AUGUST 22, 2025

www.castleairmuseum.org

CASTLE AIR MUSEUM

NEWSLETTER

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Fall Open Cockpit Day.**
  - August 30th, 2025 - Public gates open at 8:30 am. See the AV-8B Harrier II.
- **Fall Golf Tournament.**
  - September 12th, 2025 at Rancho Del Rey Golf Club in Atwater. Online registration is open now. Hole and cart sponsorships available.

To register or find out more, visit www.castleairmuseum.org.

GIFT SHOP NEWS

LUCY SILVA, RETAIL SALES MANAGER

The Gift Shop is Thrilled for Open Cockpit Day!

We're excited to welcome you to our next Open Cockpit Day! Explore our unique new arrivals and enjoy a fun shopping adventure. Discover limited-edition models, illustration prints, and books, along with brand-new apparel—including kids' shirts, toys, patches, and our newest addition: stickers!

Behind the scenes, our team has been expanding their skills and enhancing customer care, taking on tasks such as data entry, answering and directing phone calls, and processing mail and donations. We look forward to seeing you in the Gift Shop and sharing all the exciting updates we've made!

FROM THE BOARD CHAIRMAN

MAJ GEN CLAY GARRISON USAF (RET)

Welcome to our inaugural Monthly Electronic Newsletter! Kudos to Director Jared Hines for taking on this project. He is dedicated to making sure we publish our notes monthly to keep you informed.

Our museum is experiencing some refreshing and positive change. Past management did a great job acquiring the large variety of aircraft we display today. Now, our large collection requires focused attention to stay functional and relevant. The current Board's goal is to make your museum a world class attraction for our guests. As you will note when reading this letter, we are hiring personnel that are dedicated to that vision. Planes are being painted, artifacts are moving, and erection of our first covered pavilion is at hand. Beyond staff, we have implemented several management policies to solidify our financial position and normalize daily operations, so they are independent of any one individual and completely transparent to the public. If we are going to be a world class venue, we need top notch people guided by normal governance principles.

To that end, we are thrilled to inform you that we hired a curator! Rusty Wynn, longtime volunteer, is now our curator. Although only part-time, Rusty is already having a big impact along with his highly skilled volunteer assistant, Pat. I am very encouraged by their plans to catalog our artifacts and help fulfill our education and preservation mission. We are also actively searching for a new Executive Director. This is a big change and presents a real opportunity to orient our museum to the future.

I hope you enjoy this inaugural edition of our online newsletter. If you have any questions, please send me a note or call. Feedback is very much appreciated. More to follow!

RESTORATION HANGAR

GREG STATHATOS, RESTORATION MANAGER

With summer in full swing, one might think the heat would slow us down—but it's had the opposite effect. If anything, the heat has fueled our productivity. From aircraft to support vehicles and equipment, the work has been nonstop.

We started the month addressing paint issues on the F-4 "Black Bunny." Jeff and Bruce led the repairs, found the best solution, and did an outstanding job. The Black Bunny will be on display during Open Cockpit Day, though inside the hangar for now. She'll make her big return during AirFest at the airport on October 18, 2025.

Also in the hangar, our TF-102 has been moved out of storage to continue restoration. Pat and John are heading this project with their expert metal-working skills, and progress is already showing. Meanwhile, Steve—our interior specialist—is finishing work on both the Black Bunny and our UH-1 Huey. The Huey will soon join our permanent vertical lift display. We say "vertical lift" instead of "helicopters" because the museum's newest arrival, AV-8B Harrier 165579, also falls into that category.
Big progress is happening with our F-117 as well. All outstanding issues have been resolved, and a plan is in place to install the leading edges and begin paint prep. This will be an all-hands project with Richard leading the way. Frank, Bill, and our interns are wrapping up the final drilling and dimpling needed for installation. Every member's expertise will play a role in moving this aircraft closer to completion.

