



MASH Angels: Tales of an Air-Evac Helicopter Pilot in the Korean War

Richard C. Kirkland

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An inspiring first-hand account by military aviation pioneer Richard Kirkland recounts how he and a handful of daring helicopter pilots revolutionized battlefield medical evacuation and blazed the trail for modern air-evac flying.

Prior to the Korean War, the helicopter was all but unknown, and rescue was uncertain at best for downed pilots and wounded soldiers stranded behind enemy lines. In MASH ANGELS Richard Kirkland recounts his experiences on the front lines of rescue flying and military medicine. Kirkland, a fighter pilot in the Pacific theatre in World War II, came to helicopter flying after the war almost by accident. Many military higher-ups had little use for this new, “worthless contraption.” But its life-saving performances in the Korean War quickly changed minds. The helicopter was the perfect partner for another revolution in military medical care—the Mobile Army Surgical Hospital, or MASH, and the book also documents the real-life experiences of the MASH characters so familiar from the hit TV series: the nurses, surgeons (including the real “Hawkeye”), and helicopter pilots who forged a new era in military medical care.

“Helicopters of the Third Air Rescue Group were given credit for picking up 846 pilots and aircrew from behind enemy lines during the Korean War,” writes Richard Kirkland. “Add to that 8,373 soldiers and airmen we snatched from the battlefields and air-taxed to the front-line MASH. Quite a feat for a handful of taxi drivers.”

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