCAF Consolidated Canso.

On 16 November, LCdr. Fallen flew two trips in HUP 247 to Stephenville, one of them to pick up Rear Admiral (RAdm) R.E.S. Bidwell, CBE, Cd, RCN, Flag Officer Atlantic Coast (FOAC) who was paying an official visit to HMCS Labrador. HUP 247 and the two Bell HTL-4s were flown ashore to HMCS Shearwater on 21 November terminating an operation of five and three-quarter months to Foxe Basin in support of the building of the DEW Line.

**Search and Rescue Duties – Summerside PEI**

On 11 November, Lt. R.T. (Bob) Murray, OIC of HU-21 Detachment 3, with crewman PO Joe Carver flew HUP 247 to RCAF Station Summerside (Naval Air Facility (NAF) Summerside) where the Support Air Group was based. The detachment was sent to provide Search and Rescue (SAR) and utility duties for the aircraft and personnel deployed there. During the next nine days, HUP 247 was used for local familiarization flights and dry hoisting exercises for aircrew of VS 800 Squadron. On 21 December HUP 247 was flown back to HMCS Shearwater for the Christmas season.
HUP 247 Operations - 1956
Search and Rescue Duties - Summerside PEI
On 2 January 1956, Lt. Bob Murray again flew HUP 247 to Summerside with crewman PO Joe Carver and A.B. Smith for SAR duties. HUP 247 was used to replace the rotating beacon atop the Summerside Tower on 3 January. During the next week a severe ice storm struck Prince Edward Island knocking out all power and heat causing the base to be closed down and the majority of personnel were sent on leave.

On 10, 11, and 12 January, Lt. Murray with Lt. Gerry Maloney and AB Smith as crew carried out a survey of the storm damage and checked homes north and south of the airfield. Also, on the 12th the rotating beacon was again removed from the tower for repair. On completion, HUP 247 was declared unserviceable when the Dzus fasteners holding one side of the engine shroud disengaged allowing it to ride up on the tubular main rotor drive shaft wearing it through. Another few seconds of flight and the main rotor drive shaft would have parted causing the forward rotor blades to disengage and be out of phase with the aft rotor blades allowing them to strike each other with catastrophic results. A new main rotor drive shaft was flown from Shearwater to Summerside, installed, and HUP 247 was again serviceable on 16 January when local familiarization flights were given to a number of RCAF air crew.

The HUP was flown back to Shearwater on 20 January where it was used for pilot training and some utility functions. On that same day, HUP 247, piloted by LCdr. Fink airlifted a seaman from the RCN frigate HMCS Lauzon (FFE 322) to the RCN Hospital at HMCS Stadacona in Halifax.

LCdr. Laurie flew HUP 247 to RCAF Station Summerside on 5 March for SAR and utility duties. When the Summerside Naval Air Facility closed in mid-March, HUP 247 was flown back to HU-21 Squadron at HMCS Shearwater and there it remained for the rest of the year employed in pilot training and utility roles.

HUP 247 Operations - 1957
HMCS Labrador - Self Work Period - Jamaica
On 3 January, HU-21 Detachment Two / Labrador was formed at HMCS Shearwater. The Detachment consisted of Lt. Bob Murray, OIC, P1AT4 Abbie Brownell, LSEM George Koch, LSAT "Kipper" Stevenson, LS Rice, AB Ackerman and HUP-3 number 247. The HUP was flown aboard on 4 January and, on 7 January, the ship sailed for Montego Bay, Jamaica, for a short self work period and to paint the ship under more favourable weather conditions than those found in Halifax.

While transiting through the Bermuda area, HMCS Labrador encountered a severe storm causing the ship to roll through 105-degrees. The Detachment crew was employed around the clock ensuring that the helicopter tie-downs were secure and that HUP 247 was riding comfortably.

The ship arrived in Montego Bay, Jamaica on 15 January. HUP 247 was then flown ashore to the Montego Bay Airport initially to establish radio communications between the ship and the airfield. Later each morning, HUP 247 was flown ashore to the airport to keep it from being covered with a white mist being blown around from the paint rollers being used aboard ship. While in Montego Bay, the Airport Manager requested that HUP 247 be made available to support their off-field SAR organization as they only had one small outboard motor boat in the lagoon alongside the main runway and nothing for use in the open ocean. This was accommodated as a goodwill gesture.

On 23 January, HUP 247 airlifted Surg. LCdr. Don "Mac the Knife" MacIvor and a seaman suffering from an inflamed appendix to hospital in Montego Bay. The seaman was flown back aboard HMCS Labrador on 25 January for recovery and repatriation to Canada.
The return voyage was relatively uneventful except for a damaged main rotor blade that had to be replaced on HUP 247. On 28 January, while folding the main rotor blades, a gust of wind caught a blade causing it to be forced into the center blade rack, thereby punching a hole in the blade. The incident report stated that the airframe had suffered "D" Cat. and the engine sustained "E" Cat. damages.

**HMCS Labrador – Gulf of St. Lawrence**

The Detachment was again formed on 19 February with LCdr. Hal Walsh as the OIC. Three helicopters, HUP 247 and the two Bell HTL’s, were flown aboard to be used for some survey operations in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and along the St. Lawrence River. Three other pilots and nine maintenance personnel were included in the Detachment. LCdr. Bruce Vibert and Lt. Dave Oliphant, two of the pilots selected for the 1957 Arctic Summer Cruise, completed flight deck checkouts on the HUP and the HTL-4, then carried out some ice reconnaissance and personnel transfer exercises.

From the ship’s unique vantage point, HUP-3 247 and the two RCN Bell 47 HTL helicopters deployed from HMCS Labrador are seen flying here in a loose formation past a large iceberg adrift in the Labrador Sea. (Photo via Bob Murray Collection)

On 22 February, when near St. Paul Island, Lt. John Angus “MacBagpipes” MacNeil, flying HUP 247, transported A.B. Weeds to the Sydney Airport, for compassion leave. On 28 February, when in the St. Lawrence River, Lt. MacNeil with crewmen P1AT4 John Hughes and L.S. “Kipper” Stevens made two personnel transfers to Ancienne Lorette, located west of Quebec City, the site of No. 8 Air Observer School (AOS) during the Second World War. All of the helicopters were flown ashore to HU-21 at HMCS Shearwater on 4 March.

**HMCS Labrador – European Cruise**

HU-21 / Det. 2 / Labrador was reformed on 1 March consisting of two pilots, Lt. Bob Murray, OIC and Lt. Larry Zbitnew, five maintenance men, P1AT4 Abbie Brownell, P1AT4 John Hughes, LSEA George Koch, LSRA Ken Cann and ABAF Gord Patterson and two helicopters, HUP-3 247 and Bell HTL serial 200. The helicopters were flown aboard HMCS Labrador on 8 March and the ship sailed for a “show the flagship” cruise to England, Norway and Denmark.

On 19 March, HUP 247 flown by Lt. Bob Murray was used to transport Cdr. C.A. Law, the ship’s Executive Officer, to Plymouth, to visit Canada’s newest aircraft carrier HMCS Bonaventure, (CVL 22) which was preparing for flying trials in the English Channel. HMCS Labrador arrived in Portsmouth, England on 18 March for a 12-day visit. Both helicopters were used to transfer personnel from the ship to various Royal Navy (RN) Shore Establishments and RN Air Stations (RNAS) around Portsmouth.
Then on 29 March, HUP 247 flown by Lt. Bob Murray was scrambled to help in the search for the pilots of two Westland Wyvern aircraft missing from RNAS Thorney Island. Thick fog prevented the HUP from reaching the search area so the mission was aborted and the helicopter was returned to the icebreaker.

