

COMBAT

AIR MUSEUM PLANE TALK

October-December 2024
Vol. 40, No. 4

From Abilene to Vietnam ...and Back!

By Kevin Drewelow

Since the Combat Air Museum began holding membership luncheons in November 1997, there have been very few repeat speakers. That small number increased by one when Chuck Atherton returned to speak at our August luncheon.

Last December, Chuck told us about spending 1968-1969 with the U.S. Army in South Vietnam. It was a compelling account, and he provided complimentary copies of his self-published book "Our War" to several members. As we researched his book to add to the story for the January-March issue of Plane Talk, we quickly realized Chuck had just skimmed the surface of what had been a very eventful year...and beyond. We asked him to return and expand on his experiences and he agreed.

Rather than wait for the draft, Chuck enlisted in the Army and found himself in South Vietnam on August 28, 1969. His return home date was August 28, 1969 and Chuck fixed that date as his goal. As an individual replacement, he arrived alone at his unit, Company D, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade of the 1st Cavalry Division, aboard a helicopter full of ammunition and other supplies. His squad was out on patrol so Chuck awaited their return. The unit came back and two of the soldiers, both with eight months experience in-country, took a liking to Chuck and began to teach him everything he would need to know to complete his tour. Chuck was an enthusiastic pupil, and learned a lot in his first month; he was confident in his chance of staying alive.

Chuck's next four months covered a range of experiences including search

and destroy missions, night engagements with the Viet Cong and his first bout with malaria. During this time, Chuck grew increasingly concerned about his company commander, who frequently got the company lost while searching for the enemy. By Christmas, Chuck had had enough of Company D, so when Major Henson, the assistant battalion commander, requested twelve volunteers to form a long-range special operations team, he immediately volunteered. 20 other soldiers also volunteered, including 12 from Company D, a sign others shared Chuck's concern about their commander. Major Henson held two nights of tryouts, after which seven soldiers changed their minds and returned to their old units. The remaining troops were known as Henson's Hellions or the killer team and immediately went to work. Taking only what they needed-lots of ammunition, explosives, water and C-rations-the killer team went into enemy territory, detecting enemy troop concentrations by day and setting ambushes by night. Their missions lasted for three or four days, followed by a day or two of rest. Major Henson took great care of his Hellions, arranging for great meals, including steaks, beer and ice cream!

Henson's Hellions took quite a toll on the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army over the next two months until one day when Chuck and the other soldiers encountered a much larger Viet Cong force. The engagement lasted two days before the Hellions were reinforced and evacuated. Only three of the Hellions were unharmed, the others killed or wounded. While Henson's Hellions had killed twice as many enemy soldiers as



Gene Howerter and Chuck (l-r) (K. Hobbs photo)

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PLANE TALK

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THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE COMBAT AIR MUSEUM
COMBAT
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We welcome your comments!

Newsletter Layout by Megan Garner

MUSEUM HOURS

January 2 - February 28/29

Mon.-Sun. Noon - 4:30

Last Entry Every Day is 3:30 P.M.

March 1 - December 31

Mon.-Sat. 9 A.M. - 4:30 P.M.

Sun. Noon - 4:30 P.M.

Last Entry Every Day is 3:30 P.M.

Closed

New Year's Day, Easter,
Thanksgiving, Christmas Day

Your membership is important to us! Join the
COMBAT AIR MUSEUM



From the Chairman's Desk

By Gene Howerter, Chairman, Board of Directors

Please allow me to begin with an update on the final tally of participants who took advantage of the Sunflower Summer program, which allowed Kansas residents to register themselves and their children or grandchildren to attend 220 attractions in Kansas for free. This program started on May 25 and ended eleven weeks later in August as local schools opened after the summer break. The good news is the final count of all visitors attending Sunflower Summer at the Combat Air Museum was 2,505. Possibly the better news is this program supported our Museum with a final tally of \$14,561, which will go a long way in helping CAM financially. After filing our final summary of this program with the Kansas Tourism Division, Department of Commerce, we understand that there is an excellent possibility the program may continue next summer. If so, you can bet we will join in for another Sunflower Summer!

September 14 was the date we held our 2nd annual team pull contest. Last year several teams pulled two of our aircraft a short distance to see who could do it in the shortest time. This year, teams pulled one of the Metropolitan Topeka Airport Authority's large fire trucks which worked out better. The event also saw an increase in participants with a total of fourteen teams signed up. The local Walmart Distribution Center had two teams. Other new participants included Mars North America, Capitol Federal and Lewis Toyota. This event was designed to support CAM and Be Filled of South Topeka, a food bank, community closet and resource center serving the Montara neighborhood and south Topeka. Perkins Restaurant of Topeka served pancakes with sausage and a drink which most individuals attending the event took advantage of. You need to witness this event next year. Better yet, put together a team for pulling in the event!

The Museum held its annual Girls in Aviation Day on September 21. The day kicked off with over 160 girls and their parents gathering at the Museum of the Kansas National Guard taking advantage of various activities. They then transitioned to the Combat Air Museum where they enjoyed many activities and static aircraft parked on the ramp on the flight line side of hangar #602. I think one can conclude that this was an enjoyable day for all and we want to thank everyone who sponsored and presented at this event.

It is safe to assume that the Museum has now established what I would call a major annual event and fund-raiser. The 4th annual Combat Air Museum Car Show has been named "Car Show on the Tarmac." This year's event was a phenomenal success. As the previous 5K/10K run walk had reached a point where it was no longer viable, we had to do something to switch directions. I want to profoundly thank the approximately fifty individuals and companies who stayed the course with the Museum as sponsors in this new event. 100% of all monies raised from the car show go to support the Combat Air Museum. This year's car show increased from 108 cars registered last year to 235 this year when we had to close the entry gate because we were out of parking space due to construction on our flight line ramp. For those who ordered a sponsor shirt, we will be getting them to you very soon. Please hang in there with us as a sponsor next year as it benefits the Museum greatly. I also want to thank all the volunteers who worked at this year's event. This includes both

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From Abilene to Vietnam Continued from page 1

the rest of the battalion combined, this action spelled the end of the Hellions. Chuck and the other two soldiers transferred to Echo Company, a reconnaissance unit like the Hellions but with many more soldiers.

