

# Dale Mabry Army Air Field Museum Initiative Update

August 1, 2018

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Thank you for your interest in receiving periodic updates. A lot has happened since April 7, 2017 when we announced our museum initiative. To date, we have primarily used our Facebook and GoFundMe pages for breaking news. This is a brief summary of highlights from the past 16 months.

## Organization

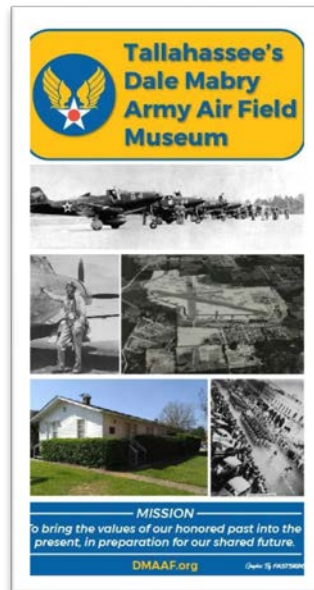
In addition to filing our Articles of Incorporation with the Florida Department of State, we secured our IRS 501(c)(3) status as a tax exempt charitable non-profit, our State of Florida sales tax exemption, and registered with the Florida Department of Agriculture, Division of Consumer Affairs to be able to solicit and accept charitable donations.

## Vision/Mission

Our Board of Directors developed the framework of a strategic plan and established the following vision and mission for the organization:

*Vision: To create a museum complex where people of all ages leave inspired and changed by their experience.*

*Mission: To bring the values of our honored past into the present, in preparation for our shared future.*



*Tabletop Display for exhibits*

It is our intent to identify property where the airbase once stood and return to it a few original structures that still exist but were relocated after the base closed, thus creating a mini-representation of Dale Mabry Army Air Field. Visitors would be taken back in time to learn about WWII from a uniquely local perspective, both on the warfront and on the home front. We know that a lot of groundwork must be laid, and nothing

happens overnight. Museums require patrons, sponsors, fundraising activities and grants to thrive. Therefore, our approach is *“for the community, by the community”*. Your continued support is vital to the success of this initiative!

One of our great hopes is that when Tallahassee celebrates its bicentennial in 2024, Dale Mabry Army Air Field is properly recognized. Sadly, if that celebration were this month, Dale Mabry Army Air Field would barely make honorable mention, yet in many ways it put Tallahassee on the map and changed the course of this city’s future.

### Social Media Presence

In addition to our webpage ([www.dmaaf.org](http://www.dmaaf.org)), we created a Facebook site ([www.facebook.com/DMAAFTally](http://www.facebook.com/DMAAFTally)) and a GoFundMe site ([www.GoFundMe.com/DMAAF](http://www.GoFundMe.com/DMAAF)). We currently have 105 followers. We try to post at least once per week and include news of our efforts and news from the past. Six hundred and eighty-two people viewed our Memorial Day 2018 post where we detailed our goal for a memorial garden honoring the estimated 285 men and women who lost their lives while serving and training at Dale Mabry Field.



Headlines from the Daily Democrat circa 1941-45

### Media Coverage

We have been on the front page of the Tallahassee Democrat and featured on WCTV-TV twice. Our efforts have also been highlighted on the Preston Scott Morning Show (100.7 FM) and the Gregg Marr Voice of Freedom Show (93.3 FM). WFSU has also taken interest in our efforts.



*Front pages of the Tallahassee Democrat*

### **Presentations and Special Events:**

We have given presentations to the Tallahassee, Experimental Aircraft Association, Chapter 445, the Tallahassee Air Force Association, and the Monticello, Tallahassee Downtown and Chattahoochee Rotary Clubs. We also had a table at the 2018 Honor Flight welcome home.



*Presentation at the Downtown Rotary Club*

### **Research**

There currently is not a single archive (something we hope to change!) where all the records pertaining to Dale Mabry Army Air reside. We have identified significant holdings at the National Archives and Records Administration offices in Marietta, GA, Mobile, AL and College Park, MD. Through a visit to College Park earlier this year, we obtained amazing records detailing the \$500,000 project to camouflage the airfield to defend against an enemy invasion. We also obtained the official base history from the Air Force Historical Archives at Maxwell Air Force Base. The Florida Archives also has a wonderful photographic collection in the Florida Memories Digital Collection, a vertical file, some original copies of the *Dale Mabry Observer* and an index created through the efforts of Claude Kenneson. We also have obtained the earliest editions of the base newspaper, the *Dale Mabry Observer* from the Tallahassee Democrat archives. We have visited the FSU Institute for WWII and the Human Experience, which ironically was established after the donation of a photo

album by Paul Dougherty, who was stationed at Dale Mabry Field and took many photographs while there. The FSU Special Archives includes much information about the unique interplay between FSU and Dale Mabry Field and includes many recorded oral history reports that mention Dale Mabry Field. Finally, through the records administrator at the City of Tallahassee, many records from their archives were made available for review, including city minutes.



