CASTLE AIR MUSEUM

NEWSLETTER

Photographer: Jack Poelstra

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Bombs Away Car Show - Apr 25th**
  The Annual BOMBS AWAY Car Show, onsite among the airplanes at Castle Air Museum, will be held April 25th, 2026 from 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Online registration and more information coming soon!

- **Spring Open Cockpit Day - May 23rd**
  Castle Air Museum's Spring Open Cockpit Day will be on May 23rd, 2026. This is your opportunity to see our historical aircraft up-close and explore the rich history of military aviation. Gates open at 8:30am. More information coming soon!

CASTLE'S MOST WANTED

This is the section of the newsletter where we post the job most in need of a special volunteer. Hence, our most wanted! If you have the desire and ability to fill this need or know someone who can, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator to start a journey to help make Castle the most desired destination in Central California!

IRRIGATION SPECIALIST - Have a background in landscape irrigation? We can use your help. Our timers and valve controllers need work. We can save water, time, and money, if we can get our several distributed controllers working again. Our grounds keeper David will show you our needs. You can work on weekends. Skilled help is preferred.

FROM THE BOARD CHAIRMAN

MAJ GEN CLAY GARRISON USAF (RET)

It wouldn't be a monthly newsletter if I didn't provide a pavilion update. We recently did a video call with all of the subcontractors working on our project. It was very exciting to see the initial plans for our plumbing, electrical, HVAC, and grading. We also accomplished our first plan check with the City of Atwater for the rodeo arena that will house our WWII bombers. Looking forward to our approved grading plan so we can start moving dirt!

The banquet room looks a little different these days. The old F-102 simulator is gone, as are all of the excess display cases. We cleaned everything out so we can start marketing the space more effectively for events. Need a room for a party or meeting? Use your member privileges and get a special rate.

Restoration is making another trip to China Lake to get parts for our A-7. Greg and his team did a great job cleaning out the hangar and making space for the A-7, TF-102, and Mig-17. Three simultaneous projects! The hangar is open Mon/Wed/Fri, if you want to see the restoration team in action.

And finally, thank you to everyone who participated in our Year-End Fundraiser. Membership and visitors keep the lights on; donations make restorations and special projects (pavilion) possible. That means the F-117 sheet metal will get finished this year. All good!

RESTORATION HANGAR

GREG STATHATOS, RESTORATION MANAGER

January was another busy month in the hangar, highlighted by a major milestone on the B-24. After more than two years of work, the ailerons are now complete and installed. Pat, Richard, and John rebuilt nearly 75% of the original structure. Once covered in fabric, matching paint was applied. Despite challenges with the original finish, persistence paid off and the results are excellent.
Heavy, wet fog throughout January temporarily paused exterior work on the B-52. We are still aiming for completion in time for Open Cockpit in May, weather permitting.

Inside the hangar, progress continues on the TF-102, with Pat and John advancing restoration work while Eesa continues detailed work on the ordnance bay. When finished, it will be the only functional TF-102 ordnance bay in existence.

Work on the A-7 is also moving forward. Jeff, Steve, Barry, and Richard are removing and preparing parts from donor wings and verticals for installation on the China Lake donor wing. A cradle has been completed to retrieve the center wing section, with a five-man team heading out early Monday for a two-day recovery trip.

The Motor Pool is now fully operational, improving vehicle storage and maintenance access. Cleanup efforts continue, creating room for future projects and a more efficient workspace, including a newly cleared and fenced storage area along the side of the hangar.

ONE TEAM... ONE FIGHT

GIFT SHOP

LUCY SILVA, RETAIL SALES MANAGER

Are you looking for an educational and fun outing for your child's class? Do you want to introduce them to an exciting STEM field like aviation? Maybe a hands-on history activity where they can see the machines that changed the world in the last century?

All of this is possible. The museum offers many types of tours for groups of all ages. Our layout is perfect for large or small groups looking for room to roam while learning cool facts about military aviation and the men and women who made it possible. We can even add the VC-9 tour for your group. Call the Gift Shop for details. 209-782-2182

CURATOR'S CORNER

RUSTY WYNN, CURATOR

I'm happy to report that I met my self-imposed goal of relocating all aircraft technical manuals from the Tech Manual Library (behind the Copper Wings Café) to the Baker Memorial Library. While the manuals are not yet fully organized, they are now physically housed upstairs.

Additional tech manuals previously stored in the Restoration Hangar are also in the process of being moved to the Baker Memorial Library. This has been a significant undertaking, but the manuals will be far better served in this centralized location.

