

AEROTECH NEWS



Journal of Aerospace, Defense Industry and Veteran News

and Review

by Laura Mitchell
NASA Armstrong

Each NASA facility has its own unique micro-climate and geography.

At NASA's Armstrong Flight Research Center in Edwards, Calif., the high-desert climate is an interesting natural habitat for a variety of wildlife.

Armstrong Flight Research Center, housed at Edwards Air Force Base, sits on more than 300,000 acres of desert land. Part of that landscape is Rogers Dry Lake, a drainage basin that retains water with no outflow to external bodies of water like rivers, other lakes, or the ocean. This unique climate makes it an ideal location for the experimental flight testing that NASA Armstrong is known for.

It is also home to desert tortoises, bobcats, lizards, snakes, scorpions, and burrowing owls. To ensure the safety of the wildlife and the personnel, NASA biologists and the environmental office monitor the wildlife and their behavior. Mark Bratton, environmental scientist and wildlife biologist, monitors and tracks the wildlife on center and across the base in conjunction with the Air Force.

The desert tortoise is native to the Mojave Desert. The desert tortoise can live between 50 and 80 years and grow to be 10-14 inches. Some tortoises on base have been outfitted with radio transmitters on their shells, and other tortoises that have been relocated to different areas of the base.

"The radio transmitters help us know where the adult female tortoises are so when they are ready to lay their eggs, we can take the females to holding pens where they lay/deposit their eggs in predator-proof pens. After the female lays her eggs, the adult female is returned to the wild and the eggs incubate in the pens until they hatch. Once the young hatch they are raised in predator-proof pens until they are larger and more predator resistant," said Bratton.

Bobcats have been known to venture out at Armstrong. "We know of a male and female bobcat, and three kittens. We're privileged to have the bobcats and even get to see them, since they're pretty secretive animals," said Bratton. Currently the large mammal study has been tracking some of the resident bobcats and coyotes on base. "Bobcats have different resources in different locations.

See WILDLIFE, Page 3

NASA photograph

A bobcat seeks shade in the Mojave Desert at Armstrong Flight Research Center in Edwards, Calif.



Room to roam for wildlife at Armstrong Flight Research Center



Virgin Orbit bankruptcy proceedings continue: Asset sale complete



Virgin Orbit photograph

The Virgin Orbit modified Boeing 747, Cosmic Girl, taxis along the flightline at the Mojave Air and Space Port prior to takeoff.

by **Stuart Ibberson**
editor

Virgin Orbit announced May 23 that it is closing for good after a sale of assets totaling \$36.4 million.

Rocket Lab USA will get the major part of Virgin Orbit's Long Beach, Calif., headquarters and manufacturing facilities.

Rocket Lab USA agreed to pay \$16 million for the facilities during a May 22 auction that continued Chapter 11 bankruptcy court proceedings. The sale includes machinery and equipment Virgin Orbit had used to build the LauncherOne rockets.

In addition, Stratolaunch will get Cosmic Girl — the modified Boeing 747 — that Virgin Orbit used to launch LauncherOne. Stratolaunch will pay \$17 million according to the court statements.

And the company's primary launch site and home to Cosmic Girl at the Mojave Air and Space Port will be acquired by rocket engine and spacecraft startup Launcher Inc. Earlier this year, Launcher Inc. was acquired by Vast Space, a space station firm.

All the sales will be confirmed by the bankruptcy court on May 24.

On May 23, Virgin Orbit released a statement.

"Throughout its history, Virgin Orbit has been at the forefront of innovation and has made substantial contributions to the field of commercial rocket launch with its LauncherOne air launch platform.

"The company's cutting-edge technology, unmatched expertise, and commitment to excellence have propelled it to the vanguard of an emerging commercial launch industry."

It added: "As Virgin Orbit embarks on this path, the management and employees would like to extend their heartfelt gratitude to all

stakeholders, including customers, partners, investors, and employees, for their support and dedication over the years.

"It is through their collective efforts that the Company has been able to achieve significant milestones and make lasting contributions to the advancement of satellite launch in the United States and the United Kingdom.

Virgin Orbit, founded by Sir Richard Branson in 2017, laid off 85 percent of its employees in March 2023, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in April after failing to secure long-term funding after a failed launch from the United Kingdom in January. Most of the 100 or so employees who remained at the company after the March layoffs will be laid off within the next week or so.

On May 8, 2023, Virgin Orbit released a statement that said the company had received letters of interest from more than 30 organizations including several who proposed maintaining and operating the business intact.

At the time, company CEO Dan Hart said: "I'm pleased with the number and quality of the

indications of interest we've received, which we believe reflects the innovative ideas and hard work the team has put into the development of this unique system. I look forward to continuing to work with those who have expressed interest and other parties as we approach the final bid deadline."

However, the at the May 23 auction, the company decided "not to continue the auction" regarding the current inventory of LauncherOne rockets.

The court filing stated, "No Successful Bidder or Next-Highest Bidder has been selected for such Assets at this time." A company spokesperson said discussions on what to do with the rocket engines are ongoing.

Following the days court proceedings, a Virgin Orbit statement said, "The combined total proceeds were determined by a rigorous and competitive auction which maximizes value for the estate and minimizes the remaining duration of the company's restructuring. Virgin Orbit's legacy in the space industry will forever be remembered."

"Throughout its history, Virgin Orbit has been at the forefront of innovation and has made substantial contributions to the field of commercial rocket launch with its LauncherOne air launch platform. The company's cutting-edge technology, unmatched expertise, and commitment to excellence have propelled it to the vanguard of an emerging commercial launch industry."

