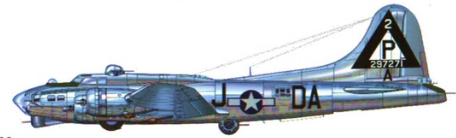




384th Bomb Group, Inc. News & Journal



"Keep The Show On The Road..."

September 2020

Mission of the Month: Second Schweinfurt, "Black Thursday"

With this issue of the 384th newsletter, we debut a new feature, Mission of the Month, a look back at missions that were pivotal in the fighting history of the 384th Bomb Group.

Ball bearings – small, machined orbs that made the Fuhrer's forces move by reducing friction in the joints of deadly engines, tanks and other weapons of war – were frequently the target of the Eighth Air Force during 1943 and 1944. During August and October 1943, two major raids against ball bearing factories in the German city of Schweinfurt became legendary for the damage they inflicted on U.S. bombers.

For the 384th Bomb Group, "Second Schweinfurt," the Oct. 14, 1943 return raid to the main German ball bearing production site, took on special meaning for several reasons. Dubbed "Black Thursday" for the heavy losses to the attacking B-17 force, Second Schweinfurt was devastating to the 384th as well. It was mission 32 for the 384th, and mission 115 for the Eighth.

Leading the attack as commander of the 40th Bomb Wing was Col. Bud Peaslee, who had led the 384th since its formation. A dearly loved leader, he had moved to his new role two weeks before the Schweinfurt mission. (The 384th, as part of the 41st Combat Wing, arrived over the target in a wave after the 40th Combat Wing.) Of 21 B-17s that took off from Grafton-Underwood, six were lost to enemy action, three crews bailed out over England on their return, and five aborted. Only five aircraft completed the mission as briefed.

Across the Eighth, 300 heavy bombers assembled for the mission. Sixty didn't return. And 17 crash-landed in England.

At the time, this was the largest mission of the air war. The stream of bombers spread over an estimated 800 miles and statisticians would later calculate the battle raged in the air for more than three hours. They also calculated that just about one-tenth of the bomber force returned to their bases without battle damage.



The Sad Sack crew, 546th squadron, 1943.

With the staggering losses across the Eighth, morale fell. Many felt that the Schweinfurt raids did little to stop German ball bearing production. After the war, it became clear that the raid, damaging as it was to the Eighth, had crippled two-thirds of Schweinfurt's production. Still, the Germans had begun substituting "slide" bearings for the loss of ball bearings, and as well, had moved ball bearing production to smaller sites more difficult for American bombers to cripple.

Among the 384th's losses was B-17 F 42-30196, named "Sad Sack" and piloted by Lt. Larry Keller. Attacked by German fighters, witnesses reported that it blew up at 15,000 feet and crashed at Würzburg, Germany. In addition to Keller, copilot Lt. Marion Odell, navigator Lt. Jerome Hart, bombardier Lt. Kenneth Elbert Gross, flight engineer Sgt. Virgilio Jacoby and ball turret gunner Sgt. Harry McClean were killed. The remaining crew became POWs.

— Paul Furiga

Yet Another Mission of the Month ...

Since this is our fall newsletter, here is another notable autumn mission from the 384th's service in 1943 and 1944:

November 30, 1944: Forty-four aircraft made this mission to Zeitz, Germany. On this mission, two aircraft were lost to flak and two crash-landed in Allied territory in France. Crew on a fifth bailed out but the aircraft returned to base (see S. Sgt. Lee Peirce's remembrance, June 2020 newsletter). This mission is most notable for the fate of the Hugh Evans crew. Their plane, damaged by flak, force-landed near Rebgeshain, Germany. The crew survived, but four were murdered by the Nazi Ortsgruppenleiter in Beltershain: pilot Lt. Hugh Evans, copilot Lt. Thomas Kohlhaas, flight engineer S. Sgt. Milton Erich and ball turret gunner S. Sgt. John Bellovary; the others became POWs.

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2020 Calendar

8th Air Force Historical Society 2020 Reunion, POSTPONED, see P. 4

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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FLAK House Corner: Furzedown House, Stockbridge

For U.S. Army Air Force combat air crews in the United Kingdom, home leave was impossible. Doctors responsible for their well-being believed the next best thing would be rest homes that provided tranquility, comfort and freedom from military routine (and of course combat stresses). Over the course of the air war, the Eighth Air Force found that this type of rest was best achievable at English country houses or hotels.

Aircrew, at least once during a tour, came for a week away from the horrors of war. After a rest, commanders and medical staff hoped the fliers would return to their units refreshed.

Many 384th crews took these trips, typically after their first 10 missions. Unlike many other activities, rest home trips were often taken as a crew – enlisted and officers together.

