

## ***Update # 47 - "City of Savannah"***

B-17 Restoration

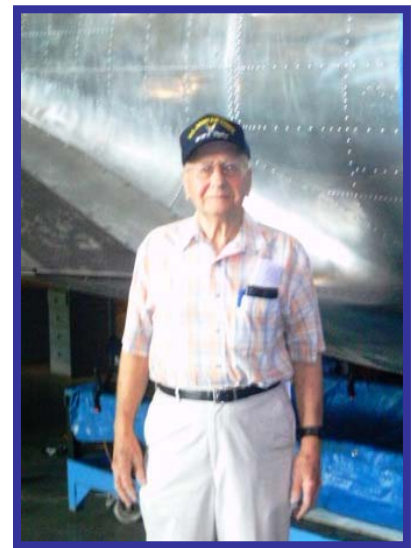
March 15, 2010

There is much to report this week. On Tuesday Henry Skipper and Jerry McLaughlin were preparing to deliver a presentation at a luncheon for museum volunteers when our Resident B-24 pilot, Paul Grasse, came into the Art Gallery with a museum visitor at this side. The visitor was named Walter Schattel and he was visiting from Kerrville, Texas. Walter is currently on a bus tour of the South East with a group of his Texas neighbors. Everyone in the Texas group but Walter spent last Tuesday visiting the actual city that is named Savannah. Not Walter – he came out to the Mighty Eighth to see our *"City of Savannah"* – also known as B-17G/44-83814.



The reason that Walter left his group to come to the museum is that 65 years ago Walter flew 37 missions as a B-17 radio operator/gunner in the 837th Squadron of the 487<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group. When Walter announced what squadron and group he had served with everyone was amazed with the irony of the situation. The original *"City of Savannah"* served in the same squadron and group that Walter had flown with during his tour with the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force in England. Needless to say, Walter was immediately given "Honored Guest" status, invited to the luncheon, and was introduced to the group, who gave him a hearty round of applause.

After lunch Walter posed for photographs near the radio compartment of the *"City"* and then accompanied Henry and Jerry up to the Museum office area where he was interviewed for the museum's oral history program. During his interview it was learned that Walter and his crew had trained together at Tampa Florida and then taken a train to Savannah in September of 1944 – three months before the *"City of Savannah"* crew had arrived here. They reported to Hunter Field, where they were assigned a B-17, which they flew to England. After additional training they were assigned to the 487<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, where they flew 37 missions in the amazingly short period of 101 days, between October, 1944, and January, 1945, in a B-17G named *"My Gal Ellen"* – named after the crew chief's girlfriend. These dates tend to indicate that Walter and the original *"City of Savannah"* aircraft may have actually overlapped in their time at Levenham, where the 498<sup>th</sup> was stationed.





Walter was as happy with his reception at the museum as we were happy to welcome him. Additional telephone interviews will be conducted in the near future as Walter has agreed to give us more information on the 498<sup>th</sup> and the operations at Levenham.



More project excitement was generated on Wednesday when Guy MacDonald, Mac McCormick and Carroll Baker, from the Coastal Amateur Radio Society (CARS), arrived at the museum to meet with Marshall Brooks for their first session with the WWII radio equipment we have accumulated. The three radio experts carefully photographed all of our equipment and report that we have a BC-348 receiver and a RT-18/ARC-1 VHF transceiver that might actually work. We aren't sure what all that means – but it sounds like good news.

Work continues on the “task from hell”, also known as cleaning the underside of the wings on the aircraft. This final exterior cleaning chore has been – we thought – close to finished on two occasions. Both declarations of victory were pre-mature, as rapid progress down the wings has been stifled by real challenges on the wing tips.

As we mentioned last week, the Wednesday crew continues to expand, and with JEB Harper joining Bill Burkel as the second supervisor on that crew. (It needs to be mentioned here that in addition to being supervisors, Bill and JEB are the only two volunteers on the project that work on two crews.)

Thanks to our good friend Doug Birkey, of the Air Force Association, in Washington, DC, we have been able to give each of our volunteers a copy of a wonderful brochure portraying the B-17 “*Shoo Shoo Baby*” (in some circles there is an additional *Shoo* included). This B-17, which currently resides at the Wright-Patterson Museum, may well be the finest B-17 restoration in existence. Each volunteer will be able to look at this magnificent airplane with the idea that our goal is to eventually match the “*Baby*”. While

Doug provided the original document a second Thank You has to go out to JEB Harper who reproduced the original so that all of our volunteers could have a copy.

One final note: there will be an “all hands” meeting in the Combat Gallery for all active volunteers at 6:00 PM on March 24<sup>th</sup>. The purpose of this meeting is to explain to the group the project plans for the next several months and the possible changes in roles for some teams and individuals. CEO Henry Skipper will address the group and Henry and Jerry will present the new publicity presentation that has been prepared for public appearances in the months to come.

*More to follow...*