Virgin Orbit statement

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Stratolaunch successfully completes Talon-A separation test

Stratolaunch photograph

Stratolaunch LLC successfully completed a separation release test of the Talon-A separation test vehicle, TA-0. May 13, 2023.

The flight was the 11th for the company's launch platform Roc and the second time the team has conducted flight operations in Vandenberg Space Force Base's Western Range off California's central coast.

The flight, which lasted a total of four hours and eight minutes, performed risk reduction by demonstrating the Talon-A launch system can cleanly and safely separate hypersonic vehicles from Roc's center-wing pylon. The test also confirmed telemetry between the vehicles and Vandenberg Space Force Base's communication assets, assuring that back-up telemetry data collection will occur during future hypersonic flight tests. With this landmark test complete, the team will progress toward its first hypersonic flight of the TA-1 expendable testbed in late summer of 2023.

"Today's test was exceptional," said Dr. Zachary Krevor, CEO and president for Stratolaunch. "It was exhilarating to see TA-0 release safely away from Roc, and I commend

our team and partners. Our hardware and data collection systems performed as anticipated, and we now stand at the precipice of achieving hypersonic flight."

"We also thank the Western Range, Vandenberg Space Force Base, for their continued support of our test operations. They have provided us with multiple flight opportunities and have been a great partner adapting to our various schedule requests as we adjusted our release window. We look forward to working together during our future operations pursuing hypersonic flight," he said.

WILDLIFE, from 1



NASA photograph

Their water source might be a mile or so away from their den and another location to stalk prey," said Bratton. NASA employees have had the opportunity to witness bobcats lounging around some of the buildings and with caution, they have been able to take photos from a distance.

Snakes and lizards are also abundant around Armstrong. Bratton notes that many of the snakes are non-venomous although some like the gopher snake try to mimic the venomous snakes like the "Mojave green" rattlesnake by flattening out their head and shaking their tail in dried leaves to mimic a rattle.

The Environmental Office takes great care in managing the animals in residence at Armstrong, monitoring their behavior and locations for the safety of NASA personnel and the animals. In every case, if you see wildlife a little too up close and personal, Bratton suggests avoiding them, give them a wide berth and go on about your business.

A desert tortoise, native to the Mojave Desert at Armstrong Flight Research Center in Edwards, Calif.

AFTC attends career day at Millen Academy

by Tech. Sgt. Robert Cloys
Edwards AFB, Calif.

Air Force Test Center Airmen from Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., attended the 2023 Career Day at David G. Millen Law & Government Magnet Academy in Palmdale, Calif., May 12, 2023. DGM is an intermediate school with students in grades 6 through 8.

Participation in events like these are an important part of AFTC's local community outreach. This marks AFTC's second appearance at DGM's career day, the first since 2019.

A mixture of active-duty airmen and civilian airmen from a wide range of career fields represented AFTC at the school to provide students with information on becoming an Airmen, as either active-duty or civilian. Each team member advised students on their personal backgrounds, career journeys, benefits of joining the Air Force team, and opportunities available to them locally at Edwards.



Air Force photographs by Tech. Sgt. Robert Cloys

Staff Sgt. Justin Joshua Delos Santos, 412th Medical Group mental health and ADAPT technician, meets with his assigned student escort before speaking at David G. Millen Law & Government Magnet Academy's 2023 Career Day in Palmdale, Calif., May 12, 2023. Air Force Test Center active-duty and civilian Airmen from a wide range of career fields attended the Career Day to provide students with information on career opportunities with the Air Force.



Staff Sgt. Justin Joshua Delos Santos, 412th Medical Group mental health and ADAPT technician, speaks with David G. Millen Law & Government Magnet Academy students at the school's 2023 Career Day in Palmdale, Calif., May 12, 2023.



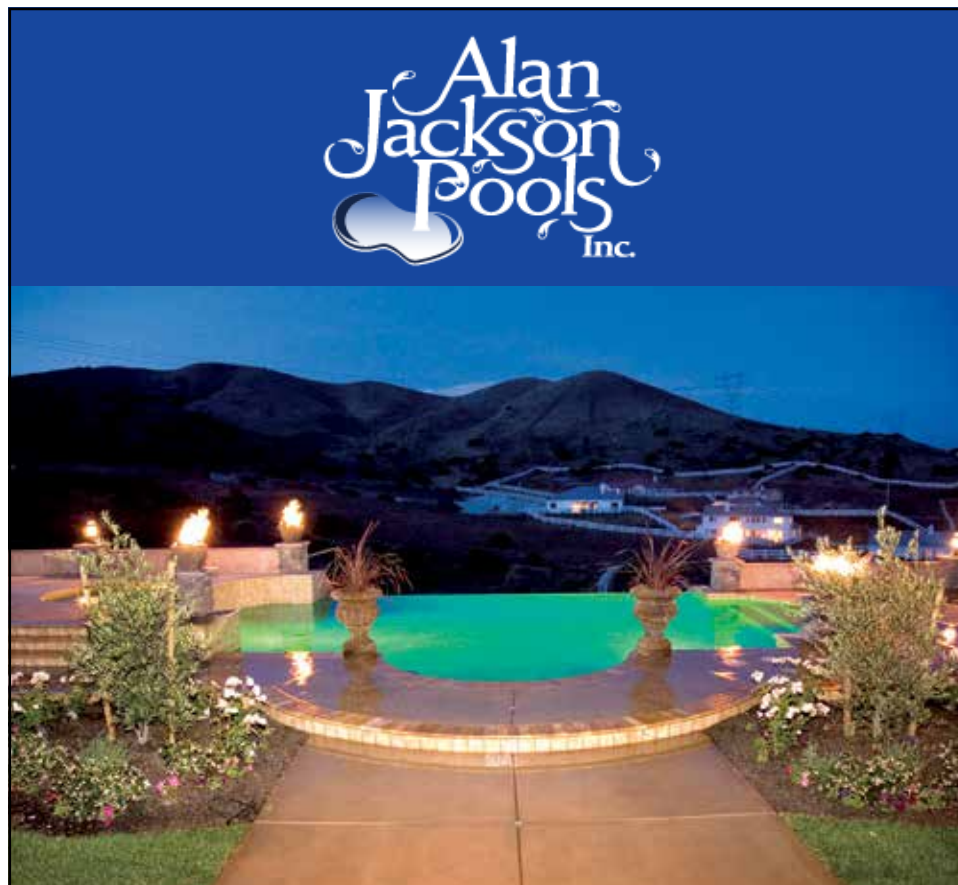
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Digital Test, Training Range now open at Edwards

