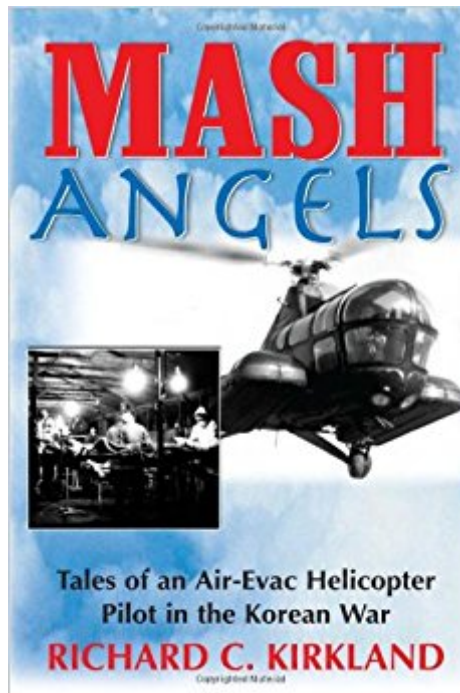




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# MASH Angels: Tales Of An Air-Evac Helicopter Pilot In The Korean War



## Synopsis

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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“A Korean War saga with implications for modern medical care . . . *MASH ANGELS* is an engaging, inspiring account of those willing to place themselves in danger in order to save lives.” (Kirkus)

Born in 1923, Richard was raised in a rural community in California during the Great Depression. At the outbreak of WWII he joined the Army Air Corps and served in the famous "Flying Knights" Fighter Squadron with Major Dick Bong, America's all time ace of aces. Lt. Kirkland flew 103 combat missions in P-38 and P-47 fighters dogfighting Japanese Zeros, attacking enemy installations, ships, and flying escort for bombers. After WWII, Lt. Kirkland was assigned to a top secret project of testing atomic bombs in the Marshall Islands. During the Korean War, Captain Kirkland traded his wings for rotors and flew 69 helicopter missions rescuing downed pilots from behind enemy lines and snatching wounded soldiers from the battlefield at the 8055 MASH, home of the infamous "Hawkeye." Major Kirkland was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, five Air Medals, the Air Force Commendation Medal and both the U.S. and Korean Presidential citations for his service in WWII and the Korean War. Richard sketched and painted his surroundings as a boy in California, writing short stories to match his artwork. During his military service he continued, sketching and painting his surroundings, capturing history as it occurred. He used his art for inspiration in his writing. He has written and published numerous magazine short stories and articles, and four books about his experiences. His last book "Wide Place in the Road," is historic fiction, based on true historic incidents with real characters that Richard knew and associated with during the span of the book from the Great Depression through WWII. Richard is very active at 89 and speaks regularly at various civic, social, and historic societies. He has been a featured speaker at the National Press Club in Washington D.C., and was interviewed on both the American and Canadian History Channels. He and his wife Maria, who is also an artist, have nine children, sixteen grandchildren and one great grandson.

I picked this up and just started reading to get an idea of what kind of book this was... and I couldn't put it down. I put aside all the other material I was reading so I could finish it all the way through. Kirkland started out as a fighter pilot in WWII, then in peacetime found himself retrained as a helicopter pilot. Captain Kirkland found himself sent to Korea during the last phase of fighting, which saw 2nd generation helicopters used for rescue operations behind enemy lines, the evacuation of wounded soldiers for medical care and the recovery of Allied pilots who were shot down. These early machines were piston-powered, using cloth-covered rotor blades to create lift. They were underpowered and tricky to fly, but brave men did the job. Kirkland was disappointed at not having the chance to return to the Air Force as a fighter pilot, ideally flying the new jets. But eventually he came to appreciate the importance of the mission he could do as a helicopter pilot. Well-written and illustrated with black and white photos this is a great book.

Thanks for telling your story and paving the way for we military helo pilots. Thank you sir for your service.

Hair raising in parts. What those pilots did for their country. they are unsung heroes!! The story flowed well and was almost sorry it ended . Not for the faint of heart but a good read. Learned some history of that conflict which was truly a war, that I did not know. Many people do not know this story or much about the Korean Conflict. Carolyn M

This is a very good read. I don't know if he wrote his own book or had it ghostwritten, but he tells a pretty good story. The guy has truly been there. It's like watching M.A.S.H. but you know that none of it was made up (in fact the real Hawkeye is prominent in this book, and Kirkland says the TV version wasn't that far from the truth). A must-read for war buffs.

As a retired Vietnam Army helicopter pilot, my years in aviation slightly overlapped the history of these early Army helicopter operations. I often wondered about my predecessors and how they braved a new technology in some very basic and minimal equipment while performing extraordinary missions. This book puts all of that into perspective. Tom Tesmar "Crusader 23"

Very well-told story about a subject that hasn't been talked about very much in print.

Easy to find books in regards to WWII and the Vietnam War. Finally starting to see books coming out that cover the Korean War. In an attempt to put the reader in the pilots seat this book covers it rather nicely.

These pilots were doing things we take for granted now. This would have been a really great time to be flying helicopters. You had to really know what you are doing. Good reading for pilots and everybody! Thanks

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