



# 384th BOMB GROUP

## NEWSLETTER

1306 Adams Way  
Beavercreek, OH 45434



### Message from Your President-

**Peter Bielskis...** We certainly hope you got your registration in before now, as the cut-off date was 15 Sept. We are looking at about 40-50 who have registered and will be in St Louis so we really hope to have a great time at the Gateway City.

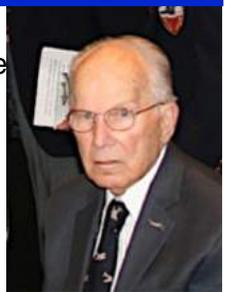
As you may know, this is our first go at melding in with the 8th Air Force Historical Society for a reunion. As our numbers continue to shrink, this may

be the best option. We will still plan other gatherings at different places from time to time, as the occasion dictates. For instance, there are some who would like to visit our old base at Grafton Underwood, and see merry olde England. We had several reunions (junkets) over there and they were all so much fun. Also, there will be a time when the wing panel will get inducted into a museum, and when that happens, we will plan a gathering

for that event. So, be on the watch for future 384th events.

In the meantime take good care of each other and we hope to see many of you in St Louis. Help us represent the 384th as we continue to *Keep the Show on the Road*

**Peter**



\*\*\* If you have any reunion questions, please contact: Debra Kujawa Managing Director, 8th AFHS at 912-748-8884, or by email at: [ManagingDirector@8thAFHS.org](mailto:ManagingDirector@8thAFHS.org)

**We Need More B-17 Panel Hosts!** The YRC Trucking Company picked up our wing panel to be hosted by Mark Meehl in Nebraska. Mark plans to take the panel to George Schock in Falls City, Nebraska and Claude (Gordy) Shaffer in Colorado for their signatures. So far, Mark has expressed an interest in bringing the panel to the St. Louis reunion for any signatures and bring it back with him to Nebraska. Now we'd like to be able to send the panel from Nebraska to another host after the reunion in October. We have 3 veterans in Illinois, 1 in Indiana, 1 in Michigan, 1 in Wisconsin and 1 in Minnesota. If you are interested, or are thinking about helping us with this on-going project, please call or email Chris Wilkinson at 310-866-8457 or [christopherwilkinson99@gmail.com](mailto:christopherwilkinson99@gmail.com). We will definitely discuss options at the reunion. - Chris Wilkinson



### Spotlight on Noah Hickman, Radio Operator/Gunner, 544th Squadron

I joined the Enlisted Reserve Corps in 1942, and was assigned to the Army Air Corps, reporting to Scott Field, IL in April 1943. Following basic training at Keesler Field, MS, I went to Sioux Falls, SD for radio training. I went to gunnery school at Yuma, AZ, to Kearns, UT to join a crew, and to Texas for final preparation.

Our B-17 crew arrived at Grafton Underwood in mid-July 1944. We had a training session to learn the British system of communication and other procedures. Our first mission was a so-called milk run to the coast of France. Then followed a total of 30 missions, often as lead plane, to industrial centers, refineries, and rail centers in Berlin, Munich, Cologne, Kiel, Stuttgart, Regensburg and others.

On the 23rd mission our plane was severely damaged, we were losing altitude, and were unable to keep up with the formation. We had no communications with the squadron or the base. I finally got a message through to the base with our location and we were guided home. I have since come to feel a connection between that mission and the 23rd Psalm.

Back in the States, I had some R&R in California and was assigned to duty at Scott Field. However, the train trip was interrupted with news that the war was over. The group I was with spent a few happy days celebrating in Kansas City before moving on to Scott Field. I was honorably discharged in October 1945.

One further note: Some years ago, my wife and I visited Grafton Underwood. As we stood before the monument to the 384th, we looked up to see a lady walking toward us down the lane. It was Annie Bagshaw, bearing a bouquet of flowers. As many of you know, every week as she could, Annie had faithfully shown her appreciation and respect for the men at the base by placing flowers at the monument. It was truly an honor to meet her.

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



# The 13th Combat Bombardment Wing Heritage Trail

By: Fred Preller, based on article in the 95th BG Heritage Association Summer 2016 Newsletter

During WWII, the 13th Combat Bomb Wing consisted of the 95th, 100th, and 390th Bombardment Groups (Heavy). Today, each Group’s legacy is kept alive by local organizations that have established and maintained museums in their honor. Recently, each of these organizations, with the help of The 8th in the East, have agreed to cooperate in forming the “13th CBW Heritage Trail.” Current plans include producing informational brochures and coordinating open times (last Sundays, April-October) to “foster deeper understanding and appreciation of the 13th Combat Wing and the remarkable period of history with which the [wing] was associated” (Sophie Towne, 100th BG Memorial Museum). Of course, the “13th Combat Bombardment Wing” has a Facebook group, and it appears that a website is intended.

