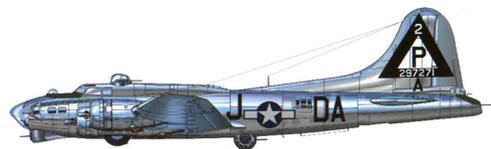




384th Bomb Group, Inc. News & Journal



"Keep The Show On The Road..."

June 2019

England Junket XI Reunion Anticipation Builds

As you read this, most likely Junket XI reunion attendees will be either on their way to Cambridge, England or are already there. From talking to some of them, and seeing the online posts of others, I know that there is a great deal of anticipation and excitement for the trip on both sides of the Atlantic. A significant number of the attendees have never been to Grafton Underwood, so it will have an even greater impact on them. I remember my first visit to Grafton Underwood; the smell of the woods, the wind in the trees, the soft rain, the quiet anticipation. The place is dense with stories and lives past. It whispers to you. And the impact of it has never really left me. I'm sure it will be the same for them as well and will sustain them in their devotion to the Group in the years to come. For our attending Veterans, it will bring back memories of friends, the stories, their youth, the hard work of the missions and their homecoming when their missions had been completed.

For the folks in Grafton Underwood, they may as excited, if not more, as the attendees are about the visit. The anticipation for them is high. They have been very busy working to clean, repair, and prepare the Monument and area for a very memorable experience. They'll have special information about their new non-profit organization, Friends of The 384th. The timing couldn't be better for everyone to consider how to preserve the buildings on the airbase. In this newsletter, we cover this developing story in more detail.

The forty attendees of Junket XI includes three of our Veterans on this very special trip, made extra special by their attendance. These intrepid gentlemen are Henry Sienkiewicz, Len Estrin and Henry Kolinek and are attending with their families. We know that many of our Veterans wish they could go, but their advanced age and health made it difficult for them to do so. We appreciate them all, which is why we do everything we do.

This trip has it all, and more. In conversations I've had with Neill Howarth, he said that locals that own vintage, restored WWII US Army vehicles will form a small convoy to Grafton Underwood to greet the attendees and veterans. I'm sure our veterans will be their special guests and get royal treatment. Its something that no one seeing it will ever forget.

A very important visit to Cambridge American Cemetery will be made to pay our respects to the men that didn't come home to their family and friends. The 384th Bomb Group remembers the sacrifice, we'll never forget. Its what drives us forward to keep the legacy alive. - Christopher Wilkinson

Keep The Show On The Road



THIS ISSUE

"384th Reunion Junket XI" P. 1

"A Son's Search For His Father..." P. 3

"Friends Of The 384th: Preserving Grafton Underwood Station 106", P. 4-5

Taps - Briefings, P. 6

CALENDAR

September 19-24, 2019

384th England Junket XI to Cambridge, England

Oct. 16-20, 2019

8th Air Force Historical Society Reunion
St. Louis, MO. Details online at
WWW.8THAFHS.ORG.

2019 B-17 Tours - USA

For information about tour dates, visit the website.

EAA
B-17G "Aluminum Overcast"
WWW.EAA.ORG

Collings Foundation
B-17G "Nine-O-Nine"
WWW.COLLINGSFOUNDATION.ORG

Liberty Belle Foundation
B-17G "Ye Olde Pub" (restored as B-17F)
WWW.LIBERTYFOUNDATION.ORG

Commemorative Air Force - Arizona Wing
B-17G "Sentimental Journey"
WWW.AZCAF.ORG

Commemorative Air Force - Gulf Coast Wing
B-17G "Texas Raiders"
WWW.B17TEXASRAIDERS.ORG

National Warplane Museum
B-17G "Movie Memphis Belle" (restored as B-17F)
WWW.NATIONALWARPLANEMUSEUM.COM

MUSEUMS

The National Museum of the U.S. Air Force
Dayton, Ohio, USA
WWW.NATIONALMUSEUM.AF.MI

Hill Aerospace Museum
Hill AFB, Ogden Utah, USA
WWW.AEROSPACEUTAH.ORG

National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force
Savannah, Georgia, USA
WWW.MIGHTYEIGHTH.ORG



"Keep The Show On The Road..."

