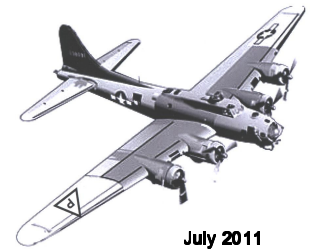




# 384th Bomb Group Newsletter

1306 Adams Way  
Beavercreek, OH 45434



July 2011

## SEATTLE In October

It's time to make your reservations for the 2011 Gathering in Seattle on October 6<sup>th</sup> through the 9<sup>th</sup>. Cost for the gathering is \$105.00 per person.

The Doubletree Guest Suites (a Hilton Honors hotel), has free parking and offers a free shuttle to and from the airport. Hotel registration deadline is **Sept 15<sup>th</sup>** for the group rate of \$119.00 for a single or double. Reservations may be made by calling 206-575-8220. Please state you are with the 384<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group to get the group rate. This rate is good

three days before and three days after the event based on availability. The hotel is located close to a large shopping mall and there are plenty of restaurants to enjoy.

This year the banquet will be on Friday evening. This will allow us to do the cruise on Saturday to Tillicum Village for the salmon dinner. We must pay for the cruise **IN FULL** thirty days (**Sept 6<sup>th</sup>**) prior to the event so all reservations **MUST** be made before that date. **Once we have paid for meals we will not be able to make refunds for any reason. WE HAVE NO CONTROL OVER THIS**

## DATE AS IT IS SET BY THE CRUISE COMPANY.

Confirmation will be sent out Sept 10<sup>th</sup> along with airport shuttle information and driving directions from the airport to the hotel.

In an effort to keep expenses down we are asking those of you who have your lan-yards from Savannah to use them as your name tag in Seattle. Just be sure to indicate when filling out the registration form if you need a name tag or not. Now is the time to start looking for those name tags.

## Air Force Academy Report - F. Alter



### Cadet Joe Bledsoe III, Class 2011, Don & Frank

May saw Carol and me heading out to the US Air Force Academy for another series of graduation events, but the best part was getting Don and Irene to go one more time. The weather was unusually cool for that time of the year, even for Colorado. In fact the weather caused the Graduation parade to be cancelled (lightning and hail!).

A few facts about the events that lead up to the big graduation ceremony. First, you should know that the 384th sponsors and has sponsored the top student of the year for the Biology Dept for decades. The Academy has several opportunities for evening events such as plays, musicals,



etc, the Sunday before the formal events begin on Monday.

Monday starts with the Donors' Coffee (the 384th is a donor) in the Cadet Field House, which is followed by the Awards Parade on Stillman Field (have you ever seen 4,000 people in a parade??). This is where the wings, groups and squadrons receive their awards. Next is the Donors' Luncheon at the Officers Club, followed by the Individual Awards ceremony, back at the Field House. This is where we (Don and I) presented the award to our cadet, Joseph Bledsoe III. This is a well choreographed event and we did our part well.

Tuesday is the Graduation Parade. This is not the graduation ceremony, but another parade with the seniors culled from the ranks near the end. We usually watch this parade from the

Biology Dept, which overlooks the parade field. The fly-overs are magnificent and last year even the gliders landed on the field, but this year the weather gods said no. Following the parade the Biology cadets and their families join us in the Dept for lunch and further departmental awards. This is always my favorite time because you get to meet some really sharp young, up and coming Americans. It was such a treat for Joe Carnes last year that he remarked that being with these young cadets restored his faith in our country to get through these tough times.

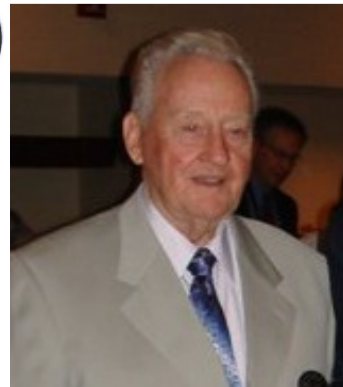
Wednesday is the Graduation Ceremony at Falcon Stadium and the whole place is locked down once you enter. We have never done the ceremony, but for those who enjoy crowds and lengthy ceremonies, this is one not to be missed.

If any of you are interested in representing the 384th at this awesome event please call me.

*"Keep the Show on the Road...."*



## Message from Your New President... Bill O'Leary



Greetings!