by Tech. Sgt. Robert Cloys
Edwards AFB, Calif.

The 412th Electronic Warfare Group, 445th Test Squadron, celebrated the opening of the Digital Test and Training Range facility enabled by the Joint Simulation Environment during a ribbon-cutting ceremony, May 8.

The \$34.4 million-dollar, state-of-the-art facility located at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., will provide high-end modeling and simulation capabilities for the United States Air Force.

Several distinguished guests were in attendance, including:

U.S. Congressman Mike Garcia, California 27th District

Jake Lopez, Representative for U.S. Congressman Kevin McCarthy

Dominic Heiden, Representative for 12th District Senator, Shannon Grove

Brandon Roque, Representative for California 21st District Senator, Scott Wilk

The Air Force Test Center is the lead Air Force partner supporting Air Force Test and Evaluation, Air Force Training and Readiness, the Air Force Life Cycle Management Center, and the Department of the Navy executing the Joint Simulation Environment as a cross-service, government-owned, enterprise solution to develop a virtual battlespace environment.

The DTTR is specifically designed

to meet the unique and complex needs of the Joint Simulation Environment.

Equipped with cutting-edge technology, the facility enables Edwards' skilled test professionals to work more effectively and efficiently than ever.

"I am grateful to the countless individuals, including leadership from the 412th Test Wing and the Air Force Test Center at Edwards AFB, who have worked tirelessly to advance this state-of-the-art facility," said McCarthy in a statement. "This will serve as an invaluable resource to help test weapons systems in realistic environments and better prepare for future missions. Because of these unwavering efforts, our nation's Air Force will be stronger and better equipped to handle the challenges ahead"

This DTTR instantiates the first-of-its-kind USAF JSE Supersite and will pave the way toward digital transformation for experimentation, development, testing, and high-end advanced training of 5th-generation and other advanced weapon systems.

The Air Force rapidly established two DTTR facilities – the first at Edwards AFB, closely followed by a second at Nellis AFB, Nevada, within the following year. Both facilities are enabled by the architecture developed by the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division, Naval Air Systems Command, at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Md., and

their outstanding continuing partnership between the Air Force and the Navy.

The DTTR represents a robust digital synthetic environment for developing 5th and 6th Gen platforms and their advanced weapon systems using the principles of digital engineering.

This facility will allow the Test and Evaluation enterprise to execute complex testing and high-end training events in a virtual environment that can replicate high densities of model-based systems in a closed, secured environment

without the traditional limitations of an Open-Air Range.

The facility can execute high-tempo training and mission rehearsal events and provide high-density, multi-threat scenarios in air, land, sea, and soon space and cyber environments. The mission 445 TS will begin performing at the DTTR will revolutionize test and training across the electromagnetic spectrum for multi-domain, multi-platform, system-of-systems scenarios. It will also influence the early developmental stages

of weapon systems using realistic models in a government-owned, low-cost, and low-risk environment.

"Beyond simply its functional characteristics, this new facility represents a tangible expression of our organization's values and mission," said Lt. Col. James Petersen, 445th TS command. "It is a statement that reinforces our commitment to excellence, innovation, and service to our nation. And more than that, it represents an investment in the future of the United States Air Force."



Air Force photograph by Tech. Sgt. Robert Cloys

Stakeholders prepare to cut the ribbon at the Digital Test and Training Range Facility Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., May 8, 2023. The DTTR is specifically designed to meet the unique and complex needs of the Joint Simulation Environment. Equipped with cutting-edge technology, the facility enables Edwards' skilled test professionals to work more effectively and efficiently than ever.

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NASA Armstrong chase aircraft gets a facelift

by Jay Levine
NASA Armstrong

An F/A-18 aircraft received from the U.S. Navy in 2021 has been rejuvenated, had its NASA colors added, and is close to flight certification at NASA's Armstrong Flight Research Center, in Edwards, Calif.

Thanks to the U.S. Air Force Corrosion Control Facility on Edwards Air Force Base, also known as the Paint Barn, the F/A-18D aircraft designated NASA 862 will join the center's stable of aircraft with its new colors. NASA 862 is intended to track, or "chase," the quiet supersonic X-59 aircraft and

legacy, two-seat F/A-18B models with newer aircraft. To that end, Asher tasked Jack Ly, a NASA Armstrong flight operations engineer, to evaluate several aircraft that could meet the center's mission.