![A Royal Navy Westland Wyvern strike fighter with an aerodynamic fuel tank shape under each wing. (Bill Upton Collection)](image)

The wreckage of the two Wyverns, which had been involved in a mid-air collision, was located later in the day and the search was called off. At noon, Captain T.C. Pullen, Commanding Officer (CO) of HMCS Labrador was flown to HMCS Bonaventure for lunch and a tour with her CO, Captain H.V.W. Gross.

The ship then sailed for Oslo, Norway and Copenhagen, Denmark on 30 March. While in Oslo, HUP 247 was the “star of the show” at a party given by the ship’s company, attended by children from a local orphanage. The children were dressed in flying helmets and “Mae West’s” and given a turn sitting in the cockpit and handling the flying controls. A good time was had by all.

Captain Pullen and the Canadian Ambassador to Denmark used HUP 247 for a “birds eye” view of Oslo and Copenhagen on 11 and 12 of April. On 13 April, Lt. Zbitnew flew HUP 247 to the Royal Danish Air Base Værløse to view their helicopter training programme. The ship then departed for Portsmouth, England and on to Halifax via the Kiel Canal on 14 April.

During the morning of 18 April, Lt. Murray with crewman P1AT4 Brownell flew HUP 247 to HMS Vernon, in Portsmouth, to pick-up Dr. C.W.H. Smithinbank for a return passage to Halifax.

On 22/23 April, HUP 247 was at “standby alert” to transfer a sick seaman from the USCG Cutter Mackina, but due to wind and rough seas that was not accomplished. On return to Halifax, Lt. Murray flew HUP 247 ashore to HU-21 at HMCS Shearwater where the helicopter remained until 21 June.
Crossing the Atlantic Ocean during April 1957 obviously had its ups and downs! (Photos page via Bob Murray scrapbook)

HMCS Labrador – 1957 Arctic Summer Cruise

HU-21 Detachment 2 to HMCS Labrador was formed on 20 June consisting of three pilots; LCdr. Bruce Vibert, DSC, OIC, Lt. Larry Zbitnew and Lt. Dave Oliphant. Also included were seven maintenance personnel; P1ATA John Hughes, P2EA George Koch, P2RA Ken Cann, LSAR Gil Turgeon, LSAR Carl Snelgrove, ABAF Gord Patterson, ABAF Laval Gagnon under the supervision of C2ATA Joe Malone and three helicopters, HUP-3 247, Bells HTL-4 202 and HTL-6 205.

The three helicopters were flown aboard HMCS Labrador on 21 June and the ship sailed for Arctic operations four days later on 25 June. The objectives associated with the 1957 summer Arctic operations would be to:
- escort merchant ships supplying the DEW Line sites;
- survey harbours and clear beach approaches;
- conduct oceanographic, hydrographic and other scientific research; and
- investigate the possibility of a "Northwest Passage" for large ships.

Early on 27 June the ship arrived in St. John's, Newfoundland to pick-up a party of American naval personnel, which included Cdr. Focht USN and CPO MacDonald USN, assigned to the ship for public relations duties. HMCS Labrador sailed from St. John's midday on 27 June enroute Hamilton Inlet for a rendezvous with the USN Icebreaker, USS Edisto AG 89, to transfer a USN Public Information Team.
On 29 June, HUP 247, flown by Lt. Larry Zbitnew with the ship's meteorologist LCdr. Bill Markham carried out ice recce flights to locate a safe passage through the ice, into Hamilton Inlet, for the USNS tankers Kankakee and Memphis. The HUP also made five flights to USS Edisto to transfer personnel, equipment and to collect radio crystals so the ships could communicate with each other.

HMCS Labrador turned south to operate off La Soie and St. Anthony's, Newfoundland, where HUP 247 was used to transfer personnel ashore. On 4 July, the ship departed St. Anthony's enroute Foxe Harbour, Spotted Island and Cartwright, Labrador. HUP 247 and both of the Bell helicopters were employed transferring the ship's diving team, hydrographers and a photographer into Cartwright.

On 12 July, the ship arrived off Yellow Beach on Resolution Island to disembark the two Bells, two pilots and four maintenance men to assist in hydrographic operations from the USAF radar station at Cape Warwick. Due to inclement weather the Bells were stowed temporarily at Yellow Beach until they could be flown up to the radar station. The six detachment personnel moved into quarters at the radar base where they settled into the station routine. In the meantime, HMCS Labrador sailed for Greenland, in fog, with LCdr. Bruce Vibert and HUP 247, which was undergoing a routine maintenance inspection.

After two days of intensive flying from 0400 until 1930 hours, hydrographic operations had been completed on the southern end of the island and the North Channel. Later in the evening the USAF authorities requested assistance to search for a missing airman. Both of the Bells were employed on the search that continued on into the next day. Lt. Oliphant finally sighted the body of the airman located about 61 meters (200-feet) from the bottom of a precipice over which he had fallen. An unsuccessful recovery attempt was made by boat, but had to be assisted by Lt. Oliphant, in one of the Bell helicopters, using a hand line to move the body down the slope and through the water to the waiting boat.

The ship arrived in Narssasuaq, Greenland on 15 July to embark Mr. and Mrs. Feaver, the Canadian Ambassador to Denmark, Professor and Mrs. Niels Bohr, and others for passage to Godthab. HUP 247, piloted by LCdr. Vibert, flew 48 kilometres (30 miles) to Narssasuaq (Bluey West 1) with the mail.
HMCS Labrador sailed on 19 July for Resolution Island, off the southern peninsula of Baffin Island at the entrance to Frobisher Bay and encountered very rough seas in Davis Strait that prevented flying for the next three days. On 22 July, HUP 247 was flown ashore by LCdr. Vibert to the Resolution Island site where it became fogged in for several hours. The fog lifted sufficiently in the late afternoon to allow all helicopters to be flown aboard. Personnel and equipment involved in the hydrographic operations were returned by LCVP and the ship sailed for New Harbour on Baffin Island.

On 23 July, HUP 247 was used for an ice survey in the forenoon and, in the afternoon, three external sling loads of stores and equipment was transferred in New Harbour. On completion, HUP 247 was declared unserviceable for a problem with the rigging.

"Hells Bells" The Loss of Bells RCN 202 and 205
Bells 202 and 205 were airborne at noon on 26 July for hydrographic work in York Sound, Frobisher Bay. Both of the small Bell helicopters crashed in severe turbulence atop Peter Point, a 732 meter (2400 foot) mountain adjacent to the 829 meter (2719 foot) high Grinnell Glacier.

Bell 202 had attempted a landing atop the high mountain and the pilot stated that upon closing the throttle for an autorotation and landing flare, the engine stopped completely. The helicopter landed heavily and rolled over onto the passenger side, sustaining "A" Cat. damages. During a rescue attempt for the crashed Bell 202, the pilot of the rescue Bell 205 helicopter successfully landed atop the mountain peak next to the wreck of 202. The tail rotor was damaged on lifting off caused by a gusting downdraft, and the airframe sustained "D" Cat. damages and the engine suffered "E" Cat. damages. The accident stranded the two pilots, LCdr. Vibert in Bell 202 and Lt. Zbitnew in Bell 205 with two civilian hydrographers, Sidney van Dyck and Stuart Dunbrack. HUP 247 was deployed from HMCS Labrador to perform a recce over the crash site area, however strong winds prevented a rescue at this time, so HUP 247, piloted by Lt. Oliphant, dropped food and water to the survivors. Both of the crews were eventually rescued the next morning also by Lt. Oliphant in the HUP.

