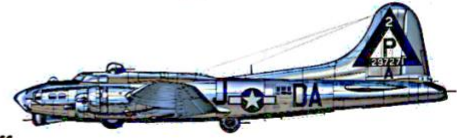




# 384th Bomb Group, Inc. News & Journal



*"Keep The Show On The Road..."*

June 2022

## U.S. fundraising for Grafton Underwood museum tops initial goal

*Meanwhile, volunteers make continuing progress at future site, revealing more history*

The U.S. effort to financially support a museum honoring the 384<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group at its former Grafton Underwood home has surpassed its initial fundraising goal of \$30,000.

The total includes three \$5,000 pledges, and a \$2,000 Group contribution. Half of the total came from 10 donations of \$1,000 or more. We are now prepared to match whatever the Friends of the 384<sup>th</sup> raise to purchase buildings, for a ground lease, and associated costs in the first of a few phases that lead to the eventual completion of a museum.

Neill Howarth of the Friends group reports that financial and legal details are in a good place with Boughton Estate, owner of the site, and talks are ongoing to complete the necessary paperwork to bring the museum to life.

As that work proceeds in the background, the Friends continue efforts to clear the site for the museum. In addition to lots of elbow grease during many "workdays" on what will be the main building for the museum, the former Operations Block, the Friends are turning up other interesting remnants of history that may become part of the final site.

One of the more interesting finds from most recent workdays has been the foundations for the picket post, or guard shack, near the operations block. We're reproducing here a computer rendering of what the building might have looked like in its prime (**below, left**), as well as a group photo of those who've helped uncover the foundation (**below, right**).



If you'd like to support this effort financially, our Board of Directors has established a fundraising program (see **p. 6**) to support the construction of the museum. The Board earnestly urges members (and others) to understand that this endeavor will be the signature achievement we will accomplish with our Friends in the U.K. This opportunity must be seized, we each must dig deep, and provide what help we can to The Friends of the 384<sup>th</sup> to ensure the success of this joint project.

## The latest on our 2022 reunion (with the 8th Air Force Historical Society)

The 48th Annual 8th Air Force Historical Society Reunion will take place Wednesday, 19 October through Sunday, 23 October at the Crystal Gateway Marriott, Arlington, VA.

As we did in 2011, 2016 and 2017, our 384<sup>th</sup> reunion will be held in conjunction with the 8th AFHS event. In 2023, we plan on a U.K. junket and return to Grafton Underwood.

This year, the 384<sup>th</sup> will have a hospitality suite. The full schedule is available at the 8th AFHS website ([8thAFHS.org](http://8thAFHS.org)). Information there includes registration forms with costs for meals and tour options. **Note: You must be a member of the 8th AFHS to attend this event. Dues are \$40 a year.**

The 8th AFHS also recommends booking your hotel first before registering for the reunion. For more information contact Debra Kujawa, Managing Director, at 912-748-8884 or [ManagingDirector@8thAFHS.org](mailto:ManagingDirector@8thAFHS.org)



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## 2022 Calendar

384th BG 2022 reunion will be held, 19-23 October, Washington, D.C. along with The 8th Air Force Historical Society 2022 Reunion, 19-23 October, Washington, D.C.; check for details at <https://www.8thafhs.org/>

## On the Internet

### 384th BG website

*Our internet home, maintained by Fred Preller and team.*

### 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.*

## Contact Us

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## A letter from our president: When we meet again ...

Fellow 384thers, it has been a rough two years, but we did manage to get together at Ogden last fall to unveil Wingy at the Hill Aerospace Museum at Hill AFB, Utah.

That was a fun gathering, although smaller than usual due to prevailing issues. In the meantime, Fred Preller took on raising funds for the future 384th Bomb Group Museum at Grafton Underwood.



At first it seemed the goal of raising \$30,000 on our side of the pond was a target out of range, but Fred pulled it off like magic (**see story, P. 1**).

