



384th Bomb Group, Inc. News & Journal



"Keep The Show On The Road..."

June 2020

Friends of 384th's effort to preserve GU airfield moves forward

Kettering Council planning staff gave Friends of the 384th a very special gift for Victory in Europe Day on May 8: A pre-planning application sent in April, explaining the group's intentions to preserve and restore the former operations block at the Grafton-Underwood airfield, former home to the 384th Bomb Group, earned a very encouraging response.

Neill Howarth with the Friends group reports that the planning board would like some further detailed information about the size, scale and future operation of the Maproom/Operations block as a museum. This is being collated at the moment by a team of people and should hopefully be presented to the council by mid-June at the latest. Boughton Estate is offering to help get this proposal accepted. Sam Rees, land agent at Boughton, is at the forefront of this effort. The building has had security cameras installed and fencing to make it more secure. There has been a lot of interest in the building in recent months, not all of it welcome. It is being policed by Boughton Estates and a team with Friends of the 384th.

Boughton's Sam Rees said he would like to move control to the Friends sometime in the autumn, perhaps August or September (subject to conditions).

This great news came almost exactly one year to the day when a first meeting was held in the Grafton Underwood village hall (May 9) to try and save this building. (see the illustration at the right of a potential layout).

The museum has the support of the Grafton Underwood parish council and many others. In the proposal to Boughton, the Friends says it will

create "a local tourist attraction, positive PR for Boughton Estates with a display within the museum detailing Boughton's involvement and support to historic value of the local area." For more information, please contact:

- Chris Wilkinson in the US, christopherwilkinson99@gmail.com
- Neill Howarth in the UK, neillhowarth@gmail.com
- Also please sign our petition to show support. You can find it online at: <https://www.gopetition.com/petitions/grafton-underwood-airfield.html>



Reunion Update: Rescheduling for 2021 underway for Ogden, Utah

Well, immediately after we printed the last newsletter, an unseen enemy called COVID-19 derailed our 2020 reunion plans. Rest assured, our organizers, led by Amy Meighan (daughter of Col. Nathan H. Mazer), will work hard to step things back by one year. Amy reports there may be slight changes, but she plans to keep as much of the original plan as possible. **Stayed tuned for dates and details. Highlights of what organizers are planning, as they begin rebooking in January 2021:**

- We plan to continue with the Hilton Garden Inn, Ogden, as our headquarters hotel;
- We still plan to tour Wendover airfield (the original 384th home);
- Amy has planned optional excursions in the area to points of interest.

In this Issue

GU airfield update	P. 1
Reunion update – 2021	P. 1
A Belgian memorial	P. 3
Taps	P. 4
Zeitz mission revisited	P. 5

2020 Calendar

8th Air Force Historical Society 2020 Reunion, Oct. 21-25, Memphis TN

On the Internet

[384th BG website](#)

Our internet home, maintained by Fred Preller.

[384th Facebook page](#)

A great place where many of us share our experiences, photos, etc. from both sides of "the pond."

[8th Air Force HS](#)

The home for the 8th Air Force Historical Society online.

[8th AFHS Facebook](#)

Information, photos, stories, current events, pertinent information relating to "The Mighty Eighth."

[The Arrowhead Club](#)

Cindy Bryan's wonderful and inspiring blog. Her father was a 384th crewman and POW.

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Update on the rebuilding of Champaign Lady



A view inside the hangar where Champaign Lady is being assembled/restored from several B-17 airframes by a dedicated crew of volunteers. At left is a wing; note some of the museum's other historic aircraft behind Champaign Lady.

The last time the 384th visited the Champaign Aviation Museum was 20 Oct 2018, and since then there has been significant progress building Champaign Lady. In addition to working on her airframe components, the museum now has a machine shop as an addition to the hangar on the north side.

This shop is two levels and the upper is currently used for storage, whereas the first floor is mostly the machining area. We will store the engines, nacelles and other completed components upstairs and work with metal bending, machining, welding and coatings on the ground floor.

The aircraft now has a completed right outer wing panel, except for skinning. The inner right wing section is coming along and the main landing gear trunion has been fitted. All four engine nacelles are complete and will move upstairs soon, as will the engines.

