

384th BOMB GROUP**NEWSLETTER**1306 Adams Way
Beavercreek, OH 45434**Reigate Hill Memorial** - provided by Matt Smith

On 19 March 1945, Lt Robert Griffin was cruising back to base just under an ever lowering overcast cloud base, routing carefully around London and picking his way back to base across the English countryside. Suddenly ahead, out of the gloom, appeared a line of hills, the crest above him and likely the tops just touching, if not obscured by the low clouds. No doubt Lt Griffin opened the throttles wide and made a desperate attempt to clear the rise known locally as Reigate Hill, but to no avail. The bomber struck the hillside agonizingly close to the top and all nine crew aboard were killed instantly. And thus another nine names were added to the 384th Bomb Group roll of honor.

Seventy years later a crowd gathered on that same hilltop at the spot the bomber came to rest, to remember those nine men. As we arrived at the site a Royal Air Force Chinook helicopter flew low overhead following the hill line in salute, and as we made our way to the clearing the bomber made on impact, the view through the remaining gaps in the trees was stunning. Unlike that day seventy years ago, the weather was "CAVOK," (ceiling and visibility OK). Horizontal visibility must have been in excess of 10 kilometers and the cloud base sat at around 3,000 to 3,500 feet.

The event was expertly organized by the National Trust, which now own the land where the aircraft crashed and was well supported by the people of Reigate. The local aviation museum, the Wings Museum, brought along some fragments of the aircraft that have been recovered over the years and put on display in the hotel that hosted us before and after our trip to the crash site. They also displayed an original painting of the aircraft, 43-39035.

The memorial itself is made of two full size wingtips carved from wood. They are positioned within the clearing to match the exact wingspan of a B-17 and leave the rest of the aircraft missing, to be filled with thoughts and memories...

**Message from Your President-****Peter Bielskis, 546th Sq. 1944-45**

Fellow 384thers, it's **Tucson or Bust!** We are now set for our reunion in Tucson in sunny Arizona, and have sent out the registration form in the last newsletter; repeated in this issue. You may also go to the 384th website at 384thbombgroup.com for the form as well. On the first page of the web-site, on the right side, you will see

"Notices" and the next block has "Reunions." In the "Reunions" block, you can click on "Information Pack" and that will give you all the info for registering, hotel reservations, and brief itineraries.

We are so anxious to see all of you in Tucson. It promises to be a really good get-together and you will see some old, dear friends who perhaps haven't been to recent reunions. We

had a very nice reunion in Dayton last October with just over 100 attending, including 17 veterans. So let's do it again and make Tucson a memorable one. We will have lots to do and see, and spend some time with old friends.

Thanks, *Peter.**"Keep the Show on the Road..."*

Spotlight on Sheldon Vernon, Pilot, 544th Sqdn

by Col Vernon himself

This is a brief reminiscence of some of my days at Grafton Underwood. I flew thirty missions starting with the first on 16 Nov 1943, over Knaben, Norway and ending with a milk run over a no ball target on 1 May 1944. All of them were, and still are, memorable in that although we suffered flak hits on all, no one was wounded and damage to the aircraft was minimal. Having said that, there were two that are still vivid in my mind to this day. The first daylight mission over Berlin on March 6, 1944 was undoubtedly the most memorable because of the intensity of the flak and the fighter attacks. My squadron, the 544th, was the only squadron from the 384th Bomb Group to participate. I recall that in the mission briefing, they said that we would be in the envelope of fire of at least 1500 flak guns during our time over the city and I think that was a conservative estimate. I recall that the flak bursts were heavy enough that, as the saying goes, you could walk on them. One other mission sticks in my mind, although not nearly as ominously as the Berlin foray. I don't recall what the target was for that day, but shortly after we crossed the channel into France, we lost a supercharger. As a result, we could no longer stay in formation and so aborted the mission. Made it safely back to Merry Olde England, but shortly after we flew over land, one of our waist gunners called out that we had two Beau Fighters on our wing. At that point, it dawned on us that we had forgotten to turn the IFF back on. Once that was accomplished the RAF broke off and we returned to dear old Grafton Underwood.

**French National Order of the Legion of Honor Presented to Two 384th Veterans** - Linda Walker

History of the National Order of the Legion of Honor: During the French Revolution all the orders of the kingdom were abolished. It was the wish of Napoleon to create a reward to

commend civilians and soldiers regardless of their stature in life. In 1802, the Legion of Honor was established as the first modern order of merit and was open to all individuals of all ranks and professions. The order is France's highest award and is conferred upon men and women, either French citizens or foreign nationals, for outstanding achievements in military

or civilian life.

