



384th Bomb Group Heritage Association News & Journal

384th Bomb Group, Inc.



"Keep The Show On The Road..."

May 2024

Will we see you in New Orleans? Our 2024 reunion is better with you

Joint gathering with Eighth Air Force Historical Society now booking its third hotel

Over the years, 384th Bomb Group Heritage Association reunions have been a great way for people to connect and share their common interest in preserving the history and legacy of the 384th Bomb Group. Oh yes and have a great time too!

We are holding our reunion this year with the 8th Air Force Historical Society annual reunion in New Orleans, 25-29 September. **Membership in the 8th AFHS**

AND registration for the 8th AFHS

Reunion are required to attend their events and for the reduced hotel rate.

The 384th does not require a registration fee. We will have a beautiful hospitality suite in the Higgins Hotel that we are sharing with three other bomb group associations (385th, 466th and the 96th). It's a large deluxe suite with comfortable accommodations and windows with dramatic views of The National World War II Museum across the street. The suite will be open throughout the reunion for meetings, casual conversation and making friends.

Registration for the 8th Air Force Historical Society Reunion is required to attend their events and the 384th Bomb Group Banquet on Friday night, September 27. To receive the group hotel rate, registration must be done SEPARATELY at the reserved reunion hotel. Links to the 8th AFHS Reunion registration and hotel reservation information are in this newsletter. The hotels are filling fast – we are now booking into a third official hotel, so make plans soon if you can!

If you are unable to attend Wednesday and Thursday due to work but can take a Friday off to travel, please consider attending Friday-Sunday so you can attend the 384th Banquet on Friday, 27 September at 7pm, and the 8th Air Force Historical Society Banquet Saturday night. Again, 8th AFHS Registration is required to attend both events. The 384th hospitality suite and The National WWII Museum will be open every day of the reunion.

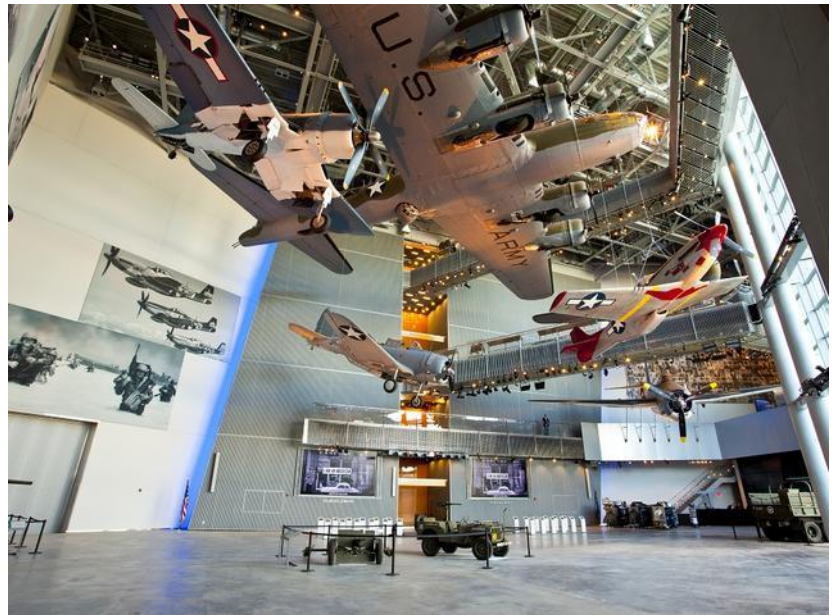
We hope to see as many of our cherished 384th Bomb Group veterans as can attend. They include Peter Bielskis, John DeFrancesco, George Alan Purchase, Hank Sienkiewicz and Henry Kolinek.

If you're a new or returning member, a non-member, young or not so young, we welcome everyone. Be confident you'll be warmly welcomed by us all!

A special note: the last time we met with the 8th AFHS in New Orleans, the 384th had the largest contingent! If you join us, you can help us repeat that showing!

We've shown our keen spirit in the U.K., at our previous reunions and on our 384th Bomber Group Facebook page. Let's show our esprit de corps and how we "Keep The Show On The Road" in New Orleans!