So, hopefully we can get the funds and help to Neill and his gang to begin the reconstruction and development.

Do you suppose the airlines would let us take shovels and tools with us to our reunion in the U.K. in 2023?

Gathering there is the plan so please join us in Grafton Underwood in fall 2023 (we'll know the dates when we get Duxford's airshow schedule). This year, we are joining the 8th Air Force reunion in

Washington, D.C. where we will hopefully again have the largest group there!

We need to enjoy each other's company like we used to, so please sign up for the D.C. reunion (**below**). There will be plenty to do. Keep the Show on the Road! —Frank Alfter

## Andy Rivera honors 384th by keeping the show on the road

384th member and collector Andy Rivera honors the Lloyd Armstrong crew, specifically Lt. Joseph Van der Haeghen. This original 545th squadron crew was designated "Crew 5" and was first assigned a B-17F they named *Doris Mae*.

Andy has a tribute to the 384th that keeps the show on the road: his vintage Jeep. Andy recently shared "This one is a 1941 Ford GPW, so I named her Doris Mae after their first assigned B-17."



The Jeep represented the 384th in this year's Washington, D.C. Memorial Day parade and will be on the road this summer.

Andy's previous Jeep, a 1945 Willys MB, was also painted in 384th markings. He named it "Joe's Maxine", after Lt. Van der Haeghen's wife, whom he married in 1945.

## TAPS

We have NOT received word of any 384th veteran's passing since our March 2022 newsletter.

If you know of a 384th veteran's passing, please write our editor, Paul Furiga ([paul.furiga@wordwritepr.com](mailto:paul.furiga@wordwritepr.com) or 222 Courtney Place, Wexford, PA 15090), so that we may honor their service and their passing in the newsletter.

June 2022



## How the 384th's radio rebels accessed the truth from inside POW camps

In the 1960s, the American sitcom *Hogan's Heroes* made lighthearted fun of the prisoner of war life many 384th veterans experienced firsthand. My father, 547th squadron bombardier/navigator [Lt. Frank D. Furiga](#), himself a POW, found humor in some aspects of the show (which I watched religiously) but seemed put off by much of the series' story plots.

Only later in life, as I came to understand the true nature of aerial combat and its aftermath, did I begin to understand why my dad wasn't a fan of the idea of turning a POW camp into a setting for laughs. A few aspects he found authentic, though, among them the building of secret radios to monitor news from the outside world.

In the 384th, we know of at least two instances of aircrew assembling crystal radio sets inside POW camps for this purpose.

The crew of *Mad Money II*, a Vega-built B-17F (42-5838) was one of the original 36 B-17s assigned to the 384th in May



The *Mad Money II* museum display in Denmark.

1943. First assigned to the crew of Horace Frink, it was coded SO\*P as part of the 547th squadron. It was the last of the group's original aircraft to go missing on the 4 January 1944 mission to Kiel, Germany. All 10 crew became POW's.

After flak damage and German fighter attacks, pilot Lt. William Kaczaraba made a perfect belly landing on the Asnaes Peninsula in Denmark, southwest of Kalundborg, and the crew set the plane on fire. In prison camp, flexible gunner [S. Sgt. Harry Gilrane](#) managed to build a crystal radio that the 1953 Hollywood movie *Stalag 17* made world famous. The crew's story was also the subject

of *A Dying Breed*, a book published in 2010 by Neal B. Dillon. The radio has been displayed at [Museum Vestsjælland in Denmark](#). Here's a short [YouTube video of the radio](#) with a brief narration by Harry Gilrane.

Frank Alfter, our 384th president, inherited another crystal radio set from his father, [S. Sgt. Glen Alfter](#). Frank's dad was aboard *Big Stupe V* on 13 April 1944 as tail gunner when the 545th squadron B-17G was attacked by fighters and went down near Rambucourt, France. Amazingly, four of the ten crew managed to evade capture (copilot Lt. Walter Mabe, bombardier Lt. John Betolatti, top turret gunner T. Sgt. Samuel Deutsch and ball turret gunner S. Sgt. Robert Bechtel).