On arrival, fliers were provided with civilian clothes. Uniforms were worn only for dinner. Air Service Command supplied an administrative commanding officer, adjutant and enlisted helpers. A medical officer, rotated each week from operational units, provided emergency care or medical advice.

American Red Cross girls acted as hostesses, supervising recreation and dining. The Red

Cross also employed the civilian staff to run the house and maintain the grounds.



Lt. Gene Goodrick, pilot and commander of the Goodrick crew, at Furzedown House, likely fall 1944

with extensive gardens and peaceful surroundings – an excellent location for a USAAF Rest Home.

Furzedown House joined the program on 26th June 1944. It was set up to accommodate 25 officers and was allocated to the 1st Bomb Division.

As has been the case with many large, country houses since World War II, Furzedown House has been split into a number of individual apartments. Although the interior has been altered beyond recognition, the façade has changed very little. —Fred Preller

Who's in the 384th Database? Here are some answers to that question

Spoiler Alert: There are almost 8,000 names, from many sources, all initially entered by hand. The database is not quite perfect, but it is definitely getting better on a daily basis, thanks to the website team and reams of official documents from the National Archives.

Easy question, right? All the servicemen that served in the 384th, of course. But wait, is that really so? And where did we find all the names?

The online 384th BG Personnel database was started in the mid-naughts using 384th members' names taken from Ken Decker's "Memories..." book (with his permission), from Ken's shot down crew lists – I put my Dad in as record #1, of course. We did this to see what worked (from a database perspective) and what needed improvement. Then I received a "small" set of names – about 1,500-2,000 I believe, and a little later I received another much larger set from John Edwards (Group Historian, in case you didn't remember). These were all put into the 384th personnel database and everything was fine. NOT! We ran into the "duplicate record" problem in a big way, and then of course we realized that we had a problem with different ways of expressing the name of one person: is this "J Johnson" the same as "James W Johnson" or perhaps "Johnny Johnson" – maybe "Jack Johnson?" And what about misspellings, since they were all manually entered? Pity the poor website team.

Fortunately, we were able to resolve most of those problems, although we continue to turn up more on a regular basis. There were a lot of them, but the database provided ways of searching to find potential duplicates, etc., so the biggest part of the problem just took a few months to resolve. Getting a little creative with searching using "wild cards" in the search led to identifying a lot of misspellings, too. However, to this day we still find duplicates, questionable spellings, and names of those we are unable to confirm as serving with the 384th.

On the other hand, some men remained missing – from the database, that is. Now when we started the database, we focused on the combat crewmembers, which were pretty easy to document. The clerks, cooks, MPs, mechanics, armorers – in other words, the guys who made the place run – were a lot harder to identify and it was hard to know if we should look for more, and where. A lot of those names came from the fellows appearing in Special Orders for assignments, leaves, promotions, etc., with more information from the 384th combat records we obtained in multiple trips to the National Archives in College Park, MD. But we knew some were still missing. Keith Ellefson, having served in the Army (a one-time First Sergeant), suggested we look for something called "Morning Reports." "Morning Reports?" I said. It turns out that every Army unit prepares a Morning Report daily detailing all personnel activity – assignments, transfers, promotions, furlough/leave, sick time. We had pretty much gotten all the 384th records from the National Archives we had visited, so I asked how did we overlook them? Answer: because they are in the National Archives in St. Louis, MO. So, we went there.

Using Morning Reports (and some payroll records found in St. Louis) we are closing in on validating everyone who served with the Group, including those who temporarily served to help start the Group in Wendover – their efforts contributed to Group success, too – and those who joined the Group after the cessation of hostilities. The period of service runs from December 1942, when the 384th formed, to the end of February 1946, when it was inactivated.

So, you see it is our intention to have everyone in the database who was in the 384th, and we continue to get closer and closer to that goal. One problem we see that will limit our efforts is that some Morning Reports, Payroll Records, and Special Orders have not yet been located, in the National Archives or elsewhere.

A final tip: when searching for someone (from the website home page, for instance), do not spell out the name fully! Looking for "Schrodkawa Avie Pleibwitz"? DO NOT type that all in; just search for First Name "s" and Last Name "pl" (case does not matter) because you really cannot rely on the Group and Squadron clerks to get it exactly right – and then the website team would have had to type it in correctly, too. The search will return all names that match, and maybe you will discover another duplicate record that you can bring to our attention, which would be great!

Next newsletter: "The Sortie Report Project," or "Who Wants to Enter 100,000 Records in the Database – BY HAND?"