— *Patty Bielskis and Christopher Wilkinson*



The interior of the National World War II Museum in New Orleans, across the street from the Higgins, one of the headquarter hotels for the 8th Air Force Historical Society reunion, 25-29 September.

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2024 Calendar

The 2024 384th BG reunion will be held 25-29 September in New Orleans in conjunction with the 8th Air Force Historical Society. Check the 384th website, our Facebook page and the 8th AFHS online (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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Thank you — and hope to see you in New Orleans

Let me first express my appreciation for everyone's support following the passing of my wife, Gail, after over 56 years together. I am still finding my way forward, and



having Group business to attend to provides welcome focused activity. And I am certainly looking forward to seeing many of you at the reunion in New Orleans.

Our application for 501(c)(3) status ran into a hitch, so it will take a bit longer. Essentially, I was not aware that our status as an existing non-profit corporation would require us to submit the longer IRS Form 1023 rather than the simpler Form 1023-EZ. Well, live and learn, so we are in the process of collecting the required financial (and other) data required. My goal is to have it prepared for submission this month.

As an organization operated exclusively by volunteers, two things are paramount: ideas

and participation. Here are some ideas for participation:

- Museum Fundraising, which I have done for the past 2 years, and must now hand over;
- Reunion Planning, currently headed by Patty Bielskis.
- Membership, currently headed by Christopher Wilkinson.
- Sales, currently operated by Keith Ellefson.
- U.K. interests
- U.S. interests
- Website, currently me and others.
- Philanthropy.

Suggestions for extending the list of interest areas are welcome, and while we will certainly want to talk with you to ensure we understand your intent and motivation, you will not automatically be appointed committee chair, although if you volunteer you will get first consideration.

You will find a Membership report elsewhere in this issue, and it is BIG news – so far. The growth in numbers is primarily due to the efforts of Vice President Christopher Wilkinson and Secretary Paul Furiga, with support from Treasurer Ray Lustig. These volunteers are leading the growth of the Group to KEEP THE SHOW ON THE ROAD!
—Fred Preller

Know your 384th Officers and Board of Directors

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

2024 DUES INFORMATION

384th Bomb Group, Inc., is an Ohio nonprofit corporation, dba 384th Bomb Group Heritage Association. Membership includes this quarterly newsletter for \$25, renewed yearly in January.

Our 2024 treasurer is Ray Lustig. Please pay dues online via PayPal here: <https://384thbombgroup.com/content/pages/MembershipForm.php>

Or pay dues via check made out to 384th Bomb Group, Inc. and send to:

Paul Furiga, 384th Bomb Group, Inc.
222 Courtney Place
Wexford, PA 15090

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

Celebrating our “century bomber” boys on their 100th

During the latter months and years of World War II, as Allied air forces gained air superiority over Europe, many bombers, including many B-17s of the 384th Bomb Group, earned the status of “Century Bombers,” meaning that those aircraft had flown 100 missions while safely returning to base.

In these pages, as time claims more of our 384th veterans, we more often find ourselves saluting those who have left us (see TAPS, below). So, we’re honored and humbled to share the upcoming 100th birthdays of two vets who could be considered among our “century bomber” boys.

The first story is from Dennis Bielskis, a 384th board member and son of 384th board chairman **S. Sgt. Peter Bielskis**, (right, at our 2021 reunion).

“My Dad will be turning 100 on 1 August 2024. His dad, Julius Bielskis, was a veteran of World War I and I’m Peter’s oldest son, a Vietnam combat



veteran. Peter joined the U.S. Army Air Force in 1944 and was a ball turret gunner. He shipped overseas February 1945 and flew 27 combat missions (546th squadron). He returned to Detroit in August 1945 and married my mother, having two sons: myself and my brother Lawrence Bielskis. He went back to Ford Motor, working for the next 51 years. My mother, Dad’s wife of 47 years, Leona Bielskis, passed away 19 January 1994. My dad is my hero. He had no place to hide; at least my service in Vietnam with the 11th Armed Cavalry Regiment gave me somewhere to go and hide — he had nothing.”