Maintenance work on HUP 247, the only available rescue helicopter in the area, was completed. Once HUP 247 was buttoned up, a test flight and recce flights over the crash site by Lt. Oliphant was quickly arranged. Strong winds during the afternoon prevented further rescue attempts, but, by evening, the winds had subsided. This allowed Lt. Oliphant with crewman LSRA Ken Cann to make another flight over the area to drop food and water to the survivors of the two crashed helicopters.
Early the next morning, at 0430 hours, another food and water drop was made by Lt. Oliphant. A call from the mountain at 0730 reported the winds and turbulence had decreased and that the conditions were ideal for a rescue attempt. HUP 247, flown by Lt. Oliphant, completed a successful pick-up of the crews and had them safely back aboard by 0830. The two Bells and several pieces of equipment were left atop Peter Point when Labrador departed York Sound for Frobisher Bay (now known as Iqualuit).

(Note: A first hand description of events by the survivors is included within at Appendix “A”)

HUP 247, flown by Lt. Oliphant was used on 28 July to transport Commodore H.L. Quinn, DSC, CD, RCN ashore to Frobisher Bay and pick-up the mail. Also, Major Van Dore, USAF, Commanding Officer of the Resolution Island Radar Site was flown aboard for passage to his home base.

On 30 July, HMCS Labrador arrived at Brevoort Island to assist the icebreaker USS Edisto, the MSTS cargo vessel USNS Lieut. James E. Robinson, T-AKV-3, two dock landing ships (LSD) the USS San Marcos, LSD 25 and USS Rushmore LSD 14 in DEW Line re-supply operations.

The HUP started flying on arrival at Brevoort Island but soon returned onboard with a severe one-to-one vibration accompanied by a 6.8 kg. (15-pound) loss in aft transmission oil pressure. Investigation by the Detachment CPO found metal particles in the main transmission oil sump. The OIC ordered the transmission fluid drained and refilled with fresh oil. On completion of this task, the helicopter was test flown, including an auto-rotation and, on landing, the fluid was again checked and found to contain larger metal particles than before. The aircraft was declared unserviceable and AOG (Aircraft On Ground) until a replacement transmission could be obtained. LCdr. Vibert took the jar containing the metal particles to the bridge to inform the Captain that his last helicopter was unserviceable and could not fly until a replacement transmission could be obtained. The loss of all helicopters so early in the cruise could have disastrous repercussions on future operations further north i.e; in Bellot Strait.

The Captain went out onto the bridge wing to assess the situation. On his return, he stated that he did not believe LCdr. Vibert and would have LCdr. Les Brown, the Senior Engineer, investigate. LCdr. Vibert retired to his cabin to “consider his position”; he returned to the bridge and informed the Captain that “since he (The Captain) did not appear to have confidence in him he should be relieved as OIC of the Detachment. The Captain accepted his request, effective the 3rd of August, and appointed Lt. Dave Oliphant as acting OIC until a replacement arrived onboard.

In accordance with a direct order, HUP 247 was run up with rotors engaged on 3 August. Inspection after shutdown revealed larger metal particles in the sump than previously noted.

HMCS Labrador proceeded to sea in company with the USS Rushmore and the petrol carrier, USS Nodaway. Once clear of the ice, the USS Rushmore transferred, by a highline, fifteen pairs of climbing boots to be used in Operation “Hell’s Bells”, the attempt to salvage the two crashed Bells scattered atop Peter Point.

The ship arrived back at York Sound on 5 August and landed a party of 18 men under the command of Cdr. Law, to commence Operation “Hell’s Bells”. The ship then set sail to rendezvous with the US Coast Guard icebreaker USS Eastwind, WAGB 279. This meeting had been arranged to transfer HUP-3 246 (US serial No. 51-16622), which Eastwind had picked up in Halifax, and a USN HTL-5 helicopter, serial number 129966, on loan from the US Navy for the summer operations, along with 454 kg. (1000 lbs.) of stores. The HTL-5 was returned to the US Navy on 30 September, it being assigned to the USS Edisto.
On 9 August, HMCS Labrador returned to York Sound to embark all but three of the members of the “Hell’s Bells” salvage party. The party managed to get within a few hundred feet of the summit but were turned back by poor visibility. Commissioned Officer Art Brevic, CPO Martin and LSAR Carl Snelgrove remained ashore to attempt another climb later.

HMCS Labrador returned to Frobisher Bay on 14 August to embark fresh vegetables, stores, mail, the new transmission for HUP 247 which arrived by air freight and the members of a Board of Inquiry convened to investigate the crash of the two HTL’s. Lt. Bob Murray also arrived by air to replace LCdr. Vibert who had been appointed to HU-21 at RCNAS shearwater. In addition, 30 USAF personnel and their baggage were embarked for passage to Resolution Island.

Early on 15 August, the icebreaker departed Frobisher Bay enroute Resolution Island, via York Sound to pick-up the three remaining members of the “Hell’s Bells” salvage party, their equipment and their helmets, sun glasses and shotguns that they recovered from the crash site. Also, the Board of Inquiry into the loss of the two helicopters commenced their deliberations. HMCS Labrador continued on to Resolution Island where the 30 USAF personnel were taken ashore by LCVP. On completion, the ship set sail for Resolute Bay, on Cornwallis Island, in Barrow Strait.

Two days later the ship crossed the Arctic Circle and paid homage to His Majesty King Neptune (by the grace of mythology Lord of the Waters, Sovereign of all the oceans, Governor and Lord High Admiral of the Bath – to give his traditional titles). All “tadpoles” (the uninitiated members of the crew) were summoned to appear before his court and were duly initiated into the “Mystic Rites of the Freedom of the Seas, according to the Ancient Customs of King Neptune and his Watery Realm”.

The tadpoles aboard HMCS Labrador are seen dressed for the very regal occasion during the crossing the Arctic Circle Line ceremony. A tadpole is seen being presented to His Majesty King Neptune, visible at the lower left of the image, who is sporting a thick white beard, a cape and his crown duly annotated with the title “Nippy IV”. (Photo via Bob Murray Collection)

The Air Department, dressed in Arabian costume, carried the OIC, in a sedan chair, to Neptune’s Court where the Royal Physicians and Barbers washed the dust of temperate climes from our heads and prepared the group prior to being presented to King Neptune for initiation.

On 22 August, Operation “Bellot” commenced. Both HUPs were employed on the hydrographic operations and transferring personnel ashore to open the uninhabited Hudson Bay Company (HBC) trading post buildings at Fort Ross. The fort was named after the explorer Sir John Ross and was an HBC post until it was abandoned in 1948 in favour of Spence Bay, located about 150 nautical miles to the south. The two wooden buildings, in remarkably good condition, were re-opened and occupied by a local “tide watching party” in order to record the rise and fall of the tide.
A cook, P2CK Joe Edison, and three members of the air department constituted the "tide watching party". Because of the strong current and the real possibility that the ship could be pushed onto "Magpie Rock", at the eastern end of Bellot Strait, it was deemed prudent to establish a camp at Fort Ross with sufficient provisions and shelter to accommodate the ship's company.

"POGO", the ship's hydrographic tender, completed sounding lines of Bellot Strait and the hydrographers, using the HUPs, finished setting up the leading marks in preparation for our first transit through the Strait. When the ship got underway, one of the HUP helicopters was detailed to hover above "Magpie Rock", our greatest hazard at the eastern end, acting as a position marker. After we cleared "Magpie", the HUPs were used for ice reconnaissance, photography and to check on the tide watching party that was camping in tents, at the western part of the strait. Once we had completed the passage and while cruising down Franklin Strait, HUP 246 commenced a standard 50-hour service maintenance inspection.

