



384th Bomb Group, Inc. News & Journal



"Keep The Show On The Road..."

February 2023

Plans for Memorial Junket XII to Grafton Underwood take shape

Reunion will include airfield, museum, cemetery and air show excursions over five days

Junket XII, our 2023 384th reunion, will return us to England 13-19 September.

Our friends at Arena Travel are completing the itinerary, and it's as awesome as the last in 2019. Here are details:

The reunion begins 13 September with a coach trip from a hotel near Heathrow Airport at lunchtime, traveling to our headquarters hotel, the Hilton Cambridge City Centre. All events originate there and accommodations are included in the reunion fee, is £1,725 per person (double occupancy). If not sharing accommodations, a "single supplement" of £625 is charged, making the total for solo attendees £2,350. This covers meals, transportation, and our professional tour manager, former RAF pilot Rick Hobson.



This recent photo shows progress at the 384th museum site at Grafton Underwood. For more on the work there, please see story, **Page 4**.

On 14 September, we visit an airfield and museum in Suffolk as well as Great Ashfield, home of the 385th Bomb Group, our traveling partners. We will also have a Traditional English Tea at the historic Swan in Lavenham. On 15 September, we have the day to explore historic Cambridge, including the River Cam. On 16 September, we spend the whole day at Grafton Underwood, including the memorial and museum site.

On 17 September, we will enjoy a Gold Experience package at the Battle of Britain Air Show at Duxford. On 18 September, we will visit the Cambridge American Cemetery to honor 384th and 8th Air Force fallen and missing.

Our last reunion activity that evening will be our dinner at the RAF Club in London, followed by transport to a hotel near Heathrow Airport. The stay at this hotel is included in the registration. On 19 September, we will bid each other farewell, whether going home or continuing travel in the UK or on the continent.

The final package is expected "any day now" and changes will be included in the next newsletter as well as on the 384th website, and on Facebook. Do not miss this one — space is limited!

An update on digital delivery of this newsletter and who gets printed copies

As mentioned in our November 2022 newsletter, the 8th Air Force Historical Society is no longer printing its well-regarded glossy magazine: This will save the 8th AFHS \$25,000 a year.

Publishing costs similarly affect the 384th. So the board has elected to primarily publish digitally. As with the 8th AFHS, for vets and those without easy email access, we'll continue to make printed copies available. Some additional background:

- Our annual dues income barely covers printing and mailing of the newsletter.
- Email delivery means you receive the newsletter more quickly. It takes time and effort to print, affix mailing labels, etc.
- Live links in the electronic version will take you to all the internet resources referenced in a newsletter issue.
- Many mailed copies are returned every issue because we don't have the right addresses.

And because the newsletter will now be primarily digital, your editor will no longer be thinking about the added cost of mailing and printing (in other words, more content, more pictures, more stories every issue!).

Paul Furiga

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2022-2023 Calendar

The 384th BG Memorial Junket XII is planned for Wednesday, 13 September through Tuesday, 19 September 2023. See page 1 story and check the 384th website and our Facebook page (links below) for updates.

On the Internet

384th BG website

Our internet home, maintained by Fred Preller and team.

384th Facebook page

A great place where many of us share our experiences, photos, etc. from both sides of "the pond."

8th Air Force HS

The home for the 8th Air Force Historical Society online.

8th AFHS Facebook

Information, photos, stories, current events, pertinent information relating to "The Mighty Eighth."

The Arrowhead Club

Cindy Bryan's wonderful and inspiring blog. Her father was a 384th crewman and POW.

Contact Us

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From our president: What does our future hold?

Not only for this year, including Junket XII, but the years to come

Two things are on my mind as we approach the end of winter:

The first is our dwindling membership, which for many understandable reasons has been heading south in the last couple of decades. Most of our cherished Veterans are now gone, but I personally have committed to Keep the Show on the Road ever since I met our core group in 1985. But with most of our Veterans having flown west over



the years, it has become incumbent on us, the NexGen, to step up to the plate. I am so grateful for those of us "youngsters" who have selflessly given themselves to the meaning of Keeping the Show on the Road, but we need to recruit not only our generation, but those that follow. Please help us by getting the word out about our great organization and how we need to keep the memories of the 384th wartime contributions alive.

