



384th Bomb Group Newsletter

1306 Adams Way
Beavercreek, OH 45434



February 2012

San Antonio on the River Walk - 18-21 October 2012

San Antonio here we come! We have selected the Hyatt Regency on the River Walk in San Antonio as our hotel for the next 384th BG Reunion, October 18th through the 21st. We are planning on a meet and greet reception early Thursday evening with our banquet on Saturday and these are covered with the \$108.00 per person registration fee. (We have a food and beverage minimum amount we must hit in order to get our hospitality suite and banquet room at no charge so we will not be able to break down the registration fee by event.) You will have all day Friday to see San Antonio on your own, or with friends, or just sit in the hospitality suite and talk. Getting around town is easy and



there are plenty of opportunities to sight see with the local tourist groups. All

you have to do is decide what you want to do and then go buy a ticket. You will have the water taxi, the trolley, or local tour bus companies to choose from. Our hotel is close to the Alamo and The River Walk which makes getting around even easier. Unfortunately the hotel does not offer an airport shuttle. San Antonio Express shuttle runs \$18 one way or \$32 for a round trip with a taxi coming in at about \$25 one way for up to 4 people. We have a room rate of \$119 for a single or double, \$144 for a triple and \$169 for a quad with the room rate good 2 days prior and 2 days after the event based on availability. Room will include complimentary internet, 10% discount on in house food and beverage, \$5 daily breakfast voucher to Einstein's Bagels (up to 2 vouchers per room per night), and discounted daily self parking at \$10 per vehicle with in and out privileges.

We have a block of 35 rooms on hold so make your reservations early to make sure you don't miss out. We had to keep this number small to

protect the group financially. If we need more than 35 we can extend the block based on hotel availability so the earlier we find out we need more rooms the better off we are. October seems to be a very popular tourist month in San Antonio so I don't expect the hotel to have availability should you wait till the last minute to make a reservation and our block of rooms is gone.



Reservation deadline for the hotel is September 27, 2012 so that is the date we will use for our registration deadline as well. Please work with me on this and don't wait till the last minute to register.

Building a Zero-Time Flying Fortress - Frank Alter

When was the last time you saw a brand-spanking new B-17, one with zero hours on her? You might just be interested to know that there is one being built, pretty much from scratch, in a little town just north-north-west of Springfield, Ohio.

The *Champaign Lady*, named after the county in which she is being birthed, is the definition of labor of love. About four years ago, Carol and I went to Urbana to see this marvel and she was a very long way from where she is now in construction. There was very little sheet metal on the forward fuselage and the cockpit window frames were just cleco'd together.

That was sometime in 2008, and we took Quentin up there to see it when he was here for the Reunion that year. Quentin was duly impressed and we spent hours talking with the project manager about how this was being done. To learn that this was being built by volunteers and would eventually be a flying example of the greatest bomber there ever was got our attention.

How did this build start? In July 05, the B-17 *Liberty Belle* was at Grimes Airport, Urbana and raised \$18,000 with rides in the *Belle*. One of those present was Tom Reilly of Tom Reilly Vintage Aircraft, Inc, who had led the restoration of



the *Belle*. He was impressed with the museum at Grimes and called Carol Hall, asst mgr of the airport, to say he had another B-17 project waiting to start. He needed a financier and found it in Jerry Shiffer, a local business leader, private pilot, and generous supporter of community causes. (continued on page 3)

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



Message from Your President... Bill O'Leary



GREETINGS!

I sincerely hope that as the New Year progresses along your wish for good health and happiness throughout the year has not and will not disappoint you.

Gathering in San Antonio, Texas—October 18-21, 2012:

Our Secretary/Treasurer, Carol Alfter, has been a very busy lady of late with not only the regular day-to-day administrative tasks, but also the task of contacting hotels with requests to submit proposals to include room rates, availability of meeting rooms, access to transportation, dinner menu, etc. Of the hotels that responded, the Hyatt Regency River Walk met all requirements. The negotiated room rate of \$119 per night along with a registration fee of \$108 are considered to be quite reasonable for a quality hotel right on the River Walk. It is interesting to note that Carol was able to handle all this via e-mail as opposed to a face-to-face meeting with hotel management which is generally the case. Her prior experience in such matters, coupled with a firm determination to obtain fair and reasonable pricing, will result in good value for all attendees. Thanks, Carol for a job very well done.



