CASTLE AIR MUSEUM

NEWSLETTER

Convair YB-58A Hustler 55-0666

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Flicks of Flight - Apr 18th**
  Featured Film: Planes: Fire & Rescue
  Bust your lawn chairs and blankets then join us for a special featured film out among the airplanes.

- **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!

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!

Part-time Landscaper - We have an opening for a paid part-time landscaper. There is always work that needs to be accomplished when the grass and weeds start growing. Pick your days; 18 hours a week. You can inquire with Jared. Of course, we also accept volunteers. There is plenty of work to go around. Help make our grounds beautiful!

FROM THE BOARD CHAIRMAN

MAJ GEN CLAY GARRISON USAF (RET)

The days are longer and definitely warmer, so our event season is picking up at the museum. As you can see on the left, Flicks of Flight kicks off on April 18th with the very kid-friendly movie, Planes: Fire and Rescue. Bring the kids/grandkids and enjoy a great evening underneath one of our bombers. Next up is the Bombs Away Car Show, the best and most unique car show on the West Coast. We are offering reduced admission on that day, so mark your calendar and join us.

Good news! Our YouTube channel is so popular it got monetized. That means we are collecting ad revenue for the museum. This is due to the tremendous effort of our social media team and production staff. We've come a long way since we started a year ago. If you haven't been following our channel, look it up under Castle Air Museum.

BIG ANNOUNCEMENT - Our online store is finally going live on April 1st. Now our guests will be able to pre-purchase tickets for the museum and all special events. We will also begin limited merch sales over the next few months. This is another project over a year in the making. Jared comes to us with lots of experience in this area and our web designer at Baroness Design did the heavy lifting. Check it out soon and send me your feedback.

Don't forget Open Cockpit Day, May 23rd!

RESTORATION HANGAR

GREG STATHATOS, RESTORATION MANAGER

With another month flying by at supersonic speed, the Restoration Team is feeling lucky—even if we're not all Irish. We are pursuing additional military donations, including a WWII utility jeep and a Korean War-era fuel trailer. The front-corner building will soon be converted to display vehicles for public viewing rather than storage.

With improved weather, sanding on the B-52 has resumed. We are seeking volunteers to assist—any day, any time (lights available). Approximately 100 hours remain before the black paint can be applied.

In the hangar, Jeff continues work toward the A-7's debut at Castle AirFest in October. The vertical stabilizer is nearly ready for installation, with Barry and Steve preparing the remaining components. It will be close, but the aircraft is on track for its reveal.

Pat and John are making major progress on the TF-102. John is repairing wing and stabilator damage, while Pat has completed a complex fuselage repair requiring exceptional craftsmanship. It has been an impressive effort to witness.

Hangar cleanup is ongoing, with two large dumpsters of scrap metal already removed. Additional cleanup is planned as we prepare to tackle the boneyard.

The Pharaohs successfully brought "Big Bertha" back into operation. During its first test tow, we moved the Hound Dog from Hangar 47 under the B-52, enhancing the display ahead of Open Cockpit.

Our younger volunteers continue to make an impact. Aaron is restoring an artifact air compressor—his third "yellow" project—while Gabriel is refurbishing long-stored missiles from Hangar 47. Dexter completed welding repairs on the F-16 event trailer. Their contributions are a welcome addition to the team.

Our newly acquired M-5 trailer has been cleared of a makeshift structure, thanks to the efforts of Frank, Bruce, Richard, and Darrel, who filled three dumpsters during the demolition. We now have two rare examples—fewer than a dozen are known to exist.

It's always a good time in the hangar—come join us for some hands-on work.

ONE TEAM...ONE FIGHT

CURATOR'S CORNER

RUSTY WYNN, CURATOR

March Highlights

Castle Air Museum was the place to be this month as we welcomed several special visitors and made meaningful progress behind the scenes.

Robert Geopfarth Visit

- We were honored to host Robert Geopfarth, reconnaissance attack navigator (RAN) of our RA-5C Vigilante (156615), during its final launch from the USS Nimitz on February 6, 1977. Robert spent a week reconnecting with "his" aircraft, carefully cleaning both cockpits. He also volunteered time to clean the cockpit of our indoor B-52.
- Special thanks to Bill Walls and his wife for providing their house trailer during his stay.

Connecting with Tom Myers

- While Robert was here, we connected by phone with Tom Myers, the pilot of RA-5C (156615) on its final Nimitz launch. Tom also flew our RF-8G Crusader (145607) during the Cuban Missile Crisis. We look forward to welcoming both gentlemen to the museum together soon.