For the rest of the crew, it was off to Stalag 17B. Glen Alfter's journey is recounted in a PDF available on the group website, shared by Frank, called *Anatomy of a Shoot-Down*. The document includes pictures from Grafton Underwood, information on the 384th and how it operated, and detailed information on that fateful day when *Big Stupe V* went down.

The radio built in prison camp stayed with Frank's dad and then passed on to Frank. In 1984, Frank donated the radio to the Smithsonian. Unfortunately, he fears the radio may reside in the same massive storeroom that the fictional Ark of the Covenant disappeared into in the final scene of the film *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, as it hasn't been seen since!

Luckily for us, Frank has great pictures of the radio, one of which we are honored to share here.

— Paul Furiga



S. Sgt. Glen Alfter's radio, now residing somewhere at the Smithsonian.



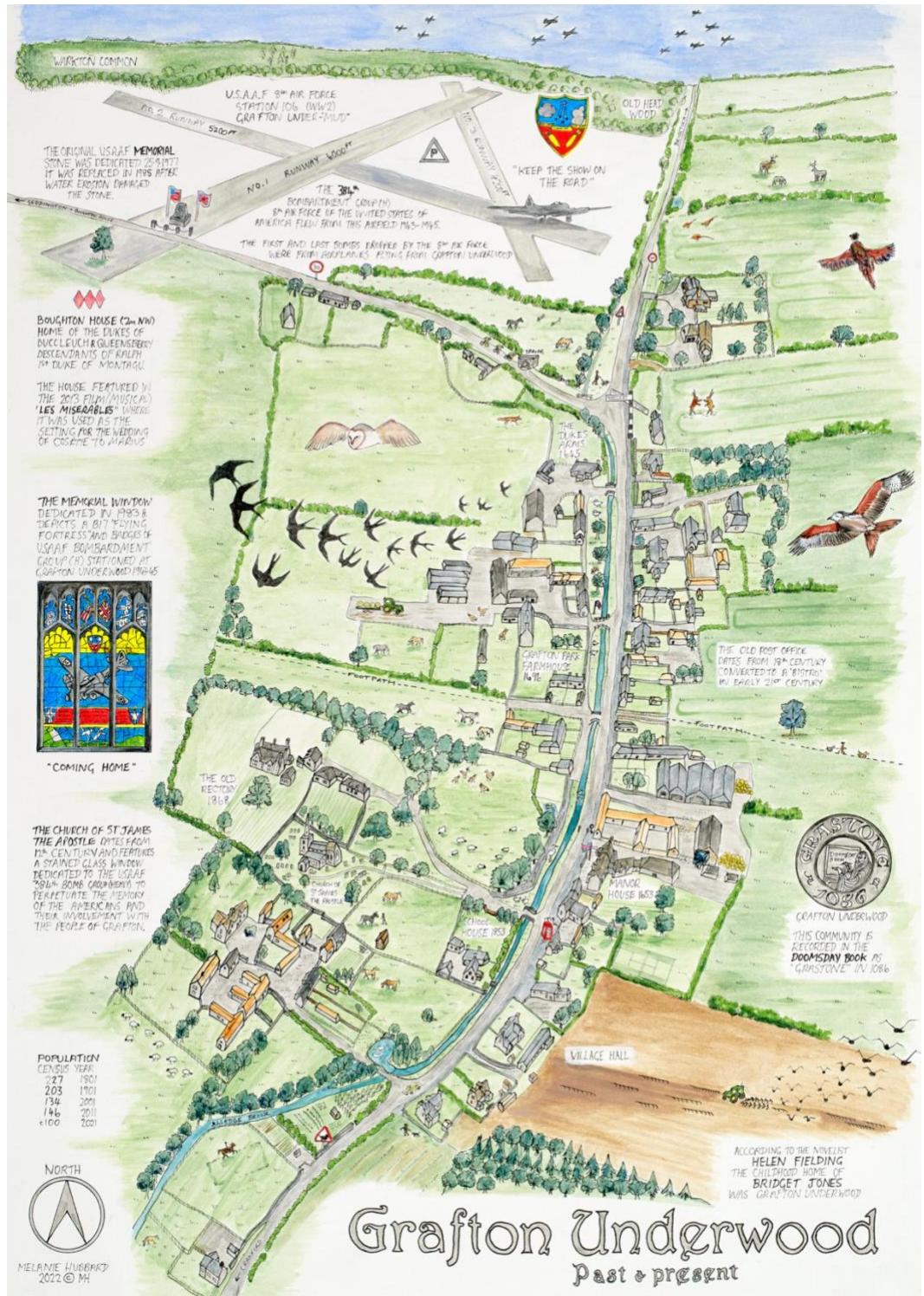
# The Grafton Underwood map that explains it all, thanks to Mel Hubbard