Veterans:

Some time ago I made the statement that, in my opinion, it would appear that the 384th BG has made the turn onto final approach when considering the ever dwindling number of veterans who are either no longer with us or who are not capable of the travel required to attend our gatherings. So we should, therefore, think about officially transferring the operation to the "Next Generation". We are very fortunate to have such a group of highly motivated and dedicated NexGen people currently in place who have demonstrated their desire to keep the heritage of the 384th BG on-going for years to come. I don't look at this, in effect, as locking the doors, boarding up the windows and walking away from the old structure as some 8th AF groups have done, but rather as resurfacing the old Road that the Show has been on for so many years, thus providing our NexGen with the means to maintain our many historical monuments and artifacts, and to also provide for a smooth ride into the future. Please think about the suggestion, and let's talk about it at the gathering.

NOTE: The fact that we will be "Gathering" in the shadow of the Alamo has no relevance to the above suggestion.

Website Report... Fred Preller

The website remains under active development on a number of fronts. The main effort is directed at completing the Combat Crew Database Project. John Edwards is the Project Manager, assisted by Keith Ellefson, Phil Hettel, and me. With well over 70% of the missions already entered, completion is no longer a distant goal.

A side benefit of this project is the quality improvement we are able to achieve in the Personnel database. Originally created from several sources, mis-spelled names and duplications were inevitable. Having to verify the identity of every crewmember entered for a mission has been instrumental in exposing these errors, and providing an opportunity to correct them. We

have found so many duplicates, we are tempted to form another Heavy Bombardment Squadron!

Also, as more crewmember data becomes available, additional website features are being developed. Most notably, the presentation of data on the "person" page has been revised and enhanced, with inclusion of POW data, for instance. A background task of producing the "Instant Memory Book" is under way. This feature, to be made available on the "person" page, will generate a comprehensive report of all individual personnel information, as well as a sortie report for every mission the individual flew, a summary of the crewmembers he flew with and the aircraft he flew in – and will (fingers crossed here) allow you to save the entire report as a PDF, thus the "Instant Memory Book" title.

TIP: Although all of the information (except news-

letters, see below) is freely available to all site visitors, you will need to "enable pop-up windows" in your browser for 384thbombgroup.com. In Internet Explorer, this is found in Internet Options under the Privacy settings. You may also find that enabling "tabbed browsing" (General settings) will make use of the website somewhat more sensible – and there are some customized tab settings that you may want to experiment with.

Newsletters are available on-line, by visiting the 384th website at 384thBombGroup.com, and clicking on the NEWSLETTER button. You will need to enter a username and password to gain access. All dues paying members have access. If you have paid, and need access, please contact Carol or Fred.

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. Let's share the legacy in stories that will keep forever. This issue includes the interesting story about how Fred Preller acquired the photos he had in Seattle; also a short story about building a zero-time B-17 Flying Fortress in Ohio.

Pop Dolan Photos Mysteriously Appear - Gail P. Bauer

Dear Fred,

Enclosed is the original envelope and photos which Major Dolan had sent to his wife during World War II. You will note that the postmark is possibly November 1, 1943. How they came to be in our home is quite the mystery. I can only assume that the prior owner was a member of the 384th Bomb Group. Home renovations certainly lead to other things besides chaos.

As mentioned, I want to return these to their rightful owners and place in history. My Mother lived in the greater London area during World War II, and worked for the Post Office as a telephonist. She lost many friends in the blitz, and remarked on more than one occasion that without the American involvement "England would be marching to a different tune." After the end of the War, my Father took us to Australia, where I lived till 1968 when I left to travel abroad. While living in London I took a position with the USAF at their hospital in Wiesbaden. So, as you can see I have a real "soft spot" for the USAF, and am honored to live in the United States after having met and married my husband, who was stationed with the US Army just outside Mainz. In another "twist", I am a Social Worker, and in the process of finalizing a Master's essay for a degree in Gerontology (study of aging), which is about civilians in England during the Second World War.

The returning of these photos could not come at a better time, as I note your reunion is to be held in October. To all those men of the 384th Bomb Group living and deceased, please accept my deepest gratitude, thanks and admiration for their service, which, in many cases resulted in the ultimate sacrifice. You will be in my heart, thoughts and prayers come October, when you gather together once again. Gail P. Bauer

Almost Home Prints Available

We have received ten copies of an art print of Richard Boyd's 1945 original painting titled *Almost Home*. They come from Quentin Bland's collection, via Matt Smith. The prints depict a B-17G with an escort of two P-51s. The name "Fightin' Hebe" has been added to the B-17G, along with the Triangle-P tail marking. The prints were apparently commissioned by Nathan "Mike" Mazer, namesake of the "Fightin' Hebe". They are serially numbered, and are signed by Mazer. Each print measures 18-1/4 width x 17-3/8 height overall.