The next two months were busy for Echo Company. They saw a lot of combat and during that time, Chuck had another bout with malaria. He spent two weeks in a field hospital before returning to his unit. They experienced a lot of intense action over the next three weeks and then relocated to a quiet area for a well-deserved break. It soon proved to be anything but quiet.

Chuck's unit was withdrawn to support Hill 54, a quiet area that, despite overlooking an enemy supply trail, had not been attacked in half a year. The January-March 2024 issue of Plane Talk covered the battle for Hill 54 and the reader will find it online at <https://www.combatairmuseum.org/newsletter/images/2024/PlaneTalkJanMar24.pdf>. There are two videos about the battle for Hill 54 on YouTube and Plane Talk recommends them for readers interested in learning more.

Chuck took a short leave to Hawaii and upon his return was assigned to Bravo Company. A month later he sought and got a transfer back to Delta Company, the same unit he had joined upon his arrival in Vietnam. By early August, Chuck had less than a month to go before the end of his tour. One morning, Chuck was leaning against a tree, eating his breakfast when his unit was attacked. Chuck continued to eat while others engaged the enemy. When asked later why he didn't pick up his weapon and help, he didn't realize he had not done so. His commanding officer sent him to the rear for evaluation. Two weeks later, he requested a two week leave – to which all soldiers were entitled – to visit Okinawa and his request was granted. En route to the island, Chuck suffered a serious malaria attack which rendered him delirious. He slept for three days in the hospital and began to improve. Okinawa law required him to remain on the island for three weeks after testing negative for malaria; this kept Chuck on the island into September which meant his tour was over and he would not have to return to Vietnam.

Chuck returned to the United States, then on to Ft. Riley where he was released on a two week leave. During that time, Chuck met the woman he would marry. [Chuck and Elaine were married for 48 years before she passed in 2019.]

It was 1970 and Chuck was home but his medical problems from Vietnam followed him. He went to the Veterans



1st Cavalry Division patch **7th Cavalry Regiment patch**



Administration (VA) hospital in Topeka but he was disappointed in the quality of care he received. He began visiting Stormont Vail hospital in Topeka. A recurring blood infection made Chuck very ill and Elaine had to get him into the car to go to the emergency room. At 5'3" and 103 pounds, Elaine was tiny compared to Chuck, but she got him in the car anyway. The doctor immediately recognized severe cellulitis and began immediate treatment which saved Chuck's life. He said that was the first of three times when Elaine saved him.

Like so many of his fellow veterans, Chuck was up against multiple challenges: shrapnel wounds, two cancers related to Agent Orange exposure and post-traumatic stress disorder, among others. Decades later, Chuck met a VA employee who told him how much the VA had improved and to give them another try. He got Chuck to visit and now Chuck says he is completely satisfied with the treatment he receives from the VA. He encouraged all veterans in the room to register with the VA and pointed out that when the time comes to seek assisted living, the VA will pay for long-term care, matching a veteran's disability percentage at a VA-contracted home.

Chuck spoke briefly about his decorations, or credentials as he refers to them. Among many others decorations, Chuck received the Purple Heart with two devices. 30 years after coming home, Chuck mentioned to a coworker that he should have received a Bronze Star but never did; he still had the original order. The coworker had been an archivist and immediately went to work. Chuck's Bronze Star arrived in the mail ten days later! After a newspaper story described Chuck receiving his medal through the mail, a number of local veterans arranged to have Kansas National

Guard Brigadier General Jonathan Small present Chuck with his Bronze Star at a dinner at the Shawnee Country Club.

Chuck's tour in Vietnam changed the trajectory of his life in many ways, both good and bad, but Chuck's resilience, optimism and family got him through. Vietnam veterans served our nation at a difficult time during a long and unpopular war, but they set the bar high and left large boots to fill for the young people who followed them into military service. ♦



Chuck Atherton (K. Hobbs photo)

Chairman's Desk Continued from page 2

Museum members and car enthusiasts. I especially want to thank Rob Goodrich, his wife Jennifer and Jay Eddy for their great work organizing the car show. The one-of-a-kind trophies Sam Gomez produced were a smashing hit as were the raffle items and the event T-shirts Jay Eddy designed. Finally, I can report to you who were not in attendance that at least 550 individuals registered at our gift shop entry between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. I would call this a phenomenal success. We are already planning a bigger "Car Show on the Tarmac" for next fall. We hope to see you there and please join us as an event t-shirt sponsor! ♦

4th Annual CAM Car Show *the Best Yet!*

By Kevin Drexelov

Detailed planning, great advertising, dedicated volunteers and hard work combined with beautiful weather resulted in the biggest and best Combat Air Museum car show ever on Sunday, October 6!

Four years ago, Rob and Jennifer Goodrich expressed interest in holding a car show to benefit the Combat Air Museum. Assisted by their many friends in the local car enthusiast community, the first show was successful and it has grown every year. Last year Rob introduced us to Jay Eddy, a digital creator and car enthusiast who produces "Tooned Up Cars," caricatures of collectible cars for their owners. This year, Jay contributed his considerable creative skills and called the gathering "Car Show on The Tarmac." He designed a special logo that we used on T-shirts, stickers and advertisements and Jay's social media advertising campaign resulted in people bringing cars from as far away as Iowa and Oklahoma. People registered 235 cars this year, more than double the number of cars that participated last year!