The Presentation Ceremony took place at the San Diego Air and Space Museum, San Diego, California, on April 8th, 2015 at 11:00AM. There were a total of 14 WWII veterans from the San Diego area honored, including two representing the 384th Bomb Group: Jay Walker and Bill O'Leary.

Robert Johnson, Lt Col, USAF (Ret) was the Master of Ceremonies and introduced the events in the following order: Presentation of Colors, Pledge of Allegiance, the French National Anthem, introduction of special guests, presentation of awards, closing and acknowledgements, photographs followed by reception.

Presentation of awards was conducted by The Honorable Fabrice Maiolino Deputy Consul General of



France, Los Angeles.

The closing remarks of gratitude were originally scheduled to be presented by Jay Walker. However, a problem resulting in damage to a vocal cord left him with very limited voice volume. Bill O'Leary was, therefore, selected to present the remarks in his stead.

More From Bill on Istres.... I was with Cy Courtney when he met with his dad in Paris. His father was there on business for International Harvester. Cy was a pre-med student prior to his entry into the service and I remember his overwhelming joy upon his return from London with an old copy of *Grey's Anatomy*, that he found in an antique book store, the bible of any medical student. I remember taking many rides on a German motorcycle on the runway at Istres, running full throttle at about a 20 degree tilt to compensate for cross-wind. Sadly, the fun came to a sudden end when the person doing the refueling neglected to add the required amount of oil to the gas for piston lubrication. This may be the motorcycle that Linda references in an earlier story about life at Istres, France after the war.

Just a Note from Frank:

There are some folks who feel that since their veteran is no longer with us, they should stop coming to these reunions. Please know there are several of us NexGeners whose veterans are long gone and we still go, mostly because we want to Keep the Show on the Road, but also because we have met so many others like us and the 384th has proven to be a bond for all of us. We want to see all of you and will continue to be your connection with your veteran's life and accomplishments. We must **Keep the Show on the Road!**



384TH BOMB GROUP, INC. REUNION
OCTOBER 29 – NOVEMBER 1, 2015
DOUBLETREE HOTEL TUCSON – REID PARK
TUCSON, ARIZONA

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 29**

2:00pm – 6:00pm

6:00pm – 7:30pm

Reunion Registration Open
 Welcome Reception in Hospitality Room
 Hospitality Room Open – *Hours to be posted during the reunion.*

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30

11:30am – 3:30pm

Evening

PIMA AIR MUSEUM TOUR (description follows)
 Dinner on Own
 Hospitality Room Open – *Hours to be posted during the reunion.*

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 31

9:00am – 11:00am

11:00am – 3:00pm

6:30pm – 7:00pm

7:00pm – 11:00pm

Board Meeting
 SABINO CANYON TOUR (description follows)
 Cash Bar Reception
 Banquet Dinner

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1

Farewells and Departures

This is the schedule as of March.....times may change as we get closer to the reunion dates.

TOUR DESCRIPTIONS**PIMA AIR MUSEUM TOUR – FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30**

We will arrive and enjoy a group lunch before exploring the museum. View models, uniforms, insignia, WWII mock-up airmen's quarters, a B-29 "Superfortress," Douglas "Globemaster," F-84 "Shooting Star," F-100 "Super Sabre," SR-71, and a pristinely restored B-17. There are over 250 planes on display including JFK's Air Force One. Trace America's heritage of flight from a full-scale replica of the Wright brothers' plane to the X-15 rocket that first took men to the edge of space. Following the Museum visit, enjoy the aircraft static display before returning to the hotel.

11:30am board bus, 3:30pm back to hotel
 Includes bus, guide, lunch, and admission.

SABINO CANYON TOUR – SATURDAY, OCTOBER 31

Enjoy lunch at Sweet Tomatoes, which features an Italian Buffet. After lunch, we will head to the beautiful Sabino Canyon, a natural desert oasis located in Tucson's Coronado National Forest and is home to spectacular desert landscapes and abundant wildlife. Upon arrival at Sabino Canyon, enjoy a tram ride through the foothills of the Santa Catalina Mountains to see the beautiful sights up close before heading back to the hotel.

11:00am board bus, 3:00pm back to hotel
 Includes bus, escort, buffet lunch, and tram ride.