We are offering nine of these prints (one of the ten suffered some "flak damage" during shipment) on a first-come, first-served basis for a donation of \$30 postpaid. Please send payment - payable to 384th Bomb Group - to Carol Alfter, Treasurer, 384th Bomb Group Inc., 1306 Adams Way, Beavercreek, OH 45434. Be sure to include the shipping address(es).

Fred Preller



(cont'd from page 1)

In Nov 05, as the first parts began to arrive, sad news came that Jerry Shiffer had been killed flying his plane which crashed near Belgrade, MT.

Seeing his dream through, "We'll see it to the finish," said Shiffer's widow Leah. "When Jerry got excited about something, he couldn't wait." Neither can his children, David, Andrea and Eric. David and Eric, in fact, want to learn to fly the B-17, and they want to carry out their father's wish to create a rumbling, thundering, four-engine memorial to World War II veterans.

You may remember Horst Rapp from the Seattle Gathering last year. He and Lisel stayed at our home and we all went to Grimes to see this miracle. The construction is slow, tedious, but methodical, and supervised by FAA certified airfram-



ers. And now Emily, our daughter, got the bug and she and I volunteer building this beauty. We are actually hand tooling some of the millions of parts that will eventually come together as the airplane we all know and love. This week we made channel brackets that secure the wing ribs to the inner wing skin. A friend is helping make the vertical fin support structure (part of the waist section). We have sheet metal workers, carpenters,

mathematicians to work out the curves when the drawings don't tell us enough. We probably have the best set of drawings that cover just about every piece used in construction, and it's all digitized.

Perhaps we need another Dayton Gathering to share this miracle!!! Frank Alfter



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

The Greatest Generations Foundation

The Greatest Generations Foundation is conducting six programs to East England and Normandy between May and September for WWII veterans (only) to return to their bomb group base. These nine-day programs will start in East England visiting four bases – including the 384th's and 3 others over 3 days. The program will continue over to Normandy via London, visiting the Imperial War Museum, Winston Churchill Cabinet Rooms, Trafalgar Square, Omaha and Utah Beaches and other important sites around Northern France, ending in Paris.

We are seeking as many able WWII veterans from the 384th who are willing to return with the Foundation to Grafton Underwood. Please know that the Foundation underwrites all expenses for the veterans to return. Programs to England and France run from 9/10 days, including a day each way for traveling. The programs are set to depart the USA on May 5, May 30, July 7 and 28, August, 18 and September 8. There will be 20 War Veterans and 20 Cadets/Students in each group.

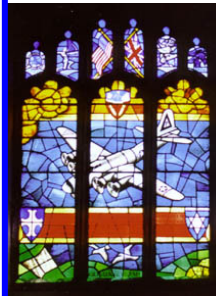
Please know this program is for veterans only who are under the escort of Air Force Academy cadets through our Connecting Generations program. This program allows military cadets from all backgrounds to explore the values and beliefs—the fundamental ideals—that Americans and their Allies embraced and fought for during wartime. These programs are designed to educate both young and old about the extraordinary history of sacrifice, and the noble accomplishments of those who served, while remembering the heroes who gave the full measure of devotion for their nation.

NEXGEN: Take an active role in 384th NexGen planning for the future. Contact Fred Preller at f3red@preller.us or call 469-338-1397 to participate.

TAPS as of Feb 2012

Richard A. Benoit
Howard J. Eklund
Ralph Charles Wood

Florence, MA
Sequim, WA
Sonora, CA



384th Bomb Group
Grafton Underwood



If you know any veteran who served with the 8th Air Force during WWII who would be interested in returning, please have them contact Timothy Davis at timothy_davis@tgff.org or call 303-331-1944

About The Greatest Generations Foundation (Web: www.tgff.org)
The Greatest Generations Foundation is an IRS 501(C)(3) organization dedicated to honoring the sacrifices of veterans and ensuring that their legacies are recorded and retold in perpetuity to future generations. In order to preserve the legacies established by these heroes, TGGF provides opportunities for veterans to return to their former fields of battle in the company of their brothers in arms and younger generations to educate them about the sacrifices made long ago.