



Hugo Leech led a life that most people only dream of and very few get to enjoy. His career varied: army officer, helicopter pilot, ship captain, flying instructor, Transport Canada inspector and director of Aviation Safety Promotion.

He was born in Surbiton, England, in December 1933 and was the son of a Royal Air Force officer.

At the age of 18, Hugo was called to serve his two years in the military (national service). His many talents were quickly seen and he was selected for officer training at Sandhurst, where he graduated as a second lieutenant. He was selected to serve in the Royal Army Service Corps where he learned to drive just about anything with wheels, to fly, and to command an ocean-going ship.

In 1958, he took command of a 1000-t, 200-ft. amphibious landing craft. On one of his voyages, he took his ship, in company with two other similar vessels, from England, past Gibraltar, through the Suez Canal, across the Indian Ocean and through the Strait of Malacca to Singapore: a trip of over 10,000 mi. During the voyage they ran into a typhoon and one of the other ships sank, taking with it a crew of 30.

In 1963, Hugo learned to fly with the Army Air Corps. As a military helicopter pilot, he flew missions in Great Britain, Europe, Cyprus, Singapore, India, Malaysia and Belize. His talents were again recognized and he became a flight instructor. He was promoted to major and, in 1968, decided that he needed a new career.

He retired from the British military and moved to Canada where he got a job in British Columbia as a pilot with Northern Helicopters. For the next six years, Hugo practiced one of his true loves, flying, throughout the Americas. In 1974, Hugo left Northern as their chief pilot for a job with Transport Canada in Ottawa as a civil aviation inspector. He worked in flight training from 1974 until 1984,

when he moved to the Aviation Safety Promotion Branch in the Safety Programs Directorate. While in flight training, Hugo created the first helicopter flight instructor guide, a document that is essentially the same today and is well respected around the world for its guidance. He was also responsible for setting up and running an annual helicopter flight instructor course, which is still offered today.

Shortly after moving to safety, he took over as editor of *Aviation Safety Vortex*, a position he held until he became senior editor of the entire family of Transport Canada aviation safety newsletters. He also produced a number of award-winning aviation safety videos. A year before his retirement from Transport Canada in 1994, Hugo became the director of Safety Promotion.

In 1994, Hugo Leech was presented the prestigious Joe Mashman Safety Award by Helicopter Association International, as acknowledgment for his outstanding contributions in the promotion of safety and safety awareness throughout the helicopter industry.

When he wasn't flying, Hugo was quite likely driving something with wheels at a very rapid pace — be it his MGB sports car or a race car. In 1979, he raced a 1931 standard Bentley in the Laguna Seca California antique car race. He later commented that the only reason Phil Hill (World Formula One Driving Champion, 1961) managed to pass him in the corkscrew was that he was driving a turbo 1932 Bentley. Hugo also held back because the car he was driving didn't belong to him and he didn't want to break it.

In addition, he was a very accomplished singer, guitarist, comedian and actor with a penchant for Gilbert and Sullivan musicals.

Hugo couldn't stay away from aircraft so, after he retired from Transport Canada, he went to work with the Canadian War Museum where, among other things, he organized the re-enactment of a Second World War bombing raid, complete with WWII aircraft, such as the Avro Lancaster.

Hugo married Carol in the spring of 1991, in a Bell 205, near Carp, Ontario. The helicopter was filled with family, friends, a minister and the pilot. It flew over Carp, along the Ottawa River to Ottawa and back to Carp when the ceremony was finished. In later years, Hugo expressed some concern over which province he was actually married in since the pilot flew down the centre of the Ottawa River and may have wandered into Quebec as Hugo was saying, "I do."

Hugo Leech succumbed to cancer on August 28, 1998, at the age of 64.