"We're excited to have this aircraft in our fleet," Ly said. "Our hope is in the next couple of months we will be able to integrate more instrumentation to support more missions."

Ly identified the F/A-18D that would become NASA 862, was identified in May 2021 at its home base at the U.S. Naval Air Station Patuxent River in Maryland. After leading a team to inspect the aircraft, its



NASA photographs by Steve Freeman

NASA 862, which is an F/A-18D, departs with its fresh colors from the U.S. Air Force Corrosion Control Facility on Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., for its nearby home at NASA's Armstrong Flight Research Center.



U.S. Air Force Corrosion Control Facility personnel Kristian Snoots and Shelby Youngo remove masking from NASA 862, which is an F/A-18D based at NASA's Armstrong Flight Research Center in Edwards, Calif. The corrosion control facility is located at Edwards Air Force Base and is also known as the Paint Barn.

provide a platform for videographers and photographers to document flights.

The long road for this aircraft's acquisition and preparation began in 2020. Troy Asher, director for Flight Operations at NASA Armstrong, initiated an effort to replace the center's

airframe and component records, Ly gave his recommendation to select it. Although the F/A-18D is considered old by military standards, it is more modern the F/A-18B, and its parts are easier to find.

The aircraft spent four months hav-

ing its military components removed during preparation for transfer to NASA Armstrong. The aircraft was delivered to NASA Armstrong in October 2021, and coordination continued to send it to the Naval Air Station North Island Base, near San Diego, in June 2022 for intense depot-level maintenance. NASA's Aeronautics Research Mission Directorate and NASA Armstrong provided funding to enable the aircraft rejuvenation.

For the aircraft to fly NASA Armstrong missions, it needed an overhaul required when an aircraft flies a certain number of hours. That involves removing the wings, inspecting for corrosion, modernizing its systems, and conducting other key inspections and servicing. Technicians installed full aircraft controls in the rear cockpit to allow a second pilot to receive training or maintain proficiency. The maintenance to NASA 862 should support a life span of about 40 years for the aircraft based on NASA Armstrong usage.

NASA 862 returned to NASA Arm-

strong in February 2023, then made an initial trip to the Paint Barn in March for sanding, masking and preparation for painting. It then returned to the Paint Barn for the full NASA Armstrong paint scheme and the final application of safety decals and NASA and Armstrong identifications. The aircraft returned to NASA Armstrong May 15.

NASA entered the aircraft into its Aircraft Management Information System and completed weight and balance checks. The aircraft's initial airworthiness review is expected this month. Once complete, Asher will sign its airworthiness certificate and send it to Center Director Brad Flick for final approval for the aircraft to begin flights.



U.S. Air Force Corrosion Control Facility's Shelby Youngo completes painting a danger warning on NASA 862, which is an F/A-18D based at NASA's Armstrong Flight Research Center in Edwards, Calif. The corrosion control facility is located on Edwards Air Force Base and is also known as the Paint Barn.



U.S. Air Force Corrosion Control Facility personnel Kristian Snoots and Shelby Youngo remove masking from NASA 862, which is an F/A-18D based at NASA's Armstrong Flight Research Center in Edwards, Calif. The corrosion control facility is located on Edwards Air Force Base and is also known as the Paint Barn.



Eric Miranda, who works at the U.S. Air Force Corrosion Control Facility, paints areas in a stencil for adding some finishing touches to NASA 862, which is an F/A-18D based at NASA's Armstrong Flight Research Center in Edwards, Calif. The corrosion control facility is located on Edwards Air Force Base and is also known as the Paint Barn.

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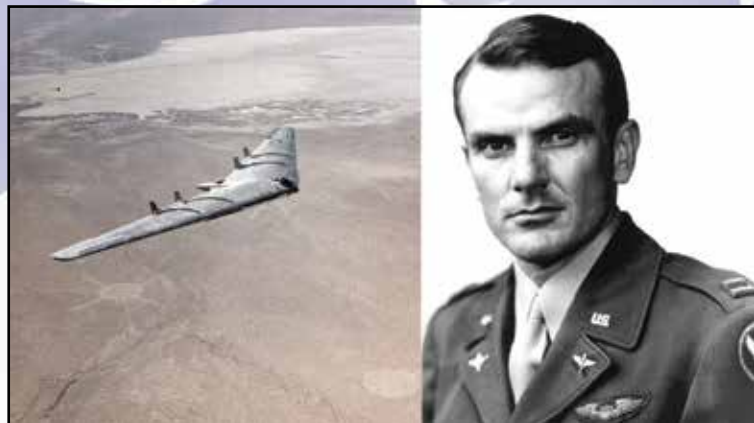
June 4, 1971: The Martin Marietta X-24A prototype aircraft made its last flight on this day. The program's primary purpose involved testing of lifting body concepts, experimenting with the concept of unpowered reentry and landing. The Space Shuttle later utilized these same concepts.



June 5, 1961: The first class of the Aerospace Research Pilot School began on this day. The class consisted of four permanent members of the Test Pilot School and one from the Air Force Flight Test Center's Directorate of Flight Test aerospace research pilots.



June 8, 1959: At Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., North American Aviation's Chief Engineering Test Pilot, A. Scott Crossfield, made the first flight of the X-15A hypersonic research rocketplane at Edwards AFB, Calif. The aircraft was the first of three X-15s built for the U.S. Air Force and NASA. It was airdropped from a Boeing NB-52A Stratofortress, 52-003, at 37,550 feet over Rosamond Dry Lake. This was an unpowered glide flight to check the flying characteristics and aircraft systems, so there were no propellants or oxidizers aboard, other than hydrogen peroxide which powered the pumps and generators. The aircraft reached 0.79 Mach (522 mph) during the 4 minute, 56.6 second flight.