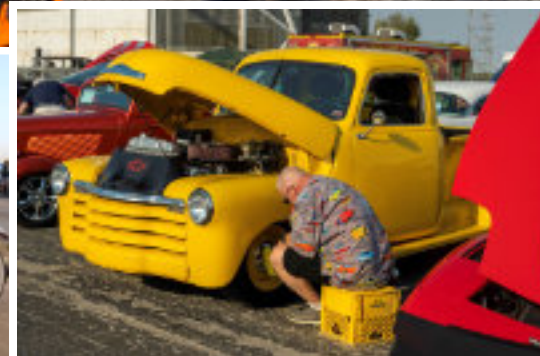
(R. Goodrich photo)



(M. Brent photo)

Many car fans pitched in to help, from seeking raffle prizes and donations from area merchants, to staffing the multitude of volunteer jobs needed to make the show the hit it was. Sam Gomez once again provided his unique and extraordinary trophies. The raffle, door prizes, food trucks, vendors and the deejay were extremely popular. 552 people paid admission to visit the Museum that day.

By the end of the day, everyone's time and effort raised over \$10,000 to support the Combat Air Museum, up from \$3,000 last year. As Rob told a reporter from WIBW, "There's no secret, I mean we promote that every bit of the money that we make out here goes to the Museum and what they need to do with it. It also puts the Museum on board and gets people aware that it's out here."
(Ed. note: all photos by Klio Hobbs except where noted) ♦



Thunder Over the Heartland *Air Show*

By Chuck Watson

The Thunder Over the Heartland airshow, by all appearances, was a huge success and the Combat Air Museum did its part in the event. Our volunteers towed several of our aircraft to display alongside several currently serving and vintage military aircraft. CAM aircraft displayed were our Grumman F9F Panther, Grumman F11F Tiger, Republic F-84F Thunderstreak, Beech RU-8D Seminole, Vultee BT-13A Valiant, and our Mikoyan Gurevich MiG-15 and MiG-21. Along with the planes, the Museum staffed a tent with rotating members answering questions, passing out information about CAM and enjoying the flying!

At a Thursday evening airshow kickoff event at Everygy Plaza, member Chuck Watson, assisted by his two assistants Cambria and Sadie Dye, presented his painting of the Air Force Thunderbirds formation overflying our McDonnell Douglas F-4D Phantom. The team's commander and leader, Lt Col Nathan Malafa later surprised Chuck with a personalized team lithograph.



Chuck receives the Thunderbirds print (A. Dye photo)

Friday was a perfect fall day of flying acts of all types including a rare three-ship formation of a Douglas DC-3, C-47 and an AC-47 gunship variant. Multiple aerobatic pilots demonstrated their skills throughout the day, along with a North



CAM F9F Panther (K. Hobbs photo)

American P-51D Mustang, a Grumman S-2 firebomber and Randy Ball's impressive twilight demonstration of his Mikoyan Gurevich MiG-17. Both Friday and Saturday's shows were closed with fiery night routines by numerous air acts with lots of pyrotechnics and topped off with the biggest fireworks display seen in years, capped by a 1,500-foot explosion of jet fuel creating a huge wall of fire which startled everyone!



Titan Aerobatic Team (K. Hobbs photo)

The show itself was sponsored by Vaerus Aviation, CoreFirst Bank and Trust and numerous other area businesses. Saturday welcomed huge crowds and hotter weather; Sunday was much cooler but the flying on both days was extremely exciting. The Thunderbirds made their first Topeka appearance in over twenty years and gave powerful shows highlighting their Lockheed Martin F-16 Fighting Falcons and shaking the entire area. We older folks remember the days when Topeka hosted annual airshows and we hope this year's event will be a precursor of future ones here. ♦



Thunderbirds low pass (K. Hobbs photo)

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Girls in Aviation Day

By Kevin Drewelow

The Combat Air Museum partnered with the Museum of the Kansas National Guard and many friends to put on our annual Girls in Aviation Day at Topeka Regional Airport and it was one of our best ever! Great weather and more activities overcame taxiway construction that limited the available space for parking large aircraft at CAM.

The day began at the Museum of the Kansas National Guard where over 160 girls and their parents broke into groups and met women pilots, members of the Air Explorer Post 8, experienced a Kansas STARBASE STEM demonstration and toured the museum, among many other activities. By lunchtime, they were heading to the Combat Air Museum for more aviation fun!

Girls in Aviation Day was a bit different this year. Thanks to a grant from Visit Topeka, the Combat Air Museum became a corporate member of Women in Aviation, Inc. They advertised our event worldwide and sent a box of swag bags to pass out to the first 100 girls. Due to the current situation with the federal budget, we needed sponsors to cover a rental car and hotel room for a visiting Air Force pilot. Visit Topeka covered the room and our friends at Lewis Toyota provided a 2025 Toyota. The Kansas Commission on Aerospace Education once again provided a grant that allowed us to offer free admission to all.

Several new organizations put on displays for the girls. The Federal Aviation Administration's Aviation and Space Education Office brought their drone tent, a 10-foot square pop-up canopy covered with a net in which girls could learn to fly small drones – they were busy all day! The National Weather Service office at Topeka's Billard Airport offered



Deb hands out swag bags (K. Drewelow photo)



Girls learn about the WASP program (K. Hobbs photo)



FAA drone tent (K. Drewelow photo)

activities and displays for the kids. The Ad Astra Model Club had a table where children could assemble plastic models to take home. CAM even had a child-safe ax throwing activity in which kids tossed plastic axes at a target covered in plastic bristles, which would catch and hold the ax. Two fellows displayed and explained their powered paramotor in which the pilot straps an enclosed small engine and propeller to their back with a large canopy providing the lift.

Greg Inkmann and the Foundation for Aeronautical Education demonstrated radio-controlled airplanes, Laraine and Rance Sackrider helped children make and drop coffee filter parachutes from their innovative launch tower, and Dave Murray ran the ever-popular paper airplane table. It was too windy to inflate a hot air balloon, but the Great Plains Balloon Club displayed a gondola that the girls enjoyed climbing into and out of.

Construction on Echo taxiway just outside the museum prevented us from bringing a Boeing KC-135R Stratotanker from the 190th Air Refueling Wing this year, but several other aircraft were on hand for tours. Our neighbors at the Kansas Army National Guard's Army Aviation Support Facility #1 provided a Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter which belongs to G Company, 1st General Support Aviation Battalion of the 11th Aviation Regiment and is used for medical evacuation. The Kansas Highway Patrol displayed their new Airbus AS350B3 Twin Star helicopter and Darrell Linenberger brought his antique Aeronca Champ.