*Please plan to be at the bus boarding area (in front of the hotel) at least five minutes prior to the scheduled time.
 Driver and Staff gratuities are not included in the tour prices.*

*"Like" Armed Forces Reunions, Inc. on Facebook at
www.facebook.com/ArmedForcesReunions*

CANCELLATION AND REFUND POLICY FOR ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC.

For attendees canceling reunion activities prior to the cut-off date, Armed Forces Reunions, Inc. (AFR) shall process a full refund less the non-refundable AFR registration fee (\$10 per person). Attendees canceling reunion activities after the cut-off date will be refunded to the fullest extent that AFR's vendor commitments and guarantees will allow, less the non-refundable AFR registration fee. **Cancellations will only be taken Monday through Friday from 9:00am until 5:00pm Eastern Standard Time, excluding holidays.** Please call (757) 625-6401 to cancel reunion activities and obtain a cancellation code. Refunds processed 4-6 weeks after reunion. Canceling your hotel reservation does not cancel your reunion activities.

DOUBLETREE BY HILTON TUCSON - REID PARK - TUCSON, ARIZONA

520-881-4200 or 1-800-445-8667

445 S. Alvernon Way, Tucson, AZ 85711-4198

Reservation Information: Call the number above and reference the 384th Bomb Group Reunion, or visit www.afr-reg.com/ 384BG2015 and click on hotel reservation link at top of the page to make reservations and get the group rate. **Rate:** \$95 + tax; rate includes the hot All American Breakfast buffet. Cut off Date is 28 Sep 2015. **Cancellation Policy:** All reservations have a 48 hour cancellation policy, or attendee will be charged one night's room rate plus tax. Hotel has free shuttle bus to and from airport.

384TH BOMB GROUP REUNION ACTIVITY REGISTRATION FORM

June 2015

Listed below are all registration, tour, and meal costs for the reunion. Please enter how many people will be participating in each event and total the amount. Send that amount payable to ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC. in the form of check or money order. Your cancelled check will serve as your confirmation. Returned checks will be charged a \$20 fee. You may also register online and pay by credit card at www.afr-reg.com/384BG2015 (3% will be added to total). All registration forms and payments must be received by mail on or before September 28, 2015. After that date, reservations will be accepted on a space available basis. We suggest you make a copy of this form before mailing. Please do not staple or tape your payment to this form.

Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.
322 Madison Mews
Norfolk, VA 23510
ATTN: 384th BOMB GROUP

OFFICE USE ONLY

Check # _____ Date Received _____
 Inputted _____ Nametag Completed _____

CUT-OFF DATE IS 9/28/15
REGISTRATION PACKAGE

	Price Per	# of People	Total
Includes Thursday evening Welcome Reception, Friday's Pima Air Museum Tour, Saturday's Sabino Canyon Tour, and banquet dinner on Saturday (please select entrée below). <i>Daily Breakfast Buffet included in room rate.</i>	\$190		\$
<u>BANQUET</u>			
SATURDAY: BANQUET (Please select your entrée – price included in registration package.)			
Chicken Marsala			
Beef Tips in Red Wine Sauce			
Total Amount Payable to <u>Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.</u>			\$

PLEASE PRINT NAME AS YOU WANT YOUR NAMETAG TO READ

FIRST _____ LAST _____

IS THIS YOUR FIRST 384th BOMB GROUP FUNCTION? YES NO

SPOUSE NAME (IF ATTENDING) _____

GUEST NAMES _____

STREET ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PH. NUMBER (____) _____ - _____ EMAIL _____@_____

DISABILITY/DIETARY RESTRICTIONS _____

(Sleeping room requirements must be conveyed by attendee directly with hotel)

MUST YOU BE LIFTED HYDRAULICALLY ONTO THE BUS WHILE SEATED IN YOUR WHEELCHAIR IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE IN BUS TRIPS? (PLEASE NOTE THAT WE CANNOT GUARANTEE AVAILABILITY). YES NO

EMERGENCY CONTACT _____ PH. NUMBER (____) _____ - _____

ARRIVAL DATE _____ DEPARTURE DATE _____

ARE YOU STAYING AT THE HOTEL? YES NO ARE YOU FLYING? DRIVING? RV?

For refunds and cancellations please refer to our policies outlined at the bottom of the reunion program. **CANCELLATIONS WILL ONLY BE TAKEN MONDAY-FRIDAY 9:00am-4:00pm EASTERN TIME** (excluding holidays). Call (757) 625-6401 to cancel reunion activities and obtain a cancellation code. Refunds processed 4-6 weeks after reunion.

