

Many famous personalities were given a spin in the “bubble” machine. They included New York Gov. Thomas E. Dewey and the popular Mayor of New York City, Fiorello LaGuardia.

“I remember Mayor LaGuardia stooping under the rotor to get in the ship,” Young said, “but I don’t know why because he was so short. Harry Truman, who was then vice president, also witnessed test flights before we started giving rides.”

In the meantime, Ship 2 was putting the helicopter on the map by chalking up impressive accomplishments.

On Jan. 15, 1945, a Bell test pilot parachuted from a damaged fighter plane and made his way to an isolated farmhouse. He needed medical attention.

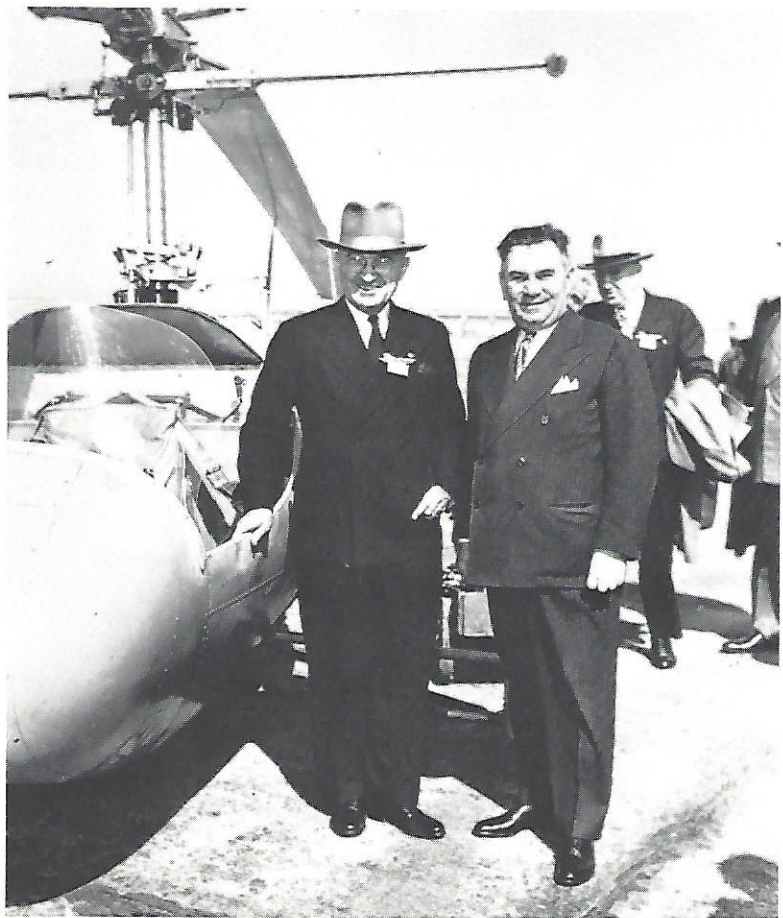
An item in *Western Flying* magazine read: “A dramatic example of the practical use of the helicopter occurred in weather-locked Western New York when a Bell Aircraft helicopter carried a doctor to the aid of an injured pilot, snowbound in a farmhouse.”

“The helicopter, a two-place experimental model, was flown by Floyd Carlson 20 miles from the Bell helicopter facilities in Gardenville, N.Y. to a point just south of Lockport, N.Y. There, the rotary aircraft landing on a road, took on Dr. Thomas C. Marriott as a passenger, covered five miles in a few minutes and deposited the Buffalo physician in the yard of the farmhouse.

“It is believed to be the first time in the United States a doctor has used a helicopter on a mercy mission.”

Ship 2 also had the distinction of being the first Bell helicopter to make a rescue mission. It happened March 14, 1945, when Carlson picked up two men from a crumbling spring ice flow in Lake Erie. Both had been given up for lost, since the ice was too heavy to permit rescue by boat, and too weak to permit rescue by sled.

While the three Model 30 helicopters were making headlines, the sleek Model 42 was proving to be a problem child.



Harry S. Truman poses by Ship 1 with Larry Bell in early 1945 when the then vice president visited the plant.



To shield the pilot and passenger from the elements, Young (kneeling at left) invented this protective bubble enclosure for Ship 3.



New York Governor Thomas E. Dewey departs from Ship 3 after being given a ride by Floyd Carlson.



Ship 1, foreground, and Ship 2 are shown hovering at the Gardenville Airport.

The aircraft was like a combination of beauty and the beast. On the outside, its sweeping lines and classic nose seemed to convey — “this is the helicopter of the future” But strip away the 42’s comely cover and you’d find a monstrous tangle of cables winding around drums and a chamber of mechanical horrors.

You knew you had problems, for instance, when the pilot pulled the collective pitch lever up and the blades turned down.

“The 42’s snag was that the engineers had attempted to build a helicopter like an airplane,” Young said. “Their approach was to make the drawings first, manufacture the ship and test it. Our system was to manufacture, test, make modifications and then make the drawings.”

In the meantime, the third Model 30’s performance capabilities were drawing quite a few followers.

“Ship three came at a time when the company was kind of discouraged, because military orders had been cancelled,” Young noted. “The contraption from Gardenville didn’t look too pretty, but passengers were sold on the machine after the first ride.”

Larry Bell had also become sold on Ship 3 and made the decision to transfer the responsibility of helicopter development and production from his product department to the Gardenville group. His faith in the project and the men behind it was shown with the placement of a 500 unit order for Franklin engines. Another big job handed to Young and Bart Kelley was to bail out the Model 42.

“When the Model 42 was given to us to fix, it was very encouraging, because it was an admission that the Gardenville methods could do what the system could not,” Young pointed out.

During the war, Bell’s main plant had been moved from Buffalo to Niagara Falls. To give the group more elbow room and the convenience of the factory facilities, they were relocated there on June 24, 1945.

At Niagara (the Wheatfield Plant), the group was installed in a spacious area, complete with offices, a hangar and model and machine shops. Other specialists were added to the project; drawings for the production prototype Model 47 materialized.



Bell Aircraft had great expectations for the streamlined five-place Model 42 that was designed on the basis of a marketing survey.



Several members of the Gardenville group take a ride on the third Model 30 to test its weight lifting capability. Piloting the aircraft is Joe Mashman. Inventor Arthur Young faces the camera behind the seated passengers.