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October 18, 2002
For Immediate Release

R44 is First Piston to Land at the North Pole

Torrance, CA – U.K. pilots Steve Brooks and Quentin Smith flew Brooks' R44 Raven helicopter, G-NUDE, to the North Pole in late June 2002. The pair left Anchorage to fly north over the Arctic Circle and then followed the Northwest Passage to Resolute Bay.

From there, G-NUDE and a twin Otter flew fuel to Ward Hunt Island, the most northerly landmass, from where most polar explorers start their expeditions.

Once fed and rested, Brooks and Smith flew 200 miles onto the polar cap to set up their forward fuel dump. Due to the ice drifting, technology was required to track the fuel. However, technology failed, so Smith left Brooks on the ice with a tent, rifle, and hand-held radio while he searched for the 100 LL.

Some ten hours later, Smith returned. The pair then refueled the helicopter and flew to the Geographic North Pole, landing at N90.00.00. Having set up camp on the ice with a small hole in the ground serving as an ice bucket, the two pilots raised their glasses, whereupon Smith promised to return Brooks to England in time for his upcoming marriage to Joanna Vestey, a professional photographer and licensed R44 pilot.

After a good night's sleep, despite the 24-hour daylight, the pair returned once more to the Canadian coastline and Ward Hunt Island. Their adventure marked the first flight of a piston-powered helicopter to the North Pole.

Robinson Helicopter Company is the world's leading manufacturer of civil helicopters and builds the two-seat Model R22 and the four-seat Model R44. Robinson helicopters are used throughout the world for a variety of private, business, and commercial operations. For more information, visit the website at www.robinsonheli.com.

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