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**IS A DALE MABRY ARMY AIR FIELD MUSEUM IN TALLAHASSEE'S FUTURE?
LOCAL GROUP OF ENTHUSIASTS FORM TO EXPLORE THE FEASIBILITY OF A DALE MABRY ARMY
AIR FIELD MUSEUM**

TALLAHASSEE, FL -- Between 1940 and 1945 Dale Mabry Army Air Field was a major military installation in Tallahassee, where over 8,000 World War II fighter pilots received training, including the original Tuskegee Airmen. Airfields in Thomasville, Townsend and Waycross, GA and Perry, FL were sub-bases of Dale Mabry Army Air Field. On the 75th anniversary of Dale Mabry Army Air Field's first public unveiling of April 6, 1942, a group of local history enthusiasts unveiled their plans to explore the feasibility of a museum, and launched a website at www.dmaaf.org. *"Today, a flag will fly over the U.S. Capitol commemorating the 75th anniversary of Dale Mabry Army Air Field's first Open House, and in symbolic fashion we are filing articles of incorporation with an effective date also of April 6, 2017,"* said Chuck Wells who is leading the effort.

Construction of Dale Mabry Army Air Field began in October of 1940, during America's World War II military build-up. The base was activated on January 24, 1941. Built under tight security, the public would not be allowed onto the base for another 14 months. Expecting only a few hundred, a crowd estimated as high as 8,000 turned out—roughly half of Tallahassee's population. *"The base's historical impact in shaping the Tallahassee community cannot be overstated,"* said Wells. *"Millions of dollars were pumped into the local economy for construction, thousands of soldiers spent parts of their paychecks in town, hotels were often sold out with visiting loved ones, and over 800 civilians were employed."* When WWII ended in late 1945, the improved property, much of it swamp land, reverted back to local control and the base was repurposed in many ways. For instance, between 1946 and 1953 parts of the old base served as the West Campus of Florida State University, accommodating the influx of male students to the transformed Florida State College for Women. Many of these men were WWII veterans, including some who trained at the base.

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Wells noted, *“Today the base is our own ‘Pompeii’, a lost city buried under modern-day Tallahassee. Most people are surprised to learn there was a base here, but if you know what you are looking for, remnants can still be found.”* Mabry Street leads to the communities south of Jackson Bluff Road where the base buildings once stood. Streets there are named after famous World War II heroes like Eisenhower, Van Fleet and Patton. Sabal Palms Elementary, nicknamed “The Patriots,” sits at its center. Appleyard Drive was built over the north-south runway and the aged asphalt of the northwest-southeast runway is visible near Messer Field. Tallahassee Fire Station No. 4 sits where the control tower once stood. *“Every so often something reminds us of the base’s once looming presence, like this past November when a WWII-era bomb was found downtown and detonated. Interest is aroused, but nothing is done with that energy,”* said Wells. *“We think there is sustainable interest, but leadership is needed.”* The story of Dale Mabry Army Air Field is the story of WWII, and of the generation that fought the war. That generation has been dubbed, “The Greatest Generation” for their sacrifices defending freedom and transforming America into a super power. *“A dedicated museum would preserve the Dale Mabry Army Air Field’s contribution to Tallahassee, and a generation’s indelible mark on American society,”* said Wells. *“This is too connected to Tallahassee and too historically important to be told only through text books,”* said Wells.

Other members of the non-profit’s Board of Directors are Tommy Bowermeister, Bob Garment, Harold Knowles, Al Latimer, Penny Ralston and Lorraine Wells.

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