Our second “century bomber” boy is **Lt. Edward Field**, navigator with the 546th squadron (**photo above right, signing the 384th commemorative wing panel, “Wingy”**) who will celebrate his 100th on 8 June, 2024 with a party at the Westbeth Community Room in New York City. Edward, in addition to flying 27 combat missions, is a poet who wrote of his combat experiences in moving pieces including “World War II” which became the text for “Minor Accident of War.” an animated short film honored with five wins at U.S. film festivals in 2019.

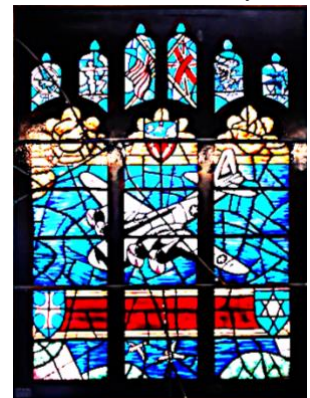
Please join us in wishing Peter and Edward a Happy Birthday!

TAPS: Honoring our veterans who have flown west

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. Col. Edwin Scofield Halseth, died 30 December 1985, age 65. As a 1st Lt. pilot and copilot with the 544th Bombardment Squadron, he flew 3 combat missions. On 25 July 1943 his B-17, “Passes Cancelled,” was shot down by flak after dropping bombs on Hamburg. It was the aircraft’s first mission since delivery from the U.S. All 10 crew safely bailed out and were taken POW. After liberation, he pursued a career as an archaeologist with the Smithsonian but was recalled to active duty in 1949. He flew B-29s during the Korean conflict and for several years thereafter. He served in Vietnam as an intelligence officer. He retired from the Air Force in 1967. He was awarded the Purple Heart, European Theater of Operations Campaign ribbon, POW Medal, Korea Service Medal, UN Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, RVN Campaign Medal and several Air Force Commendation Medals. He lived in Satellite Beach, Florida.

S. Sgt. Albert Williamson, died 15 April 2023, aged 100. Radio operator, 545th squadron, 30 missions (27 April-27 June 1944). Albert is among the 384th vets who signed the commemorative wing panel, “Wingy,” now displayed at the Hill Aerospace Museum in Utah. A 2022 profile of Albert in his local newspaper related that his wife Ruth, who died in 2016, wore a wedding dress made from a parachute. Albert and Ruth later donated that dress to the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum in Pooler, Ga. Until his passing, Albert lived in Williamsburg, Va., with the family of his daughter, Robyn Williamson Johns.



384th Bombardment Group Museum celebrates five years

May 8, 2024, saw the 5th anniversary of the meeting in Grafton Underwood village hall to gauge the interest and possibilities of saving the Operations Block and Norden Bombsight building at Grafton Park Wood on the former 384th Bomb Group site. Five years is a milestone in any project. A lot of the early clearance work was done at a risk of being frustrated by there not



being an opening to get established as a museum, but I believe the trustees and volunteers proved themselves time and again that they were the people to carry it through.

We must pause at five years and allow ourselves a moment of reflection. We OWN the buildings forever. The 100-year lease is activated at very favorable terms and Boughton Estate management is building a close relationship with the museum. The number of volunteers grows weekly and local businesses are very active in support. Recently the project saw a season of tours beginning for the airfield

and accommodation sites, talks/films shared in the Operations Block, and most exciting of all, huge landscaping of the two-acre site began. More than 300 tons of soil and masonry debris were removed on one day alone (**see picture, above**)!

A brand-new visitor centre will be erected on the site of the headquarters hut on the site between mid-May and the end of June 2024. Then comes the task of making it suitable for use. The other buildings will be in construction phase for a while yet.

Recently, the Museum were made custodians of the memorial on Geddington Road. They will be supporting the good work done by Kevin Flecknor over the past years by providing help with routine maintenance when required to keep the now 40-year-old memorial stone and more recently developed area in top condition.