The Registration Form for the Seattle Gathering is included with this Newsletter, along with an urgent request from Carol to heed the "NO LATER THAN SEPTEMBER 6" date to complete and submit your form along with the reasonable charge of just \$105 per person. That way, firm arrangements can be made for certain scheduled events in order to avoid monetary penalties for the Group. The one problem that Carol would like to handle is---making arrangements with the hotel for an additional block of rooms in order to accommodate the larger than expected attendance. Let's all get in the spirit and make this a Gathering to be long remembered for fun and fellowship with friends, new and old.

### ATTENTION VETS:

The B-17 wing panel will be in Seattle and available for autographs during the Gathering. This is a very fine project that our NexGen folks are managing with the thought of preserving this bit of history with your signature in a museum someday. For those unable to attend the Gathering and who wish to participate in the signing, please contact Chris Wilkinson and he will be happy to try to arrange availability of the panel for your signature. Currently the panel is in Dayton, OH and Frank Alfter will be contacting those in his area. The panel will next go to Fred Preller in Nevada, before being sent to Seattle in time for the Gathering. Chris' e-mail address is cwilkinson99@hotmail.com. , telephone number 310-396-7187.

Keep the Show on the Road..... **to Seattle!**

Bill

## We Need Your Stories and Photos !!!

You will notice there are a couple of stories Frank wrote for the last newsletter, and not one other story. There were news items and a little about our Branson Gathering and important information about next year's gathering that will be held in Seattle, but no other stories. I know you all have a wealth of experiences that we would like to publish so others can enjoy and learn, so PLEASE send us your stories!!!!

## The General and Mrs. Curtis E. LeMay Foundation

The LeMay Foundation helps widows of all Air Force Retirees, both officers and enlisted, through financial grants of assistance. These widows spend much of their lives coping with the difficulties of military life, and supporting their spouses through years of active duty. We are not interested in why they need help, only that they need it. We provide assistance for as long as it is required. We have several widows who have been receiving monthly checks for over six years. We also help Air Force widows with a specific need they may be facing, in a single disbursement. We do not offer loans. All funds disbursed are considered grants.

Because we all believe that military spouses are entitled to a decent standard of living, entitled to live with dignity, and entitled to be proud of their service. We consider it to be a privilege to be a part of this noble endeavor.

If you are a widow of an Air Force retiree, either of an officer or enlisted, and you would like to apply for help through financial grants of assistance, please fill out a LeMay Foundation application. Grants from the LeMay Foundation can be either a single grant or an ongoing monthly account.

All applications are considered carefully with the intent of helping

those who need it the most. Single grants may be needed for a new pair of eye-glasses, a new roof or some other pressing need that cannot be met under a widow's current income. Don't let a single need dissuade you from submitting an application. The LeMay foundation was designed to continue General and Mrs. Lemay's motto "Taking care of our own". Go Online here for Assistance:

<http://lemay-foundation.org/assistance.html>

**Telephone:** 1-800-554-5510 or (951) 697-2099

LeMay Foundation, 17050 Arnold Drive, Riverside, CA 92518, or [info@lemayfoundation.com](mailto:info@lemayfoundation.com)



## One More Time... Don Thompson

The fall of 2010 and the spring of 2011 hold a lot of memories for me. In July of 2010, Irene broke her femur just below her hip joint, which did not allow us to go to Branson. Disappointment!! This was offset by having a B-17, *Aluminum Overcast*, at the local airport. She is the same B-17 that I flew in at the Oshkosh Air Show twenty-seven years ago. The people I got to know from the Experimental Aircraft Association remembered me and insisted that I should fly in it ONE MORE TIME! When I did, it brought back a lot of memories and I really enjoyed the flight and talking to the crew.

Then a snowy winter was followed by spring and the graduation at the Air Force Academy. Carol talked Irene and me into going by changing some of the things we ordinarily do, so that it was not so hard on an old man. So, I went ONE MORE TIME. And as usual, we enjoyed it very much.

As to the future, we will see what we can do, health permitting. The 384th and its Gatherings have been a real joy and I hope all goes well for everyone getting to Seattle, so I can see all of you ONE MORE TIME!

## Ben's Gone

Some of you may have met Dewayne Bennett, better known as Ben. To me he was the pilot of the only 545th ship to make it back to Grafton Underwood the day my father was shot down. I got to know Ben over the years and visited him many times in Tucson. He was a great person and loved to talk about the B-17, so we were good friends. Unfortunately, Ben passed away and will be sorely missed by all who knew this great man. The Pima Air Museum will especially miss his 7-days-a-week work ethic. Fly High, Ben! .... Frank Altfer



## WW II Experiences of a B-17 Pilot... Allyn C. Lewis

One year after Japan's "dastardly attacks," I enlisted in the US Army Air Corps as an Aviation Cadet. The actual date of my enlistment was 12 Dec 1942 and I was called to active duty during Feb 1943. First, I reported to Lincoln, NE and about 3 weeks later I was assigned to the training detachment at the Univ of Montana for about 5 months. There I had my first flying experience in a J-3 Piper Cub. Along with many others in my age group, I attended various college level classes, and got a lot of basic military training.

