

## AIAA Members Get Up Close with Historic Aircraft

by

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*Images courtesy of Ken Philippart*

Greater Huntsville Section members had a unique opportunity to get up close and personal with an historic US Navy jet on November 4, 2021. The section was invited by the newly formed Huntsville Chapter of the Commemorative Air Force (CAF) to view a 1950s-era TF9J Cougar training aircraft as it underwent restoration.



*The TF9J Cougar undergoing restoration for eventual display at James Clemens High School in Madison.*

The aircraft is on permanent loan from the Naval Aviation Museum in Pensacola. It was on loan to the US Veterans Memorial Museum in Huntsville until 2015 when it was transferred to James Clemens High School in Madison, AL. James Clemens' nickname is "The Jets" and the aircraft will be put on pedestal display in front of the school once restoration is completed. The jet has gone through extensive renovations over the last five years. Currently, the fuselage, one wing, and horizontal stabilizers are ready for paint. Wing hydraulic locks are 75 percent complete. Canopy repair and fabrication are 40 percent finished. Overall, the aircraft is currently about 75 percent restored. The school has acquired the funds to mount the aircraft, and the designs and approved color scheme are currently in Montgomery, awaiting state approval.

Greater Huntsville members joined members of the CAF and the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) in viewing the aircraft, peering into the cockpit and access panels and asking questions about the aircraft's history, condition and restoration status.

Section members Nancy Donahoo, Jason Thrasher, Stephen Hayden, Ken Philippart, and Frank Pichler toured the aircraft and learned about the restoration efforts from Mr. Randy Bevers, the specialist performing the restoration. They learned the history of the aircraft from its days as the premier US Navy training aircraft to



*Randy Bevers (3<sup>rd</sup> from right) explains the restoration efforts to AIAA, CAF and EAA members.*



*Open access panel and speed brakes on the TF9J.*

The Greater Huntsville Section thanks Mr. Todd Holder of the CAF Huntsville Chapter for extending the invitation to AIAA members to learn about the TF9J in an up close and hands on environment.

service with the US Air Force Test Pilot School to static display at a previous high school and now James Clemens High. Randy explained that the aircraft landing gear had been removed for its previous static display and was missing.

Since the Naval Aviation Museum no longer allows pedestal display of its aircraft, a waiver had to be obtained to allow the aircraft to be displayed on a pedestal at James Clemens. The aircraft is almost ready for reassembly and painting and is expected to be put on display sometime in 2022.



*The Cougar's disassembled wing folding gear.*