



384th Bomb Group Newsletter

1306 Adams Way
Beavercreek, OH 45434



November 2011

SEATTLE Was Great!

With 60 people, of whom 15 were our treasured veterans, we had a great time in Seattle. And the weather really cooperated... unbelievable! Yes, it did rain and drizzle a bit, but when we needed it to be clear, it was perfect.

Most of our 384th gang arrived by Thursday evening and the gathering began in earnest. There were plenty of eateries within a short walk from the hotel and the hospitality room was just right for our friendship and camaraderie. Fred brought the B-17 panel up from Reno so we could get more veteran signatures, and he also brought a large pile of books that he was giving to anyone interested. We all had a grand time reacquainting and meeting new friends.

Friday morning saw most of us boarding a bus for the Museum of Flight where there was a recently restored Fortress, where 11 of our 15 heroes were photographed. The B-17's name was *Boeing Bee* and appeared to be a very thorough and beautiful restoration. At the banquet Friday evening we

managed to photograph 14 of the 15 vets with the panel.

The weather was absolutely perfect for our cruise to Tillicum Island for our lunch on Saturday. The temperature was even perfect and the scenery on the way out and back, about a 45 minute sail each way,

was gorgeous. The view of the city on the way back, with the Space Needle as our steering point, was incredible.

After the cruise we were treated to a very spell-binding presentation by an old friend of mine, Horst Rapp and his wife Lisel. Horst lives in a town in Germany on the flight path to Schweinfurt. During the 13 Apr 44 mission to that fateful target, many of the B-17s that were shot down



came to rest near Horst's home. He researched German, as well as American archives and actually interviewed some of the Luftwaffe pilots who shot my father down! We trust everyone thoroughly enjoyed Horst's talk as his research efforts were unique.

Next stop is San Antonio (see Carol's article, back page), so get your planning calendars out now. Let's get at least 100 there! Frank Alfter

8th Air Force Reunion

NEXGEN President Represents 384th at 8th AFHS Reunion in St Louis by Fred Preller

I attended the 2011 Annual Reunion of the 8th Air Force Historical Society, held this October in St. Louis, Missouri. Of the 270 (or so) attendees, fully 70 of them were 8th AF Veterans - see photo of most of them! Alas, none of our 384th Veterans attended. In fact, I was the sole representative of the Group in attendance, but of course good fellowship ruled, and I was adopted by any and all.

Traveling to St. Louis was an adventure (!) made much more enjoyable by connecting with 401st Bomb Group Veteran Frank Perez (ball turret gun-

ner) and his niece Josie who were headed to the reunion! Suffice it to say it pays to wear your 8th AF pins, patches, and hat when traveling.

In addition to all the events and activities, I still found time to connect with Veterans and NexGens from all the Groups, as well as the 8AFHS leadership and especially the researchers and webmasters who are working behind the scenes to preserve the legacy of the 8th Air Force. I was invited to take part in all activities, from board meetings to workshops, and got a good feel for what challenges the organization faces, and what they are doing to address the issues, such as declining membership. I also found the hospitality rooms to be a source of ... great camaraderie, as

well as a fertile ground for sharing information, as well as "stories"...

The next 8AFHS Reunion is scheduled for 3-7 October 2012, in San Antonio, Texas (why does that sound familiar?). The Crowne Plaza Riverwalk will be Reunion HQ.



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



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

GREETINGS!