Second, we are fast approaching boarding time for our next visit to Grafton Underwood, our Junket XII. Carol has again worked with Helen of Arena Travel in the UK to come up with another fabulous experience of walking in the footsteps of our Greatest

Generation. For those who were with us in 2019, you know what a great trip back in time that was. This 2023 trip promises to be just as wonderful. You will find details in other parts of this newsletter that will allow you to start planning your trip today. Don't miss out on a lifetime experience; join us as we celebrate the legacy of our fathers, uncles, and grandfathers who made it possible for us to have the freedom we all share as Americans.

—Frank Alfter

Know your 384th Officers and Board of Directors

Chairman of the Board	Peter Bielskis
President	Frank Alfter
Senior Vice President	Bill O'Leary
Secretary	Carol Alfter
Treasurer	Ray Lustig
Member	Chris Wilkinson
Member	Dennis Bielskis
Member	Thomas Swift
Member	Fred Preller
Member/Newsletter Editor	Paul Furiga

The 384th Bomb Group, Inc. is a non-profit veterans organization based in Ohio. Membership includes the quarterly newsletter for \$25, renewed yearly in January.

2023 DUES INFORMATION

Our 2023 treasurer is Ray Lustig.

Please send dues to:

Ray Lustig, Treasurer, 384th Bomb Group, Inc.
128 Ulster Avenue
Walden, NY 12586

Questions? Contact Ray at rlustig@hvc.rr.com

Thank you for your help in ensuring that group activities are financially supported.

Henry Sienkiewicz, 545th Squadron, celebrates 100th birthday

Lt. Henry "Sink" Sienkiewicz, bombardier, 545th Squadron, marked his 100th birthday on 4 January 2023 with a drive-by parade of horn- and siren-blowing firetrucks, police cars, sheriffs' cars, veterans' cars and friends as well as surrounded by friends and family waving flags and cheering.

Daughter Sandra Bukowski Peverly says a big surprise was four classes from a nearby elementary school (1st and 2nd



graders) who sang Happy Birthday, gave Henry cards and thanked him for his service. The celebration made the local news on Syracuse NewsChannel 9. Henry's son drove in from Schenectady, and Sandra's daughter (with Henry's three-year-old great-granddaughter) came in from Maryland.

Later in the week, more than 150 guests gathered to congratulate Henry. The county executive did a presentation and the 174th Attack Wing of the Air National Guard also sent a citation. Sandra reports that the Mighty 8th, 384th Bomb Group and 545th Squadron were all mentioned quite a bit. Sandra notes that while Henry has slowed down after a fall last spring, he can "still come up with a wisecrack or joke!"

TAPS: Sharing news about passages we may have missed – February 2023

Over the last year or so, the TAPS section of this newsletter has been thin. In a few issues, there were no deaths reported.

This concerned us. We wondered if we had reached the stage where so few Veterans remained that deaths would be infrequent, or perhaps we had missed some deaths? While families are generally appreciative of seeing their loved one's passing in the newsletter, we are not always among those who are notified of a Veteran's passing.

Thanks to board member and webmaster Fred Preller, who cross-checked historical newsletters and other sources, we were able to identify and honor the passing of several Veterans we had missed. If you know of a 384th Veteran's passing, please write our editor, Paul Furiga (newsletter@384thbombgroup.com or 222 Courtney Place, Wexford, PA 15090), so that we may honor their service and their passing here.

Lt. Richard Lee Cranstoun, pilot, 545th squadron, 31 missions (7 August-30 November 1944). Died 19 February 2018, aged 97.

Lt. Frank D. Furiga, bombardier/navigator, 547th squadron, 25 missions (7 May-21 July 1944). Died 17 January 2014, aged 88. Frank became a POW on his 25th mission along with co-pilot Lt. Dale Harlan Peterson and bombardier Lt. John Cresto when fire below the flight deck destroyed oxygen. S. Sgt. Jesse McCoy died when his parachute didn't open. Pilot First Lt. Gene Goodrick was awarded the Silver Star for bringing the plane and remaining crew home with the assistance of ball turret gunner S. Sgt. Lee Pierce.