June 5, 1948: The second Northrop YB-49 "Flying Wing" was undergoing stall recovery performance testing at 40,000 feet, north of Muroc Army Air Field (now Edwards AFB, Calif.). The crew of five included co-pilot Capt. Glen W. Edwards. The aircraft suffered a catastrophic structural failure with the outer wing panels tearing off, and the aircraft crashed approximately 10 miles east of Mojave. The entire crew was killed.



June 6, 1944: The Lockheed XP-58 Chain Lightning made its first flight, from the Lockheed facility at Burbank, Calif., (pictured) to Muroc Army Air Field (now Edwards AFB), with company test pilot Joe Towle at the controls. The aircraft was an upgraded version of the company's legendary P-38 Lightning, designed for a variety of roles.



June 8, 1966: XB-70A Valkyrie #2 was flying in close formation with four other aircraft. During the flight, an F-104 drifted into the XB-70s right wing, flipped and rolled over the top of the Valkyrie, destroying the bomber's vertical stabilizers. The F-104 then exploded, destroying the Valkyrie's rudders and damaging its left wing. With the loss of both rudders and damage to the wings, the Valkyrie entered an uncontrollable spin and crashed north of Barstow, Calif. NASA Chief Test Pilot Joe Walker (F-104 pilot) and Carl Cross (XB-70 co-pilot) were killed. Al White (XB-70 pilot) ejected, sustaining serious injuries.



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Museum fund drive takes wing at Edwards



Photographs by Dennis Anderson

A Replica of Bell X-1 that test pilot Chuck Yeager flew to break the sound barrier in 1947 is housed at current Flight Test Museum inside the gate at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif.

by Dennis Anderson
special to Aerotech News

Test pilot James “J.B.” Brown beckoned the audience gathered on a large, concrete foundation to gaze skyward and look up through a latticework of steel beams that arched above them.

They looked up through the skeleton of steel of the new Flight Test Museum site to take in the sight of a powder-blue sky, laced with the slow drift of cotton-white wisps and cumulus clouds. The crowd took in a sight of the heavens that looked like perfect flying weather. For test pilots, for air crew, for civilians and soaring birds, it was perfect.

Two fighter jets zoomed overhead in the distance, gone by the time their sound trail roared.

“Look up in the sky,” said Brown. “It all happened here.”

Chuck Yeager flying the Bell X-1 to break the sound barrier 76 years ago, the X-15 rocket plane flying past the edge of space in the 1960s, the space shuttle, testing and landing in the 1970s and 80s. All of that happened in those powder-blue skies above Edwards.

Brown was joined by dignitaries May 5, 2023, to officially kick off the campaign to fund completion of the 75,000-foot hangar-like structure that will house the future Flight Test Museum at Edwards.

Brown was a good choice to explain some of the excitement in a massive expansion to the existing museum. The new facility will be outside the West Gate of the California desert base described as the “Flight Test Center of the Universe” and home of the “Right Stuff” test pilots and astronauts re-

counted in Tom Wolfe’s book about Edwards’ earliest glory days.

An Air Force graduate of the USAF Test Pilot School at Edwards, and former chief test pilot for Lockheed Martin, Brown briefly shared his credentials with nearly 100 civic leaders gathered to launch a \$1.2 million anticipated six-month fund-raising drive.

“I have been lucky enough to fly the F-117 and F-22 as chief test pilot,” he said, adding, “I have been lucky enough to fly above 70,000 feet to see the darkness of space and curvature of the Earth.

“I’ve flown two times the speed of sound and seen my shock wave streak across the desert floor ... I’ve even flown airplanes backwards.”

A new flight museum will recognize the history and achievements of pilots, but also engineers, and support crews, and all the people “with greasy hands and bloody knuckles” who have made air and space programs that defined the American experience in the 20th and

21st centuries, Brown said.

He invoked the spirit of Sir Isaac Newton, discoverer of the concept of gravity, and quoted him, saying, “We stand on the shoulders of giants.”

“The great aeronautical achievements that have enabled the U.S. to maintain dominance of the skies were accomplished right here at Edwards Air Force Base,” Brown said.

The museum under construction outside the base’s West Gate is a skeleton of steel girders on concrete foundation. The building’s completion was stalled by the COVID pandemic and the inflation that came with it.

Art Thompson, renowned engineer and Chair of the Flight Test Museum Foundation, said that because of rapidly rising costs the \$1.2 million campaign is needed “to put the skin on the building.”

The new museum, replacing a much smaller facility inside the base, will house 80 different cutting-edge aircraft, all first tested in the skies above

“When my kids were growing up, I was the mom who always wanted to go on the field trip, and I got to take them to the Flight Test Museum, the small one inside the base,” MacLaren said. “You never know what it is that’s going to inspire someone young to make a life choice about what they’re going to go out and do.”

Museum Director George Welsh said even without expansion, the current facility attracted 50,000 visitors in 2022. He estimated the museum would easily double that, and he echoed MacLaren’s sentiments about inspiration.

“I have met people here at Edwards who were kids in classes I visited, and they come back to tell me that they are working here in our programs.”

Once complete, the museum will be turned over to the Air Force, but no Department of Defense funds are allocated, so all fundraising must come from private sources, corporations, and individuals.



“Century Series” Cold War fighters on display outside the new Flight Test Museum site.