We had a total of 60 attendees at our Seattle Gathering including 15 384th Veterans. I'm certain that most, if not all, would award this Gathering an "A+" rating, when considering the hotel and its outstanding accommodations, the planned events along with the required transportation, and the Hospitality Suite with its tables of memorabilia, 384th and otherwise, and of course, the B-17 wing panel which was on display and available for the Vets to sign under their respective squadron insignia. Friday, 7 Oct, we boarded a bus for a visit to the Museum of Flight where a tour of the Museum was provided by a docent and former ball turret gunner with the 351st Bomb Gp. Our three hour stay there literally flew by. That evening we enjoyed a cocktail hour followed by a banquet which was very nicely prepared by the hotel. A general membership meeting was held after dinner which included stories from several of the Vets concerning their life and times while at Station 106—very interesting. Saturday morning we boarded a bus at the hotel at 10:30 for a trip to Pier 55 to board a boat for an approximately 10-mile cruise to Blake Island for a Tillicum Salmon luncheon. The weather was San Diego-like (had to put that in), in that the sky was dark blue and cloudless, with temperatures at 70 degrees. The salmon was baked in the traditional manner over an Alder wood fire and was delicious. The luncheon was followed by a stage presentation of actors describing various ritualistic dances and customs practiced by the Tillicum Indians. The evening was free to do as we pleased. Gathering in the Hospitality Room very obviously appealed to most. It didn't take long for a group of Vets to get together for an exchange of stories about the days at Grafton, and suddenly, with little imagination, you found yourself in the barracks with comrades all around you.

Vets, I strongly urge all of you who can physically do so to attend the next gathering, which is planned for San Antonio, Texas. You will enjoy the camaraderie and the relaxed atmosphere. To those members who are unable to join us, we want you to know that you will be with us in spirit.

And now— Frank, Carol, Fred, Chris, Tom & Linda Rowley, thank you all so very much for your hard work and dedication without which the Seattle Gathering would not have been the success that it was. Carol, you deserve two pats on the back for your year-long work and dedication to the 384th Bomb Gp.

KEEP THE SHOW ON THE ROAD..... Bill

AWOL... William M. Klien

Dad enlisted on 16 Aug 40. After the War broke out he was an airplane mechanic (TSgt). His unit was designated to go to England as a ground unit, but my dad wanted to fight, not repair airplanes. He went AWOL, spending a few days in New York City to make sure his unit had shipped out. He then returned to the base and turned himself in. After citing his reasons for leaving, he received no disciplinary action, and was eventually sent to gunnery school. After training, he received his assignment, being attached to the 547th Bomb Sqdn, 384th Bomb Gp (H).

He flew 35 combat missions. Thirty-three were flown on the B-17 *Sleepy Lagoon* and two on the *Nevada Avenger*. He was the top turret gunner/flight engineer on all of his missions.

His crew was supposed to stop at 25 missions, but because there was a shortage of crews, they had to complete 10 additional missions. His battle campaigns include, Air Offensive—Europe, Normandy, Northern France and the Rhineland. He received the Air Medal with 4 Oak Leaf Clusters, good Conduct Medal, American Defense Service Medal, and the European-African-Middle Eastern Service Medal. by William Klien, Jr

Mission to Bremen by Eugene Spearman

By March 30, 1945, I had already flown 23 missions. The sergeant woke me and said, "Spearman, briefing at 0400. You are flying with the Ed Nicolai crew." I got dressed and got on my little English bike and rode down to the mess hall. We called it Ptomaine Tavern. I wondered how many other airmen had ridden this same little bike. You acquired them by going down to the flightline and getting one that some previous crewman left because they did not return from a mission. After breakfast we went to briefing where the flight commander would tell us the target for the day. If it was a rough target you would hear some "Awes and groans." Today it was the submarine base at Bremen. Next, the weather officer would tell us about the weather over the target as well as at the base when we returned. Then a navigation officer would talk about the rout in and out of Germany. Then with a "Good luck Boys—hit the target" send-off, we would file out, pick up our equipment, and ride the trucks out to the dispersed planes. Dressed in the heavy flight suits, I always thought everyone looked like stuffed toad frogs.

We then taxied out to the end of the runway and

awaited our signal to take off. Standing there during most of my missions even in rain or snow stood a man, Bro Billy, holding a Bible. His being there was such a blessing for me. Just knowing someone was praying for me made me feel better.

And then we roared down the runway and into the air. The 384th history log showed the mission to Bremen was mission #300 flown by the 384th BG. There were 39 aircraft from Grafton Underwood and the total bomb load of 500lb bombs was 105 tons. The elevation at target was 26,000 feet and bombing was by PF. Flak was moderate and accurate. We were in the left hand wing position and made a left hand turn off the target and were struck by flak shortly after releasing our bombs. The pilot was slightly injured when cockpit plexiglass and copilot controls were hit. The waist gunner was hit by flak in the upper chest but saved by his flak suit. The tail gunner was KIA when flak hit the tail. Two engines were knocked out and we left formation, hit the deck and headed home with some 200 holes in her. The plane's name was *Snuffy*, ol' 42-32106, and I thought she would be scrapped, but she flew again after we departed with 34 missions to our credit.