During the move, several boxes of aviation-related books were discovered and will be added to the Baker Memorial Library collection. The library will be reorganized to create a more user-friendly space for research and for members who wish to borrow books for personal reading.

We continue to learn the intricacies of the PastPerfect system. In 2025, 37 new objects were added to the database, and we have already begun accessioning new objects for 2026.

Ongoing Curator Projects

- Accessioning new artifacts into the Castle Air Museum collection
- Inventorying and documenting existing artifacts
- Relocating magazines and periodicals from the curator's office
- Reorganizing the Baker Memorial Library
- Collecting and documenting history for all aircraft and artifacts
- Reorganizing aircraft files

MEMBERSHIP SERVICES

JOHN SUNDGREN - MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Renewals: Go online to 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

VOLUNTEER SERVICES

BOB SCOBLE, VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Volunteer Management Update

Castle Air Museum has embraced data-driven tools to improve volunteer management, streamline operations, and track contributions. All volunteers are now integrated into advanced management systems, enhancing communication and record-keeping.

New Volunteer Application Process

Applications can now be submitted online via the Zoho platform on our website. Once submitted, the Volunteer Coordinator is notified, and applicants are contacted for a phone interview and in-person meeting.

Since Zoho was implemented earlier this year, we received 50 online applications:

- 21 joined the volunteer team
- 17 declined or did not respond
- 4 resigned after on-boarding

Paper applications remain available by mail, at the Gift Shop, or through an active volunteer or museum member.

Volunteer Management Tools

- Excel: Tracks volunteer hours and mileage, supporting monthly, annual, and lifetime totals. Personalized letters recognizing 2025 contributions will be sent after January, and top contributors are acknowledged at the Membership Dinner.

- PastPerfect: Stores volunteer details, hours, and assignments (Restoration, Special Events, Crew Chief roles), producing customizable reports that complement Excel and replace paper records.

- Microsoft Outlook: Organizes email communication via assignment-based distribution lists, ensuring volunteers stay informed. Volunteers who haven't received emails in the past six months should update their contact information.

These tools help Castle Air Museum efficiently manage volunteers, recognize their contributions, and maintain clear communication across all assignments.

AIRCRAFT OF THE MONTH

RUSTY WYNN, CURATOR

Aircraft of the Month: Douglas A-4L Skyhawk (BuNo 149532)

Castle Air Museum is home to an incredible variety of aircraft—and their stories bring them to life. If this Skyhawk could talk, she would tell a remarkable tale: joining the Navy, serving in Vietnam, becoming a photographic "model," performing in aerobatic shows, and later flying as a Marine Corps aircraft.

Douglas A-4L Skyhawk, BuNo 149532, was built by Douglas Aircraft in Long Beach, California, as an A-4D-2N (c/n 12857) and delivered to the U.S. Navy on July 21, 1960. She served with multiple squadrons, including VA-22 "Fighting Redcocks", VA-94 "Mighty Shrikes", and VA-216 "Black Diamonds," aboard the USS Midway and USS Ranger.

In 1966, assigned to VA-144 "Roadrunners" aboard the USS Kitty Hawk, 149532 flew combat missions over North Vietnam from Yankee Station in the Gulf of Tonkin under the call sign "Warpaint 312." During this deployment, she also became a photo model for the squadron's 1966–67 cruise book, appearing in portraits with the pilots and crew.

Following Vietnam, 149532 cycled through several assignments, including VSF-1 "Warhawks", a return to VA-216, and later VA-95 "Green Lizards." In 1970, she was rebuilt and upgraded to an A-4L and transferred to the newly created VA-209 "Air Barons," a Naval Air Reserve squadron. For one year, she performed in aerobatic demonstration shows across the United States, earning the nickname "show girl" of the squadron before VA-209 was disestablished in 1971.

In 1972, 149532 became a U.S. Marine Corps aircraft with VMA-124 "Wild Aces" at NAS Memphis, Tennessee. Around 1976, she returned to Navy service with VA-204 "River Rattlers," remaining at NAS Memphis until she was officially retired from Navy service on January 4, 1978.

In March 2006, 149532 was acquired by the National Museum of Naval Aviation in Pensacola, Florida, and later loaned to Castle Air Museum. She was restored in 2007 as a River Rattler and placed on display, where she continues to share her rich history, showcasing decades of service, combat, and showmanship for visitors today.

Photographer: VA:144/The Skyhawk Association
148532 as "Warpaint 312"

Photographer: VA:144/The Skyhawk Association
148532 ready for launch as "Warpaint 312"

Photographer: Fred Roos via Sullivan Collection
With the Marine Corp., VMA-124

Photograph: Skyhawk Association
149532 as taxi lead with the Air Barons