

## Update # 59 -“City of Savannah”

B-17 Restoration

July 1, 2010



The morning crew at 0930hrs: L-R: Joe Prichard, Jim Grismer, Darrel Schwartz, Steve Bravo, Mike Callahan, Bill Burkel, Carl Finney (not pictured, Gil Patrick)

Wednesday, June 30<sup>th</sup>, the “*City of Savannah*” project may have had its finest hour since the arrival of the aircraft of January 15, 2009. Seventeen volunteers, over a period of ten hours, covered the entire interior of the aircraft, from nose to tail, with anti-corrosion material known commercially as Cortec VCI-427. We’ll just call it 427.

The first arriving volunteers were briefed at 9:00 AM by Project Managers Jerry McLaughlin and Jim Grismer. Jim and Jerry had prepared all of the necessary equipment and pre-mixed the 427 on Tuesday in order to assure an early start on Wednesday morning. As has been the case in the past (remember the problem with cleaning the bottom of the wings?) the group discussed how the 427 would be applied and washed out of the plane and came up with a system that worked even better than anticipated. Thanks to the ideas created by the morning volunteers, who represented all four work crews, it was possible to have two teams working in the aircraft instead of the single team that had been anticipated. One team, consisting of Steve Bravo, Mike Callahan and Darrell Schwartz began work in the nose of the “*City*” while a second team consisting of Gil Patrick and Carl Finney began work amidships in the radio compartment.



1005hrs: Steve Bravo puts on the first spray of anti-corrosion material

Jim and Joe Prichard were kept busy under the fuselage using buckets and a shop vac to catch the run-off water as both teams applied the 427, wiped it from the aluminum fuselage and then washed down the interior. Bill Burkel, just returned from the Injured Reserve list and back surgery, offered moral support. This process worked well for the rest of the day as more volunteers, including Mort Glick, and Scott Witcher, arrived during the day to provide relief for the early teams.

We need to give special notice to the volunteer who drove the farthest to participate in the Maximum Effort, Carl Finney. Carl drives 200 miles between Jackson, Georgia, and Savannah, once a month to work with one of the “*City of Savannah*” crews. Many times Carl leaves home at 5:00 AM, drives more than three hours, works with us for 6-8 hours, overlapping with the Wednesday Day and Night crews, and then drives home the same night. Other times he spends the night at a motel, at his expense. Carl drove to Savannah this week and stayed at a motel on Tuesday night to be sure he would be on time for the 0900 start of the Maximum Effort. He was the first volunteer to show up on Wednesday morning, and then worked all day – ON HIS BIRTHDAY! Museum Executive Assistant Jane Harper surprised Carl when she showed up in the middle of the lunch break holding a birthday cake with Carl’s name on it. The singing may have been off key, but Carl enjoyed the “Happy Birthday” salute from his fellow volunteers. When asked why he does all this traveling to work on the project he replied, “I’d carry the honey bucket if that was the only job available to honor the guys who flew these B-17’s in combat.” Carl, hats off to you from your friends on the “*City of Savannah*” project. You are our kind of guy! (Note: Carl claims to be 39 years old, but this seems to conflict with the fact that he spent his time in the Air Force as a B-47 mechanic.)



1230 hrs: Carl Finney celebrates his "39th" birthday with a cake provided by his fellow volunteers

Back to our story: after the lunch break the day crews got back to work and were supported by the early arrival of the Wednesday (Night) crew members Greg Kindred and Bill Liening. The full night crew was able to take over the operation with the arrival of Ken Rombouts, Jack Nilsen and Justin Seeley. (Jim and I would like to make special note of the efforts of Steve Bravo, Joe Prichard and Gil Patrick who put in extra hours after their full shift was done and marked additional hours working with the night crew.)

When a dinner break was called at 6:00 PM the only part of the aircraft that remained to be worked on was the very narrow area behind the tail wheel assembly, which was immediately taken care of when the pizza was finished.

Special thanks need to go out to museum staffers Holly Kirkpatrick from the events staff, who provided ice, soft drinks and water to the crews all day long, and Jane Harper and Bruce Johnson for being available all day to help with the many details that needed attention. All of the volunteers appreciated the lunch and dinner provided by the museum.



1800hrs: The afternoon/evening crew having dinner before getting back on the job. L to R: Ken Rombouts, Jim Grismer, Greg Kindred, Jack Nilsen, Justin Seeley, Joe Prichard, Steve Bravo, Mort Glick (...and once again Gil Patrick is missing.)

The application of the 427 means that Phase II of the restoration project has only one remaining step – and a big one it is – the painting of the interior of the aircraft. The final decision on how and when that will be accomplished has not yet been decided. We are awaiting a demonstration of how the aircraft's interior might be sprayed with a state-of-the-art interior spraying system used by Gulfstream Corporation, or we may be forced to employ the more traditional and time consuming manual method.

As you can see – Wednesday was quite a day at the Mighty Eighth - -

And there's more to come . . .