

UPDATE # 114 - "CITY OF SAVANNAH"
B-17 Restoration
February 6, 2012

Last week the long anticipated trip to Barksdale AFB in Shreveport, LA, to deliver and install the floors and radio room shelves for the *Lady Liberty* finally took place. Our self proclaimed Special Operations team departed on Wednesday morning in a twelve passenger van loaded with only four passengers, but a great deal of tools and flooring. The intrepid team was led by Jeff Hoopes, with some top of the line expertise riding in truck with him, including Bob MacDonald, John Finch and Gil Patrick. They left the museum at 6:00 AM and didn't arrive at Barksdale until 7:00 PM, an extended time on the road because of very heavy rain. Barksdale's project manager, Terry Snook, met the team and got them settled for the night.

Jeff reported to us on a regular basis using the Crew Chief's log. What follows is his (slightly edited) story of their adventure:



***Miss Liberty*, on her Barksdale AFB hardstand - the reason for the trip**

Special Operations Detachment Barksdale AFB 1/25/12

We arrived at Barksdale AFB at 1900 hrs local time. VFR conditions entire trip until LA state line then sky caved in. Katrina II conditions. After 14 hrs on the road, arrived in good spirits and in one piece. Met with Terry Snook, escorted on base, cleared security, checked into semi private lodging accommodations (we get to share head w/ somebody, but like old times). EXCELLENT dinner provided by Terry / Phil of Mighty 8th Association.

Tomorrow starts at 0800. We're hoping for good weather.

Bob, John, Gil, and Jeff



Day one, fortifying for a long day, L-R, Bob, John, Gil

Thursday Morning: 8:00 AM

Weather looks to be past us this AM. There might be a shower this afternoon. Fri / Sat look good. Will do recon and get a picture of where everything is and lay out a game plan.

We're thinking that we should start in radio room first (to give Bob something to stand on to install is beautiful brackets / shelves) and allow John to do all the measuring he needs to do up in the nose. Next, go to nose and work our way from nose to tail to keep us from scraping the new wood floors.



Gil and John starting work on the radio room floor

We offered Terry and Phil that if our progress exceeded our estimate and we have "extra time", that they should think about what else we can help them with here while we're on site. We really don't think that installing all of this will take even two days (but you never know) so we may have an extra day of "free" man hours to offer them on something else while we're here.

Thursday Evening 10:00 PM

We met the museum volunteer team and toured their shop. They are doing some very nice detail work in restoring aircraft components. They have a few active duty AF volunteers that are doing a great job with equipment. Have lots of pictures. We began installing floors in radio room. Quickly found out our pre-fabricated pieces were close, but not perfect fits. Some notches needed to be cut here and there, and other trimming. We had to back out of the airplane and re-urethane all the freshly exposed wood. All this "fitting" time put us behind in our expectations. We believe that radio room will be hardest, then cockpit. The waist area should just drop in, BUT, at this point we're expecting the worst and hoping for the best. We will jump on the nose first thing tomorrow. John is taking pictures and measurements. Once the radio room is done, we will go to the upper cockpit, then the nose,

and then work back to the tail. The radio room has four of the five shelf / brackets installed. The active duty volunteers were climbing all over us installing their radio gear with great enthusiasm.

Hosting by the Mighty 8th Association has been OUTSTANDING. On base food is very affordable (breakfast / lunch) but nothing available for dinner as the O club is being renovated. We ventured off base tonight. No disciplinary actions or incidents to report. They're either behaving well or getting away with it . . .

Saturday Morning 10:30 AM

Friday was a busy day. We installed radio room, upper cockpit, nose, tail / rear waist flooring today. There was a tough learning curve, but the project is coming along nicely. We had to build the center cockpit floor, lower cockpit floor, and several custom nose pieces today. If we ever build doors for anyone again, we need to leave them unfinished and let customer decide how they want them finished. The "funky" hunter green color doesn't go with anything. We all decided that they so much liked the natural wood look that we stripped the green paint off and finished them with clear urethane. They look nice, but it took a lot of work making that happen. We plan on finishing tomorrow. Terry is taking us to a commemorative education dinner on Saturday night, hosted by the Mighty 8th Association, in celebration of the 70th anniversary. The Barksdale radio club will also be setting up on Saturday to talk to *City of Savannah* radio team during the special anniversary events at both sites. Another fine Cajun meal last night, thanks to Terry, he really knows how to take care of guests! That's all the latest news for now. Saturday is another busy day!

Saturday Evening 6:00 PM

Mission Complete this afternoon. We learned a lot that will enhance our own installation efforts. We have a "punch list" of items that we couldn't finish due to missing hardware or paint drying. We are bringing back their original radio room table and will build a new one for them (and one for us) using the original as a design. Tonight we attend a fund raiser dinner for the museum and will hit the road very early tomorrow AM. Tired, but satisfied.



Our Special Ops team posing for a family picture – Bob, John, Gil, Jeff....WELL DONE!

Correction and apology – after all the effort that Bob MacDonald did preparing his metal-work, and 28 hours on the road doing our good work at Barksdale, we discovered that Bob had inadvertently been left off of our 100 hour club announcement at the annual dinner and in this column. Actually, Bob put in over THREE hundred hours in 2011. Sorry Bob – the guilty parties have been properly flogged.

There is a great deal going on that we will be reporting on in the next few weeks, so as we always say,

More to come . . .