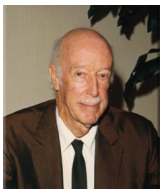

Army Aviation Hall of Fame 1995 Induction

Bart Kelley is one of the original and most outstanding pioneers of the helicopter industry. After joining Arthur Young and Bell in 1941, his engineering leadership was at the forefront of every new design at Bell Helicopters for the next 35 years.

In the course of Bart Kelley's tenure as senior engineer (Director of Engineering; Senior Vice President, Engineering) with Bell Helicopter Company, over 24,000 Bell helicopters were produced. By far the largest part were delivered to the U.S. Army as the H-13 Sioux, UH-1 Iroquois, AH-1G Cobra, OH-58 Kiowa, and XV-15. Mr. Kelley actively supervised the design, test, and development of all Bell experimental and production aircraft, and was accepted by his fellow engineers as clearly outstanding in his field.

A helicopter pilot himself, Bart Kelley was uncommonly sensitive to the flyability of aircraft from the pilot's point of view. Through extensive contact with the U.S. Army and its crewmen, he also became uniquely responsive to military needs with respect to reliability and maintainability.

Kelley's Model 209 Cobra attack helicopter, the first in the world, was designed and developed without government request or assistance during the Vietnam War. After acceptance, it emerged as the AH-1 and was used extensively in that war. In successive dash numbers, it is still used extensively by the U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps and in several allied foreign countries. Its basic configuration has been copied in later attack helicopter designs.

Bart Kelley also presided over the design of Bell's tilt-rotor aircraft, the first experimental model which flew successfully and often in the 1950s and early 60s, and which may well become the outstanding vertical take off and landing aircraft of the future.

Bart Kelley has designed aircraft which are flying in more than 70 countries, the world over.

Possessed not only of vast engineering expertise, Kelley has also exhibited an unusually perceptive instinct for the practical and (in a complex field of endeavor) the simple. In a word, he has exceptionally keen judgment as to what works well and reliably and what doesn't.

His distinguished service in the development of rotary wing aircraft led to his Honorary Fellowships in the American Helicopter Society and the Royal Aeronautical Society. After 35 years of service, Bart Kelley retired in 1975, but still serves as a consultant with Bell Helicopter Textron.