From Missoula, I was assigned to the Santa Ana, CA classification center for about 10 weeks. After much testing, I was assigned to pilot training. A primary pilot training school known as Thunderbird Field was located outside Phoenix, AZ. There I learned to fly the PT-17 Stearman.

From Thunderbird I was assigned to War Eagle Field at Lancaster, CA where I learned to fly a low wing BT-13, affectionately called the "Vultee Vibrator," as it vibrated during spins. I learned aerobatics, basic instruments, night flying and humility. Ground schooling, over 10 weeks, included aerodynamics, radio and meteorology.

After successfully completing basic training at War Eagle, I was assigned to Marfa AFB, TX. At both Thunderbird and War Eagle the pilot training instructors were civilians. At Marfa, only military instructors were used. This training was called Advanced. I learned to pilot a twin-engine low wing Beachcraft airplane, with side-by-side pilot and instructor seating. After 10 weeks of intense training, I graduated as pilot and second lieutenant. The date was 23 May 1944, thus I was a successful graduate of Class of 44-F.

After WW I, the US Army Air Corps, which became the US Air Force in 1947, had located pilot training fields in several States, including Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and California. From Marfa I was assigned to the first pilot school at Roswell, NM. This was my first introduction to a B-17 Flying Fortress, the well-known 4-engine bomber that saw combat in the European and Pacific theaters of war. Some of the flying instructors were combat veterans and their experiences were most valuable to those of us who were destined to pilot the B-17 under combat and bad weather conditions. Again, I successfully completed the 10 weeks of my first B-17 pilot training. Like all of my fellow pilots, I was eager to be assigned a crew and then to be assigned to a theater of combat.

In Sep '44, I was assigned to a staging facility at Tampa, FL. Our crew was then designated. However, we did not assemble there. After a so-called "delay in route" for about 10 days, I arrived at a US Army Air Force Base located at Gulfport, MS. There our crew trained together day and night. In our preparation, this training as a combat crew proved to be most valuable.

After about 10 weeks, our crew was assigned to Savannah, GA, for the purpose of flying a brand new B-17 to Europe. We flew "our B-17" to England, via Manchester, NH, Goose Bay, Lab, Keflavik, Iceland, Wales and then on to Stone, England. We stayed in Iceland for about 10 days due to weather conditions. While there, on 30 Jan 1945, I turned twenty-one.

After a few hours at Stone, we were assigned to the 547th Sqdn, 384th Bomb Group at Grafton

Underwood. Within a few days we were flying combat missions. Thus for me it was nearly 2 years of military and pilot training before flying combat duty. Our crew flew on the Eighth Air Force's last bombing missions over Pilzen, Czechoslovakia on 25 April, 1945, with the Skoda Ironworks being our target.

I often thought about the risky weather conditions that we endured during takeoffs and landings at Grafton Underwood. Some takeoffs were under "full instrument" conditions. Also, many landings were made when the cloud ceiling was very low, and visibility was below "minimums." To help us see the runway the ground personnel fired flares near the approach end. It wasn't advisable to go around, as there also were as many as 38 other B-17s in the traffic pattern.

Within the combat timeframe, our crew was a somewhat typical B-17 combat crew, as we were all rather young and ranged in age from 19 years to 26 years old.



## NexGen Activities

In addition to the **384<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group's B-17 Wing Panel Veterans Signing Project** and the **Combat Crew Database Project** described below, NexGen activities continue on many fronts. Principal among these is the international effort to preserve the photograph collection accumulated over the years by the late Quentin Bland.