The busiest static display airplane was a Textron T-6 Texan II trainer from Laughlin Air Force Base in Del Rio, Texas. 1st Lieutenant Paige Soenksen is a flight instructor at Laughlin, and

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F-15A Eagle Update

By Kevin Drewelow



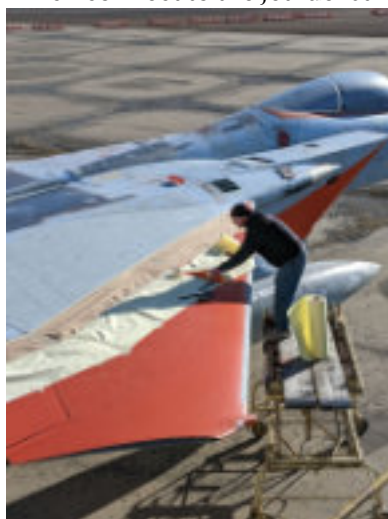
Gary and the augmenter
(K. Drewelow photo)

Combat Air Museum volunteers have been working on our McDonnell Douglas F-15A Eagle throughout the summer and fall and have completely transformed the jet's appearance!

In early August, our three former Eagle maintainers traveled to Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, Texas to pick up some F-15 parts from an Eagle being partially disassembled. Tim Felks, Dave Hargitt and Gary Naylor obtained a number of parts we needed for our Eagle, including pylons for the wing external fuel tanks, a tail hook and two augmenters, or afterburner nozzles, and aircraft brakes among others. They returned from Texas and immediately went to work installing the parts.

The augmenters required some "imagineering" to install. The augmenters attach to the aft end of the engine, not the airframe. Our Eagle has no engines, so they had to invent a way. Gary Naylor, Danny San Romani, Paul Williams and Joe Wulfsuhle all worked together to install the #1 (left) engine augmenter. They identified some ways to improve it and Joe Wulfsuhle is fabricating the improved mount for the #2 augmenters. They will then upgrade the #1 mount to the new standard. Early Eagles, including ours, had augmenters covered with external metal strips called "turkey feathers," but they were later found to be unnecessary and were removed. Our augmenters came from a later model F-15 and are not strictly correct for our jet, but they are better than no augmenters.

Gary's crew also brought all of the components used in the F-15 Aircraft Mounted Accessory Drive (AMAD). The AMAD is an airframe mounted gearbox on which mounts the generator and hydraulic pumps. Each F-15 contains two AMADs which connect to the jet fuel starter, a small turbine engine used to start the main engines. This permits the pilot to start the Eagle's engines without external electrical and pneumatic ground units. Gary built an AMAD display that will be on exhibit soon.



Masking the right wing
(K. Drewelow photo)

Gary's gang installed the pylons on the wings and then mounted the external fuel tanks. They closed the canopy, installed some other parts and then turned the jet over to Tim Johnson for painting.

Tim is a retired Air Force structural mechanic who has painted numerous aircraft during his career, including Lockheed F-117 Nighthawks, America's first stealth aircraft. Gary Naylor brought Tim to see the Eagle and Tim couldn't wait to get started. We contacted Tnemec, the paint company in North Kansas City, Missouri, who provided the paint used on our Lockheed EC-121 two years ago. They produce a water-based coating for exterior use on metal buildings which withstands weather and sunlight far better than aircraft polyurethane coatings. Tnemec technical representative Kyle Long visited the Combat Air Museum and spoke with Kevin Drewelow and Tim Johnson. We took him to see the F-15 and he was very interested in helping us. We determined Tnemec's Canal Blue was a spot-on match for the Air Superiority Blue originally used on the flight test Eagles such as ours. Tnemec's Aviation Orange is a close match to the fluorescent orange later applied to make the test jets more visible; we deliberately chose to not use fluorescent orange as it would fade much too quickly since our Eagle will be displayed outside.



Painting the right wing
(K. Drewelow photo)



Tim sanding the Eagle
(K. Drewelow photo)

Our F-15A, serial number 71-0286, was the seventh Eagle off the production line. The first 18 Eagles were only used for flight test; 286 tested external armament and external fuel tanks. By studying our Eagle as received and a multitude of period photos, we knew 286 had received a variety of markings during its flight test days and afterwards. We settled on a photo dated 12 September 1976 as the standard for our markings.

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Museum Notes

By Kevin Drewelow

Cold War display in Saint Marys...In August, staff members at the Pottawatomie Wabaunsee Regional Library in Saint Marys, Kansas asked the Combat Air Museum to participate in a large display about the Cold War and the Berlin Wall they were planning. We loaned them a three-inch square Lucite cube containing a small piece of the Berlin Wall labeled, "BERLIN WALL 1961-1989." We also donated a spare copy of "Daring Young Men" by Richard Reeves, an account of the Berlin Airlift. Darren Roberts researched and then built a 1/72 scale model of a Douglas C-47 painted as it would have appeared during the Berlin Airlift. Library staff suspended the C-47 from the ceiling with fishing line, flying between clouds made of cotton. The display provided a great introduction to the Berlin Wall and Cold War for those too young to have experienced that dangerous time.