Melanie “Mel” Hubbard lives in the 384th’s Grafton Underwood home and has a hobby she’s sharing with us: her detailed and creative maps.

Her recent depiction of Grafton Underwood caught our eye and she was kind enough to share it. She writes: “The bonds those men must have made in their time together would never have been broken. I knew Quentin (Bland) as he was here when we moved to the village in 2005. He was a lovely man and had so much knowledge.

“My husband Roger and I have no links to the ‘Forces’ but have lived in Grafton for almost 17 years now and our interest has grown from the place, the history and the people around us. We ‘hosted’ Rosie McNair for the 2019 reunion, having made contact with her through Matt Smith and Neill Howarth.

“I have wanted to create an illustrated map of the village for some time, incorporating the airfield and some of its history. It took me a while to work out how to do it, and then to create the painting with some history and stories on it!”



Enough maps have been purchased as of this writing that Mel has been able to donate £150 towards the museum project (see p. 1). She reports that “several copies have made their way to the U.S. to be with families and relatives of those who served.” Mel has also completed a map of Geddington, where 384th personnel frequented the pubs in their down time. Mel will also donate £10 from the sale of each Geddington map to the 384th Bomb group museum project. If you are interested in purchasing a copy of either color A2 map (£75 each), visit Mel on the Internet at [www.Facebook.com/HubbArt](http://www.Facebook.com/HubbArt) or email her at [hubbwebb@aol.com](mailto:hubbwebb@aol.com).

— Paul Furiga



# Shake your tailfeather, Lucky Thirteen, you've got your stinger (back)!

As regular readers know, *Lucky Thirteen* is a 384th Bomb Group B-17F veteran being rebuilt in Asheville, N.C. by the Hangar Thirteen Foundation. We are a small organization but uncompromising in our dedication to accuracy. This attention to detail is extreme, ranging from the major (working radios, autopilot) to the minute (1940s ALCLAD stamps, properly colored gauges). Hangar Thirteen volunteers have consulted on the restoration of *Memphis Belle* (41-24485, 91BG) at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force, with the computer simulation company MicroProse, and on the upcoming Steven Spielberg HBO series, *Masters of the Air*.

Some progress updates:

The biggest news is the acquisition of a tail gun assembly, which arrived on Memorial Day. This stinger-type tail was taken from B-17F 42-30681 of the Eleventh Air Force, which was abandoned over Alaska on 25 September 1943 – the same month *Lucky Thirteen* was shot down. This piece was recovered in 2001 and we have worked hard over the past few years to acquire it. Since 42-30681 was also a late-F model, it is a perfect match for *Lucky Thirteen*.

