

# INSIDE THE MIGHTY EIGHTH

In 1983 Major General Lewis E. Lyle, USAF, a B-17 bomber pilot and veteran of over 70 combat missions during World War II, and other veterans began planning



a museum to honor the men and women who helped defeat Nazi aggression by serving in or supporting the greatest air armada the world had ever seen – the Eighth Air Force. On May 14, 1996, the vision became a reality with the dedication of the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum.

The Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum plays an integral role within the educational

community. Over 15,000 students participate in annual field trips which include a variety of activities from guided tours through the extensive exhibits to hands-on workshops demonstrating the science of flight, life on the home front, and a general introduction to the world of aviation. One program teaches about problems presented by weather to airmen. Officially recognized in 2003 by the State of Georgia as a Center for Character Education, the Mighty Eighth has accepted the challenge of sharing the positive character traits demonstrated by the men and women of the Eighth Air Force.

Covering an area of nearly 90,000 square feet and situated on 13 acres in Pooler, Georgia, minutes from historic downtown Savannah where the Eighth



Air Force was founded in 1942, the Museum tells the compelling story of the ordinary people whose lives were transformed into extraordinary commitment, sacrifice, and patriotism.

Vintage aircraft, theater presentations, and hundreds of artifacts are just some of the tools used in telling the powerful story of the Eighth.

Upon arrival visitors step into the awesome expanse of the Lewis E. Lyle Rotunda, with its soaring ceiling and imposing bronze statues of Eighth Air Force legends. Museum exhibits are meaningful to every visitor.



Each exhibit becomes a compelling and powerful

example of sacrifice, courage, and patriotism. Among

the exhibits are *Prelude to War, Battle of Britain, From*

*Savannah to the UK, and the Honoring the Eighth Gallery.*

The *Molesworth Airfield Mural* features a rendering of the

B-17, "Snap, Crackle, and Pop." The *Mission Experience*

and *Combat Gallery* include vintage aircraft, interactive

exhibits and static displays. *Escape and Evasion, Tuskegee*

*Airmen, and the Prisoner Of War* are stories relating

experiences of various bomb and fighter groups of the Eighth. *Post World War II and Fly Girls of World War II* are two of the most recent areas of exhibition. Each exhibit dramatically tells a unique story of World War II. Rising to the north, the *Chapel of the Fallen Eagles* – designed to replicate a 16th century Old English village church – presides over the Memorial Gardens, its carillon echoing a stream of familiar hymns and melodies to visitors and passers-by.



The Roger A. Freeman Eighth Air Force Research Center contains the archival manuscript and photographic collections, the artifact collection, the Harry D. Gobrecht Family 303rd Bombardment Group (H) Research Center, and houses the John H. Woolnough Library with over 7,000 volumes and many rare books of Eighth Air Force history. Library staff assist visitors world-wide in gathering information about veterans and aviation, as well as providing research assistance to students, educators, and historical authors.

Visitors can remember their journey through the Mighty Eighth by exploring the art, books, and mementos available from the extensive selection in the Museum Store. Lunchtime is always an enjoyable experience in the café.