Having visited each of the museums on the 13th CBW Heritage Trail, I can recommend without reservation that you include a day to tour the Trail – although you will be hard-pressed to visit all three, as each is fascinating on its own.

## RETREAT AT THE AIR FORCE ACADEMY By LtCol Mark Berent, a Vietnam Veteran

I was caught in the rain as I returned from a hike to my RV parked in site 8 at the Air Force Academy Fam Camp. As I approached my home on wheels, I heard a crackle as a loudspeaker was switched on. Then I heard a bugle playing a melody I had not heard in 42 years. I glanced at my watch. It was 1700 hrs and I recognized Retreat, the call to attention for the Star-Spangled Banner to be played as the American flag was lowered. I wasn’t sure where the flagpole was located so I faced the loudspeaker situated somewhere in the pine trees. Though I was only a few feet from the door, I was actually thrilled to be able to come to attention and, under the new regs, salute.

Then I was really surprised as a huge wave of emotion swept over me as the rain pelted down. My God, the thoughts; the stream of consciousness; the rapid freeze frames of pictures just behind my eyes. Since it was such current news the first picture was of that wretched football player seated while the national anthem was played. But it was instantly obscured by dozens of rapid-fire images that appeared in split-seconds: the flagpoles I had seen on so many air bases where we would stop our cars if driving and get out and salute; the midnight sign-off of TV stations of yore wherein they overlaid the American flag with the Thunderbirds looping while Magee’s High Flight was read; the tiny flag POW Mike Christian fashioned in the Hanoi Hilton; the flags held by so many people as I followed the funeral cortege for Robin Olds to his final resting place here at the Academy; and finally, the folded flags I never saw held by the survivors of lost comrades.

The last strains of our national anthem echoed through the trees and I found I had more than rain streaming down my face. It’s interesting that now, as we are so much older, we can let our emotions have free reign, something we could not do in combat.

## Progress Report on Champaign Lady in Urbana, OH

This year marks the tenth year since we started building the B-17 in Urbana. Since the Group last visited in 2014, two of the engine nacelles are complete, both horizontal stabilizers are 98% complete, both bomb bay doors and both wing tips are complete. The bombardier/navigator compartment is complete and we are now populating the cockpit. We are working on the right wing, have both spars in work with nacelle integration points being worked. We figure we have another 7 or 8 years before we call for a fuel truck.

Frank Alfter



Cockpit



Bomb Bay Door



Horizontal Stab



Engine Nacelles



Wing Root



Wing Tip

**Not Quite As Briefed** - as debriefed by 1st Lt Gene R. Goodrick

The mission was to attack oil targets near Zeitz, Germany on 30 Nov 1944

We made the first bomb run and there were big contrails, and we caught a collision heading from another squadron coming in from the left. Major Koehne said he couldn't bomb so we did a right run and I figured we would go back and make another run. We did drop down about 3,000 feet to get out of the contrails and turned back on the bomb run, and were pretty well along on the bomb run when flak started getting accurate. About two minutes before bombs away we got hit and a large explosion took place both inside and outside the ship. It bounced me right out of my seat. I got excited. I heard this hissing noise behind me and smoke started filling the cockpit. Flames were coming out from under the flight deck and the cockpit filled up with smoke. The engineer got out of the turret immediately upon the explosion and was making quite a bit of noise back there so I thought he was trying to put the fire out. The fire was on the pilot's left system. I kept yelling for the engineer to get the fire extinguisher but later found out the fire extinguisher hadn't been used and I told the co-pilot to go back and help him out. I was trying to hold the ship in formation. We were flying close formation. The co-pilot went back and I continued to fly the ship. About this time I noticed the hatch below was opened, so I figured the only reason for that was that they had bailed out. Therefore I salvaged the bombs myself. The bomb bay doors had been opened previously, before the bombardier went out. The bombs went away with the rest of the formation. After bombs away there was no particular need for me to stay with the rest of the formation. My right wingman was flying very close, so I dove down below so if the ship blew up and to keep from running into another ship. I then noticed both the engineer and co-pilot had gone. I didn't have any oxygen. My oxygen system was hit. It was the one that was burning. My system all burned out. They opened the escape hatch and I think that is what put the fire out. I got out of formation and I realized I didn't have any oxygen. I had been off of oxygen about four minutes. I looked down and checked and found I didn't have any oxygen so I tried to get a walk-around bottle. I set the ship on AFCE and got out of the seat into the hatch trying to get a walk around-bottle broken loose. I never did get one loose. I was getting very weak and I had told one of the gunners to come up and help me out, and I told him I didn't have any oxygen. The ball turret operator came up. I had not ordered him to get out of the ball turret all this time. He came up and put me on the co-pilot's oxygen and I put him up in the top turret. We had dropped to about 16,500 feet. About that time there were three fighters in the vicinity at 2 o'clock high. They were too far away to be identified, so we kept calling them out and maneuvering around until we found out they were P-51s. I then got him out of the top turret and I was trying to get back into formation with some group as we didn't have a navigator. We took a heading west and I saw this formation of bombers about five miles ahead and 7,000 feet higher so I started going towards it and ducked into a thin layer of stratus clouds. Stayed in there for about three or four minutes and came back and there were still fighters around the area. Somebody asked the group leader to fire some flares. About two minutes after I heard this over the VHF, I saw these flare trails and I knew they were up ahead so I called him and told him I was moving in formation. We were climbing very fast and I picked out what I thought was our formation and I was correct. It was our group. The hydraulic and electrical system had been shot out and the wheels were going up and down. Both landing gear motors had burned out. The right landing gear was locked down and the left was burned out. We joined the high element and came back to the base. We didn't have any flaps or lights. We lowered the wheels but didn't have any brakes when I hit the runway. I didn't know how I was going to stop the plane. I was going to ground loop it, but the ball turret gunner didn't know where the tail wheel lock release was so we just ran off the end of the runway. All the remaining crew did a wonderful job of sticking with me. Right after we were hit somebody said, "Let's get out of this thing." I think it was either the co-pilot or the engineer. After that I noticed that everyone up front was gone, so I called back and they were all staying there. I told them we could make it back OK. None were injured.