Edwards. But the Museum Foundation vision is for something grander than a military aircraft museum, Thompson said.

“The mission of foundation is preserving heritage and history not only of beautiful hardware, but the people, the people who created our community, people who made us the ‘Center of the Aerospace Universe, the Aerospace Valley,’” Thompson said.

The new museum site sits outside the gate, aligned with the “Century Circle” of historic fighter jets, including the F-100 Super Sabre, the F-104 Starfighter and F-105 Thunderchief. The planes rest, waiting to be sheltered from the harsh winds and dust that blows off Rogers Dry Lake, home of many space shuttle landings.

Thompson, who was part of engineering team that developed the B-2 stealth bomber, said the museum’s role is envisioned as “an education and communications center,” to attract students ranging from elementary grades to university. It will become a Mecca for Science, Technology, Education and Mathematics training and research.

Civic leaders gathered at the museum superstructure included Kathy MacLaren, President of AV EDGE, the Economic Development and Growth Enterprise. She also represents the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

Brian Sandberg, president of the Society of Experimental Test Pilots, hailed the museum as future home of the Bob Hoover Flight Test Research Library and archives. The archives detail the history of flight test since the 1940s amid the programs that developed America’s first jet fighter in deep secrecy during World War II.

The new museum, estimated for completion within three years, “will attract thousands of visitors, adding millions of dollars to our economy,” Drew Mercy, Director of AV Edge, said. The regional economic impact of flight test and Edwards and Air Force Plant 42 in Palmdale is nearly \$2.8 billion, Mercy said.

The Museum Foundation is seeking “Life Friend” memberships for \$1,000 contributions that can be spread over three years, Thompson said. The organization is also seeking sponsorships that can be used in corporate marketing programs.

Information about the fund drive can be found at <https://flighttestmuseum.org>.

The day’s event concluded with official recognitions from House Speaker Kevin McCarthy and Rep. Mike Garcia, R-Santa Clarita, as well as from State Sen. Scott Wilk, Assembly members Tom Lackey and Shannon Grove. Additional recognitions came from Kern County Supervisor Zack Scrivner and Los Angeles County Supervisor Kathryn Barger.



Visitors inspect the steel superstructure of future home of the Flight Test Museum that is under construction outside the West Gate at Edwards Air Force Base Calif.



James “J.B.” Brown, President of National Test Pilot School, directs the audience to “look up in the sky.”



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Memories of our aerospace history in skies over the AV

by Cathy Hansen
special to Aerotech News

Let me take you back a few decades.

Do you remember where you were and what you were doing between 1965 and 1968?

In December 1965, Boeing and Pan Am agreed to build a jumbo-sized airliner – the model 747. It would dwarf every airliner in operation at that time and quickly became known as a “wide-body” because it would have an internal cabin width of about 20-feet, almost twice that of the Boeing 707. It could be configured to carry 490 passengers!

On April 13, 1966, Boeing announced an order worth \$525 million from Pan Am for 25 Model 747 jumbo jets, (that’s \$21-million each!). On Sept. 1, 1966, BOAC placed an order for six 747s.

On Sept. 30, 1968, Boeing rolled out the first Model 747 from its specially built plant in Everett, Wash. Everyone was shocked at the size of the new airliner. It weighed 710,000 pounds, measured 231-feet in length, with a height of over 63-feet and a wingspan of 200-feet, longer than the



Courtesy photograph

A Boeing 747 in Pan Am livery.

Wright Brothers first flight!

A new feature in landing gears was developed to distribute the weight of the aircraft, so as not to put greater loads on existing runways and taxiways. The 18 wheels were only slightly larger than those on a 707.

There were four sets of wheels with four-wheels each that were spaced in a way that their tracks didn’t overlap and gave the aircraft the widest track of a commercial airliner at the time. The nose gear had a set of two wheels.

Today at Mojave Air and Space Port at Rutan Field, Stratolaunch was constructed using many parts from two 747-400s that were in storage in the boneyard, including the landing gears.

Many other aviation related events

took place in our famous skies from 1966 to 1968. On Jan. 7, 1966, the U.S. Air Force Strategic Air Command received its first Lockheed SR-71 aircraft at Beale AFB, Calif; North American’s XB-70 Valkyrie maintained a speed of Mach 3 over a period of 32 minutes on May 19, 1966, the following month tragedy hit as an F-104 collided with the XB-70 resulting in the loss of the two aircraft and test pilots Joe Walker and Maj. Carl Cross.

The wingless and unpowered Northrop/NASA M2-F2 lifting body completed a successful flight test after it was released from the wing of a Boeing B-52 mother ship at Edwards AFB on July 12, 1966; the engine for the Concord was test flown on the RAF Vulcan bomber on Sept. 9, 1966; and Pete Knight piloted the North American X-15 to 4,250 mph (Mach 6.33) on Nov. 18, 1966 and then on Oct. 3, 1967 Knight flew the rocket powered X-15 to Mach 6.7 (4,520 mph). He also earned astronaut wings for another X-15 flight to 280,000 feet in altitude.

After 10 years of test flying at Edwards AFB, Knight went to Vietnam and flew 253 combat missions in the F-100D. Knight joined the U.S. Air Force in 1951 and retired after 32 years of service in 1982

The Vietnam War escalated in 1966 and the UH-1 Huey helicopter gunship and the AH-1 Huey Cobra played important roles flying into battle zones in Vietnam.

We had the opportunity to own UH-1H helicopters and used them in some TV series and motion pictures. They all had history of being flown in Vietnam. Such an honor to fly a machine that served our men and women in the military.