Unfortunately, fire destroyed the "watching camp" on 26 August. HUP 247 was dispatched with tents and provisions to re-establish the camp. Late in the evening the ship sailed for Resolute Bay.
The next day, HUP 247 was used to fly Captain Pullen on a survey of Fury Beach where the remains of HMS Fury, abandoned near this beach in July 1825, were found. When abandoned, much of its stores and three boats were cached on the beach. HMS Fury was one of the ships of Captain W.E. Parry’s third “Voyage of Discovery”. Scattered around the beach were tin cans, which probably had contained pemmican (dried meat), lengths of eight-inch cable laid hawser, nails, each stamped with the military broad arrow, anchors and cannon. The Captain noted what was there and planned to return and collect some of the artifacts for the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, in Halifax. HMCS Labrador arrived in Resolute Bay on the evening of 28 August.

Early the next morning the ship departed Resolute Bay and proceeded down Peel Sound battling heavy ice and arrived at the western end of Bellot Strait on 31 August. The weather in the area was foul, 91.4 meters (300 feet) overcast with rain. HUP 247 was employed checking on tide watching camps at both ends of the strait, hydrographic and beacon party support. Fog and zero visibility prevented the HUP returning to the ship so had to call on the ship / LCVP for help. The LCVP was sent ashore; the helicopter would hover over it then it would make a radar-controlled approach to the stern of HMCS Labrador where the helicopter would land-on.

On 1 September, the ship moved to the eastern end of Bellot Strait. The HUPs were used towards setting up leading marks for hydrography and transferring Padre George “Dinger” Bell to Fort Ross to conduct church services. Lt. Larry Zibitnew, flying HUP 247 on a photographic mission, found some strange rock piles near Bell Island. These were later investigated by Cdr. C.A. Law, and found to be Inuit cairns.

HMCS Labrador proceeded south in Franklin Strait on 3 September to rendezvous with the US Coast Guard Ice Patrol Tender Storis Wag 38 and the Buoy Tenders Spar W403 and Bramble W392 and escort them through Bellot Strait. These Coast Guard ships were enroute from California to Massachusetts and were the first US ships to transit the Northwest Passage.

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HMCS Labrador is leading the US Coast Guard ships in line astern formation through Bellot Strait. (Bob Murray Collection)
Both HUPs were employed carrying out oceanography and hydrography tasks on 4 and 5 September. HUP 246, flown by Lt. Dave Oliphant failed to start after being shut down at Fort Ross. Due to the nature of the defect, the starter drive shaft had sheared inside the engine casing; the engine had to be changed. The 726-kilogram (1600-pound) spare engine, which was carried as part of the aviation stores, was brought ashore by LCVP and manhandled up the beach to the helicopter. A makeshift crane with shear legs, made from some 4"x4" and 2"x12" shoring material and a heavy-duty chain block, brought from the ship, was erected by Lt. R.E. Dorkin, the ship’s Bo’s’n, with the support of the Shipwright and a Boatswain’s crew.

A small maintenance crew consisting of P1AT4 John Hughes, P2EA George Koch, ABAF Gordon Patterson, ABAF Laval Gagnon under the supervision of LCdr. Les Brown, HMCS Labrador’s Air Engineer Officer, was brought ashore to change the engine. As there was no shelter from the freezing rain and wind on the beach, a tarpaulin was erected over the engine bay and a Herman Nelson was brought ashore to provide a measure of warmth for the crew working on the engine. Captain Pullen was flown ashore on 6 September to place a message in a cairn that was erected to commemorate the engine change.

The engine change was completed in four days under very trying weather conditions. HUP 246 was then test flown by Lt. Bob Murray on 10 September. During the period of the engine change, HMCS Labrador departed the area and sailed down the Gulf of Boothia to Thorn Bay where Lt. Zbitnew flew Captain Pullen, in HUP 247, into the settlement of Victoria Harbour for a visit. HMCS Labrador returned to Bellot Strait / Fort Ross on 10 September where Lt. Murray flew the repaired HUP 246 back onboard safely. The unserviceable engine, detachment personnel and equipment were returned by LCVP.

On 11 September, HUP 247 was airborne early in the morning to complete the hydrographic survey of Bellot Strait and have it tied into the Shoran Station. The ship proceeded through Bellot Strait enroute Resolute bay via Peel Sound. On arrival in Resolute a HUP was flown ashore to pick-up the mail which had arrived there on 30 August. HMCS Labrador then commenced hydrographic operations between Griffith and Cornwallis Islands on 12 September. A HUP flew Padre Bell into Resolute to conduct church services for the community and Lt. Zbitnew was flown ashore to catch air transportation back to HMCS Shearwater. Later in the evening a HUP was used to pick-up 136 kgs. (300-lbs) of very welcome mail.

From 13 to 16 September inclusive there was no flying due to poor weather. The ship proceeded up Wellington Channel, between Cornwallis and Devon Islands, carrying out hydrographic operations. HMCS Labrador arrived off Beechy Island on 17 September. Both of the HUPs were employed during the morning carrying out hydrography and transporting personnel ashore to inspect the wood cairn, which had been erected there the previous year.
HUP 247 was used to fly Captain Pullen ashore to search for cairns and to record the size of the existing musk-ox herd living on the snow and ice-covered Devon Island. The small herd of animals that was eventually spotted and photographed from the air consisted simply of just four adults and five juveniles.

![Image of musk-ox herd](image)

This herd of musk-ox is on the move for a good reason. (Bob Murray Collection)

The ship departed Beechey Island enroute Fury Beach to recover some of the artifacts from the sinking of HMS *Fury*. However, the weather was unsuitable at Fury Beach so the ship returned to Lancaster Sound for some additional oceanography operations.

On 19 September, HMCS *Labrador* returned to Fury Beach to try and salvage some of the artifacts and small items that were strewn about the beach. Lt. Oliphant, flying HUP 247, using its external sling, air lifted two anchors to the flight deck of the ship but was unable to lift a cannonade or a third large anchor. A steel wire rope, which was laid across a long stretch of the beach, was also unable to retrieve the cannonade or the anchor. The two salvaged anchors and a length of cable-laid hawser, suitably mounted, were presented to the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, in Halifax, where they were put on public display.

HMCS *Labrador* departed Prince Regent Islet enroute Arctic Bay, in Admiralty Inlet on Baffin Island. On arrival, on 21 September, it was found that the new DOT operator of the Radio and Meteorological Station was unfamiliar with the electric generating equipment and was unable to run it. Engineering and electrical personnel were sent ashore to repair the generator and to instruct the operator on how to keep it running. A HUP was used as a radio link between ship and shore while the repairs were underway. On completion of these tasks the ship then sailed for Pond Inlet to check on that community. Strong winds curtailed flying operations so all activity was conducted by LCVP.

Strong winds and snow continued on 23 September. The ship conducted oceanography in the eastern approaches to Lancaster Sound while enroute Craig Harbour on Ellesmere Island. The settlement was missed on the first approach as it was hidden behind a huge iceberg and shrouded in thick fog. HMCS *Labrador* continued up Grise Ford searching for the community. Not finding it, the ship commenced a return to Jones Sound when the settlement was finally sighted. After checking on the inhabitants and finding that "alls well", the ship sailed for Thule, Greenland.

Both HUP helicopters were flown into Thule from a position about 20 nautical miles west of Parry Point. Although the flight plans were filed in accordance with published rules they failed to be communicated to Thule, at that time a United States Air Force Strategic Air Command (SAC) base.
On landing at Thule we were surrounded by Military Police, who were definitely not happy, and placed under close guard in the windowless operations center until the flight plan problem was sorted out. The HUPs were flown back to HMCS Labrador and no further flying was allowed while the ship was in port.

