

February 27, 2009

TO: Mighty Eighth B-17 Restoration Volunteers

SUBJECT: Project News

If you are receiving this e-mail you have volunteered to assist in the restoration of the B-17G "City of Savannah" here at the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum.

Our project is just getting started and we are contacting each of you to let you know how much we appreciate your interest in the project, and to explain our plans and expectations for the weeks and months to come.

First, a little history on our B-17: it rolled off of the assembly line in Long Beach, California, on May 20, 1945, as B-17G 44-83814. This was two weeks after the German surrender in Europe. The aircraft was immediately flown to a storage facility in Syracuse, New York. It stayed in storage until 1947, when it was given as a gift to a school district in North Dakota. It was purchased by an aircraft broker in 1951 and then began an active operational life in 1953 when it was sold to the Kenting Aviation Corporation of Toronto, Canada. Kenting used the aircraft mostly for aerial survey work. The next change in the aircraft's work life occurred in 1971, when it was sold by Kenting to Black Hills Aviation of Spearfish, South Dakota. Black Hills was a fire bomber operation and the aircraft spent the next ten years fighting fires throughout the western United States. Black Hills traded our B-17 to the National Air and Space Museum in 1981 for two surplus Navy P-2 Neptune patrol bombers. The aircraft was on display at the Air and Space facility at Davis-Montham Air Force Base until 1984, when it was flown to Dulles Airport in Chantilly, Virginia, and placed in permanent storage. The word "permanent" was erased on January 5th of this year when our team arrived at the Dulles facility and signed a document transferring ownership to the Mighty Eighth. Now the aircraft is in our Combat Gallery, and we are glad to welcome you to the team that will restore the "CoS" to its original combat configuration. (For those of you who would like some more history, in our next e-mail we will fill you in on how the aircraft was named "City of Savannah".)

Many of you are probably asking, "When do I get to do my part?" The answer is to standby. We have been overwhelmed with requests to help with the project, and we are contacting everyone with a phone call to let you know that we have received your paperwork.

This is a good time to explain how our project is organized: three senior volunteers head up the project team; Jerry McLaughlin is the overall Project Coordinator. Jerry reports to the Museum VP for Special Projects, Dr. Walter Brown, and the CEO, Henry Skipper. Jerry has full oversight on the project. Marshall Brooks has been tasked with managing all of the project's resources, human and contractual. Marshall will make initial contact with you and then determine where your knowledge, skills, and abilities most closely fit the needs of the project. Airplane related skills such as working with sheet metal or electronics are not the only skills Marshall is looking for from our volunteers. He would like to hear from those of you who would be interested in doing research on our B-17, and others who might be interested in preparing literature related to the aircraft and the project. If any of you have woodworking skills we are planning some serious carpentry projects for exhibits that will surround the plane. Please let Marshall know if you have a special skill that we can apply to the project. The third member of the management team is Jim Grismer. Jim has the most important job in the entire project. He is the aircraft's Crew Chief. Nobody touches the aircraft without Jim's OK! He will be supervising all volunteer and contract work on the aircraft.

Thus far the project is still in the organization phase, with interior and exterior cleaning of the aircraft dominating the chores. A great deal of protective storage materials on the outside of the plane need to be removed before the surface can be buffed back to its original sheen. Some of you are already involved, and are doing a great job. If you have not heard from us yet, stand by, there is a lot of work to do, and we are going to do our best to get all of you involved.

More to follow.