SEPTEMBER 24, 2025

www.castleairmuseum.org

CASTLE AIR MUSEUM

NEWSLETTER

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Castle Air Fest: Oct 18th**
  Castle Airfest and Bombs Away "Fall Blitz" Car Show.
  October 18, 8:00 am to 3:00 pm. Castle Airport, Gate 6, 3140 Apron Avenue, Atwater, CA 95301.

- **Flicks of Flight - Oct 18th**
  Join us to watch Planes at 7:00 pm. Free snacks of Cracker Jacks and bottles of water will be available. Bring the kids for a paper airplane building contest. Admission: A can of food for the local food bank.

CURATOR'S CORNER

RUSTY WYNN, CURATOR

This month, our focus has been on mastering our new collection management software, PastPerfect. Using it, we have fully accessioned our newest addition—the AV-8B+ Harrier—along with all its components. We are now working to do the same for every aircraft in the collection, a major but important undertaking.

Another project in progress is the relocation of magazines and periodicals from the curator's office to make space for aircraft Technical Manuals. Once completed, crew chiefs and restoration volunteers will have easier access to the manuals they need. They will be able to make copies or check out manuals, when necessary, while the originals will be better protected against damage, missing pages, or loss.

FROM THE BOARD CHAIRMAN

MAJ GEN CLAY GARRISON USAF (RET)

It has been an outstanding month for the museum! Open Cockpit Day was very successful, bringing 2400+ visitors to the grounds. Attendance was bolstered by two key partnerships - Amtrak San Joaquins and the Atwater School District. Over 300 visitors traveled via train to Open Cockpit Day and over 250 visitors attended with their children who received free entry with a paid adult admission. Two great partnerships that made a real difference for our day.

Of course, Open Cockpit Day can never be successful without the help of our many volunteers and staff. I want to thank all of them for their hard work and selfless service. I really appreciate our friends from the Winton VFW who hosted our beer garden and provided the band. And I must give a shout out to the vendors who consistently support our event and make it special.

If you didn't make it out to Open Cockpit Day you missed the freshly painted SR-71, including tail numbers and tail art. Come check it out! Remember, your membership makes visiting easy.

Don't forget the Car Show next month in conjunction with the Castle Airport Air Fest. We will be rolling out the spruced-up F-4S Bunny Phantom and the UH-1. It is very possible our Bunny Phantom will be joined by the current F-18 Vandy One, also painted in gloss black, presenting a rare photo opportunity for attendees.

I hope you enjoy this month's letter, and I look forward to your feedback.

RESTORATION HANGAR

GREG STATHATOS, RESTORATION MANAGER

It has been another busy and productive month in restoration! The team continues to gain momentum, and with cooler weather ahead, our energy is only increasing. From October 6–10 we'll be on the road to China Lake to pick up a complete wing and vertical stabilizer for our A-7, along with any other parts we can secure. Since all of our regular volunteers will be making the trip, the restoration hangar will be closed during those dates.

After more than 20 years in storage, the wings for our TF-102 have finally been moved into the restoration hangar. Work is already underway, and if progress continues at this pace, both wings should be mated with the fuselage by the end of October. While the wings were being moved, Pat and John continued repairing the cockpit, and Jeff has been documenting landing gear placement and sourcing missing pieces.

Restoration isn't only about aircraft—it also includes the support vehicles that keep operations moving. Our volunteers from the Pharaohs Car Club have been hard at work servicing anything with wheels. Thanks to their efforts, our Veterans Day Parade caravan is coming together. The WWII Jeep, Vietnam-era Mighty Mite, and 1936 tractor are all running again and will be pulling artifacts through downtown Merced on November 11. In addition, the man lift is back in service, the grounds crew Mule is operational, and next month the ambulance will receive a full fluid change to prepare for towing the MASH helicopter.

Looking ahead, excitement is building for Castle Airfest on October 18. The F-4 "Black Bunny" and the Huey are being kept in pristine condition in the hangar for their big day. Then, on October 22, restoration will roll both aircraft out to their display spots—a "mini parade" of sorts. With those two leaving the hangar, we'll have a new empty space ready for our next restoration project. But you'll have to wait until next month's newsletter to find out what's moving onto the waiting list!

