

UPDATE # 103 - “CITY OF SAVANNAH”
B-17 Restoration
August 5, 2011

As promised in the last Update there was big news at the Mighty Eighth last Saturday. The news was the arrival of Fred Bieser from the Turret Museum, here in Georgia, with our fully operational chin turret. Fred had visited us several months ago to demonstrate the turret and to discuss terms for a purchase with Museum CEO Henry Skipper. Henry and Fred kept in touch regarding financial arrangements for the turret while Fred was talking technical issues with Assistant Project Manager Dave Talleur, and Saturday Crew Chief Rocky Rodriguez.

All of these discussions came to fruition on July 30th with Fred’s arrival and his two hour session with Dave and Rocky on the inner workings of the turret. The final test involved rolling the turret (which currently sits on a portable wooden framework) out to the “*City of Savannah*” and connecting it to the airplane’s power supply. A cheer went up from the volunteers as Dave threw the switch and the turret began its ventral and lateral movements.



Rocky Rodriguez and the Patrick clan, Gil and Justin, help Fred unload the turret



Fred Bieser, Dave Talleur and Rocky Rodriguez discussing the turret's power supply cart



Fred Bieser explains details during his two hour instruction session with the CoS team

The turret has been moved to a secure location in the shop area until the team can be properly trained on its operation. Tentative plans call for demonstrations of the turret for Museum visitors to begin in the next several months.

A special “thank you” goes out this week to Bud Currey for all the work he has put in on making the bail-out bottle holders for the airplane. Bud will not settle for anything that is not up to his exacting standards. Thanks to his excellent work, our holders will not be “near” perfect, they will meet 1944 USAAF standards as “perfect”. Well done Bud!

This week also marked the second visit from our good friends from the Gulfstream model shop. This week they spent time talking with the CoS night crew discussing various parts that they might be able to replicate for us. It was decided that their first chores will be the pilot's control wheels and recoil adapters that are needed for several of the airplane's machine guns.

The final piece of news for this week involves our new ball turret frame. As many of you know, we are honored to have a true WWII ball turret gunner in our midst at the Mighty Eighth. Bud Porter, who serves on the Mighty Eighth Board of Directors, flew many missions in a B-17 ball turret in 1945. Bud was so happy to see the new turret that he immediately walked into Henry Skipper's office and wrote a check for the expenses incurred to bring the turret to Savannah from Wisconsin.



Bud Porter sitting next to what was his station in 1945, beneath a B-17

Needless to say, we are very grateful for Bud's check, but even happier to have paid him the honor of replicating the very dangerous home he had once inhabited beneath at B-17 in the skies over Europe.

More to come . . .