— Fred Preller

The screenshot shows the website for the 384th Bombardment Group (Heavy). The header includes navigation links: 384th Home, WWII COMBAT, WWII INFO, RESOURCES, PHOTO GALLERY, SITE INFO, and 384TH BG INC. Below the header is a red banner with the text "Grafton Underwood, England (Station 106) 1943-1945". The main title is "384th Bombardment Group (Heavy)" with a logo on the left and a "P" logo on the right. Below the title is the slogan "Keep The Show On The Road". The main content area is titled "Personnel Database Search" and contains instructions: "For best results, enter ONLY the first ONE or TWO letters of the first and/or last names of a 384th Bomb Group member. Look up any 384th Veteran you know and help me complete his information. Contact Webmaster for assistance." There are input fields for "First Name:" and "Last Name:" with a "LOOKUP INDIVIDUAL IN PERSONNEL DATABASE" button below them. Below the search fields is a section titled "Do you have information about a 384th Veteran?" with instructions: "After checking what we have in our personnel database, please supply any missing information using the Standard Personnel Database Questionnaire, available for download as an MS WORD file or as a PDF file." At the bottom of the page, there is a note: "Personnel database contents courtesy of John Edwards, and many others."

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 September 2020.

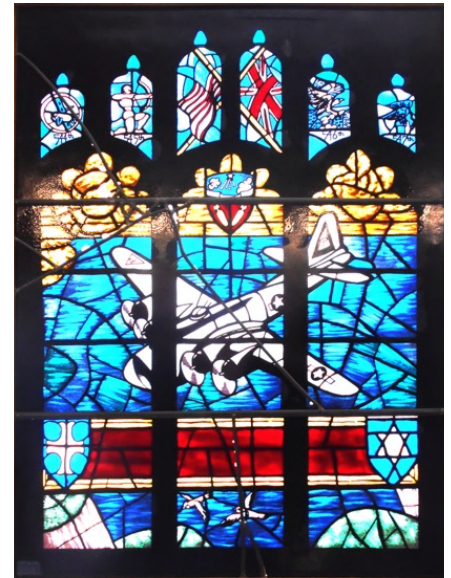
T. Sgt. Joseph E. Goode, flight engineer, top turret gunner, 544th squadron, 36 missions, 25 September 1944–19 February 1945, died 12 October 2019, aged 100.

S. Sgt. Martin L. Parisot, a tail gunner with the Bigelow crew of the 547th squadron, went down with the crew on their second mission, 12 August 1943. Eight of the crew became POWs; two were KIA. Martin died 24 July 2020, aged 99.

Lt. Wallace A. Storey, co-pilot, then pilot, 545th Squadron, 35 missions, 26 August 1944–8 January 1945, died 4 September 2020, aged 97.

S. Sgt. Carroll Raymond York, tail gunner, 547th Squadron, 27 missions, 17 January–17 April 1945 (last bombing mission over Germany), died 23 August 2020, aged 95.

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).



September 2020

Eighth Air Force Historical Society reschedules 2020 annual meeting to 2022; 2021 meeting is in Savannah

This news comes to us from Travis Chapman, board member of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society:

"I am asking you to share this message with your 8th AFHS Group. The Board held a Skype meeting on August 9 and it was decided to postpone the Memphis Reunion to October 19-23, 2022. We are not meeting in Memphis this year but will next meet October 27-31, 2021 in Savannah. Obviously, this decision was necessitated by the realities of Covid-19. We are investigating a Zoom meeting platform for Saturday, October 24, 2020 so that the members of the Society can touch base via this format. More details will be forthcoming."



As 384th Bomb Group members may recall from our last issue, our annual meeting for 2020 is also in the process of being rescheduled. Our organizers, led by Amy Meighan (daughter of Col. Nathan H. Mazer), will work hard to step things back by one year to 2021. Amy reports there may be slight changes, but she plans to keep as much of the original plan as possible.

Highlights of what organizers are planning, as they begin rebooking in January:

- 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.

New Feature: Remembering Those Who Didn't Come Home

Beginning with this issue, we debut another feature dedicated to 384th crew who never came home. Thanks to the efforts of 384th NextGen member Cindy Bryan, we are sharing stories about these heroes from her website, where the original version of this story (and many more researched by Cindy) can be found, thearrowheadclub.com.

