

Vintage image of a Piasecki HRP-1. The steel tube structure was covered with fabric. Note the cartoon nose art and 19 “upward arrow” mission markings whose purpose is unknown.

# RARE ROTORS

AN AMAZING “BARN FIND” UNCOVERS A HORDE OF HISTORIC HELICOPTERS

BY NICHOLAS A. VERONICO

It turns out that the terms “around-to-it” and “barn find” are cosmically linked. Someone has the foresight to purchase an interesting or historic project with the intention of restoring it when they get “around-to-it.” For various reasons, family obligations, health concerns, money, or time, the project owner never gets around-to-it and, in this case, an aircraft or helicopter gets pushed into a corner of the yard. The owner may pass and the project is then inherited by well-meaning friends or relatives and the “around-to-it” cycle starts again. Eventually, the decision to part with the item is made and it is at this

stage where the restoration project enters the realm of “barn find.”

Recently, Doug Scroggins of Scroggins Aviation Mockup and Effects of Las Vegas, Nevada, made an incredible barn find of ten 1940s/1950s vintage helicopters. Scroggins Aviation Mockups and Effects is a leading supplier of cockpit sections, full-scale commercial and military aircraft helicopters, and cabin interiors for the motion picture and TV industry. The company’s work has most recently been seen in *Dunkirk*, *Flight*, *Jurassic World*, and *Sully*, along with *Captain America: Civil War*, *Deadpool 2*, and *Jumanji*:

*Welcome to the Jungle*. “I’m always in the market for interesting, historic aircraft. Having an inventory of classic helicopters helps us expand our offerings to entertainment production companies,” said Doug Scroggins.

Before Covid, Scroggins had heard about some potential Vietnam War-era helicopters stored in a yard in the southwest. “A gentleman in the United Kingdom had mentioned that a pair of Piasecki CH-21s could be seen on Google Maps. I did some searching and could see the tails of the two H-21s poking over the fence on Google Maps Street View. I was

busy with some movie work and time just slipped by.

“Then I received a phone call while I was in Hawaii on set,” Scroggins said. “The person on the other end said, ‘I hear you’re the helicopter guy. I may have some helicopters available if you’re interested.’ I started asking questions and when he gave me the location, I got very excited. He sent pictures the same day. I could not believe it — this is the same yard I had seen a few years back. I had no idea what was in there.

“The caller said he represented the late owner’s family and they were looking to sell all of the helicopters and associated parts as a lot. There were also some seven or eight fixed-wing aircraft, Convair L-13s and Fairchild PT-26 hulks, that were committed to another buyer. Wait! Helicopters, as in many, to be sold as a lot? He had my attention,” Scroggins said.

After seeing photos and traveling to Deming, New Mexico, Scroggins made a deal to acquire a pair of rare 1947-vintage Piasecki HRP Rescuers, two Piasecki HUP Retrievers also with an addition cockpit section, three Piasecki H-21 Workhorses (known as the “Flying Banana”), a 1945 Sikorsky R-5D Dragonfly, and an even



The carcass of BuNo 111814 is carefully lifted out of the yard for transportation to Mojave Airport. The helo takes to the air for the first time in 70 years. (Doug Scroggins)



The HRP’s look like skeletons from prehistoric beasts. (DS)