

## Castle Air Museum Open Cockpit Day 5-31-2021



Every Memorial Day weekend the Castle Air Museum in Atwater, CA conducts an Open Cockpit Day (OCD). They also conduct another one in Sep or Oct when its cooler. These are the largest visitor events of the year and help the Museum keep its doors open and add new aircraft to their displays. Crowd sizes are 3000-5000 for OCD.

The 456<sup>th</sup> FIS started conducting mini-reunions at OCD events thanks to Dean Rager and Mike Woloszyn former F-106 Crew Chiefs who live locally. They invite all former 456ers and any F-106 troops from other Squadrons who live near Atwater, CA. Crew Chief Bruce Gookin of Utah and MA-1 Wizard Lou Pizzarello of Virginia always attend. The first thing we do is visit Ginnie Marcotte, widow of our last CO Lt Col John C. Marcotte (RIP). Ginnie is nearing 97 and is smarter and has a much better memory than all of us! We meet at her home and bring her favorite food (Mexican). She always enjoys a visit from “Her Boys” from the 1967-68 period. When about 35 of us newbies age 18-20 showed up at the 456<sup>th</sup> FIS, John and Ginnie were our Parental guides and wouldn’t hesitate to kick our butts when we needed. We loved them.

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The next stop we make is the CAM Restoration Hangar to meet with our Hero Ralph Robledo. Ralph was a MA-1 C Msgrt at the 84<sup>th</sup> FIS when they moved to Castle AFB. Ralph joined the CAM Restoration team when he retired and led the restoration in 2003 of 57-2456 dedicated to John Marcotte. Ralph's Son Dean Robledo took over as crew chief of the 456<sup>th</sup> display and has done a magnificent job keeping her clean and waxed during 18 years of hot Valley Sun. Ralph always shows us the latest project in the hangar. Here we see the F-100 and F-102A are in for repainting. Ralph is a craftsman and has made missiles from PVC pipe that look better than the originals. CAM is expecting a F-117 Nighthawk in June. Donations are welcomed <https://www.castleairmuseum.org/>

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Dean & Mike set up a trailer at CAM with the help of a great lady who helped them coordinate their set up for the OCD. They had enough food to feed a small Army and gave most of it away to those in need. They had invited all the Sixers we could notify but my guess is that the 104-degree temp kept many of them away. No problem, they met a record crowd of visitors and made some new friends. CAM CEO Joe Pruzzo and his niece were on hand to enjoy the feast.

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Memorial Day morning: Time to wake up 57-2456, place the information, and greet the visitors... hundreds of them!

Many questions answered, shade & cool drink offered, pictures taken and repeat until everyone goes home. When it hit 104-degrees it didn't take long for everyone to head home.

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Left to right: Ralph Robledo, Mike Woloszyn, Dean Rager, Lou Pizzarello, and Bruce Gookin. Ralph made the tribute sign for Major B.A Hansen who recently passed away. Hanging from the cockpit is B.A. Hansen's Orange Flight Suit that he wore at every CAM OCD. B.A. was also a member of the Greatest Generation, and we will miss him greatly.

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The Serial Plate placard stencil shows the correct serial number of this airframe is 58-0703. There were no other 456<sup>th</sup> FIS aircraft left in 2003 and the USAF Museum gave us permission to restore this as 57-2456 in honor of John C. Marcotte, the last CO of the 456<sup>th</sup> FIS before the squadron was retired. John was a WWII Hero who was shot down over Germany and captured as a POW before he escaped. The first CO of the 456<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron Oct 14, 1944, was Kenneth Taylor. He and George Welsh flying P-40s shot down several Japanese Zeros on Dec 11, 1941. Thousands of officers and enlisted served the 456<sup>th</sup> FIS during its lifetime and it is fitting that both John Marcotte and Kenneth Taylor be recognized as members of the Greatest Generation.

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We also had some visitors from the Future! Could these be Guardians from the USAF Space Command?

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**Brought to you by:**

**Dean Rager F-106 Crew Chief**

**Mike Woloszyn F-106 Crew Chief**

**Bruce Gookin F-106 Crew Chief**

**Lou Pizzarello MA-1 Crew Chief**

**Joe Pruzzo CEO Castle Air Museum**

**Dean Robledo CAM Crew Chief for 57-2456**

**Patrick McGee, Bob Kwiecinski, Dave Stiteler, and Pat Perry F-106 Reunion Committee**

**<https://www.f-106deltadart.com/reunioncommittee.htm>**

**See you in Melbourne, Florida Nov 17-21, 2021**