Editor's Notes: Connections

The 384th Reunion Junket XI England on September 19-24, 2019 will be an amazing experience for everyone involved. New connections will be made and reinforced. For some it will be their first time to see the sights around Grafton Underwood, the airbase and meeting the people that are our friends in the UK. For our attending Veterans Henry Sienkiewicz, Len Estrin and Henry Kolinek, it will be a visit full of memories of their youth, of war, and of friends since passed. And some exciting conversation! For others, they will be visiting familiar places and renewing old acquaintances, re-energizing those connections. We're looking forward to reading their amazing stories and seeing their pictures in the next newsletter!

As I put together our newsletters, sometimes themes seem to emerge out of the stories. In this issue, it seems to be about our connections to the men of the 384th Bomb Group and their legacy. In the end, family and friends are often what make us what we are, and the 384th Bomb Group family is no different. I hope you'll enjoy the stories about what we're doing, where we've been and where we're going to help inspire you in our journey together in the 384th Bomb Group, as they have inspired me.

Christopher Wilkinson, Editor
christopherwilkinson99@gmail.com

384th Bomb Group and Squadron Patches

Bomb Group and squadron patches are available for purchase. Original WWII 384th Bomb Group patches were used as templates to recreate each one as closely as possible in design, size and color. Squadron patches are \$9 each. Orders of four or more squadron patches are \$8 each. 384th Bomb Group patch is \$10 each. Domestic (USA) postage is included with purchase. For international orders, postage will apply.

For purchasing, email Keith Ellefson at 384thbombgroup@troycable.net



544th Sq.



545th Sq.



546th Sq.



547th Sq.



384th Bomb Group

384th Bomb Group, Inc. Board of Directors

Chairman - Peter Bielskis (Veteran)
President - Frank Alfter (NexGen)
Board Member - Len Estrin (Veteran)
Board Member - William O'Leary (Veteran)
Board Member - Dennis Bielskis (NexGen)
Board Member - Chris Wilkinson (NexGen)

Group Treasurer - Carol Alfter (NexGen)

The 384th Bomb Group, Inc. is a 501(c)3 non-profit veterans organization based in Ohio.

Membership includes the Tri-monthly newsletter for \$25 per year, renewed annually in January.

Mail \$25 membership renewal payment to:
Carol Alfter, Treasurer
1306 Adams Way
Beavercreek, Ohio 45434

Internet Resources for the 384th Bomb Group

The 384th Bomb Group website is one of, if not the most, comprehensive online 8th Air Force Heavy Bomber Group website in the world.

As such, it is an invaluable resource for 384th BG families and researchers. It's easy to use format can be used to find all the missions and the crews; written Veterans' accounts and links to Veterans videos. There are thousands photos of crews and support personnel, B-17s and Grafton Underwood airbase.

It's also a source of contemporary news about the 384th Bomb Group, Inc. including events, special projects and reunions. Go to:

www.384thbombgroup.com

For personal stories and explorations of the 384th's past and present, Cindy Bryan's wonderful and inspiring blog *The Arrowhead Club* is the best. Her father was a crewman and POW in the 384thxz. Go to:

www.thearrowheadclub.com

A Son's Search For His Father...

The story I write here is compelling and timeless on several levels: great personal loss and of a lost love; a personal journey of discovery and reunion; making connections to family and claiming a father's legacy. Alan Dickens of Kettering, England was looking for his father. A lifelong mystery compelled him to start his journey of discovery.

It was important to me to base the story on the words of Alan Dickens and Joyce Puttkammer, who have been generous about sharing it with us here.