NexGen past-president Matt Smith obtained the loan of Quentin's photo albums from Quentin's daughter, Sam, and began scanning them late last year – an effort complicated by simultaneously moving his family to new quarters. [Aside to Matt: I didn't know you were in the military service!] This effort was recently completed, and the thumb-drive containing all the photo images was sent

to, and received by, Tony Plowright, on the Isle of Wight. Tony, a longtime friend of the 384<sup>th</sup>, is an expert at preparing photos for display on the 384<sup>th</sup> Gallery website, as well as being able to recognize and document many personnel, aircraft, dates, etc. But – and there is always a but, isn't there – Tony and his wife will also be moving soon! In the meantime, Tony copied all the images and sent the thumb-drive to me – don't worry, we already moved! It may be a bit of time before the photos start showing up on the website, but those who know Tony are confident that he will get the job done – he will *"KEEP THE SHOW ON THE ROAD!"* Plans are also afoot to attend the Eighth Air Force Historical Society (8<sup>th</sup> AFHS) 2011 Reunion in St. Louis, MO. This will take place the week following the 384<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group 2011 Gathering in Seattle, WA. I plan to attend, and hope to meet other 384<sup>th</sup>

NexGen – and Veterans – while there. Information about the 8<sup>th</sup> AFHS 2011 Reunion can be found at [REUNION](#). Also, I have met a gentleman here in the Reno-Sparks area who has established a NexGen organization for the 493<sup>rd</sup> BG, and, hopefully, some of his experience will benefit the 384<sup>th</sup>.

Fred Preller  
President,  
384<sup>th</sup> NexGen



## **B-17 Wing Panel Project** Chris Wilkinson

The NexGen members of the Bomb Group have secured a piece of history and are in the process of getting our veterans signatures on it. This B-17 wing panel was generously donated by Carl Scholl of Aero Traders in Chino, CA and the fabulous art work was donated by Cory O'Bryan. The purpose of the B-17 Wing Panel signing project is to provide a way to honor our 384<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group veterans. We chose a real wing panel from a B-17G Flying Fortress because this was the aircraft the Group supported, flew and fought in. Eventually, the panel will be installed in a museum for future generations to learn of the 384<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group's contributions and pride in helping to win the Allied air war in Europe. We don't know which museum yet, but suggestions have been Hill AFB's 384<sup>th</sup> BG exhibit in Utah, The Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum near Savannah, GA or the USAF Museum in Dayton, OH.

I'm happy to report that this project has seen some very good progress recently, all thanks to some generous folks who have and will be hosting the panel. Hosts are Fred Preller in Nevada, Paul Mantle in Texas and Frank Alfter in Ohio. It is especially important to make the panel available to those unable to attend the reunions. Since the first 10 veterans signed the panel at the Branson 2010 Reunion last September, we have had a total of more than 30 veterans sign the panel, with more being contacted every day. All veterans of the 384<sup>th</sup> BG who served during WWII and/or

occupation forces between 1943 and 1946, whether they were maintenance, support personnel, crewmen or officers, are eligible to sign. Each volunteer host makes it available to any veteran of the 384<sup>th</sup> BG in their area. The host takes care of everything and makes sure it's a positive experience for the veteran and his family. The process starts with the host contacting the veteran and arranging a time for either the veteran to visit the host or the host to drive the panel to the veteran. During the visit, the host takes pictures of the veteran signing the panel and family members and later we mail him the pictures and a signing certificate commemorating the occasion.

The panel is currently in Ohio with Frank Alfter (937-306-2142 or [falfter@att.net](mailto:falfter@att.net)). It will then go to Fred Preller (469-338-1397, or [f3red@preller.us](mailto:f3red@preller.us)) in Nevada. We should all thank each of these gents for their dedicated efforts. The wing panel will also be available for signature at the reunion in Seattle, Washington on October 6-9, 2011. After the reunion Paul Mantle will host the panel in Texas and can be reached at 214-709-5180 cell, 903-634-2223 home, or [ontos0311@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ontos0311@sbcglobal.net).

If you are a 384<sup>th</sup> BG veteran, or are a family member of a veteran or a friend of a veteran who you think might be interested in participating, in **any area of the U.S.**, please do not hesitate to contact Chris Wilkinson. Now's not the time to be shy! We're interested in *servicing* you, and we're ready to go! Also, to increase opportunities for more veterans, we need volunteer hosts in the Southeast, Northeast, Northwest, Mountain States area and the Upper Midwest. Veterans have expressed interest in signing in each of these areas, but we need help reaching them. This is a great opportunity for a NexGen member to contribute to the legacy of the Group. Interested veterans and volunteer hosts, please contact the members at the numbers above, or email Chris Wilkinson at 310-396-7187 or [cwilkinson99@hotmail.com](mailto:cwilkinson99@hotmail.com), and we will make suitable arrangements.