I have barely scratched the surface of the fantastic history of aviation in this area that we call home.

For the folks who love aviation and the history we have witnessed, we surely need to preserve these iconic flying machines for future generations.



North American photograph

The North American XB-70 Valkyrie.



Photograph by Cathy Hansen

A UH-1H Huey on location for the TV series ER.



NASA photograph

Pete Knight with the X-15.



NASA photograph

The Northrop/NASA M2-F2 lifting body.

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The great silence in the Aerospace Valley

by Bob Alvis
special to Aerotech News

The other day, I was helping with a project at Blackbird Airpark in Palmdale, Calif., and as I looked around at the selection of aircraft and those at Joe Davies Heritage Airpark, I began to look across the field at those hangars on the north side of Air Force Plant 42.

Over the years, many landmark aircraft icons in the history of the Antelope Valley were produced and tested there. The memories of past projects that affected the lives of thousands of us is represented in one form or another in monuments made of aluminum and expensive metals, as well as statues or displays to commemorate past generations and their contributions to our nation and our valley's history.

One of those aircraft born out of much controversy became an iconic part of our valley's history and inspired so many of us with a passion that still lives on today — not just with locals but with aviation enthusiasts around the world.

General Operational Requirement No. 38 "Weapon System 110A," that we came to know as the North American XB-70, became that passion.

Starting in 1955, the program was a roller coaster of changing political and military requirements that lasted until a last flight to a museum in Dayton, Ohio, in the 1960s.

Two XB-70s were built here in Palmdale at Plant 42, and the North American work force who punched that clock everyday was made up of dads and moms, brothers and sisters, neighbors and friends from all over the Antelope Valley and beyond.

Even though the Valkyrie, as it was named, was not getting much love on the national stage, it was getting lots of love from our local communities. The futuristic-looking Mach 3 bomber with all those new technology innovations was becoming

a reality thanks to the many hands who made up the work force here in our valley. On the day of its rollout, with the national press in attendance, the Antelope Valley put on its best, and presented its achievement for the world to see, and it did not disappoint.

Over its existence, those first flights and benchmark successes became points of pride as the amazing white bird stepped into its role as a research aircraft. It had all of us looking to the skies with every flight to see the most beautiful and graceful large-scale aircraft to ever ride a shockwave.

With the well-documented tragedy of ship number two, the program began its slow decay, and the pride of the Antelope Valley began to lose its luster. With one ship remaining after the loss of ship two, the program began to fade away, as passions and interests began to find homes in other projects.

Some years ago, I took my son on a trip across country to visit that remaining B-70 at Dayton, Ohio. Standing under that beautiful bird, I looked at my son and remembered a day when I was about his age standing on the lawn of a westside school with all the other students and watching this very plane take off to the east on its very first flight.

In the presence of such an important piece of aviation history and being able to touch it, I was not only thinking of my dad and the thousands of hours spent going over every detail of construction and preparation, but I also think back to all those in our desert home who also contributed to its development, construction and operation that are no longer with us.

Standing at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force Museum in Dayton, Ohio, I thought back to the Antelope Valley, place of the B-70s birth and development with all the history that took place in our skies and realized that we do not have one thing here paying tribute to its existence and all those who made it happen.



North American Aviation photograph

The XB-70 Valkyrie is rolled out from the North American Aviation facility at Air Force Plant 42 in Palmdale, Calif.

We have the Aerospace Walk of Honor, we have museums past and present, schools and public squares, but at all these locations we do not have one indication that this amazing project that so many were a part of, and that today has a following of enthusiasts worldwide ever existed.

Why is that? Do we just not care anymore about such things? Have we lost the passion of past generations who held these projects near and dear in their hearts? Do we not have leadership who can see the broader picture when telling a story or honoring a legacy? Or is it we just don't care and see no real value in remembering this amazing project in a public setting?

I'm certainly not advocating that we get out the old blue prints and build a ship number three, but it would be nice if we, as a community, could find a project to commemorate one of the greatest aircraft development projects to ever grace our skies and use whatever that looks like as a tribute to the everyday Antelope Valley citizen that for generations never made the headlines, but made the headlines possible.

Like me, the XB-70 is personal to so many of us from that time period. It sure would be nice to see that personal attachment shared with future genera-

tions who are making that same history today, and to show they too are a part of a long chain that goes back for generations and that someday even their contributions to the greatness of our country and its people will not be forgotten.

The XB-70 Valkyrie remembrance and legacy project to me is just a dream. Too great for just one man to accomplish, but if we could get a movement of next-generation family members who were personally and spiritually connected to our iconic valley treasure, then maybe just maybe a long overdue project can take flight once again in our communities' presence.

It would also be nice to see current generations not personally involved to find it in their hearts to get involved also and show an understanding and the respect to people they never knew that have for too long been overlooked when it comes aerospace legacy workers.

Yep, it's a dream. But the void is too great to be overlooked and I'm just praying that we can find a way to bring visitors from all over and have a destination display that would once again put the XB-70, its history, and our valley once again on national display.

Until next time, Bob out...



NASA photograph

The XB-70 Valkyrie in flight.



Air Force photograph

The XB-70 Valkyrie on display at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force.

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The items to be sold are generally described as follows: Furniture, clothing, tools and or other household items stored by the following persons.