In his own words, Alan wrote: "As I approached the age of 74 I decided to try and answer a question that had bothered me since my late teens, was my mother's first husband my father?"

Alan was born in Kettering, Northamptonshire during WWII. His grandparents had a café in Kettering where his mother worked during the war.

For most of his life, his father's identity was a mystery. He knew his father and mother had divorced after the war. But his birth certificate didn't include his divorced father's name. It was left blank.

DNA technology made it possible to trace his family origins. Alan was astounded to discover that his birth father's family was in a group located in Colorado. A worldwide DNA database made it possible to narrow it down to one family, but not necessarily to one person. Alan had solved part of his life mystery, but was it possible to identify his father?

Alan narrowed his search down to one person who was the right age: Eugene Theodore Wilson. He was a Captain and navigator in the 384th Bomb Group at Grafton Underwood, England at the same time his mother was in Kettering. Ominously, he found his name in an MIA report dated in January 1945.

The 384th Bomb Group website writes that Eugene was one of two Lead Navigators on the Lead PFF/GEE-H ship, B-17G 44-8216, on a mission to bomb the marshaling yards in Bonn, Germany on 10 January 1945.

There were mechanical problems on the mission and the lead B-17 had been hit by flak. The secondary target at Cologne was selected to be hit instead.

Eugene's B-17 was one of the lead B-17s designated to bring the formation over the target. It was here that events turned deadly for Capt. Eugene Wilson and the crew.

20 minutes before the Initial Point, Eugene's B-17 left the formation due to flak damage. The reports states, "No communication was received from this aircraft regarding the abort. The crash site and the fate of the crew are unknown." No parachutes were seen and the entire crew was MIA.

Sadly, Captain Wilson was listed as missing in action on 10 January 1945, six days before Alan's birth was registered in Kettering.

Alan could have never have met his father, nor he him. It was a sad ending to Alan's quest to find his father. But Eugene Wilson had siblings and they had families. Where were they now? If he contacted them, would they accept him as Eugene's son?

On December 27, 2018, Eugene's niece Joyce Puttkammer was about to receive some astounding news. Her daughter Beth sat her down before telling her: "You have a first cousin living in England".

Beth said that Alan had contacted her by email. Joyce writes, "When she showed me the email from Alan Dickens; I read it and burst into tears. I never knew Uncle Eugene as he was MIA 10 January 1945 and I wasn't born until the fall of 1947 but his name was a household name in our collective family my entire life."

Joyce said that her grandmother had never gotten over her loss and "and never really knew what actually happened to him."

"The last time Eugene was home in late 1944, he told his mother he had met a girl in England that he wanted to marry but to my knowledge no more details were mentioned."

Joyce writes, "...wrote an email back to Alan Dickens with all this information

and let him know we were so excited and delighted to learn of his existence and surprising relationship. Ready to welcome him and his family into ours with open hearts and open arms"

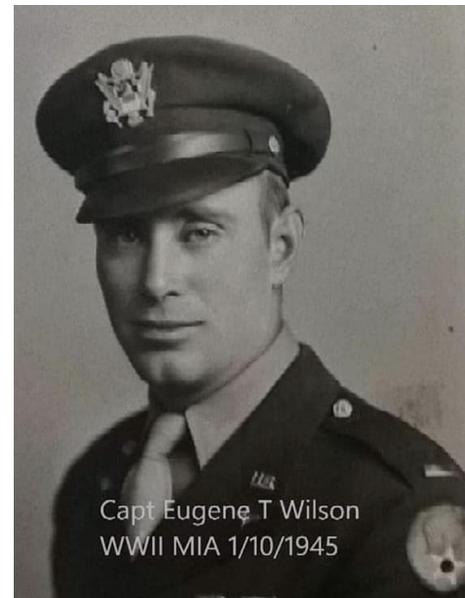
"I am so happy that Eugene's precious legacy lives on in his son. Alan, and his and (his wife's) Anne's children and grandchildren."

