

## **Update # 66 - "City of Savannah"**

B-17 Restoration

August 20, 2010

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It may be the Dog Days of August elsewhere in America, but at the Mighty Eighth things are going at full speed – in preparation for an even faster pace that will pick up at the close of the month.

The first order of business with this week's update is to send out kudos to two of our long term and stalwart volunteers, Rocky Rodriguez (Saturday Crew Chief) and Mike Callahan (Wednesday Day Crew). Several weeks ago we instituted a new program for all our volunteers in case they identified WWII Eighth Air Force veterans that were visiting the Museum. All Museum volunteers, not just those working on our project, were provided with what we called "walk in kits". The kit consists of an 8x10 sheet of paper with instructions on how to notify Museum management of the presence of special veteran/visitors to the Museum who had actually served with the Mighty Eighth in WWII. The instructions call for the volunteer to notify Museum or project management and in lieu of the availability of anyone from Museum or project staff being available to meet with the visitor, a list of questions are to be filled in so that the visitor/veteran can be contacted in the future. Rocky and Mike took those instructions to heart and were able to identify two very special visitors to the Museum last week.

Rocky was working on Saturday when he noticed that a visitor standing by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Division (B-24) exhibit seemed to be holding court with a large group of people. He went over to see what was going on and saw a man by the name of Skip Shelton explaining his service as a WWII B-24 pilot in the 448th Bomb Group to a group of fellow visitors. When Skip was done talking to the group Rocky approached him and had a discussion that resulted in his obtaining information from Skip so that he could be contacted in the future – just as the walk in kit suggested. As there is no Museum staff on duty on Saturdays, Rocky called our Project Manager, Jerry McLaughlin, at home and passed on the contact information.

Jerry's follow up revealed that Skip had quite a career as a very young B-24 co-pilot who also moonlighted as a nose art artist. (You can see the nose art that Skip painted on his own B-24, Frisco Frisky on the internet at: [www.b24bestweb.com/friscofrisky.htm](http://www.b24bestweb.com/friscofrisky.htm)). Skip later spent a half century as executive jet pilot, and today, at age 87, is a practicing commercial artist who rides his motorcycle 50 miles every day. You may well be hearing more about Skip in future updates as we try to involve him in some artwork on the "City of Savannah".

On Wednesday Mike was working on the airplane when he struck up a conversation with a family standing in front of the "City of Savannah" and discovered he was talking to James Badger, who was visiting the Museum with his granddaughter and two of his great-grand children. James had another amazing story. He had flown in the Mighty Eighth as a P-51

pilot with the famous combination of Chuck Yeager and Bud Anderson in the 357<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group. After the war James earned a degree in engineering and worked for over thirty years as a launch pad engineer for NASA, where some of his good friends were the original seven American astronauts. Now, here is a man with a few stories to tell! Mike took the “walk in” instructions so seriously that he told James to wait for him as he ran into the shop and returned with the sheet of instructions and filled it out line by line with James and his granddaughter providing all the necessary information. Next Mike notified Jerry McLaughlin. Jerry and JEB Harper met with the James and his family and Jerry took a picture of them in front of the “City”. JEB took the family to the Museum library to assist them in obtaining information on James’ combat career. JEB will also be driving to Florida to video tape James regarding his adventures with the 357<sup>th</sup> as well as his time with NASA.



**James Badger with his granddaughter and great-grand children in front of the “City of Savannah”**

These are two great stories of veterans of the Mighty Eighth Air Force in WWII that will be part of the archives of the Museum forever, thanks to our two volunteers on the “City of Savannah” project.

While Rocky and Mike were working with the visitors, others were actually working on the “City”. Rocky’s crew finished up Saturday by re-installing all of the hatches on the airplane in preparation for the upcoming interior painting project. The Wednesday Day Crew finished polishing the recently repaired bomb bay door and crawled over virtually the entire outside of the “City” to remove a layer of dust that had accumulated since polishing ended several months ago. It seems clear that the cleaning of the exterior will be a never ending chore for those who follow the current volunteers in the years to come. In this case the cleaning was in preparation for the possible placement of vinyl decals that we will be

experimenting with to replicate the national markings on the 1944 *“City of Savannah”* that appear in the pictures of the plane as it prepares to depart for Europe.

The Wednesday Night Crew was busy this week re-installing the second bomb bay door and the last two bomb racks. These chores are also part of the preparation for the upcoming painting of the interior of the aircraft.

A note on the painting: it will be done using state of the art equipment and professional interior fuselage painters on loan from our good neighbor, the Gulfstream Corporation. We are not sure of the dates yet – but we are anticipating it will be soon after the completion of the upcoming interior carpentry project which will run from August 30<sup>th</sup> to September 3<sup>rd</sup>. On a final note, the CARS radio room team was back in action this week, totally enjoying their inspection of the radio equipment donated by Tommy Garcia that they had picked up in South Carolina last week. (See picture below)



**The radio equipment donated by Tommy Garcia to the *“City of Savannah”* Project**

Yes, things are going full speed at the Mighty Eighth - - and there is more to come . . .