B-17 Wing Panel Project Frank Alfter

The Panel Project is well under way, as one could tell from the great centerpiece the Panel made in the hospitality room during our gathering in Seattle.

Our thanks go to Chris Wilkinson for his tireless efforts to acquire this significant piece of a B-17, especially since he was able to get it donated free from Carl Scholl of Aero Traders in Chino, CA. The fabulous, detailed artwork which includes the four Squadron emblems, as well as the 8th Air Force, 384th, and triangle P and detail information, was donated by Cory O'Bryan.

Originally when Chris came up with the idea, we were looking for a three-by-three crew entry hatch... something that would have been easy to

handle. When that proved to be out of our reach, Chris was offered the wing panel, which is three-by-eight, and we now think it was really the best with all the room for signatures. Since the first ten veterans signed the panel at the Branson 2010 gathering, we have had a total of more than fifty signatures. I really don't know how we would have had room for the signatures we have now, let alone the many, many more we hope to get in the coming months and years.

The whole purpose of this project is to provide a way to honor our 384th BG veterans and leave a bit of legacy for those who follow. We intend to offer the panel to a museum at some point in the future so that future generations can see and appreciate the sacrifices of our treasured heroes.

All veterans of the 384th BG who served during WW II and/or occupation forces between 1943 and 1946, whether maintenance, support personnel, crewmen are eligible to sign. If you are a 384th BG veteran, or a family member or a friend of a veteran who you think might be interested in participating in this unique project, please do not hesitate to contact Chris Wilkinson at 310-396-7187, or by email at cwilkinson99@hotmail.com.

We are in need of volunteers to host the panel in the Northeast & Southeast States, as well as Texas. This is a great opportunity for a NexGen member to contribute to the Group, so if you, or anyone you know are interested in hosting this panel in your part of the country, please call Chris to make the necessary arrangements. Let's ***KEEP THIS SHOW ON THE ROAD!***



We Need Your Stories and Photos !!!

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!!!! We are getting some traction with stories and we hope to print as many as we can. This edition will have more photos than stories, however to show everyone what a great time we all had in Seattle.



384th BOMB GROUP, INC.
 EIGHTH AIR FORCE
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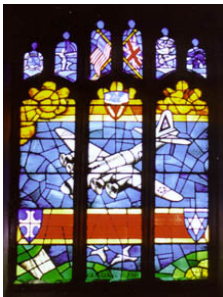
"Keep the Show on the Road...."

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

TAPS as of Oct 2011

Peggy Arnold
 Eugenia Guilmet
 Tim O'Sullivan
 Bruce Sundlun
 Clinton White

Yakima, WA
 Edmonds, WA
 Los Angeles, CA
 Providence, RI
 Loxahatchee, FL



384th Bomb Group
 Grafton Underwood



Aerial view of Grafton Underwood looking North-east; village to the right; monument as indicated



San Antonio or Bust!! Carol Alfter

As previously mentioned the board has selected San Antonio, TX for the gathering site for 2012. We considered folding into the 8th AFHS reunion but due to the high cost of attending their reunion we will be holding our own gathering. Our dates will not conflict with their dates so feel free to attend both if you are interested. Fred will be in San Antonio in Jan to scout out a hotel for the 2nd or 3rd week in Oct so plan on attending!!

Charles Fleenor has some 8th AF pins he is willing to distribute on a first come first serve basis. If you are interested in a pin contact him at 530-432-4520 or write to him at 18986 Chickadee Court, Penn Valley, CA 95946.

Dues are still only \$25.00 a year. Send a check payable to the 384th Bomb Group to Carol Alfter, 1306 Adams Way, Beavercreek, Ohio 45434. We are collecting now for 2012. If you did not pay dues in 2011 this is your last newsletter.