The ship departed Thule and proceeded south in Baffin Bay enroute Clyde Inlet. There were no flying operations held between 26 and 28 September, so a minor inspection was commenced on HUP 246 on 27 September. HUP 247, flown by Lt. Oliphant, was used on 29 September for ship to shore transfers and to exchange RCMP personnel between Clyde Inlet and Cape Christian outposts.

On 30 September, HMCS Labrador made rendezvous with USS Edisto, at Cape Hooper, to return the HTL-5 helicopter, US Navy serial number 129966, which had been borrowed from the USN when the two Bells were lost on Peter Point in July. Very little use was made of this helicopter as it suffered from continual engine problems during the time it was on loan.

HUP 247 made two flights, on 1 October, between the ship and the radar station at Cape Dyer to transfer personnel and collect mail. Marginal weather, low cloud and fog forced the helicopter to fly up and down the main road to get to the site on the top of the hill.

On 2 October, the ship arrived in Pangnirtung, a community at the head of Cumberland Sound on Baffin Island. The settlement was the site of a whaling station early in the twentieth century and supports a RCMP post, a Post Office, Church of England Mission and Hospital, and a Justice of the Peace who was a Second World War Veteran.

Lt. Bob Murray recalls:

"On anchoring off the settlement a person was sighted on the shore waving his arms to attract attention. Suspecting a problem, HUP 247, flown by LT. Dave Oliphant, was dispatched ashore to ascertain the nature of the problem. The person on the shore turned out to be the Chaplain of the mission who was brought aboard ship. His problem was that he wished to marry one of the nurses in the mission hospital. He had asked that a minister be sent from Frobisher Bay to perform the wedding, as he wanted a religious rather than a civil ceremony.

However, a minister was not available for some time and he mistakenly thought that the Captain of a naval vessel should perform a marriage ceremony.

When he found out that we had a Protestant Chaplain aboard he asked if he could marry them. Again he was out of luck, as a minister cannot perform marriages outside the province he is licensed in and, in the case of Padre Bell it was Nova Scotia.

A conference was held in the Wardroom to solve the impasse. It was decided that since we had a RCMP Constable aboard he could be flown ashore to issue the marriage license as the local RCMP detachment was away on patrol. Chaplain Bell would perform the religious ceremony up until the words `with the powers invested in me etc.' he would step aside and the local justice of the peace would step in with the pronouncement. Cdr. C. Anthony `Tony` Law DSC was the best man and Captain T.C. Pullen gave the bride away. A ship's photographer was sent ashore to record the event.

The Bride and Brides Maid dresses had been made, the wedding cake and food for a reception had been prepared and kept in the freezer. HMCS Labrador's Wardroom supplied a quantity of cans of shrimp, crab, etc., as additional "delectables" for the reception.
The church was full and the wedding ceremony was proceeding towards a conclusion when the two HUPs, flown by Lt. Bob Murray and Lt. Dave Oliphant made a low pass over the chapel to salute the newlyweds. The service came to an abrupt end when the guests streamed out of the chapel to see the flypast.

The reception was well attended by ship’s officers and the community. The two pilots were asked to remove their side arms before entering the hall as we were told it was not one of “those” types of weddings. The photographer was rushed back to the ship to develop his film and print copies for the wedding party. Additional copies were mailed to interested parties when we returned to Halifax.”

The ship arrived back in York Sound during the evening of 3 October. A “PAN, PAN, PAN” urgency call, from a pair of USAF Piasecki H-21B helicopters, one of which was forced down on Yuka Flats with low oil pressure, was answered and duly acted upon. A detachment maintenance crew was sent ashore to assess and try to rectify the problem. The crew found that the engine oil was thick and dirty with the consistency of tar and appeared not to have been changed for a considerable time. The old oil was scooped out with a wooden stick, the oil system then flushed with Varsol and replaced with fresh oil.

It was late in the evening when the oil change was completed and the H-21 was test run and declared serviceable, so it was decided that the aircrew should be brought aboard HMCS Labrador for the evening and fly back to their base in the morning. One of the helicopters, USAF Serial Number 53-4333, was flown aboard; the aircrew were fed and accommodated for the night. A request to the H-21’s operating base to use the H-21s to lift the two Bell helicopters off Peter Point was turned down although the USAF Piasecki H-21 pilots were willing to help. Next morning, the H-21 was flown off at 0600 to join the second helicopter at Yuka Flats. They returned to their home base later in the morning.

The wind and visibility were ideal on 4 October for an attempt to recover the two Bells on Peter Point. A salvage party was flown to the crash site by a HUP with the stipulation that, if the winds in York Sound rose to 10-15 knots, the salvage party would be removed from the mountain immediately.

In order to ensure that both HUPs would be immediately available, one was flown ashore to Yuka Flats. The other remained on deck, aboard HMCS Labrador, both in constant radio contact. The winds, in fact, increased suddenly to 20 – 25 knots on the deck. The HUPs were quickly launched and the salvage crew, the helicopter consoles, radios and electrical gear they had removed were airlifted off the mountain. Both pilots, Lt. Bob Murray and Lt. Dave Oliphant reported that the turbulence on top of the mountain was severe. Winds prevented flying for the remainder of the morning. HMCS Labrador departed York Sound enroute Ney Harbour to pick-up Dr. and Mrs. McLaren who had spent the summer studying the Arctic cod. A HUP was sent to pick-up the McLarens who were camped at the end of a long narrow fjord and, again, the turbulence in and out was severe. On completion, the ship continued on to Resolute Bay.
On 5 October, HMCS Labrador arrived back in York Sound for one final attempt at salvaging the two Bells, but strong winds and low ceilings prevented flying. No change in the weather was forecast for the immediate future so the ship set sail late in the evening, enroute Halifax.

There was no flying from the 6 to 8 October inclusive as the ship prepared for the Admiral’s inspection. HMCS Labrador entered the Bay of Islands, Newfoundland, on 9 October, to await the arrival of Radm H.F. Pullen, OBE, CD, RCN, FOAC, who came aboard via POGO early in the evening.

Both HUPS were flown to Corner Brook for supplies, especially fresh milk. Lt. Bob Murray recalls:

“It was Wednesday when we arrived and landing on a playing field, in the center of town. It wasn’t long before the Chief of Police arrived to ask why we had landed there without permission. We told him we were from HMCS Labrador, just back from months in the Arctic and we had flown in to try and find some fresh milk, which we hadn’t tasted in months. He informed us that it was Wednesday “Early Closing Day” but that he was friends with the owner of the local dairy and he would call him to see if he would open his establishment for us. The next thing we knew we were in the police car heading to the dairy. The owner was most gracious and gave us free run of the dairy, anything and all we wanted to drink – chocolate milk, skim milk, buttermilk and then gave us enough milk to take back with us so that all of the crew could have a glass.”

HMCS Labrador departed Bay of Islands on 10 October, enroute Halifax. No flying was permitted as the Admiral was conducting his inspection. On 11 October, Admiral Pullen carried out his inspection of the Air Department and, on completion, the HUPS were flown ashore to HU-21 Squadron at HMCS Shearwater Nova Scotia. After 109-days at sea, and having steamed some 29,772 kms. (18,500 miles), thus ended the 1957 Arctic Summer Cruise of HMCS Labrador.

HUP 247 required some maintenance, including corrosion control, from the large amount of salt spray that covers the helicopters when in rough weather at sea. For the next six months HUP 247 was used, primarily, for training and utility duties.

**HUP 247 Operations – 1958**

On 11 April, LCdr. John Laurie with passenger Lt. Les Hull flew HUP 247 on a search for a missing deHavilland CS2F Tracker’s main cabin door that was lost during an approach to HMCS Shearwater. The door was found and retrieved after a half-hour search.