D213 Hernandez, Eduardo
E398 Payton, Florence
B107 Mahoney, Kaitlyn
E396 Lopez, Justin
D155 Arella, Elynita
G608 Gallardo, James
G586 Duran, Tracy
B102 Sarran, Kester

June 23rd, 2023 Signed NOVA STORAGE

This notice is given in accordance with the provisions of section 21700 et seq. of Business & Professional Code of the State of California. The owner reserves the right to bid at the sale. All purchased goods are sold "As Is" and must be paid for and removed at the time of sale. Sales subject to prior cancellation in the event of settlement between owner & obligated party. Auctioneer: Nova Storage

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The items to be sold are generally described as follows: Furniture, clothing, tools and or other household items stored by the following persons.

0494 Herman, Crystal
0421 Teran, Paul
0074 Mcelroy, Dana
0064 Brewer, Ylana
0478 Miller, Cary
0579 Whitney, Christopher
0308 Calzada, Patricia
0574 Siebenhoven, H. Von
0610 Hardy, Rosie

May 23rd, 2023 Signed NOVA STORAGE

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Kaylee Fox
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Anthony Wilson

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Business & Professional Code Section 21700-21707

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The items to be sold are generally described as follows: Furniture, clothing, tools and or other household items stored by the following persons.

E395 Pratt, Emmanuel
C269 Mckinley, Jacquelyne
E344 Vasquez, Jacklyn
C281 Alvarez, Karina
G623 Molyneux, Sharaih
F527 Smith, Paul

May 23rd, 2023 Signed NOVA STORAGE

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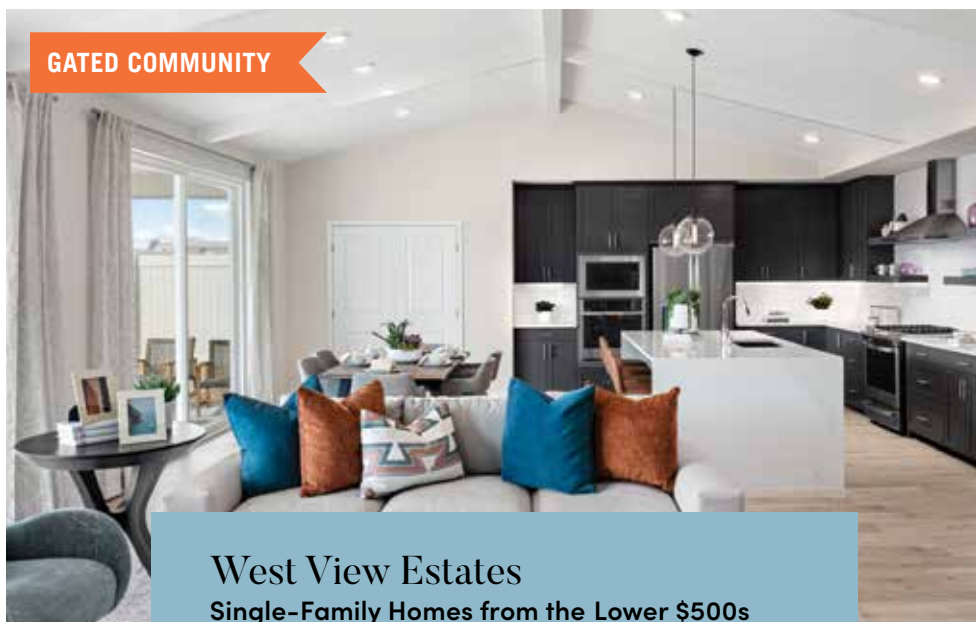


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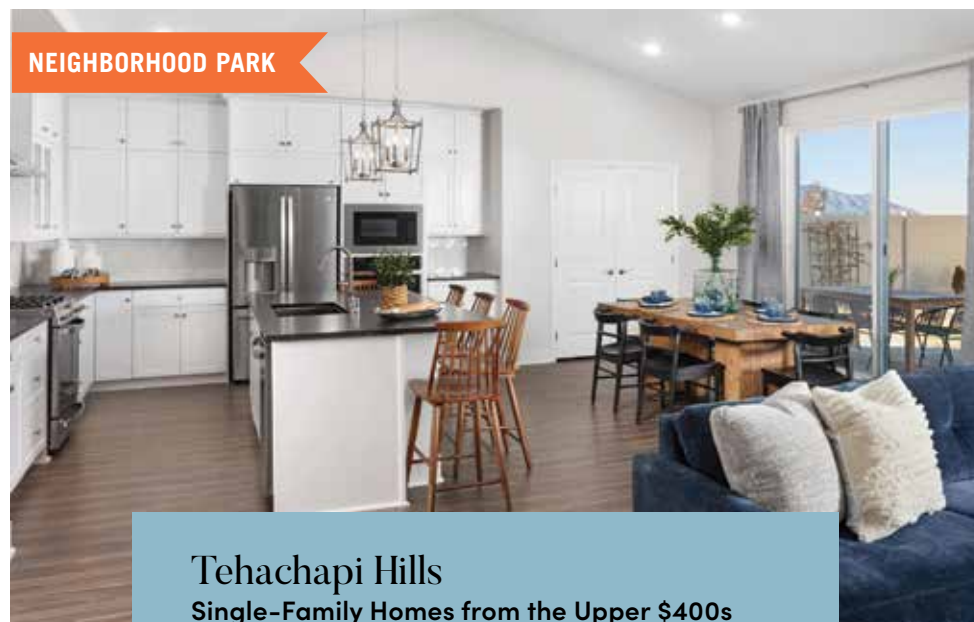
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The list price for qualifying quick move-in homes may reflect a portion or all of the base sales price reduction.