We are still looking at about 6-7 years before we can call for a fuel truck and fly this treasure. The current COVID-19 situation has put us back a little. We closed the museum to all visitors in early March and a week later even us volunteers were not allowed to work there. I have been back there for the last four weeks now, as are many of the other volunteers, so our progress is somewhat back on track.

If you would like to follow the progress of work on Champaign Lady go to www.champaignaviationmuseum.org, where you will find the "Live Hangar Feeds" when you click on "view webcam."

—Frank Alfter



A close-up view of Champaign Lady's forward fuselage assembly, under construction.

A special memorial memory from Belgium in a time of COVID-19

With COVID-19 making most memorial trips impossible in 2020, we share this account of a 2014 trip to Belgium honoring a 384th crew of the 547th squadron lost on a mission to Schweinfurt. Thanks to Cookie Samuel for this story and photos.

In April 2014, family of the Royal Flush II crew met in Belgium to attend a ceremony held every year in Fouleng, Belgium at the crash site, remembering the crew of B-17 42-97274, which crashed in a field on 13 April 1944 as it returned from a Schweinfurt mission. Six died (Lt. James R. Lavin, pilot; Lt. Louis A. Bendon, co-pilot; Lt. Calvin L. Anthes, bombardier; S. Sgt. Lloyd G. Brady, ball turret gunner; S. Sgt. James W. Malone, tail gunner; and S. Sgt. Raymond R. Marz, waist gunner), three evaded (Lt. Harold E. Ashman, navigator; T. Sgt. Troy Hollar, top turret gunner; and T. Sgt. Edward L. Price, radio operator), and one became a POW (S. Sgt. Charles W. Johnson, waist gunner). The 384th lost nine planes on this mission.

We who made the trip and family members of those who could not attend call ourselves The Royal Flush Family, as the Royal Flush II was the name of the crew's B-17. However, they were flying a brand-new, unnamed B-17 on her first and only mission that day as the Royal Flush II (42-97237) was in for repairs/maintenance. We traveled to honor our family members (my uncle, Raymond Marz, was among those killed), the Resistance members who sheltered three of the crew and the incredible Dutch families who honor them by tending their graves at the Margraten cemetery.

Troy Hollar was the last of the crew and made the trip (he passed away in September 2017). Troy was met at the airport by U.S. Air Force personnel who drove him wherever he went. They had a wheelchair for him and at one point while walking in town, the sidewalk narrowed and the servicemen carried Troy in the wheelchair around the narrow part.



The early arrivals and host families met for the first time for dinner near Chievres Air Base and instantly became a family ... The Royal Flush Family. Some already knew each other, some had only met online, and some were new to each other, but we were all family now (*see photo, at left*).

Some of us stayed with airmen from the base, Troy and his family stayed in visitor's quarters on the base, others in hotels, while I stayed with Marijke Spook at her home in the country. We found we had much in common to share. Each morning she would go to the local bakery for fresh croissants and sweet rolls for our

breakfast and then we were off for a full day of activities. She made my stay very special.

The next day we drove to the Netherlands American Cemetery at Margraten, The Netherlands to visit the graves of the five crew buried there. (*In the picture at right are Ernest Schrasser and Annemarie Schrasser-Rouvroye, who have adopted my uncle's grave, with me at the grave.*)

Troy and his family, Al Brady and his family, and I visited Grafton-Underwood on the way home. Matt Smith, who gave us a wonderful tour, commented to Troy that it had only taken him 70 years to return from that mission!

Between Facebook and the 384th BG website, I have been able to learn much about my uncle and the crew. I can only hope that others who are still searching for information on their veterans can be as fortunate as I have been to have such resources available.

We have a wonderful resource tool at the 384th, and I thank all who have developed the website into such a user-friendly source of information. I am still looking for a photo of the B-17 the crew was flying when they crashed and for a group photo of the crew.



384th squadron patches are now available!

A great way to show your 384th Bomb Group affiliation and remember your 384th service member is to purchase a group or squadron patch.

Original WWII 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.

The 384th Bomb Group patch is \$10. The cost of shipping is included in the price.

To buy, email Keith Ellefson at 384thbombgroup@troycable.net



TAPS

Given the nature of life in this 21st century, we do our best to keep everyone updated when a 384th veteran flies west. Here are the latest obituaries, as of June 2020.