Between 28 April and 1 May, Lt. Bob Murray with co-pilot Lt. (Army) Bob Barkley, RCASC, flew HUP 247 to Boeing Canada Technology Ltd. in Arnprior, Ontario for a major overhaul. On 28 April, the helicopter was flown to Saint John, New Brunswick, via RCAF Station Greenwood. After a one-day layover in Saint John, due to weather, HUP 247 was flown to RCAF Station Rockcliffe, Ontario, via the USAF Base in Bangor, Maine; then on to Lac Megantic, Quebec and RCAF Station St. Hubert, Quebec. The next morning, 1 May, the HUP was flown to Arnprior and turned over to 1118 TSD (Technical Support Detachment) at Boeing Aircraft.

On 5 November, after a six month overhaul, HUP 247 was transferred, via rail box car, from 1118 TSD, at Arnprior, to the West Coast Utility Squadron Thirty-Three (VU-33) based at NAF Patricia Bay, BC where it arrived on 26 November. HUP 247 was the second of three HUP helicopters sent to the Squadron. The first, HUP 245, arrived on 10 July 1958 and was assembled with the aid of a working party from Vertol (Boeing) in Arnprior. The third and last HUP, serial 246, arrived on 21 March 1960.
While on the Unit Establishment (UE) of VU-33 the HUPs were employed in:
A. Exercises with ships and shore establishments.
B. Personnel transfers.
C. Proficiency flying,
D. Support to the Reserve Officer Training Plan (ROTP),
E. Army co-operation, and
F. Search and Rescue (SAR)

The three HUP helicopters were also assigned new squadron numbers (See also Appendix B)
16621 / 245 became 621
16622 / 246 became 622
16623 / 247 became 623

HUP 247 Operations – Winding Down 1959 - 1964
During 1959 the HUPs were primarily used for pilot conversions, personnel transfers, familiarization flights for senior ROTP Cadets and training exercises with the Navigation Direction Training Center. The HUPs were also utilized by the Pacific Naval Laboratory photographing ship’s trials at full speed and turning circles and, hoisting trials using a Robertson stretcher. However, the stretcher trials proved to be impractical as it would not fit through the hoist hatch.

Due to a lack of parachute packing and maintenance personnel at NAF Patricia Bay, all parachutes had to be flown to Vancouver for inspection re-packing and repair. During the month of July, five parachute maintenance flights were carried out by HUPs, including one by HUP 623 on 20 July.

SAR Vancouver called upon HUPs from VU-33 twice in August 1959, the first to rescue a mountain climber near Hope, British Columbia. The helicopter was satisfactorily refuelled by gravity feed from the main tanks of a Grumman Avenger AS-3 aircraft at Hope. The second call was to confirm the identity of a crashed USN Lockheed P2V Neptune aircraft near Campbell River, British Columbia. Two HUPs were employed during June 1960 on an army co-operation exercise transporting thirty-three fully equipped soldiers a distance of 11.3 kilometers (seven miles).

For the first five months of 1960, HUP 623 continued to be used for pilot conversion / training, proficiency flying and personnel transfers. During the month of June, 186 first and second year ROTP cadets were given familiarization flights in the HUP, each cadet being allowed 20-minutes at the controls. Also in June, HUP 623 was placed in Storage Reserve (SR) and remained unavailable until 15 December when it was test flown by LCdr Ted Francis.

In 1961, HUP 623 was available for flight operations during January and February, and May through December. The majority of flights were utility in nature, for example, photographic, radar and gun alignments, checking restricted sea areas for surface ship main armament firings, helicopter control and ASW exercises and participation in local air show events. On 24 May, Lt. Dan Munro flying HUP 623 spent 5.5 flying hours in support of a Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI) exercise at Nanoose on Vancouver Island.
From 15 to 18 December, SLt. Ian Powick, flying HUP 623, deployed to the northern end of Vancouver Island to search for a missing civilian aircraft. Low cloud was encountered when flying up the Strait of Georgia between Campbell River and his destination, Port Hardy. While checking the many fjords and inlets, he had to ensure that the weather did not close his exits as there was absolutely no place to land. Unfortunately, the missing aircraft was not found, but he did get to see his first pod of killer whales.

*Over Patricia Bay BC, three RCN HUPs of VU-33 fly in formation on their last flight, on 26 April 1963. (CASM Photo 29054)*

Normal utility and pilot training operations continued throughout the year. HUP 623 was available from January to May and during August and September. On the 19 and 21 May, HUP 623, flown by Lt. Dan Munro took part in Navy Day activities and a fly past during Victoria Day celebrations. HUP 623 with SLt. Ian Powick at the controls was used on 8 June to fly Capt. (Army) Roberts on a photographic reconnaissance of the Duncan area, midway between Victoria and Nanaimo where smoke was detected.

HUP 623 was available for operations from April through December. Utility flights again took up the majority of flying hours. On 29 and 30 November SLt. Ian Powick with PO Heggie flew two trips in HUP 623 to the site of the crash of a Canadair-built T-33AN Mk. 3 / CT-133 Silver Star, RCN serial number 21465 from VU-33. The crash occurred on 23 November during just a routine jet penetration into Vancouver Airport. Both pilots of the aircraft, Lt. Norman Ogden and Lt. Donald Clarke, were killed. *(Photo via the Bill Upton Collection)*

The year 1964 saw the demise of the HUP in the RCN. On 28 February, SLt. Ian Powick with co-pilot Lt. Albert “Al” Horner, flying HUP 623, took part in the final flypast of the HUP at NAF Patricia Bay. This ended the HUP-3s tenure in the Royal Canadian Navy, and the helicopters were then struck-off-strength.
The Museum's Aircraft

On 24 February 1965, HUP-3 serial 51-16623 / 623 was purchased from Crown Assets Corporation by the Canadian War Museum, Ottawa. The helicopter was restored and repainted to RCN 623 configuration by Boeing Canada in Amprior between April 1981 and November 1982. It was then donated to the Canada Aviation Museum (CAvM) at Rockcliffe, Ontario and placed on interior static public display there.

RCN HUP 623 is seen being readied for its restoration in April 1981. (CASM)

Following repainting, HUP 623 arrives back at Museum in May 1981. (CASM)

RCN HUP 16623 restoration is seen completed in November 1982. (CASM)
Museum's Static Displays

Here, posed on roped-off static display on polished floors are the LH & RH photo profiles of the RCN HUP 51-16623 "Navy 623" as seen in the Museum's old, original wooden hangars at Rockcliffe, Ontario, during March 1983. (CASM Photos)

Restored in full colours and markings, RCN HUP 51-6623 is seen on static public display at the "Helicopter Studio" Island of Naval Flying, immediately adjacent to the RCAF Hall of Tribute in the new Museum building in May 1988. (CASM Photo)
First-Hand Description of Accident Events at Peter Point

The pilot of Bell 202, LCdr. Bruce Vibert, DSC, recalls:

"My aim was to come to a hover at about 100-feet, look for a safe spot to land then settle. My approach speed disguised the lack of sufficient power, at our weight and altitude, when approaching a hover. Also, this was attempted just below the lee of the mountain crest where one must also have been caught in severe downdrafts and turbulence. On applying the collective and attempting to flare there was no response and, no time to pick an uncluttered spot to aim for. The helicopter landed heavily and rolled onto the passenger's side. Perhaps forewarned, Larry Zbitnew's approach was far more cautious and shows that this peak was unsafe to attempt landing a Bell with very high loads."

