

UPDATE # 99 - “CITY OF SAVANNAH”

B-17 Restoration

June 17, 2011

It's been a few weeks since we sent out our last Update, so there is a lot to discuss in this issue.

The big story is Garcia Week III. Tommy Garcia arrived on Monday, June 13, to work with us on another maximum effort week for the project. As is Tommy's tradition, he arrived bearing gifts – in this case the major gift was a brand “new” tail turret for the “*City of Savannah*”.



Jim Grismer, Jack Nilsen, and Bob MacDonald, along with Gil and Justin Patrick join Tommy Garcia in unloading the tail turret outside the shop entrance to the Museum.

The turret has a fascinating story that continues to evolve as we are writing this article. What we do know is that the turret was attached to a B-17 that crashed in a remote section of Alaska and remained there for over 60 years. Tommy, and another good friend of our project, Bruce Orriss, arranged for the turret to be removed from the wreck several years ago. Now it has a final home in Savannah.

One of the first things that was done with the turret was the required test to see that it fit on to the “City”. It was carried into the Combat Gallery and immediately passed the test as the volunteers posed the new arrival for a picture with the bomber.



L to R: Jim Grismer, Tommy Garcia, Jeff Hoopes and Jack Nilsen match the turret to the fuselage.

The arrival of the turret was a big event, but what happened next was a very pleasant surprise to most of those on hand.



John Finch checking out Gil Patrick's "rotisserie" mounting device for the tail turret.

At a meeting prior to Tommy's arrival Crew Chief Bill Leining had mentioned that because the turret would need work on virtually all of its outside and inside surfaces there was a need to have it on an adjustable "rotisserie" like stand. Everyone let the through pass except for our Master Carpenter, Gil Patrick. Gil and his son Justin were on hand when the turret arrived, and after the opening ceremony of fitting the turret against the fuselage, Gil stepped forward and introduced what he had come up with to answer Bill's request for a "rotisserie".

You can see from the picture that the turret will rotate 360 degrees, like roasting a chicken. Hats off, yet again, to our Master Carpenter.

Wednesday was a long and exciting day for the project. While the carpentry team was working on the wood work we are building for the “*Yankee Doodle II*” at Barksdale AFB, Tommy was holding individual meetings with the shift crew chiefs and Jeff Hoopes, who has been appointed as our Armaments Coordinator. Jeff will be coordinating the very complicated and expensive task of equipping each gunner’s station with its appropriate equipment.

Mid afternoon saw the arrival of Mr. Fred Beiser. Fred has a very special hobby – he builds aircraft turrets! In the trailer behind Fred’s van were two of his creations, one of which was a fully articulating B-17G chin turret that could fit perfectly beneath the nose of the “*City of Savannah*”.



Fred Beiser’s B-17 nose turret on its demonstration stand.

Fred set up the turret and demonstrated its performance and then let our volunteers operate it while he talked technical aspects of the turret with Tommy Garcia and the metal working crew. Needless to say everyone was thrilled with the turret demonstration, and hope that we can see something similar working beneath the nose of the “*City of Savannah*” in the near future.

In other news: the wood working project with our Co-Eighth Air Force Museum at Barksdale AFB continues. Gil Patrick and John Finch will be driving to Barksdale on June 24 to meet with their counterparts on the “*Yankee Doodle II*” to finalize measurements for the wood work we are producing for their aircraft. They will also be taking photos so the John and the metal working crew can reconfigure the nose of the “*City*” in preparation for a chin turret. While we are on the subject of our Barksdale partners, it is the intention of the

radio team to go live from our radio room and broadcast our first message on July 15th. Hopefully, the recipients of that message will be the “*Yankee Doodle*” radio team. We’ll have more information on that story in the next few weeks.

Thanks to the efforts of volunteers Dick Gorman and Richard Moscatiello, work began this week on the construction of the “*City of Savannah*” web site. We don’t have an arrival date yet, but Dick is working hard to begin organization and writing for the several planned portions of the site.

Finally, every now and then we get a human interest story regarding our project that really gives you a feel good reaction. That happened recently when John Finch’s ten year old son, Alex – who comes to work on the airplane with his dad on Wednesday nights – earned his keep last week by crawling inside the wing of the airplane to hold a flashlight for Bob MacDonald and Jack Nilsen.



Alex “The Gremlin” Finch

This effort earned Alex the title of City of Savannah “Gremlin”. Alex will be issued an official project badge with the “Gremlin” name on it when he and his dad report to work next week.

More to come . . .