Please follow this exciting project at the [384th Bombardment Group Museum Facebook](#) page. As well, please support our work by donating to our online fundraising GoFundMe; this can be found at <https://gofund.me/d4b70c99> —*Neill Howarth*

Our 384th Bomb Group Heritage Association community thrives on Facebook

The [384th Bomb Group Heritage Association Facebook](#) page has seen enormous growth this year. The page now has about 2,725 followers. The page is private and members must request to join. It was established over 10 years ago by Patty Bielskis and has been ably overseen by Patty and Keith Ellefson.

Recently I was asked to help administer the page due to the incredible growth in requests to join. About 120 association members follow the page. Most followers are friends of the group interested in history or are involved in the 384th Bomb Group Museum in the U.K., in the U.S. and in Europe. They also support other organizations dedicated to the preservation of the history of the 8th Air Force and other bomb groups.

The page is an active meeting place for members and people looking to learn more about the 384th Bomb Group. Photos, stories, and history are shared in active discussions daily. I've personally connected with the daughters of my dad's copilot and top turret gunner. Many have had the same experience. 384th veterans John DeFrancesco, Peter Bielskis and Edward Field follow the page. Recently, we've seen a surge of descendants and relatives seeking information about their veteran. The page is a first point of contact for many people and we direct them to the 384th Bomb Group website for more information and membership. We believe that the January premier of the Masters of The Air series by Spielberg/Hanks Productions on Apple TV dramatically increased interest in the 384th Bomb Group. Believe me, we anticipated that, and we were ready for them!

As part of our welcoming, we include an invitation to join the association. Some of this year's astounding bonus of 80 new members can be directly traced to their introduction to the association on our Facebook page. Some are reading this now and I want to write here that we appreciate your membership!

The page is an opportunity for the association to lead the way for descendants who want to connect and learn with others about their shared connection to the 384th Bomb Group. We can help them. By my last count, our Facebook page has almost 450 descendants and relatives following, including sons, daughters, nieces, nephews, great nieces and nephews, sons and daughters-in-law, stepsons and stepdaughters and many others. I'm especially pleased that we have 49 granddaughters, 49 grandsons and 8 great granddaughters on our Facebook page. All have the potential to help the association by supporting our cause to sustain the preservation of the legacy, sacrifice and history of the servicemen of the 384th Bomb Group.

—*Christopher Wilkinson*

They were brothers in arms — and in the 384th Bomb Group ...

It seems that with the growth of technology, we count everything these days. Unfortunately, we don't seem to have an accurate count of the number of brothers who served in World War II. And while we may have missed a few, we do know the stories of brothers who not only served but served together – in the 384th Bomb Group!

As with so many of the 16 million who served in World War II, we know of many stories of 384th men who had brothers assigned to different bomb groups in the 8th Air Force as well as to other units around the world during the war. In this article, we're sharing the stories of brothers who served side by side in the 384th Bomb Group and supporting units at Grafton Underwood.

The Barnes twins, Edward and Everett, served in the 1140th Military Police Company (AVN). According to Everett Barnes (Edward's twin brother) in 2014, Edward was a driver assigned the 1976th QM Truck Company transporting munitions (bombs) to various airfields, and Everett was assigned to motorcycle duty with the 1140th MP Company. Edward made a delivery to Grafton Underwood in 1944, allowing the brothers a rare opportunity to visit. They decided it would be "fun" to serve together, and with a quick trip to the MP commanding officer, Edward's transfer to the MPs was a done deal! Both men were transferred back to the U.S. after the end of hostilities in Europe.



Twins Robert (left) and Ross Egger served on the same crew and became POWs on the same mission.

The Egger twins, Richard and Ross, were assigned to the 547th squadron in November 1943, completing 14 missions on the same crew as ball turret gunner and tail gunner, respectively. They were promoted on the same orders, went on flak leave on the same orders, were shot down together 22 February 1944, and became prisoners of war at the same POW camp, Stalag Luft IV. They both survived the POW experience and returned to the U.S. in 1945.

The Haley twins, Raymond and Ralph, were assigned to the 547th squadron as copilots on different crews, one day apart. Raymond John Haley was shot down on his second combat mission, 14 January 1944, and held as a POW at Stalag Luft 1. Ralph Bernard Haley was shot down on his 18th combat mission, 24 April 1944 and held as POW at Stalag Luft 3. They both survived and returned to the U.S. in 1945.