The electrical system was destroyed by the burst underneath turrets, flaps, bombay doors, wheels and landing lights inoperative. I hit the ground around 125 or so. The only thing I was landing by was the ship ahead of me. My radio compass was inoperative. After I followed him all the way around I could then see the outline of the runway. The A/C number was 800. It will be out at least a week. Twenty-seven holes in the left wing alone. I don't know whether any main spars or tanks were hit or not.

There was a dent in either the Navigator or bombardier's helmet. This may have helped influence their jump. Also, we had just seen two bombers blow up right before the target. There was a lot of flame in the A/C. The hydraulic fluid was down in there burning with the oxygen. I think the blast from the open hatch was what blew the fire out. The men that bailed out were not my original crew. Most of them had many missions.

I don't think the engineer was the first man out. Within a matter of seconds after the oxygen explosion the navigator and bombardier definitely bailed out and then the engineer and co-pilot. I motioned to the fire and he motioned that he understood but then he bailed out.

I had four engines all the way. I had no trouble staying in formation. The elevator had several large holes torn in it. The ball turret gunner cranked the wheels up over Germany but when I got over the base the tail gunner let them down. The ball turret gunner helped in the landing. There is a hand pump on the co-pilot's side which comes right down out of the bottom of the hydraulic pump and he pumped this hand pump all the way down. It slowed the plane up very little however. He called off the air speed and helped me line up with the runway, and also pointed out the planes as we came around. I couldn't have gone around again after I had gotten on the runway because I might not have been able to locate the field again.



GENE R. GOODRICK  
1st Lt. Air Corps  
Pilot, A/C 800

## Taps as of September 2016

Wesley Borgeson	St Paul, MN
Paul Bureau	Ocala, FL
James Kinzer	Lake Forest, IL
Carl Matthijetz	Three Rivers, TX
Leonard Niemiec	Phoenix, AZ
Howard Oglesby	Bella Vista, AR
Jay Walker	Carlsbad, CA



544 Bomb Squadron 545 Bomb Squadron 546 Bomb Squadron 547 Bomb Squadron



## Looking for Newsletter Writer/Editor

After about eight years, with little in the way of writing skills, or computer tech savvy, this old editor wants to give someone else the opportunity to assemble the quarterly 384th Bomb Group newsletter. I do feel that these newsletters improved over the years, but I have seen some other fabulous bomb group newsletters and I know we could do better. - Frank

## Looking for Old Issues of 384th Newsletters

If you have, or know someone who does have, any past issues of our Group newsletters, we are building a file that we hope will have every issue for historical purposes. Below is a list of the issues we do not have and are on the look-out for:

1970s - all	1992 - all	1999-06
1980s thru '87	1993-06, 09, 12	
1987-01 & 03	1994 & 95 - all	
1989-12 or 1990-01	1996-03, 06, 12	
1990-06/07	1997-03, 06, 09	
1991-03, 06/07	1998-03, 12	

If you come across any of these missing newsletters, and/or reunion programs, please contact Keith Ellefson by email at eesharpener@centurytel.net, or call him at 334-733-4353. If you do have any of these items and are willing to share them, Keith will make digital copies and take care of getting them back to you without harm.

Winter's a comin'! While we are snuggled in the warmth of our family and homes, remember those who endured.



**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)