"With regards to Dave Oliphant's rescue, flying HUP 247. A wide bank of cloud was fast approaching the mountain peak when he lifted off Larry Zbitnew and Stu Dunbrack and returned them to the ship. It was almost upon us when he came for Sid Van Dyck and myself. With most of the machine out over the long and sheer south-facing wall he positioned the helicopter's door at the very edge, hence it was very easy to come aboard. It was a beautiful piece of flying. The cloud closed in around the peak as we pulled away, and remained there for several days."

His passenger, Sidney Van Dyke, a Civilian Hydrographer attached to HMCS Labrador recalls:

"I was first introduced to the Bell helicopter in 1956 during Arctic survey operations aboard Labrador. These little yellow machines with the characteristic plastic bubble could carry two passengers and made possible much of the hydrographic survey work carried out in the Arctic by Labrador."

"Early Friday morning, it must have been between 6:30 or 7:00 o'clock, while operating in Frobisher Bay, we were getting to take some hydrographic measurements which would involve my flying to the top of Peter Point, a 2400-foot mountain in York Sound. The weather at sea level was perfect, hardly a breath of air, which was the reason for the early start. I had never liked wearing a "crash helmet", which were available on the flight deck, and I had got away with it because I was a civilian on a naval vessel. This morning CPO Joseph (Joe) Malone pressured me once again to wear a helmet and, just to be good to him, I put one on."

"The pilot for this flight was LCdr. B.F. (Bruce) Vibert, DSC, OIC of the Detachment. After Take-off and once we had acquired sufficient altitude he headed direct for the mountain top and went straight in for a landing without the usual reconnaissance to find the best spot to land. We came in fast and made a hard touch down on a bit of a slope. The helicopter, Bell HTL-4 202, rolled over onto the passenger side. Amongst a lot of noise of rotors shredding themselves against the rocks I was thrown forwards and hit the bubble in spite of the safety harness. Things happen rather quickly, as one must always expect the worst, which was, of course, the possibility that the helicopter might explode. The noise stopped as quickly as it had begun and I climbed out of the hole in the bubble that I had broken with my head. LCdr. Vibert climbed out of his side door which was facing skyward."
"We put some distance between ourselves and the helicopter and waited for what might happen. Nothing did, so we returned to the helicopter to see what might be done next. The radio was still operational so LCdr. Vibert made contact with the ship to report the crash. By now it became clear that our landing problems had been made much worse by the strong downdrafts at the site caused by the nearby Grinnell Glacier."

"A second helicopter, Bell HTL-6 205, flown by Lt. L.T. (Larry) Zbitnew, which was heading for another hydrographic site was diverted to see if he could be of any help. He arrived not long afterwards and made a safe landing beside the wrecked Bell. By now the gusting downdrafts had become worse so Lt. Zbitnew decided to leave his civilian passenger, Stu Dunbrack, and all expendable gear and return to the ship. He almost made it. On lifting off he was caught in a gust and his tail rotor slammed into the ground leaving him stranded. Now there were four of us. We had some emergency rations and were not too concerned even though the only other helicopter aboard HMCS Labrador, Płasecki HUP 247, was undergoing main rotor blade rigging."

"Surely we could find a way to climb down the mountain. Three sides turned out to go 2400 feet straight down with the fourth side, after a close look, remaining a very dicey possibility. This close look included a brief attempt to get over a sliding rubble field. I meant to give it a try. With a quarter inch rope tied to my belt I ventured a few steps across this rubble to what appeared to be a more solid edge. When I looked back, I saw the person holding the other end of the rope in his hands could not possibly hold me if I started slipping. I made it back to more stable ground and counted myself lucky. Time wore on and by mid-morning the gusting winds were getting worse. Work on HUP 247 was proceeding at a good pace and a test flight was scheduled for late afternoon. At the same time a mountain rescue team was organised aboard Labrador in case the HUP could not be made serviceable. There was no chance these increased wind conditions that the HUP pilot, Lt. D.A. (Dave) Oliphant with crewman L.S. Charles Cann, could get close enough to effect a rescue so it was planned to drop some food and water to us in the early evening. The food was no problem, but the water was in jerry cans wrapped in mattresses that burst on contact. A second flight was made at 0430 Saturday morning and this time they dropped us a lot of ice cubes in a sack. Our water problems were solved."

"The decision was made to try and to pick us up at first light the next day. That was the time of least air movement from Grinnell Glacier and therefore, hopefully, the time of least gustiness on our perch. The time came to prepare for the night. We had four sleeping bags that were carried in the helicopters in case of such an emergency. We managed to build a shelter or small lean-to using the aluminium poles from the survey stations we carried and covered them with the cut up rubber floats from the helicopters. It was not a class accommodation but quite acceptable for a one nightstand. We called the ship at 0730 to report the winds had decreased. HUP 247, flown by Lt. Dave Oliphant got airborne and flew to the mountaintop. He hovered a few feet above the ground and the first two of us, the last ones to arrive, clambered aboard and were returned to the Labrador. Within half an hour he was back. The winds were starting to gust again but Lt. Oliphant was determined to rescue us. I will never forget his calm resolve and astute manoeuvring to once again get into a hovering position so we could climb aboard. He succeeded and safely returned us to the ship by 0830."
“Once aboard Labrador we were handed over to the ship’s doctor, Surg LCdr. D.A. (Don) Maciver, who gave us a good debriefing and a medical check-up. He gave each of us a sleeping pill and told us to go to bed. I had never before taken a sleeping pill so had no idea how long it would take to knock me out.”

“Being cautious, I got a glass of water, put it on the sink beside the bed, crawled under the blanket, took the pill with water and quickly set the glass back on the sink. I was tired and in about 15-minutes was sound asleep.”

Lt. Larry Zbitnew, the Pilot of HTL-6 205 adds:

“On arrival at the crash site of Bell HTL-4 202, I circled a couple of times and then made an approach and overshoot to determine the wind and terrain conditions. It was very gusty but I thought it was necessary to check out the scene before landing. I did land on my next approach.”

“LCdr. Bruce Vibert, the pilot of Bell HTL-4 202, and I discussed what should be done next. It was decided that I should strip my helicopter of all survival equipment and leave behind my passenger, Stu Dunbrack, a Civilian Hydrographer, and return to the ship. I was to return with HUP-3 247 ser no 51-16623 later when the winds subsided.”

“On take-off I was hit by a vicious gust that forced bold collective action on my part. This, unfortunately, resulted in my tail rotor striking a rock. I just let the helicopter settle back onto the ground.”

“Although we suspected that HUP 247 had some transmission problems, it was still flyable. Since my helicopter (205) had a good battery we radioed Labrador and gave a situation report (Sitrep). We asked for nylon rope and water to be dropped by Lt. Dave Oliphant, flying HUP-3 247, while making a pass over our position. Peter Point was the only mountain in the vicinity that had no snow on it. The water drop didn’t work (jerry cans wrapped in mattresses) but later on another flight a sack of ice cubes was dropped and this solved our problem.”

“Sid Van Dyke, the passenger in Bell HTL-4 202, and I attempted to climb or rather descent the 2400-foot mountain, but after experiencing rock that crumbled underfoot we returned to the crash site with a good thirst. The ice cubes had not arrived as yet. All we had to drink was the survival rum that I carried in lieu of water and the brandy that LCdr. Vibert carried in his survival kit. Our box lunches, which we always carried on flights, had orange juice so; we drank rum and orange juice. Things improved when the ice cubes arrived.”

“Labrador was manœuvred to an inlet, visible to us, just below Peter Point. At night they put on all the ship’s upper deck lighting and played music for us, supposedly to keep our spirits up. We radioed the ship and requested that the music be turned off.”