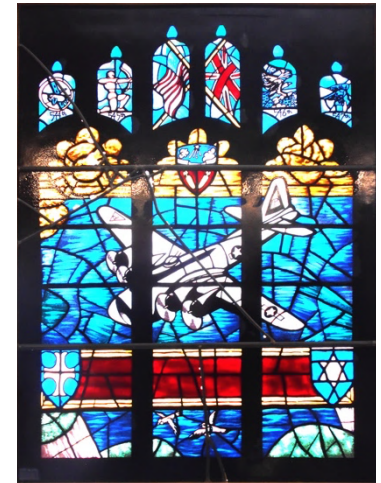
Sgt. Alvaro Fernandez, Originally a teletype operator with the 546th squadron, he joined the 384th at its 1942 formation and stayed with the Group through hostilities, to Istres, France after VE Day, to fly troops to Africa, and for other tasks and returned home afterward aboard the Queen Mary. He died 13 March 2020, aged 100.

T. Sgt. Frank Girman, flight engineer, top turret gunner, 546th Squadron, 30 missions, 18 August 1944–10 January 1945, aged 97.

S. Sgt. James H. Kugler, togglier, flight engineer, top turret gunner, 547th squadron, 35 missions, 20 June 1944–20 November 1944, aged 95.

Lt. John G. Mitchell, navigator, 546th squadron, 18 missions, 30 December 1944–25 April 1945, died 16 May 2020, aged 96. Flew on the 384th's last mission and the very last strategic bombing mission of the war in Europe.

If you know of a 384th veteran's passing, please write our editor, Paul Furiga (paul.furiga@wordwritepr.com or 222 Courtney Place, Wexford, PA 15090).



It's amazing what you can learn online ... at the 384th website

The 384th Bomb Group website is a fantastic resource for anyone interested in the group, its missions and its history. Here are highlights of additions and improvements to the website since February 2020, thanks to webmaster Fred Preller:

- 2020-04-09: Implemented "Previous Mission" and "Next Mission" controls on the Mission page.
- 2020-03-23: Revised name search to correctly handle names containing an apostrophe, such as O'Neill.
- 2020-03-16: Updated the Home and Reunions pages with information about cancellation and 8AFHS reunion.
- 2020-03-15: Updated 2020 Reunion status to CANCELLED.
- 2020-03-02: Updated the 384th Memorials page to indicate current status of Wing Panel Project.

Coming next: Fred will be updating all the missions with more contextual information, and making some of the individual mission assignments more precise. This will complement other recent improvements, including the ability to sort the individual sortie column on the one mission pages for all columns.

Visit the group website at: <https://384thbombgroup.com/>.

The 384th's history: A new view of the 30 November 1944 Zeitz mission

The letter below describes events aboard the 547th Squadron aircraft, Busy Buzzard, from which four crew parachuted after flak started a fire below the flight deck over the target. Of the four who bailed out, three survived (co-pilot Lt. Dale Harlan Peterson, bombardier Lt. James Cresto and navigator, Lt. Frank Furiga). Flight engineer S. Sgt. Jesse G. McCoy died when his parachute apparently failed to open. He may also have been wounded by the flak that set the aircraft on fire. This incident, recounted in editions of the Group history, As Briefed, originally described the aircraft as Fightin' Hebe (pp. 138, 200). However, thanks to the efforts of our group historians after the war, we know that Fightin' Hebe did not fly this mission. As well, pilot Lt. Gene Goodrick, who earned the Silver Star for bringing his plane back to base, knew from his flight records he was piloting Busy Buzzard that day. In addition to Goodrick, ball turret gunner S. Sgt. Lee Pierce took actions that were critical to the plane returning to Grafion-Underwood. This is his story, transcribed and lightly edited, from a handwritten letter he wrote to Frank Furiga when they reconnected nearly 42 years after that fateful day.

November 12, 1986

Dear Frank,

Hearing from you is like having Christmas two months early. It is great to be in contact with the past, it was like being in a time machine. I'm sure glad I did join the 384th society. I've been with the 8th Air Force Society three years now. I've heard from three other members of the 384th: Mike Mazer, Joe Seibel and L. Corwin Miller. I also got Gene Goodrich's address in St. Louis. I have a negative somewhere of our crew — the regular one — and as soon as I find it, I'll get a copy made and ship it to you. Then you'll see the crew with whom you last flew.