REGISTER ONLINE AT www.afr-reg.com/384BG2015

Grafton Underwood 70th Anniversary Ceremony

On Friday, 22 May, Northamptonshire County Council held a ceremony at Grafton Underwood Aerodrome to commemorate the handing over, seventy years ago, of the base from the 384th Bomb Group, United States Army Air Force, back to the Royal Air Force.

The ceremony commenced at 11:00 am with a service of remembrance, and was followed by a flypast at 11:50 am of the last airworthy B-17 Flying Fortress bomber in the UK, the **Sally B**, from Duxford.

Grafton Underwood's place in history is an important one. The first raid of the war by 8th Air Force bombers took off from Grafton Underwood on 17 August 1942 and the last raid of the war, against the tank factories in Pilsen, took off from Grafton on 25 April 1945. The County Council felt it was fitting that, seventy years on, the sacrifices of the men and women who served at Grafton should be remembered. 316 missions were flown from the base and 1,652 personnel lost their lives.

Many residents of Grafton Underwood, Geddington, and the surrounding villages attended.



Photo by
Michael Whitney



Kevin Fleckner & Fred Preller

Fred' Report on the 70th Anniversary: The event was well attended, 300-400 or so, plus schoolchildren. My wife and I, as well as 493rd Veteran Bill Toombs and his daughter Nancy were there. Representatives of the City and County governments, as well as the Church of England, were in attendance. **Sally B** made about a dozen low-level passes, to the delight of the crowd. Following the ceremonies, and the flypast, a jeep tour of the airfield was enjoyed by a number of the guests (the Prellers and the Toombs included).



Memorial Day 2015 at Cambridge American Cemetery by Fred Preller - The 384th was represented by Matt Smith, his wife and family, Fred and Gail Preller, Kevin Fleckner, and Roger Gambhir. Fred Preller laid the 384th Memorial wreath, assisted by A1C Rodriguez. This year's wreath was laid beneath where Major Arthur M. Stone, Jr's name is engraved on the Tablets of the Missing. Stone and his crew were reported missing on the 10 January 1945 mission to Bonn, Germany. He left formation after incurring flak damage 20 minutes before the IP and was not heard from again.



Gene Goodrick was a First Lieutenant and pilot who flew 35 missions, earning the DFC. He took great pride in re-telling the story of one particular mission to his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He would describe the day his plane was hit by enemy fire and they lost oxygen, flight controls, and four of his crew bailed out. But he stayed with the plane, and in order to protect the other B-17s in the formation, he put it in a steep dive. Through several large miracles, with no oxygen or brakes, and little control, he guided the plane to a safe landing back at the base. For this, Gene earned the Silver Star.

The example he set and the sacrifices he made for our country and for our freedom will live on for centuries through every life he touched. Gene Goodrick passed away on 17 May. We will miss him dearly... Godspeed, Gene!



Taps as of March 2015

Gene Goodrick	St Louis, MO
Stuart Gordon	Hackettstown, NJ
Harry Hancock	Indian Harbor Bch, FL
Warren Hartsough	Queensboro, KY
Leslie Jackson	Washington, DC
Robert Mitchell	Trussville, AL



384th Bomb Wing Receives Last B-1 at McConnell AFB



2 May 1988, 384 BW/CC
Col Phillip Ford & 8 AF/CC
LtGen Buck Shuler fly the
last B-1B from Rockwell
International to McConnell



Grafton Underwood Visit - by Matt Smith

On 26 March Lee Haight, grandson of SSgt Keith Haight, 547th BS, visited GU. Keith flew 22 missions as a gunner and then toggler. They were shot down on 28 Jan 1945, their 22nd mission, over the Netherlands. They evaded capture and returned to GU, but did not fly any more missions.

Lee and I had a good chat at the memorial and took a tour of the airfield, after a quick e-mail with Broughton Estates. Anyone who has visited the base knows only too well what little remains, but the technical site is *fairly* well preserved. We did have a look at a couple of the dispersals left on the airfield, and since Lee's grandfather was in the 547th, we looked in that area. Finally, we viewed the memorial window in the church, before I left Lee to complete his trip.

I trust it was a good trip; for me it is always a pleasure to meet a relative of a 384th member. Best wishes from England!

Carol's Corner - Hope you are all getting ready to send in your registration form for the reunion in Tucson.

Remember, you need to send them to the reunion planner NOT to me. With that in mind, please be aware that they need to have the forms and payment in full by the deadline...not after. Since we are using a reunion planner this year I will not be able to help those of you who forget to register on time and if you miss the deadline there is a possibility you will not be able to attend. KTSOTR-*Carol*

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