LTV A-7 Corsair II in Restoration

Photo by Greg Stathatos

LTV A-7 Corsair II Photo by Greg Stathatos

VOLUNTEER SERVICES

BOB SCOBLE, VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

The search for new volunteers is ongoing. To expand our reach, Castle Air Museum recently launched an online volunteer application on our website. So far, we have received more than 20 applications, with 13 resulting in new active volunteers. Current volunteer roles include Restoration, Crew Chiefs and assistants, Event Volunteers, and Archive support. We also continue to accept traditional paper applications, and many new recruits come through word of mouth as our volunteers share their experiences with friends and colleagues. Our volunteers truly are the backbone of Castle Air Museum's operations.

On August 30, the Museum hosted another successful Fall Open Cockpit Day. What visitors see is an exciting, well-run event—but behind the scenes, it requires months of planning and hard work from our volunteers. Preparations begin weeks in advance, with volunteers coordinating logistics, organizing vendors, and refreshing their aircraft for display. The week leading up to the event involves set-up and final details, and on the day itself, more than 50 volunteers came together to make it happen. This included over 35 crew chiefs and assistants, 15 event volunteers managing cashiers and gate control, and several restoration volunteers showcasing our Hidden Collection.

The day started before sunrise at 5:00 a.m. and wrapped up close to 6:00 p.m., when the last volunteer locked the gates. We also received tremendous support from the Sheriff's Explorers, who managed parking, and the Civil Air Patrol Cadets, who assisted with vendors and logistics throughout the day.

These events simply wouldn't be possible without our dedicated volunteers. Thank you for sharing your time, energy, and talent with Castle Air Museum.

GIFT SHOP

LUCY SILVA, RETAIL SALES MANAGER

Did you know the Gift Shop arranges tours to the museum? That's right. School groups, Boy Scouts, church groups, car clubs, family reunions. All good reasons to call the Gift Shop, ask for our group rates and arrange a knowledgeable guide. Call today!

Aircraft of the Month

BELL UH-1H IROQUOIS

MEMBER SERVICES

Renewals: Go online and complete the form or contact Janie Sundgren at: membership@castleairmuseum.org

Membership Credentials: Stop by or contact the Gift Shop at 209-723-2182

Guided Tours: Stop by the Gift Shop or contact our retail sales manager, Lucy Silva at 209-723-2182. Email at: giftshopmanager@castleairmuseum.org

Open Cockpit Day: Go directly to the membership booth and show your credentials for expedited entry.

AIRCRAFT OF THE MONTH

Built in 1968 by Bell Helicopter in Fort Worth, Texas, aircraft 68-16165 began its service as a UH-1H-BF. In September 1969, it arrived in Vietnam as a brand-new "Huey" with the 101st Airborne Division, 1st Brigade, Aviation Platoon at Camp Eagle. During its time in Vietnam, it flew with several units, including the 165th Transportation Company, the 17th Air Cavalry "C" Troop, the 605th Transportation Company, the 388th Transportation Company, and the 611th Transportation Company.

Following the war, 68-16165 was stored with the 5th Army at Corpus Christi Army Depot. In 1981 it was assigned to the 377th Medical Company as a "Dustoff" MEDEVAC helicopter at Yongsan Army Base, Seoul, South Korea. In 1994, it was upgraded to an UH-1V, receiving a rescue hoist, MEDEVAC components, and modernized avionics, and was assigned to the 126th Medical Company at Mather Air Force Base, California.

In 1995, the helicopter was transferred to the U.S. Forest Service/CalFire at McClellan Field in Sacramento, where it was placed in storage and used for spare parts. Eventually, Castle Air Museum acquired 68-16165, and restoration is now underway to return it to its Vietnam-era appearance—as the brand-new Huey that first arrived at Camp Eagle in 1969.

68-16165 at McClellan Field

68-16165 as a new "Huey"