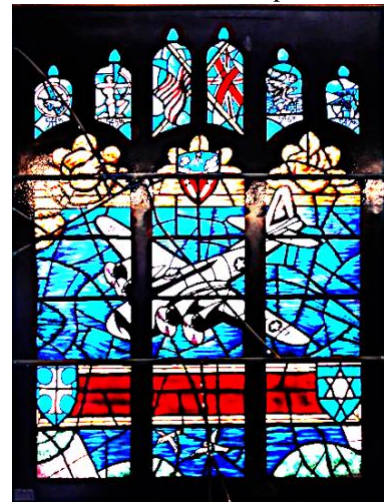
S. Sgt. Billy J. Jackson, ball turret gunner, 547th squadron, 25 missions (19 May 1943-8 March 1944). Died 2021. Wounded in both eyes on the 30 July 1943 mission, he returned to combat flying status in November 1943, even though he could not see with his right eye. Billy was an original 384th member. He returned to the U.S., then volunteered for another combat tour and was assigned to the 486th BG, where he flew 29 more missions as engineer of the Stinson Crew.

Flt. Ofcr. Joyce Johnson, co-pilot, 544th squadron, 8 missions (8 April-25 April 1945). Died 22 December 2021, aged 101. Joyce served in the U.S. Air Force reserves for many years after the war, flying as a pilot with the rank of Captain. Since his service records were lost in the 1973 St. Louis records fire, his family had difficulty getting his medals. He was finally awarded his medals at a ceremony on his 100th birthday. The ceremony was held at the Soldier's Field Memorial in Rochester, Minn., with several military representatives and about 200 people in attendance.

Sgt. Edward Sherman Meek, tail gunner, 545th squadron, 17 missions (21 February-20 March 1945). Died 26 June 2022, aged 97. Ed was shot down on his 17th mission with most of the members of his original crew including Lt. Gerald Warden Hicks, the pilot. Hicks was killed in action; the rest of the crew became POWs for six weeks.

S. Sgt. Richard T. Nolan, waist and tail gunner, 545th squadron, 35 missions (24 July-5 November 1944). Died 23 February 2016, aged 91. In addition to completing his tour, Richard is among the 384th Veterans who signed our commemorative wing panel, "Wingy," which is now on display at Hill Aerospace Museum at Hill Air Force Base in Utah.

S. Sgt. John Skopek, waist gunner, 546th squadron, 18 missions (2 March-25 April 1945). Died 10 April 2018, aged 94. In addition to completing his tour, Richard is among the 384th Veterans who signed our commemorative wing panel, "Wingy," now on display at Hill Aerospace Museum at Hill Air Force Base in Utah.



Junket XII visit is a focus for museum site efforts in Grafton Underwood



Before (left) and after (right) pictures of the Operations Block at the 384th Bomb Group's former Grafton Underwood home, showing progress made in clearing vegetation and shoring up the building itself and surrounding areas.

The 2022-2023 winter in the United Kingdom has been unpredictable. By turns cold, warm, wet and sunny, it has not deterred volunteers with the Friends of the 384th in preparing the museum site at the 384th's Grafton Underwood home.

The Junket XII visit by families, friends (and perhaps Veterans) from the United States is a focal point for the group (see **story, P. 1**). The long-term goal, of course, is a fully functioning museum honoring the service of the thousands who flew from Grafton Underwood and the thousands who made it possible for them to do so.

The shorter-term goal is to provide a good representation of progress thus far and future plans for the site during Junket XII. The entire day of Saturday, 16 September will be spent in Grafton Underwood. As with the last visit in September 2019, the group will visit the 384th memorial first erected to honor the group in the 1970s.

During the 2019 visit, leaders of what has become Friends of the 384th arranged with Boughton Estates, which own the site, to permit visitors to spend time on the former airfield and see firsthand what might be possible in terms of a museum.

The Friends group is now a formal entity engaged in the process of establishing a permanent museum at the site. The focal point will be the former Operations Block (Ops Block), where mission planning occurred. This building is in the best shape of available structures for museum purposes. The Ops Block renovation will be augmented by construction of modern Nissen huts in the style of those that once housed men and other functions on the base during the war.

As avid readers are well aware, a U.S. fundraising effort begun last year has thus far netted more than \$30,000 from 58 donors for the first phase of the project. The Friends group is also raising funds and at the appropriate time, those assets will be combined to support what is expected to be a \$500,000 U.S. cost.

The pictures on this page provide some context and visual perspective for the work that is underway at the site.

At right, bricks are reclaimed for future use. At far right, temporary support beams are necessary inside the Ops Block to allow interior work to proceed.