*Photographer Paul Dougherty was once stationed at Dale Mabry Field.*

### **Oral Histories**

Not many veterans from Dale Mabry Army Air Field remain among us. We were thrilled to locate Lt. Col. Ralph Esterling (ret.) living in North Carolina. After training at Dale Mabry, he was sent to the Pacific Theatre with the 5<sup>th</sup> Air Force. He was honored in 2012 as a hometown hero.



*Lt. Ralph Esterling posing in front of his barracks at Dale Mabry Field (L), and in 2012 (R).*

### **“Building 4” Leon County School**

In April 2017, we learned that Leon County Schools owned a Dale Mabry Army Air Field building that would be demolished that summer. By informing the School Board and Superintendent of its historical significance, they have graciously given an extension of time so that we could attempt to raise funds to take ownership and relocate the building. We also have communicated with Florida State University about preservation of two Dale Mabry Field buildings that still exist on campus but inevitably will need to be removed or demolished.



*Building 4 owned by Leon County Schools (L) and Building 264 at FSU (R)*

### **Fundraising/Community Support**

To date we have raised approximately \$10,000 in cash and commitments. We are pleased that two local chapters of national veteran support groups, the Vietnam Veterans of America and the Patriot Guard Riders have made financial commitments to saving Building 4. We believe that when you honor one veteran, you honor all veterans. Businesses in town who have offered us various support include The UPS Store Mahan, Mailbox, Fast Signs, Messer Caparello, Attorneys at Law, and Mission BBQ where a very cool portrait of Dale Mabry flyers is now on display.



*Katie Morse accepting portrait of Dale Mabry airmen for Mission BBQ*

## War on the Home Front

During WWII, everyone “did their part”. Tallahasseeans were very active in “home front” activities ranging from victory gardens to allow commercial produce to go towards the war effort (Victory Garden Drive is so named because it was a road that led to victory garden) to fund drives, to Red Cross training, and on and on. Recently, we were entrusted with records dating back to WWII linked to Mrs. Evelyn Kinsey Messer Csikos, the founder of Lively VoTech. We hope this collection will be the first of many that help to tell a more complete picture of the war effort at home here in Tallahassee.



*Evelyn Kinsey Messer Csikos (1947), founder of school that eventually became Lively Vocational/Technical School*

## Future Possibilities

With your support, we will continue to move forward on all fronts as described above. We also hope to become more visible in our efforts, for instance participating in major events such as the Veterans Day Parade, Independence Day at Tom Brown, and Springtime Tallahassee. We also hope to submit for grants through the Department of State related to historical preservation and cultural affairs. One exciting possibility is a grant to develop an historical theatrical production.

## Limited Time Commemorative VJ Day Mug Offer

Please consider getting involved as volunteer or donor, and minimally, tell your friends and family about your excitement for this effort. One way to start the conversation is with our VJ Commemorative Mug. See the attached flyer for more details.

# DALE MABRY ARMY AIR FIELD VJ DAY COMMEMORATIVE MUG

*-Limited time offer for new donations of \$50 or more through September-*



Taken straight from the headlines of the ***Dale Mabry Observer***, August 15, 1945, this is a premium, one-of-a-kind, 15-ounce mug. The Victory over Japan (VJ Day) marked the end of World War II with Japan's surrendered in mid-August, made formal aboard the U.S.S. Missouri on September 2, 1945. It was an amazing and historic moment! *Life* magazine declared it was "as if joy had been rationed and saved up for the three years, eight months and seven days since Sunday, December 7, 1941".

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**Send form and check or money order to:**

*Dale Mabry Army Air Field Museum, Inc.  
3122 Mahan Drive, Suite 801-184  
Tallahassee, FL 32308*

**Alternatively, donate on-line at:**

<https://www.facebook.com/donate/290897255012952/>

Dale Mabry Army Air Field Museum is a 501(c) (3) Charitable Organization  
All donations are tax deductible