Our restoration crew has grown with the addition of volunteers from the Pharaohs Car Club. Darrel, Darren, and their team have already repaired our forklift and electrical boom lift, prepped our Vietnam-era M422 "Mighty Mite" for future parades, and are now turning their attention to our WWII Jeep. Their skills have been a great addition to the team.

Stepping outside, visitors will notice a major transformation: our SR-71 "Blackbird." Once faded into more of a "Graybird," she has now regained her bold black finish. Tail markings, which have been missing for years, will be repainted before Open Cockpit Day.

Not to be outdone, our B-52 is undergoing extensive restoration. The fuselage has been completely sanded—151 hours of labor so far—with about 350 hours estimated to complete both wings. The goal is to have her paint-ready by December 2025.

You may also notice several aircraft now have their control surfaces locked into position, giving them the appearance of being in flight while also protecting them from wind damage. This improvement was made possible thanks to the hard work of our summer interns. If you'd like to be part of this dedicated team preserving aviation history, we encourage you to join our restoration crew. We're expanding beyond our traditional Monday-Wednesday-Friday schedule to include weekend opportunities, making it easier for more enthusiasts to get involved.

One Team... One Fight.

Aircraft of the Month

AV-8B HARRIER II

Photo by Director Jared Hines

CURATOR'S CORNER

RUSTY WYNN, CURATOR

Meet Rusty Wynn, our part-time Curator and lifelong aviation enthusiast. After retiring from a career in public school leadership, Rusty traded classrooms for cockpits—volunteering in the restoration hangar, guiding tours, and helping on the Education Committee. He's now on a mission to digitally catalog every aircraft and artifact, uncover their histories, and make this knowledge accessible to crew chiefs and visitors alike. He's also organizing our aircraft tech manuals in the Baker Memorial Library for restoration volunteers.

Meet Pat Holloway, our volunteer Assistant to the Curator who blends a love of museums, aviation, and technology. A former United Airlines flight attendant and private pilot, Pat's career in insurance and risk management took her from WWII aircraft to airlines and healthcare. With a Master's in Museum Studies and skills in conservation, exhibition design, and technical writing, she now channels her expertise into preserving and sharing Castle Air Museum's collection.

Pictured: AV-8 MX team from Naval Air Weapons Center, China Lake. Far right: AV-8 Pilot Mr. Jim Coppersmith, who put on a stunning aerial demonstration on arrival. Great partners and excellent team.

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.

VOLUNTEER SERVICES

BOB SCOBLE, VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

It's been an exciting and productive month at the museum! We've welcomed several new volunteers in tour guide, restoration, and crew chief roles—and we're happy to see a few returning volunteers as well. In restoration, Greg has been working weekends alongside 20 interns from UC Merced, making great progress on ongoing projects.

We've made some changes to make volunteering easier and less frustrating:

- Extended Aircraft Access: Crew Chiefs can now access their aircraft before and after museum hours.
- Simplified Entry: The hospital gate now has a combination lock, and Crew Chiefs have both the code and the authority to enter.
- No More Gift Shop Sign-In: Soon, volunteers will only need to show their current ID badge for entry.
- Consolidated Time Reporting: Volunteer hours and mileage will now be recorded on a single "Volunteer Time Sheet," to be submitted to the Volunteer Coordinator after month-end.

Email groups have also been updated for All Volunteers, Crew Chiefs, Restoration, Special Events, and other categories. If you're a volunteer and haven't received an email from me or Castle Air Museum in the past month, your contact information may be out of date. Please email me at bob.scoble@castleairmuseum.org so I can update your records.

In recent months, our volunteers have proudly represented the museum at several community events:

- Atwater 4th of July Parade: Reggie Hill, Clay Garrison, Kim Nickerson-Nutt, and Jeff Stopper.
- Atwater High Career Day: Reggie Hill.
- Hmong Celebration at Castle Airport: Bob Tyler, Bob Scoble, and John Sundgren.
- Merced PD's National Night Out at Applegate Park: John & Janie Sundgren, Reggie Hill, Bob Scoble, Jared Hines, and Kim Nickerson-Nutt.

We're Always Looking for Volunteers! No experience necessary.