Aerospace Medical Association

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NEWS RELEASE
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Christopher J. Brooks Receives the AsMA Theodore C. Lyster Award

This award was established to honor the memory of Brig. Gen. Theodore C. Lyster, the first Chief Surgeon, Aviation Section, United States Signal Corps. It is given annually for outstanding achievement in the general field of aerospace medicine. It is currently sponsored by the Army Aviation Medical Association.

Christopher J. Brooks, OMM, OStJ, CD, MBChB, FFOM, DAvMed, was the 2015 recipient of the Theodore C. Lyster Award for his outstanding contributions to enhancing the survivability of helicopter water ditching through helicopter underwater escape training programs and improvements in cold water immersion protective equipment. The award was presented during AsMA's Honors Night Ceremonies, May 14, 2015, at the Walt Disney World Dolphin Hotel, in Orlando, FL.

Dr. Brooks' career has spanned over 30 years, during which he has relentlessly pursued improvements in helicopter underwater escape training techniques and concurrent improvements in aircrew cold water survival equipment. These programs are especially important in Canadian and other maritime rotary wing operations where cold water ditching is a constant threat. Dr. Brooks has pursued cold water life-support equipment development, including improved life-jacket and immersion suit design and emergency breathing apparatus. He led studies and personally tested new equipment both in the lab and in actual cold water sea trials. He also led the development of improved underwater escape training programs at Survival Systems in Halifax, Nova Scotia. He has carefully documented these problems and solutions in a series of scientific papers published in *Aviation, Space and Environmental Medicine* (ASEM), NATO AGARD publications, and elsewhere. He was first author of two papers published in ASEM in 2014 (ASEM 2014;85;1-6; ASEM 2014;85;440-4). Additionally, he authored a series of lay articles for aircrew describing the improved life-support equipment and training. These combined efforts have greatly improved aircrew survival in cold water ditching and have saved many aircrew lives.

Dr. Brooks is a physician, a scientist, and an inventor. Coming from a medical family of at least 14 doctors, he was accepted at Medical School at age 17 in Manchester, UK. After graduating with an M.D. in 1964, he joined the Royal Navy and served in two nuclear submarines for 5 years as the physician and the Health Physicist in charge of the reactor chemistry and 16 nuclear tipped Polaris missiles. After leaving the Royal Navy, he spent 5 years in Family Practice in Nottingham, UK, the highlight of which time was delivering twins in the middle of the night in a gypsy caravan camped by the Erewash canal. The second twin came out bum first and survived!

Dr. Brooks then went to Carlyle, Saskatchewan, to do a locum in the winter of 1974/5. He looked after an Indian Reserve and the nearest hospital was 100 miles away. He pulled out teeth, dealt with a blown off knee cap, and one ectopic pregnancy. He loved Canada so much, he and his wife emigrated and he joined the Canadian Navy in late 1975. His new naval career started as a Flight Surgeon in Shearwater, Nova Scotia. Here he spent some time dangling from the hoist of a Sea King helicopter conducting rescues in the North Atlantic. It was also here that he realized that if the helicopter ditched, he was going to be the first person to drown—hence his interest in marine survival and his extensive research into the human factors of escape and survival from helicopters flying over water.

Dr. Brooks had three tours at the former Defence and Civil Institute of Environmental Medicine in Toronto, two of which were as the C.O. He was the Command Surgeon for the Canadian Navy and later the Canadian Air Force too. He introduced a new lifejacket for the Air Force, a quick don immersion suit for the Navy, and pioneered an Emergency Breathing Apparatus (EBS) for helicopter crew and passengers flying over water. This EBS has now been copied and introduced into virtually all NATO maritime helicopters and in 2015 legislation is underway to introduce it into the Civil Aviation Authority regulations in UK and European commercial maritime helicopters. He retired from the Navy as a Captain in 1998. He was appointed as the Director of R&D at Survival Systems Ltd. in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, and an adjunct Professor in the Faculty of Health and Human Performance at Dalhousie University, Halifax. He was also recently appointed by the Privy Council to be a Federal Medical Judge as a member of the Transportation Appeal Tribunal of Canada.

Dr. Brooks holds a Diploma in Aviation Medicine from Farnborough, UK, and is a Fellow of the Faculty of Occupational Medicine, London. He has published over 75 articles and papers, wrote the textbook on lifejackets, and has written several publications for NATO. He also co-shares five U.S. and one European patent for helicopter window escape mechanisms. Within AsMA, he serves on the International Activities Committee. His awards include the NATO Research and Technology Achievement Award, two Joe Haley Writing Awards, Order of St. John of Jersusalem, Queen's Jubilee Medal, Order of Military Merit, the Sir James Martin Gold Medal, and Honorary Member of the International Association for Safety and Survival Training.

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About the Aerospace Medical Association

The Aerospace Medical Association (AsMA) is the largest, most-representative professional organization in the fields of aerospace medicine and human performance. The Aerospace Medical Association is an umbrella group providing a forum for many different disciplines to come together and share their expertise. The Association has provided its expertise to a multitude of Federal and international agencies on a broad range of issues including aviation and space medical standards, the aging pilot, and physiological stresses of flight. AsMA's membership includes aerospace medicine specialists, physiologists, psychologists, human performance specialists, flight nurses, and researchers in this field. Most are with industry, civil aviation regulatory agencies, departments of defense and military services, the airlines, space programs, and universities. Approximately 25% of the membership is international. Through the efforts of the AsMA members, safety in flight and man's overall adaptation to adverse environments have been more nearly achieved. For further information, please visit www.asma.org.