Another major step has been the center panel mounted between the pilots, which held controls for the bomber's lights, fuel pumps, magnetos, and cowl flaps. The magnetos are of B-17 vintage and cowl flap control (a large, hydraulic assembly) was donated to us new, from old stock. The complex housing for this assembly was expertly recreated by Anton Hermans, a Dutchman currently living in Thailand. We have almost completed locating all the B-17F's correct instruments, and volunteer Bob Hachmann (son of 384th vet S. Sgt Vincent Hachmann) is working on the housing for the main instrument panel (see image at left).



The “new” *Lucky Thirteen* stinger, after clean-up



Beyond the fuselage, rebuilding the gun turrets to operational condition is the single most ambitious aspect of the project. Unable to locate an original, in March we digitally scanned an original top turret tub assembly. This 3D scan will allow our volunteers to reverse engineer the tub, recreating blueprints not seen for nearly 80 years.

Of course, molding and casting a new tub will be an expensive process. Original estimates for the top and ball turrets were somewhere around \$60,000 US each. The rarity of such parts, as well as demand from private collectors, drives up prices. For example, an F-model B-17 ball turret hanger assembly was recently offered to us for \$23,000 US. The price may be huge, but it is the only one still unclaimed. It will take time and support to reach such numbers.

To test the waters, Hangar Thirteen conducted a fundraising campaign throughout April 2022 to raise money for upper turret parts, capping out at some \$3,000 US. Time will tell if we raised enough to purchase all the internal gears. Still, we are optimistic. In June 2021, the top turret base assembly to B-17G 44-6139 (351BG) — which crashed in Belgium on 12 September 1944 — arrived at Hangar Thirteen, and the following September, a group of 384th second-generation members led by Chris Wilkinson donated the correct top turret dome to us. These major steps are encouraging, considering the task ahead. Of course, there are three phases to any difficult task: impossible, difficult, done.

Hangar Thirteen Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and donations are tax deductible. If you can spare a little to help, we can guarantee that you will see the results on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/HangarThirteenFoundation](https://www.facebook.com/HangarThirteenFoundation) and on our website, [HangarThirteen.org](https://www.HangarThirteen.org)

—Gerad Blume

## Know your 384th Bomb Group, Inc. 2022 Officers and Board of Directors

Chairman of the Board	Peter Bielskis
President	Frank Alfter
Senior Vice President	Bill O'Leary
Senior Vice President	Len Estrin
Secretary	Carol Alfter
Treasurer	Ray Lustig
Member at Large	Chris Wilkinson
Member at Large	Dennis Bielskis
Member at Large	Thomas Swift
Member at Large	Fred Preller
Member/Newsletter Editor	Paul Furiga

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

### 2022 DUES INFORMATION

Our 2022 treasurer is Ray Lustig.

Please send dues to:

Ray Lustig, Treasurer, 384th Bomb Group, Inc.  
128 Ulster Avenue  
Walden, NY 12586

Questions? Contact Ray at [rlustig@hvc.rr.com](mailto:rlustig@hvc.rr.com)

Thank you for your help in ensuring that the group activities are financially supported.

## Here's how to contribute to the 384th Bombardment Group Museum at GU

Now that The Friends of the 384th can receive donations for the 384th Bomb Group Museum, the 384th Bomb Group, Inc. is able to receive, accumulate and segregate donations until such time as it is appropriate to disburse funds to build the Museum.

We encourage all who care about the 384th and the service and sacrifice of those who served to donate. All donations – no matter how large or how small – will help bring this museum to life.

You have two options to contribute: PayPal or personal check.

Send via PayPal to [Payments@384thBombGroup.com](mailto:Payments@384thBombGroup.com).

Or mail your personal check to our treasurer:

Ray Lustig, Treasurer, 384th Bomb Group, Inc.  
128 Ulster Avenue  
Walden, NY 12586

Be sure to add a note to your PayPal transaction or the **Memo** line on your check, that the contribution is for the **Museum**.

**384TH BOMB GROUP, INC.**  
**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)