“The shelter was constructed from the survey poles we carried and the rubber floats from HTL-4 202. Our sleeping bags were something we thought of earlier. In lieu of the padding in the helicopter’s seat cushions we had sleeping bags inserted for just an occasion.”
"The rescue by Lt. Dave Oliphant, flying HUP-3 247, went off quite well. The wind was not quite as strong in the morning and we suggested to Dave that he make a reconnaissance flight first. On this flight he dropped a 15-pound fire extinguisher bottle which had been cleaned and filled with hot soup. You can imagine this missile dropping on a rocky mountain and bouncing on contact every which way. We took cover but once the bouncing ceased and we retrieved the container the soup was very much appreciated."

"Lt. Oliphant was advised not to attempt a landing but to hover about two feet above the ground. We were lifted off the mountain two at a time to keep weight to a minimum. Because of the gusty conditions the helicopter was moving quite considerably. I recall grabbing onto the wheel by the cabin door and, at that moment, Dave took off. I don’t know how I climbed in but one look down at 2400 feet of nothing I was spurred on. After a short flight we were back onboard Labrador by 0830."

One of the RCN HLT-4 helicopters from HMCS Labrador has stopped off on an ice flow to add some comical artwork.
Piasecki (Vertol) HUP-3 Helicopters in the Royal Canadian Navy

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(1) Helicopter Serial Number.

(2) Taken on Strength.

(3) Helicopter Utility Squadron Twenty-One (HU-21) side numbers.

(4) Helicopter Utility Squadron Thirty-Three (VU-33) side numbers.

(5) Struck-Off-Strength.

(6) Sold, in November 2000, by the Canadian Museum of Flight and Transportation, Vancouver BC, to a group near San Diego, California, USA.

(7) The International Helicopter museum, Locking near Weston-Super-Mare, England. This helicopter was sold in the USA where it was registered as N6699D. Subsequently it was used as an instructional airframe at a technical college, possibly in Cincinnati. It was then purchased by the Boeing Company in 1991 and restored to its RCN configuration and colours before presented to the International Helicopter Museum.

Commanding Officers
Piasecki (Vertol) HUP-3 Squadrons
Royal Canadian Navy
1954 – 1964

VH 21
LCdr. (P) (O) J.H. Beeman, CD, RCN
August 1953 – April 1955

HU 21
LCdr. (P) (O) J.H. Beeman, GM, CD, RCN
April 1955 – January 1956
LCdr. (P) R.V. Bays, CD, RCN
January 1956 – November 1956
LCdr. (P) H.R. Welsh, CD, RCN
November 1956 – June 1958

VU 33
LCdr. (P) R.A. Shimmin, CD, RCN
August 1956 – August 1958
LCdr. (P) A.J. Woods, CD, RCN
August 1958 – July 1961
LCdr. (P) S.E. Soward, CD, RCN
July 1961 – July 1963
LCdr. (P) A.A. Schellinck, CD, RCN
July 1963 – August 1965
Aircrew Who Have Flown as First Pilot
HUP-3 Side Numbers 947 / 247 / 923 / 623 / 407

SLt. Edward F. “Bud” Abbott, RCN
SLt. Allen L. “Al” Alltree, RCN
Lt. Robert “Bob” Barkley, RCASC
LCdr. Rodney V. “Rod” Bays, RCN
LCdr. John H. “Jack” Beeman, GM, RCN
Lt. Harry W. Beutel, RCN
Cdr. Frederick W.H. “Freddie” Bradley, RCN
LCdr. Robert C. “Bob” Brown, RCN
Lt. William “Bill” Charland, RCASC
SLt. John D. Clarkson, RCN
LCdr. Brian D. “Dave” Coblentz, RCN
Lt. Donald G. “Glenn” Cook, RCN
Lt. Geoffrey H. “Geoff” Craven, RCN
SLt. Donald W. “Don” Crowe, RCN
LCdr. Roy O. DeNevers, RCN
Lt. Harry R. Dubinsky, RCN
LCdr. Edward A. “Ted” Fallen, RCN
LCdr. F. Roger “Rog” Fink, GM, RCN
SLt. Glyn C. Fitzgerald, RCN
LCdr. Dennis L. Foley, LM (USA), RCN
Lt. Robert “Bob” Forrest, RCN
Lt. Edward D. “Ted” Francis, RCN
LCdr. William H. “Bill” “Goofer” Frayn, RCN
LCdr. Kenneth L. “Ken” Gibbs, RCN
Lt. J. Bryan Hayter, RCN
Lt. John D. Hewer, RCN
Lt. Albert R. “Al” Horner, OMM, RCN
Cdr. Robin L. “Robbie” Hughes, RCN
Lt. Wallace E. “Sandy” James, MBE, RCN
LCdr. John G. Laurie, RCN
SLt. Arnold E. “Arnie” Lewis, RCN
Cdr. John D. “Darky” Lowe, RCN
Lt. John A. “MacBagpipes” MacNeil, RCN
Lt. Michael S. “Mike” McCall, RCN
Lt. Gerald J. “Gerry” McMillen, RCN
Lt. Daniel E. “Dan” Munro, RCN
Lt. Robert T. “Bob” Murray, RCN
Lt. Donald J. “Don” Neilly, RCN
Lt. George E. Nickson, RCN
Lt. Norman J. “Norm” Ogden, RCN
Lt. David A. “Dave” Oliphant, RCN
Aircrew Who Have Flown as First Pilot
HUP-3 Side Numbers 947 / 247 / 923 / 623 / 407
(Con’t)

SLt. Ian A. Powick, RCN
Lt. George E. Pumple, RCN
Lt. John C. “Jack” Runciman, RCN
Lt. Allan T. “Bud” Service, RCN
LCdr. Hyman A. “Hy” Shenker, RCN
Cdr. Donald L. “Don” Sheppard, DSC, RCN
Lt. J. Grant Soutar, RCN
LCdr. Stuart E. “Stu” Soward, RCN
LCdr. Bruce F. Vibert, DSC, RCN
Lt. Gerald E. “Jerry” Watson, OMM, RCN
Lt. Ian Webster, RCN
LCdr. Harold R. “Hai” Welsh, RCN
Lt. Larry T. Zbitnew, RCN
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The information contained in this document was obtained from:


Helicopters and Other Rotorcraft Since 1907, by Kenneth Munson

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Most importantly information came from interviews, correspondence and the Flying Log Books of the following friends and fellow aviators for which I am exceedingly grateful.

BGen. Robin L. “Robbie” Hughes
BGen. Daniel E. Munro
Col. Geoffrey H. “Geoff” Craven
Cdr. Robert C. “Bob” Brown
Cdr. F. Roger “Rog” Fink
Cdr. Edward A. “Ted” Fallen
Cdr. Hyman A. “Hy” Shenker
LCol. D. Glenn Cook
LCol. Michael S. “Mike” McCall
LCdr. Rodney V. “Rod” Bays
LCdr. John H. “Jack” Beeman
LCdr. Bryan David “Dave” Cobley
LCdr. William H. “Bill” “Goofer” Frayn
LCdr. Dennis L. Foley
LCdr. Edward D. “Ted” Francis
LCdr. Kenneth L. “Ken” Gibbs
LCdr. Wallace E. “Sandy” James
LCdr. John G. Laurie
LCdr. Gerald J. “Gerry” McMillen
LCdr. John C. Runciman
LCdr. Stuart E. “Stu” Soward
LCdr. Bruce F. Vibert
LCdr. Leonard T. “Larry” Zbitnew
Lt. J. Bryan “Crash” Hayter
Lt. Arnold E. “Arnie” Lewis
Lt. John A. “MacBagpipes” MacNeil
Lt. Judson E. “Jud” McSweeney
Lt. Donald J. “Don” Neilly
Lt. Alexander W. “Alex” Nichols
Lt. Ian Powick