# 384<sup>TH</sup> BOMB GROUP 2011 GATHERING SEATTLE, WA.

October 6<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup>, 2011

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ GUEST: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDITIONAL GUEST'S NAME(S): \_\_\_\_\_

SPECIAL NEEDS: \_\_\_\_\_

IS THIS YOUR FIRST 384<sup>th</sup> BOMB GROUP FUNCTION? YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO: \_\_\_\_\_

COST PER PERSON IS \$105.00. THIS COVERS THE FRIDAY BANQUET & SALMON DINNER CRUISE ON SATURDAY.

\$105.00 PER PERSON X \_\_\_\_\_ PEOPLE ATTENDING: TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I have my name tag and lanyard from Savannah: YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

I need name tags for: \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail your completed registration form and payment in full, payable to the **384<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, Inc.**, to Carol Alfter, 1306 Adams Way, Beavercreek, OH 45434 **TO BE RECEIVED** not later than **SEPTEMBER 6, 2011. WE CANNOT ACCEPT LATE REGISTRATION AS WE MUST PAY FOR THE DINNER CRUISE IN FULL 30 DAYS PRIOR TO THE EVENT. ONCE MEALS HAVE BEEN PAID FOR WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO MAKE ANY REFUNDS FOR ANY REASON.** If you have any questions call Carol at 937-306-2142 or email at [falfter@att.net](mailto:falfter@att.net). Confirmation of registration will be sent on September 10, 2011.

The selected hotel is the Doubletree Guest Suites Seattle, 16500 Southcenter Parkway, Seattle, WA 98188, a Hilton Honors member hotel. You may make your reservations by calling the hotel direct at 1-206-575-8220 or central reservations at 1-800-222-TREE. You must state that you are with the 384<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group to get the group rate of \$119.00 for a single or double room. Triple rate is \$129.00, quad rate is \$139.00. All room rates include breakfast. **ALL RESERVATIONS MUST BE MADE BY THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2011 IN ORDER TO GET THE GROUP RATE.** The hotel accepts American Express, Diner's Club, MasterCard and Visa. Self parking is free. The hotel offers **FREE AIRPORT SHUTTLE** from 6AM to 11PM.

Please list additional guests with their names as you wish them to appear on their name tags.

384th BOMB GROUP, INC.  
 EIGHTH AIR FORCE  
 1306 Adams Way  
 Beavercreek, OH 45434



*"Keep the Show on the Road...."*

We're on the Web at: [www.384thbombgroup.com](http://www.384thbombgroup.com)

## TAPS as of June 2011

Ralph Alloway  
 Vern Arnold  
 Ben Bennett  
 Erhard (Mitt) Mittendorf  
 Clinton White

Coffeeyville, KS  
 Yakima, WA  
 Tucson, AZ  
 Marietta, GA  
 Loxahatchee, FL



384th Bomb Group  
 Grafton Underwood

## 384th Bomb Group Coins Still Available

Contact Carol or Frank Alfter at [falfter@att.net](mailto:falfter@att.net), or call 937-306-2142



Available in your language or you by  
 R.P. McGraphics  
 "Creating Images to the Vision..."

## Additional Words About the Wing Panel Project

Here is a little more information regarding the B-17 Wing Panel Project. Anyone hosting the panel incurs the cost of having the panel shipped to them as the Group does not cover any expense for this project. As an example, it was \$180 to have the panel shipped from Colorado to Ohio. We had it shipped to the AF Museum or it would have been another \$100 to have it delivered to our house. IT'S BIG!!!! You need a truck or a big van. In its wooden box it weighs about 120 pounds. It will not fit inside our Tahoe so we borrowed a truck from a friend to get it to Indiana for signatures. Hosts are more than willing to make sure veterans in their respective areas have the opportunity to sign the panel. Please be aware that if you are contacted by a host, they have already gone to some expense to provide you with the opportunity to sign the panel, and please be as accommodating as you can be. Presently, all hosts have been NexGen members but hosting the panel is not limited to NexGen members. If you are a veteran and are interested in hosting the panel this would be a great time for you to reconnect with 384<sup>th</sup> members in your area. Please contact Chris Wilkinson if you are interested in hosting the panel. I would like to point out that Chris did all of the work to get this program going and he has gone to great personal expense getting the panel to and from Branson and around CA and into AZ as well.

Just thought you might want to know.... Carol Alfter

While having lunch one day with my wife in a Sports Bar a stranger approached me and shook my hand and thanked me and all the other vets for what we did in World War II. I was wearing a baseball cap with "384<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Eighth Air Force" stitched on the crown. He picked up our lunch tab. It pays to advertise your 384<sup>th</sup> affiliation. AI Urival