November 26, 1943: Sgt. Maurice V. Henry and Sgt. James F. Bucher, lost at sea

James F. Bucher (waist gunner) and Maurice V. Henry (engineer/top turret gunner) were on their third mission with the William Featherson Gilmore crew aboard [Barrel House Bessie](#). The target was the city center of Bremen, Germany. With flak damage, Gilmore ditched in the North Sea near the English coast. Seven of the crew were rescued. Three died of exposure and Bucher and Henry's bodies were never recovered. Henry was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

"For valor above and beyond the call of duty ... T/Sgt. Henry's display of courage, coolness, skill and self-negation in the presence of great hazard and uncertainty, with utter disregard of his own personal safety, made possible the rescue of seven members of his crew although by his actions he is missing and presumed to have perished.

Approaching the target on its bombing run, T/Sgt. Henry's aircraft suffered an engine failure in two outboard engines and began to fall behind the formation. The crew jettisoned the bombs to lighten the load, and intercept the formation, but one fully armed bomb hung up in the racks. Despite intense attacks by enemy aircraft, evasive action, and the extreme cold, T/Sgt. Henry entered the open bomb bay and released the bomb. About that time the number three engine was set on fire and it was decided to run for a cloud bank some distance away.

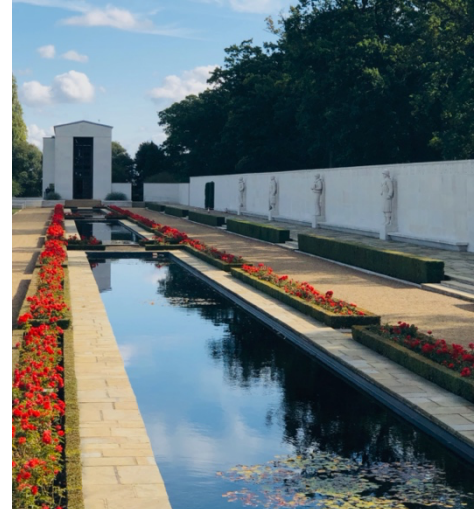
At this point, T/Sgt. Henry destroyed one enemy aircraft and damaged another from his position in the top turret. Despite violent evasive action, the enemy fighter attacks increased in intensity and many damaging hits were made on the aircraft. The oxygen system was shot out, the pilot's aileron control and both pilot and co-pilot's rudder control were destroyed, and the entire electrical system including instruments and turret control were made inoperative.

An incendiary shell struck the left side of the cockpit, slightly wounding the pilot and setting the cockpit afire. T/Sgt. Henry extinguished the fire although ill and vomiting from the acrid smoke. The enemy fighters were evaded in the clouds, but the aircraft was losing altitude and due to the failure of the inter-communications system T/Sgt. Henry made repeated trips through the ship to carry out orders of the pilot and to supervise the jettisoning of equipment to lighten the load.

Breaking out of the clouds at 6000 feet directly over the city of Emden, the aircraft was immediately engaged and further damaged by heavy and accurate anti-aircraft fire, but by strong evasive action, escaped to the sea. By this time, the number four engine was completely out and it was impossible to feather the propellor. Number three engine had been started again but was giving only spasmodic power. Shortly thereafter, both number one and number two engines cut out and T/Sgt. Henry quickly and with great presence of mind assembled the crew in the radio compartment and prepared them for ditching.

All radio equipment had been destroyed and it was impossible to transmit an S.O.S. A small boat was seen in the sea and T/Sgt. Henry immediately produced a flare and Very pistol with which to signal it. With no power, the pilot landed in the general area of the surface vessel, the aircraft breaking in two just aft of the radio compartment. T/Sgt. Henry assisted the other members of the crew to leave the ship and was himself the last to abandon it, renouncing all regard for his own survival.

He delayed his exit further by searching for and finding the emergency radio which he took with him into the icy water. Due to the battle damage to the life rafts, the heavy swell of the waves, and the shock of entering the extremely cold water, members of the crew could do nothing to assist each other. T/Sgt. Henry, still grasping the emergency radio which he considered vitally necessary to rescue, and despite his valiant struggle, was washed away and lost."



The tablets of the missing, beside the reflecting pool at Cambridge American Cemetery.

The missing air crew report also noted that only one life raft inflated and due to the extreme cold of the water, Bucher was also not able to get into a life raft and was also washed away and lost. James F. Bucher and Maurice V. Henry are listed on the Tablets of the Missing at Cambridge American Cemetery, Cambridge, England.

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

Chairman – Peter Bielskis (Veteran)
President – Frank Alfter (NexGen)
Board Member – Len Estrin (Veteran)
Board Member – William O’Leary (Veteran)
Board Member – Sheldon Vernon (Veteran)
Board Member – Carol Alfter (NextGen)
Board Member – Dennis Bielskis (NexGen)
Board Member – Chris Wilkinson (NexGen)
Interim 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 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 Virginia 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

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“Keep The Show On The Road...”

We’re on the Web at: www.384thbombgroup.com