Darren's C-47 (K. Drewelow photo)

Seaman High history students awarded... "Congratulations to Anna McLaughlin and Danika Szopinski from Seaman High School in Topeka, Kansas! The Lowell Milken Center Program presented them with the \$1,000 Founder's Award for their documentary 'Bela Hazan: The Courier Who Redefined Resistance and Changed History.' This powerful film tells the story of Bela Hazan, a young Jewish woman who risked her life as a courier for the Jewish Resistance during the Holocaust. They are pictured here with their teacher, Susan Sittenauer." Anna and Danika told the story of Bela Hazan at the Combat Air Museum's April membership luncheon; you can find their video on YouTube by entering "Bela Hazan" and read more about their presentation at

<https://www.combatairmuseum.org/newsletter/images/2024/PlaneTalkAprJun24.pdf>



(l-r) Sittenauer, McLaughlin and Szopinski (submitted photo)

September Truck Pull benefits CAM and Be Filled of South Topeka...A large crowd turned out on Saturday, September 14 at the Combat Air Museum to watch teams pull a fire truck and benefit two good causes, the Combat Air Museum and our neighbors at Be Filled of South Topeka. The folks at Be Filled organized the event, CAM provided the venue and the Metropolitan Topeka Airport Authority Fire Department brought the fire truck. 14 teams donated to participate in the event, Perkins Family Restaurant served pancakes for breakfast and face painters kept busy. The event raised just under \$2,000 for the Museum and close to \$12,500 for Be Filled to continue meeting the needs of the residents of Montara and south Topeka with food, clothing and other assistance.



Walmart team pulling the truck (K. Hobbs photo)

Patterson Legal Group donates \$500...As part of their "Patterson Gives Back" program, the Patterson Legal Group donated \$500 to the Combat Air Museum in August. As part of the award, Museum Director Kevin Drewelow also appeared in two "Giving Back" segments on KTMJ Fox 43's morning show to talk about CAM, our youth programs and upcoming events. We're grateful to the Patterson Legal Group for their donation and the publicity!

Volunteers in action... Many Museum members volunteer in various ways at CAM, and they were very busy over the summer and into fall. Our Fix-It Friday team meets on two Fridays per month to work on Museum infrastructure, sometimes more often depending upon the project. They installed a beam just outside the south door on hangar 602 and hung a bell on it. We'll soon have signage up describing how the Royal Air Force used fire bells to alert fighter pilots to man their aircraft during the Battle of Britain. The team scraped and painted the buttresses on hangar 602; the white buttresses complement the many colors of the flowers around the entrance to the hangar.

For several months, the sound system that serves both hangars had not been working properly, depriving our visitors of hearing live air traffic control transmissions. Museum members Mike and Steve Morrison, who have spent decades installing and operating public address systems, travelled to CAM to see what they could do. After they spent several hours troubleshooting and repairing connections, our sound system was as good as new!



Paul and our tug (K. Drewelow photo)

Paul Williams, his son Jacob, Joe Wulfkuhle and Gary Naylor have been busy working on our aircraft tow tractors. They changed the tires, tuned the engine and improved the wiring on our main tug and have been looking into our second tug, which has not been used in years. Paul spent considerable time looking after our Jeep and three-wheeled Air Force scooter. Danny San Romani and Ken Rosenberry have been treating light corrosion on the North American F-86H Sabre's flight controls, among many other projects.

The Fix-It Friday team has now begun a major project on the south side of hangar 602, where we plan to build a storage building immediately adjacent the hangar. We received permission from the airport authority to build the foundation and pour the footings and slab while we await approval from the Federal Aviation Administration. Ted Nolde designed the building, Mike Welch borrowed some heavy equipment from BRB

Construction and Mike Madden has been alongside them both as the team made progress. Several other members have turned out as the team needed additional help, especially the day they poured the concrete footings! ♦



Digging the footings (K. Drewelow photo)



Gene Howerter painting a buttress (K. Drewelow photo)



(l-r) Danny and Kenny clean a flap (K. Drewelow photo)

Friends of Army Aviation *Huey Visits Topeka*

By Kevin Drewelow



FoAA Huey at Forbes
(K. Drewelow photo)

Several members of the Combat Air Museum took to the sky in early September aboard a combat veteran Bell UH-1H Iroquois helicopter, better known as a “Huey.”

The Friends of Army Aviation (FoAA), a non-profit public education corporation based in Ozark, Alabama, brought their UH-1H to Topeka on September 6-8 and flew from the American Flight Museum at Topeka Regional Airport. The FoAA’s website says, “The organization is dedicated to presenting the Army

Aviation story to the American people through static displays of legacy Army aircraft and an associated ride program.”

The FoAA offered 15-minute rides for \$75. The organization’s volunteers ran a very informative and professional preflight briefing to prospective riders, letting riders know what to expect and emphasizing safety. All flight crew members and many of the ground crew were retired Army aviators who had flown the Huey during their time in the service. Once the passengers had boarded and the crew chief confirmed all seat belts were fastened, the Huey departed Topeka Regional Airport and headed south. Passengers were treated to some steep turns, gentle climbs and dives and, much too soon, were returning to the airport.

Deb Lamere and her service dog, Genesis, visited the FoAA event. Deb had just completed a surgical procedure and was using a wheelchair. The gentleman who provided the passenger briefings had flown two tours in Vietnam: the first on Hueys, the second on Chinooks. When he learned Deb had been a Chinook flight engineer in Afghanistan, he sat down with her and they had a good talk. When it was her turn to fly, the FoAA ground crew wheeled her out to the Huey and helped her into her seat. To fly once again with fellow Army aviators was just what she needed after her surgery, as the photo shows!



Deb Lamere in the Huey
(S. Noltner photo)

Chuck Watson and Mike Welch flew with the FoAA that day and shared their experiences with Plane Talk. ♦

Huey Ride

by Mike Welch

I’ve never had a desire to revisit Vietnam, so when the Huey rides became available in early September, I decided to take a look at an operable one for old time’s sake. I invited family and friends to join me at the American Flight Museum to recall some of my experiences. I took my three kids, their spouses and significant other, my daughter’s best friend and her child, a grandson and his girlfriend, plus two other friends.

When we boarded the Huey, it was much more organized than in Vietnam. In Nam, there was an Army pilot, a co-pilot or flight engineer, two seats facing outward where two Army gunners protected the craft with M60 machine guns on each side of the craft and up to 10 Army combat soldiers riding to and from different combat zones. I believe that we just jumped on or off and sat on the floor. This allowed for fast entry and exit. Often when not in a safe zone, the soldiers would jump on or off with the Huey a couple feet off the ground. When riding, usually a couple soldiers with M16s would sit one on each side with rifles ready for action.