Alan writes, "Through this first contact I have been in touch with her (Beth's) mother and uncles who welcomed me with open arms. They continue to provide stories and photographs of my father and our family."

Eugene's legacy lives on in the lives of Alan, his family and in the lives of his family in the United States. A tragic loss has been given meaning with understanding. Alan has found his father, and his American family has found Eugene's son.

And so, too, the 384th Bomb Group family has gained a new member. Welcome Alan and family!

This story was made possible with the assistance of Alan Dickens and Joyce Puttkammer, the 384th Bomb Group website, and the 384th Bomber Group Facebook page.



Capt Eugene T Wilson
WWII MIA 1/10/1945
Photo courtesy of Joyce Puttkammer



“Friends of The 384th” : Preserving Grafton Underwood Station 106

Last May, Kevin Flecknor, Jason Mann, Neill Howarth and Matt Smith created the non-profit preservation group “Friends of The 384th” in an effort to preserve the 384th Bomb Group Operations Block and Norden Bomb Sight buildings at Grafton Underwood, Station 106.

It’s a watershed development that is hoped to start the process of preserving these two buildings and other airfield artifacts in cooperation with the land owner Boughton Estate.

The Friends group was created after it was observed that Boughton Estate had begun removing brush and trees around the two buildings and other parts of the Estate last Spring. It was feared that the Estate was preparing to demolish these and other structures when fences were erected around the buildings. The two buildings are in relatively poor condition from the elements and vandals, but still standing.

The Friends of The 384th have rallied the support of the community to save these two buildings. Well attended public meetings were held and pledges of resources were offered. The group presented a preservation plan to the Estate in June. The plan was well received by the Estate, with discussions continuing. No demolition is planned at the present time.

Frank Alfter, President of the Board of Directors of the 384th Bomb Group, Inc., provided an official letter of support of the Friends of The 384th and their work to preserve the historic structures. In his letter, Frank greatly encouraged the Boughton Estate to work with the Friends

of The 384th to preserve the history of the airfield. This was very much appreciated by the Friends and it helped immeasurably to establish the Friends as having the support of the 384th Bomb Group, Inc. and they being the bonafide focal point of the preservation effort in the community.

In previous years, the Estate had resisted efforts to preserve structures on the airfield for their own reasons. Buildings that weren’t used by the Estate in its farming operations were torn down, and the concrete runways and hardstands removed. As a working farm and privately owned land, it was their right to do so.

384th Bomb Group supporter Quentin Bland, who had lived his entire life in Grafton Underwood, had appealed to the Estate to preserve what remained of the historic buildings and honor the men that served there. Quentin passed away in 2009 and much of the hope of preserving what remained had languished, though many in the nearby area wanted it to happen. By creating the Friends Of The 384th, they have in their own way carried Quentin’s torch forward to preserve the historic structures of the airbase, and created a new nexus of support in the community.

Since May, the Estate has allowed local volunteers from the Friends of The 384th to remove forest debris from the abandoned building floor slabs of the aircrew living quarters, including the Commanding Officers Quarters used by Peasley, Lacey, Smith and Milton. Kevin and his cohort of workers have trimmed grass, shrubs and made numerous small repairs on the 384th Memorial Monument. The flags are

kept flying daily and replaced by Kevin as required. The Monument’s paint has been touched up. Friends of The 384th volunteers have been working hard in preparation for the special day when our members and veterans visit Grafton Underwood in September.

The Friends Of The 384th are currently in communication with the Estate to find a mutually beneficial way to preserve the historic structures. Neill Howarth said he “spoke with the estate (on August 15) and was told internal meetings were still ongoing at this time regarding the Operations Block and Norden Bomb Sight Building.”

If the Boughton Estate agrees to allow the buildings to be preserved by the Friends, the 384th Bomb Group, Inc. Board of Directors might discuss ways of providing moral and other support, but this is yet to be determined.