Visit from the Jeffers Family

- We were privileged to host the son and great-grandson of Quentin Jeffers, top turret gunner and flight engineer aboard General Castle's B-17 on his final mission.
- Thanks to Greg Strathatus for opening the B-17 and to John Sundgren for providing a private tour. The Jeffers family greatly appreciated the hospitality.

This month, we received an F-106 "Black Box" from Bob Kwiecinski and the F-106 Association and are partnering on their Black Box Project. A new indoor exhibit will highlight the system's significance, its technology, and its connection to modern aircraft and weapons integration. The exhibit is expected to debut alongside the F-106 Association's All Troops Reunion in Reno, Nevada, May 3–6.

Thank you to Matthew Kano, a college student volunteer, for organizing our recently relocated aircraft technical manuals—an effort that will greatly improve access and preservation.

We are also nearing completion of the National Museum of the United States Air Force loan inventory, our largest to date, with a target of May 1. This year, each artifact will also be entered into our PastPerfect collections system, adding an important layer of documentation.

VOLUNTEER SERVICES

BOB SCOBLE, VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Volunteer & Community Engagement

I began working with the Open Cockpit planning team, focusing on volunteer support and food vendors. Several vendors have confirmed participation and received applications, with additional outreach ongoing.

Volunteer Crew Chiefs are confirming support for the May event, with 11 responses so far. We are also receiving commitments from Special Events volunteers.

Three new volunteers joined this month. Max Neidberger and Dexter Esquival were assigned to Restoration, while Tim Cone became Crew Chief for the AV-8 Harrier. Tim brings valuable experience as a commercial pilot and certified mechanic.

Two UC Merced mechanical engineering students have stepped up to support the B-18 Bolo, which has been without a Crew Chief for over a year.

Two Scout troops have scheduled overnight Merit Badge events in April and May. In addition to camping, they will complete community service projects, including painting inert bombs for display.

Outreach efforts included a visit to Pitman High School in Turlock to present volunteer opportunities, as well as a meeting with the Merced Union High School District's HR Director. Materials were provided for distribution to prospective volunteers.

Looking ahead, I am planning outreach at a Los Banos School Career Day and participation in Stefani Elementary's "Reading Can Give You Wings" program in Merced.

MEMBERSHIP SERVICES

JANIE 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

AIRCRAFT OF THE MONTH

RUSTY WYNN, CURATOR

Aircraft of the Month: Convair YB-58A Hustler, BuNo. 55-0666.

With the B-58 Hustler serving as this year's mascot for Castle Air Museum's Bombs Away Car Show on April 25, 2026, it is fitting to highlight our YB-58A.
Built in March 1958 by Convair in Fort Worth, Texas, Castle Air Museum's YB-58A (55-0666) was delivered as a pre-production prototype, lacking ejection capsules and the 20 mm rotary cannon of later models.

Assigned to Holloman Air Force Base in August 1958, it supported early testing of the nation's first operational supersonic bomber. During "Operation 7-Up-2," the aircraft was fitted with a centerline pod housing a General Electric YJ79-GE-5 engine to evaluate engine-airframe integration. While initial tests failed, on November 8, 1958, 55-0666 became the first B-58 to sustain Mach 2 flight for 32 minutes.
Though officially accepted in April 1959, the aircraft remained in testing, including low-level flight evaluations to adapt the B-58 for penetration missions against advancing Soviet missile defenses. Later testing proved successful.

Assigned to the 43rd Bombardment Wing at Carswell Air Force Base, Texas, 55-0666 supported operational evaluations, including weapons delivery and aerial refueling. On August 16, 1962, it set a record for the longest sustained supersonic flight—11 hours and 15 minutes—with Lt. Col. Henry John Deutschendorf, Sr. among the pilots.

The aircraft later served at Edwards, Chanute, and Little Rock Air Force Bases before being redesignated as a ground trainer in 1965 and retired in 1967. After years on display in Illinois, it was transferred to Castle Air Museum in 2016, where volunteers restored it using parts from sister ship 55-0665, "Snoopy." On August 8, 2017, it was placed on display, where it remains a centerpiece of the collection.

Convair YB-58A 55-0666 undergoing maintenance at Fort Worth's Convair plant as part of Operation 7-Up-2. Photo: The Portal to Texas History

55-0666 with special centerline pod, B-134.

At Octave Chanute Aerospace Museum with wooden frame.

55-0666 displayed at Castle Air Museum, still under restoration.
Photo: Norman Hunger

GIFT SHOP

LUCY SILVA, RETAIL SALES MANAGER

The gift shop is the central hub for anyone making contact with the museum. Membership credentials, tours, RV park reservations, mail, phone inquiries, donations...They do it all! And they sell tickets, greet guests, and keep the gift shop clean and ready, too. They are the face of the museum and a vital part of the operation. Come by and meet the team.