In contrast, there were seats for the riders on the Huey we rode on that Sunday. The pilots and Huey staff were very professional, which reminded me of the professionalism of those crews in Nam, who we always trusted.

I rode in the door, so enjoyed the same views and breeze at 90 knots as I did decades ago. In Nam, the view was great unless there were a lot of trees. My family Sunday reminded me of my combat family in Nam. On Sunday, my family and friends learned more about those folks that protect them in time of need. ♦



Huey delivering soldiers in Vietnam (army.mil photo)

Chuck's Huey Story

By Chuck Watson



(l-r) Chuck Watson and Paul Frantz in the Huey (P. Frantz photo)

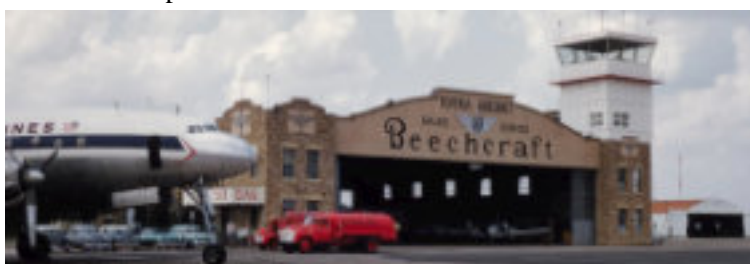
Being baby boomers, three anxious Museum members were none the less the first in line for a flight in a bucket list aircraft. Chuck Watson, Paul Franz, and Joe Stellwagon arrived at Forbes Field to take a ride in a piece of Vietnam era history.

The Friends of Army Aviation from Ozark Alabama came to town with their restored Bell UH-1H Huey helicopter to sell memorable hops in the most widely recognized and used combat aircraft all throughout the war in Southeast Asia. The distinctive sound of the Huey's beating blades was one any Vietnam vet knew as their ride, their rescuer and oftentimes a life and death medical evacuation. Just like the Hueys in CAM's collection, aircraft #20123 was bringing back old memories to some, and new ones to others.

Two pilots, a crew chief and ten riders launched into a ride south and east of the field, flying and banking along at 90 mph with the side doors open and the wind roaring in. This is the first time the group has flown this far north and visited Olathe, Ft. Leavenworth, and Topeka. All their members are volunteers, with sales and rides keeping the aircraft airborne. Bell built over 13,000 Hueys with huge losses during the war that Americans saw every night on their televisions. Besides the flying, the group's main goal is, like CAM's, to honor those who served and keep the memories alive about a critical and controversial time in our history. Everyone flying agreed the experience was worth the cost and it will remain a great memory. ♦

Next Membership Luncheon

Our next membership luncheon will take place on Monday, December 9 at 11:30 a.m. at the Combat Air Museum. Museum Director Kevin Drewelow will talk about Topeka's aviation history, from the city's first balloon club in 1910 to the present. Instead of the usual brown bag lunch, members are asked to bring a covered dish for our Christmas potluck dinner; the Museum will provide drinks. ♦



New & Renewing Members

New:

Carl Caldwell | Robert Deever | Thomas & Debra Lynn Fisher | Cameron Hagemaster | Daria Hart & family | Ken & Colleen Kirsop | Robert Lee & family | Lauren Lewis & family | Bruce & Barbara Miller | Scott & Debra Misenhelter | Richard Render

Renewing:

Wes Barricklow & family | Gary Bender | Charie Broughton | Bruce Bevitt & Tyler Gardner | Ron & Nancy Bond | Shelly Buhler & family | Debra Butz | George Catt | Duane & Alberta Coash | Bruce Couch | Thomas Crafton | Robert Crapser | Col Anthony DeJesus KSANG/USAF (Ret.) | Leon Dultmeier | Robert Eichkorn | Tim & Suzanne Felks | Richard Gates | Dale Gay | Charles & Dagmar Gorges | David Gurske & family | John Hamilton | Paul Henson | Jerry Hinkle & family | Nelson Hinman Jr & family | William & Marilyn Hensley | Donald & Kathy Jensen | Michael Kaye | Jeffry Keating | Dr Kay Kile & family | George Laliberte | Scotty Larimer | Joseph Ledbetter & family | Marcy Lee & family | Rodney Longhofer & family | Terry Love | Samantha Lowell & family | Ron Lutz | Jamie Massey & family | Becky Mathers | Sharon McDorman | Bob Miller | William Morgan | Danny Munck | David Pierce & family | Adam Polter & family | Tad & Dee Pritchett | Robert Runion | Roger Schaaf & family | Bill Shaffer & family | J. Arron & Cathy Small | Jonathan & Georgia Small | Gary & Therese Smith | Michael Spangler & family | Dick & Sharon Starks | Joe Taylor & family | Chester & Mary Thompson | Don Thun | Ryan Vincent & family | Thomas Ward & family | Christopher & Dawn Webber | Dr. Rees Webber & family | Mike Welch & family | Paul Williams & family | Finn Willard & family | Robert & Donna Woodhead | Kenneth Wright | Conrad & Sharon Youngblom

Girl's Aviation Day Continued from page 6

she was extremely excited and eager to share aviation with the girls! She spent almost the entire event at her aircraft, talking to every little girl who climbed up on the wing after waiting patiently in line. We convinced her to step inside the hangar for a few minutes for a short television interview and to speak briefly to a group of girls. Lt. Soenksen embodied the main idea of Girls in Aviation Day: we could not have asked for a better role model for the event.

Over 200 people, mostly girls, attended this year's Girls in Aviation Day and we look forward to doing it again next year! ♦



1Lt. Soenksen and girls on the T-6 (K. Hobbs photo)



1Lt. Soenksen speaking with girls (K. Hobbs photo)

F-15A Eagle Update Continued from page 7

We photographed and measured the markings on the jet, from its Stars and Bars national insignias, to the servicing and calibration placards. Tim even traced the unique nose art depicting two bird strikes, a rabbit strike and another event we're still researching, possibly the time an external fuel tank separated from the aircraft in flight and struck the left wingtip!