All these developments are a positive step forward for preserving the buildings of GU. Many expressions of gratitude have been posted on the 384th Bomber Group’s Facebook page for the work of the volunteers of the Friends of the 384th. For more information, go the Friends of The 384th Facebook page.

Written with the assistance of Neill Howarth. Unless noted otherwise, photos by Neill Howarth, Jason Mann, Kevin Flecknor, Jason Pazour and Graham Butlin.



Northants Telegraph newspaper headline, 2 May 2019.



First Meeting of the Friends of The 384th in May 2019. (L-R) Jason Mann, Neill Howarth and Kevin Flecknor. Photo by Matt Smith.



Removing forest debris from the floor slabs, 18 Aug 2019.



Bicycle storage next to the Roxy Theater.



Monument touchups by Ralph Thompson.



Ralph Thompson touches up the Monument's B-17F.



Local volunteers at GU on 18 May 2019.



USAF Molesworth volunteers with Neill and Jason, 18 May 2019



Bomb Sight Building - April 2019



Bomb Sight Building Interior - April 2019



547th Sq. Barracks - August 2019



Operations Block - April 2019



Operations Block Interior (Now and Then)



Edward Lamark, 9 August 2014
Erwin Jack Harrison, 17 April 2016
Edgar Olson, 24 Jan 2018
Robert Gissing, November 2018
Gerald Russell Bryson, 21 Nov 2018
Raymond Causa, 16 January 2019
Charles Davidson, 5 June 2019
Charles R. Bobbitt, 31 July 2019
Kenneth Sparks, 14 July 2019
Lynn T. Jones, 19 August 2019



BRIEFINGS

Maintenance Donations for 384th BG Memorial at Grafton Underwood

Kevin Flecknor (with help) continues to do a super job maintaining the memorial. He keeps eyes on the Memorial and immediately makes repairs when its required. He's a great supporter of the history and honor of the Group. But it does cost money to do some of the work. The Group recognizes and helps support Kevin. Donations can be sent via:

Internet Banking within the UK- HSBC Sort Code: 40-32-04
Account No: 91836064
Internet Banking outside of the UK
International Bank Account Number (IBAN) GB36HBUK 40320491836064
Swift Code: MIDLGB22

If you so wish to send donations via a cheque, please make these payable to: "384th BG Memorial" and send the check to:

384th BG Memorial
c/o 12 Bowland Drive
Barton Seagrave
Kettering, Northants , NN15-6TX, UK

Wing Panel Project: Update

We had four Veterans turn up this last spring that wanted to sign the B-17 wing panel. Signing Veterans is the purpose of the project. so we jumped in to get them done. They were Paul Beardshear, Ventura, CA (#151); James Kangas, Columbia Hills, MN (#152); Robert Fisher, Edinburg, TX (#153); and Henry Kolinek, Kenedy, TX (#154).

Henry Kolinek will be our last veteran to sign "Wingy". Each Veteran had a host ready to help so we delayed the donation of the 384th BG B-17 Wing Panel to Hill Aerospace Museum in Utah in order to accomodate them and their families. The Museum was notified that delivery would be delayed until we met our Veterans.

After Henry of Kolinek signs on about Sept. 9, the panel will be shipped directly to Hill Aerospace for its forever home for a future display in the Museum near their B-17G. After the donation, the Group will never be able to ship the panel for signatures again.

The Group thanks Hill Aerospace Museum for their understanding and patience for our Veterans and their families.

The Group also wishes to thank the following wing panel hosts for their assistance and care of "Wingy" while it was in their possession. They are C. Wilkinson (Paul Beardshear), Bill Ward (James Kangas), Barbara Johnson (Robert Fisher) and Marsha Duniven (Henry Kolinek).

384TH BOMB GROUP, INC.
1306 ADAMS WAY
BEAVERCREEK, OH 45434



"Keep The Show On The Road..."