The Hanlon brothers, Frank and John. Frank Hanlon was assigned to the 544th squadron in December 1942 as one of the original squadron cadre. John M. Hanlon, assigned to the 544th squadron in February 1945. was previously a member of HQ Company, 2nd Ranger Battalion. He was awarded the Combat Infantryman Badge for service at Pointe Du Hoc on D-Day. Both men were transferred back to the U.S. after the end of hostilities in Europe.

The Jerome brothers, Edwin Anthony and Robert John, were assigned to different crews of the 545th Bomb Squadron in January 1945, five days apart. Edwin was assigned as a crew pilot and completed 35 combat missions. Robert was assigned as radio operator on the Russell E. Carlson crew, completing 26 combat missions. Each man flew his first combat mission on 9 February 1945 and both men finished their combat tours and returned to the U.S.

The Majeski brothers, Charles Paul and Earl Clifford, were assigned to the 547th squadron on the same assignment orders. Charles was a crew pilot and Earl was the radio operator on the same crew. They flew 36 combat missions together and finished their combat tours in December 1944.

The Seibel brothers, James Edward and Joseph Austin. James was assigned in July 1943 as bombardier on the Randolph Jacobs crew. He was killed in action, 30 January 1944, on his 21st combat mission. His gravesite is in Independence, Mo. Joseph was assigned as a flexible gunner on the Gene Goodrick crew in July 1944. He completed 35 combat missions and returned to the U.S. in December 1944.

The Wolf brothers, Paul Leslie and Richard Vance. Paul Leslie Wolf was assigned to Grafton Underwood in January 1943 as part of the original cadre, 6th Service Squadron, later designated as the 443rd Sub-Depot. Richard Vance Wolf was assigned to the 546th squadron as copilot on the Philip Algar Crew (a model crew) in January 1943. Richard finished 25 missions and returned to the U.S. Paul returned to the U.S. after the end of hostilities in Europe.



A wartime newspaper photo of brothers Bob Jerome (left) and Edwin, both part of the 545th squadron.

A big thank you to the family members of these men who made us aware of the relationships!

— Keith Ellefson

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"Keep The Show On The Road..."
We're on the Web at: www.384thbombgroup.com

A 384th membership update — thank you and let's keep growing!

The 384th Bomb Group Membership Committee is pleased to report that our membership drive has been simply astounding. Membership in 2023 was about 80 persons, but this year has risen to 160 members as of April 30, a 100% increase.

We appreciate everyone stepping up, thank you! Our success is largely due to the work of 384th BG President Fred Preller and Secretary Paul Furiga creating a functional data gathering system and a payment system on the 384th Bomb Group website.

As vice president and membership chair, my work has been to be "Head Rah! Rah! Guy" and "Director of Annoyance" but it's been an amazing ride with these super guys the whole way. We can track progress more effectively and more easily now using the website for payment, collecting contact info and relationship information. This helps Treasurer Ray Lustig and Secretary Paul Furiga organize information for membership rolls, bookkeeping and mailing newsletters. These three guys are very busy and dedicated to the Group. They deserve our appreciation; please tell them how much you do!

A first for many years is that our new members slightly outnumber our renewing members as of April 30. Thank you, new members! We want you to be a renewing member next year! Your membership has helped to reinvigorate our future. If you're a new or renewing member, we encourage you to contact us using the information on page 2.

Our new members are largely comprised of descendants including sons, daughters, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, great nieces and nephews and other relatives. Others are new friends from the U.K. and those interested in history. Some knew one of our veterans or are former members that have returned to the fold. We are grateful for all of you, wherever you are and whatever connection you have with the 384th Bomb Group.

Over 80 renewing members are longtime members that are descendants and friends. We appreciate your loyalty and confidence in the goals we have for the future. You have provided the bedrock that gave us a place to build a campaign. (<https://384thbombgroup.com/content/pages/MembershipForm.php>). Thank you!

—Christopher Wilkinson

