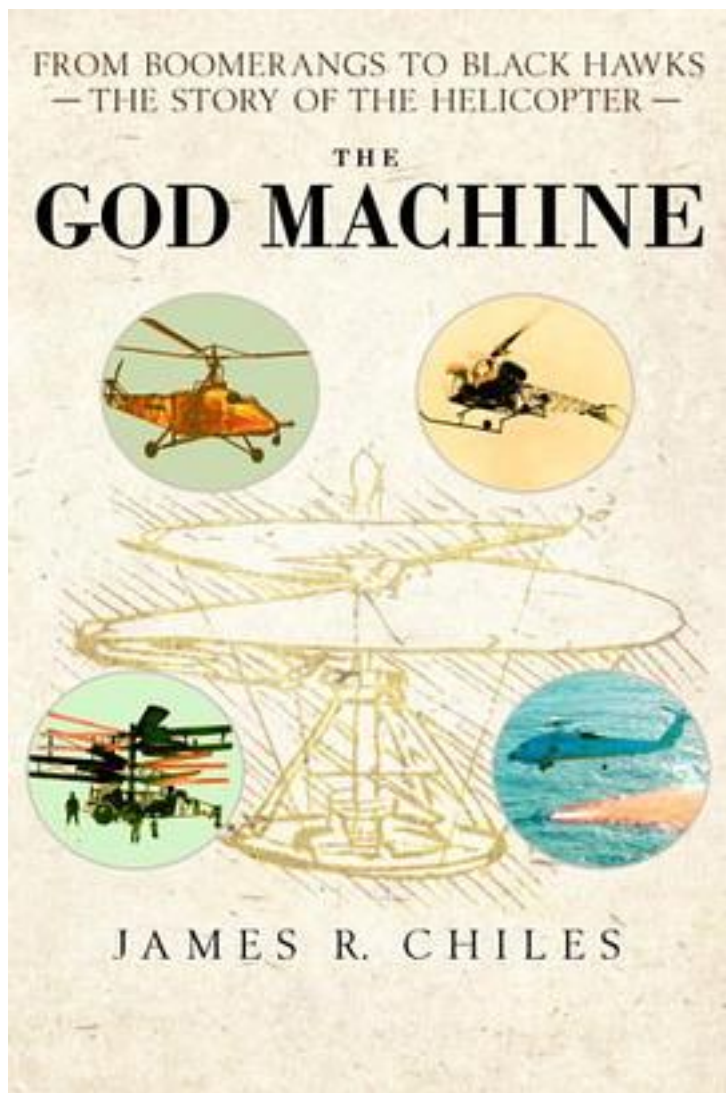


The God Machine



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History has known few more inventive minds than those responsible for the helicopter, mankind's most versatile flying machine. From the aerodynamic artistry of Leonardo da Vinci, through the futuristic tales of Jules Verne, to the prototypes built by the horde of rotationally obsessed enthusiasts who followed, here is the definitive story of a modern icon.

Proposing that humans could hover in the air by hanging a fuselage beneath large spinning blades requires a substantial leap of the imagination—not to mention a pile of precision gadgetry. This unique book bears witness to the challenge of turning the earliest “rotating wing” aircraft into the helicopters that dominate news footage today.

The helicopter turned out to be much more agile and capable than the early inventors expected but also took longer to perfect than the airplane. Among the earliest of the helicopter hopefuls were nineteenth-century American greeting card printer Mortimer Nelson, French entrepreneurs Launoy and Bienvenu of prerevolutionary Paris, and English country squire George Cayley, builder of mankind's first manned glider. The first controllable helicopter flew in the 1920s. While it has yet to take its place alongside the family car, as pioneer designer Igor Sikorsky hoped, the helicopter plays a significant role in all our lives.

In addition to transforming the ways of war, offering godlike views of inaccessible spots, and providing some of our most-watched TV moments—including the cloud of newscopters that trailed O. J. Simpson's Bronco—the helicopter has revolutionized rescues worldwide by proving its ability to extract people from almost anywhere. In 2005 an astounding 35,500 people were saved from the perils of Hurricane Katrina—a feat impossible with any other machine.

James Chiles offers profiles of the many helicoptrians throughout history who contributed to the development of this amazing machine, and pays tribute to the selfless heroism of pilots and crews. A virtual flying lesson and uplifting scientific adventure tale, *The God Machine* is more than the history of an invention; it is a journey into the minds of imaginative thinkers and a fascinating look at the ways they changed our world.

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