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AVIATION CONNECTIONS: NEWSLETTER

FALL 2026

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Eastern Carolina Aviation Heritage Foundation

OCTOBER 2026

THE T-BIRD'S JOURNEY HOME: FROM CHERRY POINT TO THE HAVELOCK TEC



T-Bird Finds Its Home at the TEC

The Havelock Tourist & Event Center (TEC) celebrated a special addition to its aviation displays with the dedication of the TAV-8B Harrier II “T-Bird” trainer aircraft on September 23, 2026. The ceremony honored the aircraft’s service with the U.S. Marine Corps and its connection to Marine aviation at Cherry Point.



Save the Date!

Please join us for...

ECAHF PARTNERS AND MEMBERS APPRECIATION NIGHT

★ "CLEARED FOR TAKEOFF" ★



**TUESDAY,
OCTOBER 20, 2026**



6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.



**at the Havelock Tourist
& Event Center**



Experience a sampling of
foods and beverages
from local caterers and
participate in STEM activities from
this year's Summer Camp.



*Can you design an aircraft
that achieves the greatest
distance?*



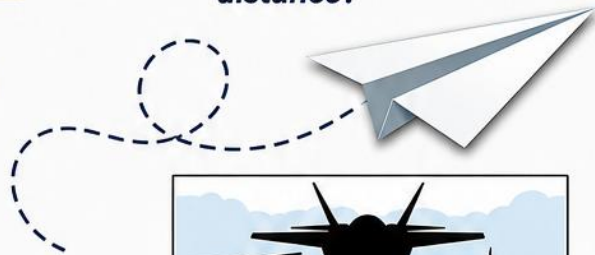
It's going to be a night
of fun, food, and networking!



Invite a friend to be your
guest.



Help spread the word about
ECAHF!



RSVP at 252-444-4348 or
events@havelocknc.us by **October 13, 2026**



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Spotlight on Exhibits

A Fresh Wash for Our Flying Legends



A-6E "Intruder": Forever Home in Havelock



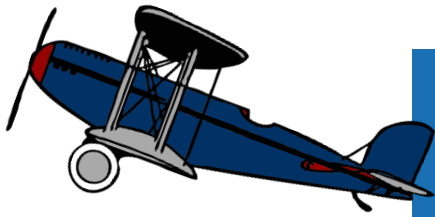
A-4M "Sky Hawk"



RF-4B "Phantom" II



HH-46D "Pedro"



SAVE
the
DATE

2026 ECAHF Gala

February 19, 2027

*From Hover to History: The Harrier Legacy
Stories From the Team Behind the Aircraft*

ECAHF *Mission and Vision Statement*

ECAHF Mission Statement: The Eastern Carolina Aviation Heritage Foundation honors aviation history and inspires and cultivates the next generation of leaders in aerospace.

ECAHF Vision Statement: An aviation heritage center that educates, inspires, and connects the community through the preservation of history and interactive STEM programs.



**2026
National
Night Out
October 6th**



The Harrier: A Dedication and the Rest of the Story

By Barry Fetzer | ECAHF Historian

Those who missed the activities at the Tourist and Event Center (TEC) in dedicating the “T-bird” or the TAV-8B (two-seater training) aircraft (Bureau Number (BUNO) 163186) recently delivered, effectively “by hand” (with the minor help of a tug...see the below photo), missed a unique event.



FRC East photo: TAV-8B BUNO 163186 being delivered from MCAS Cherry Point to the Havelock Tourist & Event Center and Aviation Heritage Museum.

With our own Havelock Mayor pro tem and Commissioner Brenda Wilson officiating on behalf of the City of Havelock and a litany of distinguished guests including AV-8 flyers and maintainers, representatives of our Naval Aviation Depot Fleet Readiness Center East (FRC East), including the Commanding Officer (CO), and the artisans of the FRC...all of whom did a superb job preparing, demilitarizing, painting, and delivering the aircraft to the TEC.

Inspiring speakers reviewed the history of the AV-8 itself and the T-Bird aircraft being dedicated as the newest addition to Havelock's and ECAHF's "squadron" of historical aircraft on display. These speakers included the Naval Aviation Acquisition and Support Program Management Office (NAVAIR PMA-257) responsible for lifecycle support of the aircraft and the former CO of 2d MAW's VMAT-101, the Harrier training squadron that flew the TAV-8B being dedicated. Colonel "Oscar" Myers had, according to his logbook, flown seven flights in that aircraft while CO of the squadron.

A traditional ribbon cutting officially dedicated the aircraft with maintainers, pilots, city and military leaders, former MCAS Cherry Point commanding general and current Chairman of the ECAHF Tom Braaten, and others.



Ribbon cutting and dedication ceremony. Photo courtesy of Barry Fetzer.

Please stick with me here: there's a "rest of the story" (with apologies to late radio announcer Paul Harvey) as I take you through a bit of Harrier lore in this historical vignette that is a bit longer than most.

What was left out of the comments yesterday at this dedication ceremony must be a part of the story—the history—of the AV-8 "Harrier". The Harrier story is incomplete without talking about its sound, or more accurately stated, its noise. The Harrier was loud, one of the loudest—if not the loudest of our military jets and certainly a winner in the decibel sweepstakes.