To get back to that trip I'll give you my version of it. I was ball turret and when I saw you guys go out the front hatch, I tried to call skipper but no response, I then called Adams (radio op) and asked what happened; He did not know. I then rolled the turret hatch to top side and crawled out. The waist gunners were at stations, but they knew nothing except we had been hit. (I had a walk around oxygen bottle plugged in.) I got to the radio room and again Adams knew nothing. He had tried to contact front but no reply. The tail gunner was still in his position. By the way — I was one of the few who wore a backpack in the ball! I got another bottle and started forward, through bomb bay. The bomb bay doors were open, but our bombs were still racked. I presumed they had been armed. On going through the bay, my 'chute harness got hooked on some of the frame. In my trying to get loose, I lost my oxygen bottle. I can still see it going through the open bomb bay. I finally got loose and headed back to radio, I remember getting to the door and then I passed out. When I came to, I was sitting on the floor with a bottle plugged in and no one had helped except someone who was at a higher altitude than we were.

Anyway, I got another bottle and preceded forward. When I opened the door between the bomb bay and pilot compartment, the smoke billowed through the door and the flight deck cleared up. There were some flames burning and some oil (hydraulic) but the fire went out from the draft. I looked up front and saw Gene (skipper to us then) lying or leaning over the wheel. The plane was below the rest of the formations, doing a large 360 over the target area. He had put it on autopilot before passing out. I put a bottle on him and in a short while he came to. I then placed him on the copilot side, which was still good. When his head cleared, we preceded homeward after dropping the bombs by hand, closing bomb bay doors, raising landing gear — all by hand.

When we got back to base, we only had about half flaps, wheels had to be cranked down and locked and I pumped the brakes by hand. We landed quite fast and went off the runway into a plowed field. I do remember there was some jerries in the air but some '51s sort of dissuaded them. The reports I had read in the past didn't tell half the story but anyway we did get back.

About you four, we figured you were not used to our lingo and someone might have said, "Let's get the hell outta here," and you figured it was a bailout order. The situation did look extremely bad. I still do not know what made me keep going except a Higher Authority. I'll always feel that way. I do know this, had I not gone up forward, we (the rest of us) would not have gotten back. Gene, at that time, had been out 3-4 minutes. Much more delay would have been fatal for all of us. Don't get me wrong, Gene did one hell of a job getting us back and we no doubt owe our necks to him. I know I'll be forever grateful.

For several years after I got out of the service, I received letters from the War Department. But I had known nothing of what had happened to any of the four of you until your recent packet and letter arrived. Of course, I am sorry about McCoy but I'm happy about you and the others. I finished my missions on Christmas 1944 (the whole crew did) and got back to the States late January '45 and got out on points June 29th, 1945 ...

Again, thanks for writing.

Lee



S. Sgt. Lee Pierce, 1944.

Know your 384th Bomb Group, Inc. Officers and Board of Directors

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The 384th Bomb Group, Inc. is a 501(c)3 non-profit veterans organization based in Ohio. Membership includes the quarterly newsletter for \$25, renewed yearly in January.

PLEASE NOTE: TREASURER UPDATE!

Carol Alfter is again our treasurer so please send dues to:
Carol Alfter
1306 Adams Way
Beavercreek, OH 45434

Please **DO NOT** send mail to the Virginia PO box, we are closing it. We are trying to get all paperwork sent to Carol. If you mailed dues to the VA address, please resend a check to Carol. We will check payments to try to ensure that you do not pay twice for 2020. If a double payment is made, we will shred the check rather than mail it back. We apologize for any inconvenience and hope to get this resolved soon.

Maintenance Donations for 384th BG Memorial at Grafton Underwood

Kevin Flecknor (with help, especially given recent health issues) continues to do a super job maintaining the memorial.

He keeps eyes on the Memorial and immediately makes repairs when 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 U.K.
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 wish to send donations via a check, 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

**384TH BOMB GROUP, INC.
1306 ADAMS WAY
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We’re on the Web at: www.384thbombgroup.com