Tim began the intimidating task of sanding and preparing the F-15 on September 18. The Eagle is a large aircraft, often referred to as "a flying tennis court." Surfaces to be painted were constructed of aluminum, titanium, stainless steel, boron, graphite and fiberglass; Tim used the correct abrasives where needed. He repaired some minor skin damage on the radome and then primed it.

Tnemec donated two five-gallon buckets of Aviation Orange and deeply discounted four five-gallon buckets of Canal Blue. We picked up the paint from Tnemec on October 16 and Tim began painting the following week. Using an airless sprayer, Tim could apply paint quickly, but masking and unmasking areas was quite time consuming. Tim worked when his time and weather permitted from October 22 to November 15 and we documented his daily progress on the Museum's Facebook page. He applied two coats of both colors and our Eagle must be seen to be appreciated – photos don't do it nor Tim justice!

The November weather has stopped regular painting. Tim plans to paint the insignias and other major markings rather than use vinyl appliques. We will add servicing placards and other markings as weather and time permit.

As Tim was painting one day, I noticed a pair of bald eagles circling high above our Eagle, as if they were watching...how appropriate! ♦



Tim Johnson (K. Drewelow photo)



Painting complete! (D. Murray photo)

An Interesting Museum Tidbit

By Gene Howerter

Something interesting is always happening at the Combat Air Museum. This time around, I would like to share some information concerning attendance at the Museum. Every day our volunteer at the front door tracks our daily attendance. Our office manager, Nelson Hinman, Jr., logs the count daily and then sends a monthly report to Visit Topeka. The Museum was shooting for a goal of 13,000 paying visitors for 2024. Dave Murray, our Vice Chairman and Chief Financial Officer, informed me early in October we had just passed that number and we are now looking at 15,000 paying visitors this year. I will keep you updated on this in our January newsletter.

So, what is the big deal, you ask? This is what I call a very big deal for us at the Museum. I was as excited as was Dave when he shared this tidbit with me. On Saturday, October 5th, the day before the annual car show, we logged in visitors from 15 states, one foreign country (Latvia) and a few from Kansas and Shawnee County. I want to draw your attention to the states represented on this single day, October 5th, 2024. Our visitors on that day came from Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Maryland, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, and Wisconsin. I don't remember ever seeing individuals from 15 different states visit our Museum on a single day!

The next day, 552 people paid admission to visit our Museum and attend the car show!

If your state is not listed as attending on October 5th, you can bet people from your state have visited our museum this year. We usually get visitors from all fifty states annually. If I were to list all our foreign countries with visitors in the same year you would be amazed. I hope to see you at the Museum soon. Bring all your friends and family, even from out of state. I thought you might be interested in seeing our total attendance statistics through October 2024. I still find them fascinating! ♦

Visitors

1,884 people from 42 states, Brazil, Canada, Germany, Great Britain, Honduras, Japan, Mexico, Portugal, Scotland, South Africa, Sweden and Taiwan visited the Combat Air Museum in August.

In September, 1,804 visitors from 40 states, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Switzerland and Ukraine toured your Museum.

1,543 people from 44 states, Argentina, Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, Germany, Great Britain, Japan, Latvia, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Korea and Turkey visited the Combat Air Museum in October.

2024-2025 Calendar of Events

November

28—Thanksgiving, Museum closed

December

9—Membership Luncheon—bring a covered dish
25—Christmas, Museum closed

January

1—New Year's Day, Museum closed
2—Winter hours begin,
Museum open noon-4:30 p.m.;
no visitors admitted after 3:30 p.m.

February

1—Winter hours continue through the end
of the month
10—Membership Luncheon, Brown Bag

March

1—Normal hours resume, Museum open
Mon-Sat 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.,
no visitors admitted after 3:30 p.m.
Museum open Sun noon-4:30 p.m.;
no visitors admitted after 3:30 p.m.
9—Daylight Savings Time begins

April

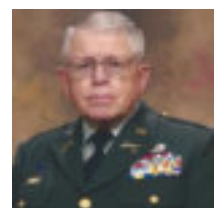
14—Membership Luncheon, Brown Bag
20—Easter Sunday, Museum closed

In Remembrance

Col. Paul Idol

May 19, 1932–August 16, 2024
U.S. Army/Kansas Army National Guard veteran
CAM #55

Paul Idol had already accomplished a lot in his life when he joined the Combat Air Museum in 1977. He was a Korean War combat veteran who went on to graduate from both Emporia State University and the first class of the Kansas National Guard Officer Candidate School in 1957. He retired after nearly 38 years of service in 1992 and was inducted into the Kansas National Guard Hall of Fame in 2010. ♦



Pilot's Notes: a Book Review

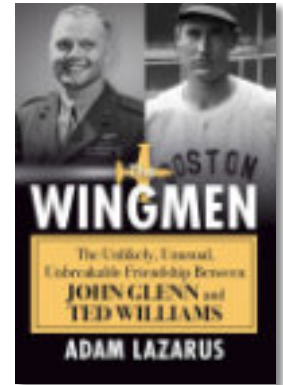
“The Wingmen” by Adam Lazarus *Reviewed by Chuck Watson*

“The Wingmen: The Unlikely, Unusual, Unbreakable Friendship Between John Glenn and Ted Williams” by Adam Lazarus is a fascinating book which covers the bond between the quiet, thoughtful Marine and the hot tempered and profane famous Boston Red Sox hitter.

Both men flew in World War II as Marine pilots, Glenn in Corsair fighters, Williams in stateside trainers. Both men were later recalled to combat flying in Korea, where Glenn anxiously fought to go into war while Williams reluctantly served but fumed about interrupting his record-breaking baseball career. Both ended up flying Grumman F9F Panthers with VMF-311 from 1952 to the end of the war in 1953 and eventually became friends and wingmen in combat and on the ground. Glenn finished his tour and even flew further missions with an Air Force F-86 Sabre unit. Ted Williams had several close calls including bringing his damaged and burning Panther in to a crash landing after a ground attack mission. Plagued by serious health issues, Williams flew only half as much as Glenn before finally being sent home and discharged back to his baseball life.