According to Conor Knighton, author of the book, "Leave Only Footprints" (where he describes his visits of every US National Park), "The decibel scale measuring noise must be logarithmic because of the remarkable range of sounds our ears can detect." He goes on, "A lawn mower (90 decibels) isn't one and a half times as loud as normal conversation (60 decibels), it's 103 , or a THOUSAND TIMES louder. The loudest sound we can process—something like a jet plane taking off at close range—is one TRILLION times louder than the decibel level of [silence]."

And a "trillion" describes the Harrier very well. So does a "cacophony", which means a loud, harsh, or unpleasant mixture of sounds. While our dedication ceremony yesterday was very pleasant in every way, from the officiating, to the great people of all walks who made it and the Harrier possible and contributed to its success, to the sights and sounds of the event, to the cake and punch afterward, the AV-8 aircraft, itself, could be described as producing a shattering cacophony, especially aboard ship.

According to several sources, an AV-8B Harrier jet emits between 125 decibels (dB) and 130 dB when measured from 100 feet away during a vertical takeoff. If measured closer—such as right next to the engine or directly on the flight deck—the sound level spikes dramatically to 140 dB to 150 dB, which is well past the human threshold of pain and can cause immediate, permanent ear damage without protection.

The Harrier is uniquely loud. While all military fighter jets are incredibly loud, the Harrier produces a distinct, piercing sound profile due to its vertical/short takeoff and landing (V/STOL) mechanics. One of the reasons is a process called "Jet Impingement". During a vertical takeoff, its powerful Rolls-Royce Pegasus engine directs its exhaust downward through four vectoring nozzles. According to NASA acoustic testing, when these exhaust blasts slam directly into the ground or a ship's flight deck, the "ground effect" amplifies the noise by an extra 14 to 17 decibels compared to a conventional jet taking off horizontally into free air. Also, there's the high-pitched Harrier engine whine. Rather than a low roar, the Harrier is famous for a metallic, high-frequency compressor whine that ground crews often described as "uniquely punishing".

And I was humbled to experience the Harrier C2, C-squared "Crushing Cacophony" first hand. The below series of photos shows one of the AV-8B aircraft assigned to the Flying Tigers of HMM-262 (reinforced) aboard the USS Belleau Wood (LHA-3), one of the six AV-8B's in my squadron when I was in command of that outfit in a galaxy far, far

away, and a long, long time ago. I stood just a few feet away from that aircraft snapping these photos. For those of us who “put up” (it is the “sound of freedom after all, right?) with the noise of AV-8A’s and B’s for years taking off from and landing at MCAS Cherry Point, I can tell you that standing a few feet away from a full throttle AV-8B launching from the flight deck of an aircraft carrier, the word “cacophony” doesn’t even begin to describe the feeling of the intensity of the ear-crushing, bone-rattling noise piercing every part of your body. What a rush!

Could it be, perhaps, that’s why I have a decent excuse these days for why I don’t hear my wife very well? That’s my excuse, Arlene, and I’m sticking with it.



Harrier launches aboard USS Belleau Wood (LHA-3), circa 1995. Photos courtesy of Barry Fetzer.

Again, with apologies to Paul Harvey, here is “the rest of the story”. One of the attendees at our dedication ceremony that day was a friend of mine who I invited to the ceremony, Pat Owen, a former Marine, and also a former Cobra (US Army trained) Vietnam-era pilot who transitioned to Harriers in the early 1970’s. He flew the AV-8A, the first version of the iconic aircraft and the one that earned the unfortunate moniker of “Carolina Lawn Dart” due to its difficulty in flying and its frequent crashes. Note the pilot’s name emblazoned on the fuselage of the AV-8A AMT model box top depicted below. Pat humbly recounts the story.



AMT AV-8A Harrier model box cover, courtesy of Pat Owen. His name appears near the port engine intake.

“My claim to fame is that every AV-8A model airplane that has a name on it depicts ‘Capt P Owen’. Pat says it’s from a random picture that the model companies happened to pick to print their model box tops.

“I tell my fellow Harrier community members that I was far from the best Harrier pilot, but I’m the only one whose name is on all the model planes.”

Now you know the “rest of the Pat Owen story.” The “model for the model” was Marine aviator, Pat Owen, photographed below, who attended our TAV-8B dedication ceremony yesterday.

And yes...Pat’s hearing is not too good anymore given all his time around Harriers. So, he has a pretty good excuse—like me perhaps—for not hearing his wife. My excuse is a little weaker if truth be known. I never flew the Harrier. I just commanded it and watched it noisily (and longingly with thoughts of what I missed by not flying it) launching from the Belleau Wood’s flight deck.



Pat Owen in front of Havelock and ECAHF’s TAV-8B “T-Bird.” Photo by Barry Fetzer.



Please Join ECAHF Each Year

ECAHF needs your support to share the story of the advancement of military aircraft and those who have made it possible in eastern North Carolina. Your membership helps to provide resources to encourage students to acquire science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) skills through interactive exhibits and programs.

Together, by joining forces as members of ECAHF, we will help honor Marines' vital mission in advancing military aviation, a mission they have accomplished since 1942 when MCAS Cherry Point was commissioned as a USMC airfield. In addition, your membership will help influence a new generation of aviation enthusiasts and skilled workers for the future. Be a part of this challenging and exciting mission.

Annual Membership

- Co-Pilot (Student) \$25.00
- Pilot (Single) \$35.00
- Squadron (Family Membership) \$50.00
- Wing (Business/Group Membership) \$250.00

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Havelock Tourist & Event Center

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PO Box 368

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