

UPDATE # 98 - "CITY OF SAVANNAH"
B-17 Restoration
May 18, 2011

Last week the "*City of Savannah*" volunteers spent a lot of time in the shop and on the Combat Gallery floor rather than in the airplane itself. Saturday, May 14th, was the Museum's 15th Anniversary Legacy Ball, and we had to be sure that the "*City*" would look good for all the donors and guests who would be standing next to the aircraft during the cocktail hour. The Wednesday (Day) crew climbed all over the airplane wiping it down so that the recent polishing would show at its best. The Wednesday (Night) crew removed all the scaffolding and wiring that was hanging from aircraft and then swept the entire floor space in the Combat Gallery. The Saturday crew did some wiring on the airplane and the final cleanup to the exhibit area. The Museum staff set up the bar for the cocktail hour beneath the right waist gun window, enabling the guests to have an up close and personal view of our B-17. While the guests were waiting in line for the bar they were able to view the video show prepared earlier this year by Dave Talleur and Mike Callahan depicting the arrival of the "*City*" at the Museum in 2009. The gala was a big success, and the "*City of Savannah*" played a major part in the evening's activities.

Our latest volunteer bio describes Saturday crew member Joel Hedgpeth. Joel is an Illinois native who says he was "bitten by the aviation bug at age seven" and later developed an interest in WWII aviation because of a Junior High School history project. He took his aviation interest to an amazing level when in 1986 he graduated from LeTourneau College in Longview, Texas, with a Bachelor of Science degree in Aviation Technology. Along with his BS Joel also received tickets as both an airframe and power plant mechanic, and a commercial pilot's license! Over the years Joel's aviation career was mainly on the ground as he worked as a maintenance analyst and manager. He joined Gulfstream Corporation in Savannah as a Reliability Engineer in 2008.

Joel and his wife Janine have been married for 28 years and have three children and a grandson. Both of Joel's sons, Josh and Ben, volunteer with our project, Josh when he is home from college at his parent's alma mater, and Ben every other Saturday. Joel joined our project after visiting the Museum in 2009 and told us ... "I volunteered to restore the B-17, but as I learned about the aircraft and was able to interact with the museum guests, the more I realized that this project is more than the aircraft itself. It is about the men who flew the B-17, the families who supported them, and the memory of those who did not return." Joel's words match the thoughts of all his fellow volunteers, and we are glad to have Joel and the rest of the Hedgpeth family as part of our "*City of Savannah*" family.



Joel and Ben Hedgpeth in the forward hatch of the "*City of Savannah*"

Many of the volunteers have scheduled out of town time during the next few weeks so that they can be on hand for Garcia Week III in June. Tommy Garcia returns to town on the 13th with his magic trailer of goodies for the project. June 15th of that week will also be the date for the rescheduled picture of the entire volunteer team that will be made into a painting by Skip Shelton.

Another story is beginning to unfold in the shop next to our airplane. Our Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum has joined with the 8th Air Force Museum at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, in a joint effort. The two museums that honor the 8th Air Force have joined forces to assist each other in the restoration of Barksdale's B-17G, "*Yankee Doodle II*" and our "*City of Savannah*". We'll be providing more information on this new venture in the weeks ahead.

More to come . . .