Although both led separate and diverging lives after Korea, neither forgot their experiences in combat. John Glenn went on to gain fame as a test pilot, businessman, early astronaut, family man and national hero who, through associating with the Kennedys, eventually went into politics himself as a Democrat, and culminated in his return to space on a shuttle mission in his 80s. Ted Williams had some success in baseball and business ventures, went through three marriages, spent little time with his kids as he avoided the press he always disliked and pursued his interests in fishing and sports. He was feted long after baseball and made friends in Republican politics.

Williams and Glenn met up occasionally in coming decades but, ignoring their differences, always sang each other's praises and grew closer over the years. Glenn stayed healthy and active and enjoyed life with his wife Annie and their three kids. Williams suffered declining health but still received wide acclaim as the baseball legend he once was. His children used him as a money source after his death and as a dark mystery when they defied his wishes and had him frozen in a crackpot scheme of immortality. The friends' story ended with Glenn's death and burial in Arlington, but all the twists and turns in their lives make a compelling story to enjoy. ♦



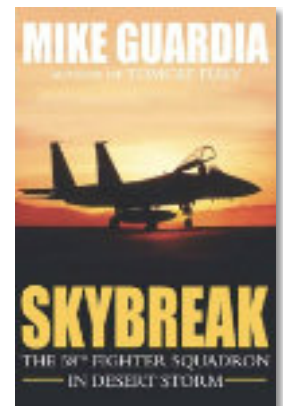
“Skybreak: The 58th Fighter Squadron in Desert Storm”

by Mike Guardia *Reviewed by Chuck Watson*

As Desert Storm is beginning to fade into history, Americans may forget the urgency and rapid response it took to react to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. This book details just one but a very important aspect of that rapid response; that of getting air superiority assets in place in a very short time frame.

The 58th fighter squadron of the 33rd Wing at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida quickly became the point of the sword when the call to war came. Within days the unit's F-15 Eagles and pilots were making the long transatlantic flight, ending up at Tabuk Royal Saudi Air Force Base even before their support crews arrived. The author first introduces the pilots of the 58th and how each became Eagle drivers in the foremost fighter unit to be chosen first. Not to be forgotten, the major maintenance crew members are profiled along with how they overcame myriad issues to quickly put and keep F-15s in the air around the clock through the entire buildup to war and during the final combat.

The 58th ended the war with more air-to-air kills than all other units combined and returned every unit member to Eglin when hostilities ended. Using mostly the pilots' own narratives, sorties of all types, including actual combat missions, are related in an exciting manner even non-aviators can understand. The cold and final results of air-to-air kills are not gloated over, but the pilots know that their advanced training and the superiority of the F-15 Eagle made them the deterrent to Saddam's invasion plans. Included in the 230-page book are black and white photos of the individuals and scenes of life in the combat zone. The author wraps up the story with follow-ups to members' postwar lives and career moves and the role of the 58th Fighter Squadron in future military planning. Hard to put down once begun, "Skybreak" is an excellent reminder of that period in recent history and how the Air Force rose to the occasion. ♦



Ways You Can Support the Combat Air Museum

Dillon's Community Rewards Program



If you shop at Dillon's and have a Plus Shopper's Card, you can help support the Combat Air Museum with just a phone call or a few keystrokes. Dillon's Stores donates millions to non-profit organizations. Our Museum benefits from CAM members who have registered with Dillon's Community Rewards Program. Enrolling in this program will not increase your grocery bill and will not affect your fuel points.



Enrolling in the Community Rewards program is a one-time event and no longer requires annual registration. If you've already signed up, no further action is required. Go to <https://www.dillons.com/i/community/community-rewards> to create a Dillon's account before enrolling in the Community Rewards program. You can also call 800.576.4377 and the Dillon's customer service representative will register you. You'll need to provide them with the Combat Air Museum's new five-character Non-Profit Organization (NPO) account number, **GA302**. Thanks to your generosity, each quarter the Museum receives a check from Dillon's that really helps us maintain the collection and facilities and provide the classes and service our visitors enjoy. Last year, Dillon's donated \$815 to CAM; that amount is less than the previous year because we have fewer donors than before. If you haven't joined, why not take a few moments now to do so: Dillon's and CAM will do the rest!

Volunteer

The Combat Air Museum exists solely upon the money we raise from admissions, donations, grants and gift shop sales. We rely on volunteers to run our gift shop, and the need for these volunteers has become even more urgent. We'll train you for this crucial and enjoyable task. If you could spare one day a month, please call the Museum Monday through Friday between 9 a.m. and noon at 785.862.3303 and ask for Nelson, our office manager and volunteer coordinator.

CAM Car Show Continued from page 4





COMBAT AIR MUSEUM
7016 SE Forbes Avenue
Topeka, KS 66619



PLANE TALK

Non-Profit Org.
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Permit #181

Visit the Combat Air Museum for fun, information and an educational experience.

Flight

How can they know that joy to be alive
Who have not flown?
To loop and spin and roll and climb and dive,
The very sky one's own,
The urge of power while engines race,
The sting of speed,
The rude winds' buffet on one's face,
To live indeed.

How can they know the grandeur of the sky,
The earth below,
The restless sea, and waves that break and die
With ceaseless ebb and flow;
The morning sun on drifting clouds
And rolling downs-
And valley mist that shrouds
The chimneyed towns?

So long has puny man to earth been chained
Who now is free,
And with the conquest of the air has gained
A glorious liberty.
How splendid is this gift He gave
On high to roam,
The sun a friend, the earth a slave,
The heavens home.

~ By Air Vice-Marshal Brian Pashley Young, CB, CBE, RAF 1918-1992

COMBAT 16
AIR MUSEUM



(Air Force photo)