The 384th Bomb Group website, an important starting point for closure

As family members and friends of 384th Bomb Group Veterans seek to learn more about the incredible contributions of these men, their journey frequently begins with an internet search and a fortuitous click on the link www.384thbombgroup.com. This is one such story, relayed in the words of Mark Olson, son-in-law of [Lt. Clifford C. Dartt](#), a copilot in the 544th Squadron, to webmaster Fred Preller.

Mark writes: “Clifford was Co-Pilot of B-17 [42-29960](#), "NYMOKYMI" that was shot down on 4 July, 1943 over Belfonds, France. Clifford was shortly captured by the Nazis and held as a POW in Stalag Luft III, then Stalag VII-A until he was liberated in April 1945.



Clifford Dartt adding his signature to “Wing,” the commemorative B-17 wing panel signed by many 384th veterans, now on display at the Hill Air Force Base Museum in Utah.

in Belfonds. My wife Joanne and I met Sally and her husband Dany for the first time in the Summer of 2015 when they traveled to our area. More significantly, on that same trip, they met Clifford — 70 years after the crash, completing the circle between Clifford and Belfonds. The timing of their meeting with Clifford was fortuitous as he passed away later that same year in December 2015.

“Through Sally's efforts, Joanne and I were privileged to attend the annual commemoration ceremony in Belfonds in July 2018 for the 75th anniversary of the crash of Clifford's B-17.”

Dartt was only on his third mission when shot down by a combination of flak and ME-109s. Of this original 384th crew, two were killed on this mission, Lt. Francis Hackley, the navigator, and Lt. Donald Irvine, the bombardier.

In addition to Dartt, radio operator S. Sgt. Paul Welch and ball turret gunner S. Sgt. Lawrence Reandeanu also became POWs.

Four managed to evade and escape: Flt. Ofcr. Gordon Erickson, pilot; S.Sgt. Robert Penly, the top turret gunner; Cpl. Charles Mankowitz, tail gunner; and S.Sgt. Frank Wingerter, waist gunner.

Among the other resources on the 384th website for this original crew are the Escape & Evasion reports for some of the crew who avoided capture, including a [lengthy handwritten account from Frank Wingerter](#).

Also on the site is a [photo album related](#) to the visit Mark Clifton references. From that album (right) is the Belfonds, France memorial to the NYMOKYMI crew referenced in Mark Clifton's account.

“I'm writing to thank you for your outstanding work in helping us to never forget our WWII heroes. You played a key role in our family learning so much more about Clifford's experiences in WWII.

“When I first did an internet search and found your website seven or eight years ago, I recall seeing a photo of who I thought could be Clifford as a young man. The caption stated: ‘Do you know this man? We believe this to be Clifford Dartt.’ After showing it to my wife I replied, yes this is Clifford. He's alive and living near us in Southeastern Massachusetts.

“You, in turn, made us aware that the little village of Belfonds in Normandy still honored the crew of Clifford's B-17 with a monument and annual commemoration ceremony. We were amazed to find this out more than 70 years after the crash. However, we were no more surprised than the citizens of Belfonds were to learn that Clifford was still alive.

“You then enabled our contact with Sally Sorel



At Wendover, the 384th Bomb Group history grows with Mel Hubbard map

In recent newsletter issues (June, August 2022), we've reported on artist Mel Hubbard's great map depicting the 384th's history and other sites worth noting in the Grafton Underwood area.

Mel was kind enough to gift two copies of her full-color map to the 384th. Both have found great homes in the U.S. The first copy of the map has been accepted at the Eighth Air Force Museum in Pooler, Ga. The second copy is now on display at Historic Wendover Airfield, where the 384th's original crews were among the 21 bomber groups trained there. Wendover is also where planning and preparation happened for the atomic bomb missions against Japan.

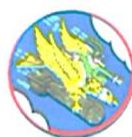
A key mission of the Historic Wendover Airfield group is to preserve the memory of wartime activities at Wendover that helped secure global freedom during World War II, and that includes the 384th's history. "Of all the bomb groups, we've got the most original signatures from your group with the B-17 photo and the ones on the propeller blade," depicted in the picture (right), says James Petersen, Historic Wendover Airfield president.

In addition to the map and memorabilia, the display also includes a replica of the stained-glass window the group installed in St. James Church in Grafton Underwood.

Peterson says a future project is to install the stained glass in a light box to better show off its features.



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We're on the Web at: www.384thbombgroup.com