Hello from the Directors office of the Army Aviation Museum! So much has been in the works since our last newsletter. From major events planned, incredible restorations completed, to new items for the museum. All of this is great news for the Museum, its supporters and our visitors. I’m sharing some of the exciting news with you in this newsletter but we hope you will plan a visit to the Museum to see the excitement for yourself.

The first exciting item is that Museum has been chosen as the venue for this year’s Aviation Birthday Ball. The night will include a focus on restoration, the aircraft that are in need, their importance in Army Aviation history and the approximate cost associated with the restoration. It will be an evening filled with information and great entertainment. It will truly be a very special “Night at the Museum” for all who attend!

The second bit of excitement is the anticipated delivery of the new furniture for our “Army Values and Heritage Gallery”, located on the 2nd floor of the Museum. The Gallery highlights ordinary soldiers that have done extraordinary things. It will be a teaching venue for new aviation soldiers arriving to Ft. Rucker for their initial aviation training. This gallery will be dedicated to Mr. Walter D. Sabey, a former Army Aviator and beloved volunteer at our Museum for years.

The most exciting news of all is the many recent and future restorations for museum. Each tell a fascinating story, but I will focus on three from the Lockheed Martin collection.

Back in the late fifties and early sixties Lockheed Aircraft Corporation began to study the feasibility of a gyro stabilized rotor system. Rotor systems of the day were not suitable for high speed flight and somewhat unreliable. Lockheed developed the CL-475 gyro stabilized aircraft to proof the concept and it proved to be a very stable design with little vibration. Later testing would add a third blade to the rotor system.
Once that milestone was achieved, work began on a more sophisticated design that would hopefully produce sufficient power to reach the speed ranges. Lockheed was looking for. The AH-51A was a radical design for the time; it would have the same gyro stabilized rotor system that would be the origin of the modern day “Roto-Rotor”. The rotor design pushed the problems of blade stall well past the wall that existed and the aircraft could reach airspeeds only dreamed of.

That being said, the aircraft still could not reach the realm of speed the engineers were hoping to achieve. The decision to add a “Thrusting” engine in addition to the rotor power plant was made and the AH-51 “Compound” made its debut with a counter-balancing weighted wing on the opposite side.

The Army Aviation Museum has been fortunate to see the CL-475 and both models of the AH-51 series recently restored. There is currently a gift letter from the Army Aviation Museum Foundation for the restoration of one example of the Cheyenne in our collection. We are hopeful that the Office of the Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Army will approve the offer and work can begin on this important restoration.

In closing, I would like to thank all of our wonderful supporters and our great Foundation for their many contributions that make restorations and exhibitions possible. We look forward to attending the AAAA convention in Nashville this year and sharing our progress and stories with the attendee’s. Until next time, thank you for your continued support!

Mr. Robert Mitchell
Museum Director

AH-51

Two significant aircraft have recently returned from restoration and have been put on display at the Army Aviation Museum. The Hiller YH-35 Hornet and the American Helicopter Company (AHC) Jet Jeep were conceived and developed as simple, small, and easy to operate aircraft to be used for artillery spotting and general observation and liaison duties. The requirements for such a vehicle were that it should be small, lightweight, and easily transportable. In addition, it should require minimal maintenance and be relatively simple to operate.

The first such aircraft, the AH-26, first flew in January 1952. It was powered by two pulse jet engines, one at the tip of each rotor blade. These pulse jets engines were built with the utmost simplicity. Pulse jets generate thrust via a series of pulsating detonations, and do not require forward motion to force air into the inlet. Each engine had problems inherent from the design. Last-minute changes added weight and complexity to the program. Another design for the small observation helicopter was Hiller’s YH-32 Jet Hornet. The Jet Jeep was produced by Allied Helicopter Company (AHC) Jet Jeep were powered by two pulse jet engines. This Hornet was more sophisticated and was designed for rapid assembly/disassembly and had to be transported in one piece.

In the end, the need for a small, easily transportable air observation platform was deemed obsolete, particularly with the advent of the turbine-powered helicopter with its longer range and much increased performance. These two significant and interesting aircraft are now in the Museum for all to see and enjoy. They represent a period when many new technologies were tested in the quest for battlefield dominance.
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