

Pistoning Cross-Country— With a Twist

Photo courtesy of Johan Nurmi



by Brian Ruby

Johan Nurmi (far right) took this photo of himself and his crew, at LAX, on the morning of their record breaking arrival.

Johan Nurmi founded and is the executive vice president of the USA Academy of Aviation, Inc., a Part 61 helicopter flight school, located in Murrieta, California. He is also chief pilot for the World Record Helicopter Team. Nurmi and fellow pilot John Thomas formed the Team in 2004, after a cross-country ferry flight introduced them to the joys of long-distance helicopter flying. Possessing a social conscience, the pair decided to combine their love of helicopters with raising money for poor children, giving a unique twist to both activities.

On Saturday, October 29, 2005 at 2:45 p.m., Nurmi and three other pilots, Frode Felle, Nico Wijngaarden, and Paul Chenette, took off from Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), in a

Robinson R-44 Raven. Flying Visual Flight Rules (VFR) only, they flew east, stopping only for gas, oil, and poor weather. The four pilots completed the leg to Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport (SAV), in Georgia, by flying in two and a half hour shifts. They then turned back to LAX, landing on Wednesday, November 2, at 6:30 a.m.

They covered more than 4,000 nautical miles, at an average speed of 48.5 miles per hour, to claim the new Speed over a Recognized Course (Transcontinental, Round Trip) record in the E-1.c class (rotorcraft with a take-off weight of 2,205 to 3,858 pounds), Group 1 (piston engine). The World Record Helicopter Team coordinated their feat with the National Aeronautic

Association (NAA), who informed the Team that their record had been ratified on November 23.

The NAA, a Helicopter Association International affiliate, is the Federation Aeronautique International's (FAI) representative organization in the U.S. The FAI is an international organization that defines, records, and arbitrates world records in aviation. The NAA monitors and certifies attempts at breaking U.S. National Records, and assists potential world, or absolute record-breakers with applying to the FAI to have their attempts ratified.

The World Record Helicopter Team did not attempt the transcontinental record for glory or fame, but to establish themselves as serious contenders for, and as practice for their planned,

June 2006, challenge to Joe R. Bower and John W. Williams' 1996 record for speed around the world, westbound. According to the NAA's *2004 World and United States Aviation & Space Records*, Bower and Williams averaged 57.01 miles-per-hour (91.75 kilometers per hour), during their trip, in a Bell 430.

Nurmi also intends to use a Bell 430 for the Team's round-the-world flight, and a DC-3 as a "chase" plane. During the recent class E-1.c challenge, bad weather caused many in-flight course deviations, and a squall line forced the R44 to stay earthbound for 10 hours. The Team plans to avoid this kind of interference when they challenge Bower and Williams' record, by flying Instrument Flight Rule (IFR), as well as (VFR).

The World Record Helicopter Team's stated reason for attempting a global circumnavigation that is speedy enough to break the record, is to create favorable publicity for the rotary-wing world, and more specifically, to raise funds for a charity.

This isn't the first philanthropic record-breaking that Nurmi has attempted. In 2002, he and copilot John Thomas flew a Robinson R-22BII from LAX to SAV, and back again, in four days, 12 hours, 55 minutes and 20 seconds. They averaged 39.23 miles-per-hour, according to the NAA, and established the U.S. record for Speed over a Recognized Course (Transcontinental, Round Trip) in class E-1.b (rotorcraft, takeoff weight from 1,102 to less than 2,205 pounds), Group 1. Thus far, neither transcontinental flight has attracted sponsor attention.

For more information about the Team, and their next record challenge, go to <http://www.worldrecordhelicopterteam.com>, or contact Johan Nurmi by email: usaacademy@earthlink.net, or by telephone 951-551-6592. 📠

Brian Ruby is communications assistant for HAI.



John (Jack) Drake Named HAI Director of Safety and Flight Operations

HAI is pleased to announce its new Director of Safety and Flight Operations, John (Jack) Drake, who joined HAI on Tuesday, January 3rd.

Jack Drake brings with him an extensive background in safety, having spent six years in the U.S. Navy as a rescue helicopter pilot, standardization flight instructor, and safety officer. He served for 26 years with the NTSB as an accident analyst, regional and go-team investigator-in-charge, and as manager of the Board's Aviation Engineering Division. In addition he worked for four years at a major airline, where he directed operations safety, safety education, and emergency planning programs. He has investigated more than 500 aviation accidents, participated in aviation safety studies, and initiated many recommendations to reduce accident risk.

Jack has taught at the NTSB's aviation accident investigation school. He has researched, written, and edited safety articles and safety newsletters, and will be contributing his expertise in *ROTOR* magazine.

Jack is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and holds an FAA commercial pilot certificate with airplane single and multi-engine land, helicopter, and instrument (airplane and helicopter) ratings. He resides in Annapolis, Maryland.

HAI is also pleased that Dick Wright, HAI's retiring Director of Safety and Flight Operations will continue to work with us, and particularly with Jack Drake, through HELI-EXPO 2006, in Dallas, Texas, February 26-28, 2006. Dick will be in charge of the flight line and will assist with the auditing of HAI's education courses.



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