

March 6, 2009

TO: B-17 Restoration Volunteers (Update #2)

We had a great deal of good news this week which we would like to share with all of you. First, we were very, very happy to learn that *International Aero Services Corporation* has volunteered to do the polishing work on the “City of Savannah” to bring the skin of the aircraft back to its factory aluminum shine as it looked when the “City” rolled off the assembly line on May 20, 1945. Also, thanks to the office of the Boeing Corporation Historian we have received three B-17G maintenance manuals. They will be a great help to us in the months to come. Next, we had a visit yesterday from Don Brooks and Tom Riley. Both men have international reputations with regard to warbird restoration, and will be involved in our project. Several of the senior volunteers will be visiting their facility next month to further discuss our project and to view, firsthand, what Don and Tom are doing with their restoration projects. Finally, we were astounded when we received a telephone call from Arnold Kolb. Mr. Kolb and his son, Nathan, were the last pilots to fly our B-17. They landed it at Dulles airport in 1984. In our next e-mail we will fill you in on what we learned from our conversation with Mr. Kolb.

**“City of Savannah”** - One of the purposes of these e-mails is to inform you of the history of the aircraft that you have volunteered to help restore. As promised in our last e-mail, here is the story on how our B-17 became known as the “City of Savannah”: During WWII, Hunter Field (as it was known in the 1940’s), was a staging port for bombers assigned to North Africa (12<sup>th</sup> Air Force), Italy (15<sup>th</sup> Air Force) or, in some cases, the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force, in England. These aircraft flew from Hunter to Natal, Brazil, then to the nation of Liberia on the African west coast and on to North Africa and their final destination. The 5,000<sup>th</sup> bomber to process through Hunter was picked by the brass at the base to be named the “City of Savannah” in honor of the residents of the city that had raised the amount of money that paid for a single B-17. This particular aircraft, commanded by Lieutenant Ralph Kittle, passed through Savannah and was assigned to the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force. When it got to England it joined the 563<sup>rd</sup> Squadron of the 388<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group. When the decision was made as to which WWII aircraft would be selected as the model for our B-17, the “City of Savannah” was the obvious choice.



The citizens of Savannah closely followed the career of its favorite bomber until March 5, 1945, when, on its 13<sup>th</sup> mission, the original “City” suffered a mechanical failure resulting from flak damage and crashed near the Czechoslovakian town of Kraslice, close to the German border. Lt. Kittle and six of the crew were captured and became Prisoners of War. The co-pilot, Lt. Jon Rutt successfully evaded capture and returned to England. We also know that the tail gunner, Sergeant Robert Warren, was killed, although we do not have any details of how he lost his life.

Now back to business. We have a request. Several volunteers have been showing up without having been scheduled for a shift. PLEASE do not show up unannounced with the hope you can pitch in for that day’s work. Several reasons for this request – while we are in the cleaning mode we sometimes do not schedule assignments because of conflicting work that has to be done on the aircraft and/or in the combat gallery. You may arrive and find that there is no work scheduled for that day, or that the work scheduled does not need extra hands. As of this week here is how the staffing for shifts is being handled: *We are working three shifts; Monday (day), and Wednesday (day and night). Jim Grismer is calling all volunteers required for those shifts prior to the work day. If you don’t hear from Jim you are not scheduled for work that day.* The good news is that we are hoping to add at least one weekend shift, and possibly a Friday shift. So, please bear with us and stand by – we are trying to get everyone involved.

***Special assignments:*** As mentioned last week, we are looking for volunteers that are interested in doing *research, writing, and carpentry* work. This week we are also looking for those of you who might have special skills that would qualify you to work on our cockpit team. We are lucky to have a 98% complete original instrument panel. The cockpit will require some scraping/painting, restoration of the pilot’s seats, and replacement of some communications equipment. If you are interested in working in any of these specialized areas please contact Marshall Brooks at 598-2646. Marshall will arrange for you to meet with Jim or me to get those special projects under way.

One final note. Some of you who have contacted us in the last few days have been told that we have been overwhelmed with the number of folks who want to be volunteers on this project. We literally have too many volunteers for the jobs at hand. Please don’t be discouraged if we don’t call you right away to participate in the project. Not everyone who has sent in an application will actually be able to participate immediately, but we hope to eventually be able to get all of you involved.