



# 384th Bomb Group, Inc. News & Journal



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

November 2022

## 384th joins 8th AFHS in Washington for a reunion to remember

*Memorial and museum tours, dinners, chance encounters make for a capital visit*

Our 384th reunion, held 19-23 October in conjunction with the 8th Air Force Historical Society gathering, brought us to the nation's capital, providing the nearly 20 members of the 384th with a memorable experience and many opportunities to connect, reconnect and build upon the relationships that Keep The Show on the Road.

Among the highlights of the five-day event in Washington, D.C. was a private tour of the Smithsonian's Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center at Washington Dulles International Airport. In the restoration area, our group had a chance to see several interesting projects underway, including restoration of a BF-109 and also *Shoo Shoo Baby*, one of the few surviving B-17s that actually saw combat during World War II (see another picture from this visit, [page 2](#)).

A tour visit to Arlington National Cemetery was so memorable that some of our group made multiple visits from our headquarters hotel (more on [page 4](#)). Another tour took us to the many monuments on the National Mall, including the World War II memorial. In our 384th hospitality room, we also had a great Hangar Thirteen display (more on [page 6](#)).

When groups such as the 384th attend the 8th AFHS reunion, we are offered the opportunity to have a "rendezvous dinner" with our attendees only; this year, we were joined for our rendezvous dinner by the contingent representing the [385th Bomb Group](#). This group also flew B-17s, from Great Ashfield. We have extended a warm invitation to this group to join us for our next visit to the U.K., as Great Ashfield is not that far from Grafton Underwood, and we see the opportunity to join forces and enjoy economies of scale for several planned events, including a visit to the Imperial War Museum at Duxford for the [Battle of Britain Air Show](#).

The board has decided the "initial" dates for our return to Grafton Underwood (see story, [Page 3](#)), where we expect to see quite a difference in the clearing and preparation for the museum that the Friends of the 384th are shepherding to completion over the next few years.



## The digital future of our newsletter (and other publications we respect)

During the 48th Annual 8th Air Force Historical Society Reunion business meeting October 22, the society took a difficult step with its well-regarded glossy magazine: It will no longer be printed. This change will save the 8th AFHS \$25,000 a year. That figure, by the way, is a 40 percent increase over production costs from just three years ago!

For a few years, the board of the 384th has also weighed whether to publish digitally only, or primarily. We've now decided to publish digitally and provide **printed copies to those who request them**. Our mailing list, understandably, is much smaller than that of the 8th AFHS, so the impact on members should be much smaller. And there will be several benefits:

- You will receive the newsletter more quickly via e-mail, as it takes time (and effort) to print, affix mailing labels, etc.
- Live links in the electronic version will take you to all the internet resources referenced in a newsletter issue.
- The cost of printing and mailing the newsletter is also an important expense for the 384th. And it's just a fact: many mailed copies are returned every issue because we don't have the right addresses, so we'll save money.
- And because the newsletter will now be primarily digital, your editor will no longer be thinking about the added cost of mailing and printing (in other words, more content, more pictures, more stories every issue!).

*Paul Furiga*

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## 2022-2023 Calendar

The 384th BG Memorial Junket XII is planned for Thursday, 14 September through Tuesday, 19 September 2023. See **page 3** story and check the 384th website and our Facebook page (below) for updates.

## 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

384th President  
Frank Alfter  
[President@384thBombGroup.com](mailto:President@384thBombGroup.com)

Editor Paul Furiga  
[newsletter@384thbombgroup.com](mailto:newsletter@384thbombgroup.com)  
222 Courtney Place  
Wexford, PA 15090  
412-427-0597

## From our president: Our 2023 Junket plans

Fellow 384thers, what a wonderful time was had by all who attended our joint reunion with the 8th AFHS in Washington, DC! It is always so good to see familiar faces again and learn more about our Bomb Group's history. It was especially nice to have Neill and Bridget Howarth with us and we will see them again in September.



September will see the Group's 12<sup>th</sup> trip across the pond to Grafton Underwood and Carol has been working closely with Helen, our UK travel company rep in planning another Junket as good or better than 2019. Hoping to include our newfound friends of the 385th we are including a visit to their home base at Great Ashfield. The itinerary will also include, among other interesting visits, the Duxford

airshow, afternoon tea at the Swan in Lavenham, and of course a day at Grafton Underwood.

At this point I should forewarn all about the correct pronunciation of Grafton Underwood, as provided by Neill at our DC reunion. It is "Grawfton" underwood.

At GU, we will begin with a wreath laying ceremony at the monument and visit St James the Apostle church with the famous stained-glass window, "Coming Home." We'll get a detailed look at the great work Neill and the Friends of the 384th are doing to preserve/restore the Operations Building. Some of us may even help with the work!

Those on Memorial Junket XI will remember what a great, awesome reunion that was. So many of you were eager to do it again, right away. Covid got in our way, but we are back on for 2023, and I feel very optimistic about Junket XII. You will not want to miss it. So, please join us on this momentous journey back in time to when our fathers, grandfathers, uncles and friends flew from there against Nazi tyranny. —Frank Alfter

## Potential partners and special guests for our 2023 Junket

As noted elsewhere (see articles, **page 1** and **page 3**), we have invited the 385th Bomb Group to join us on our 2023 Junket.

The 385th was well represented in Washington. The 385th has a history of visits to England, reunions and other activities.

As well, Brig. Gen. Paul W. Tibbets IV, USAF Ret., may be joining us, along with his family. Tibbets is the grandson of Brig. Gen. Paul W. Tibbets Jr., who flew the B-29 Enola Gay on the first nuclear mission in World War II. Tibbets Jr. also has a tie to Grafton Underwood; while a member of the 97th Bomb Group, he flew the first B-17 mission over occupied Europe from Grafton Underwood (for nearly all of its time in the U.K., the 97th was based at Polebrook).

Frank Alfter, our president, and Neill Howarth, of Friends of the 384th, talked with Tibbets several times during the 8th AFHS reunion, including during our tour of the Smithsonian's Steven F. Udvar-Hazy museum annex (see picture above of Paul W. Tibbets IV with Neill and 384th member Rosie McNair at the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center, in front of Enola Gay, flown by Tibbets' grandfather). Stay tuned for more on both of these opportunities!



## 384th plans September 2023 Memorial Junket XII to Grafton Underwood

Board and member conversations at the recent reunion in Washington, D.C., and over the last three years, have confirmed the broad interest of the 384th Bomb Group to return to Grafton Underwood in 2023.

The dates for our return have been “tentatively” set for **Thursday 14 September through Tuesday 19 September**. While Carol Alfter has begun working with Helen Warrington of Arena Travel, many details remain to be determined, especially whether the 385th Bomb Group will join us, and how their participation will affect pricing and plans. As well, based upon previous Junkets, it’s highly likely that visitors from the U.S. will either plan to spend time in the U.K. for some days before and/or after the actual Junket.

The Thursday-Tuesday initial dates are based upon the 384th’s historical approach, most recently in 2019, to the activities during the Junket. These are expected to begin with Wednesday arrivals for our U.S. members (in 2019 we stayed at a hotel near Heathrow that night) before venturing north by motor coach to establish our home base at a hotel in the Cambridge area.

From the hotel, all of our activities will be by motor coach. It’s highly likely we will have a service and wreath-laying at the Grafton Underwood memorial on Saturday 16 September, plus likely excursions to old haunts such as the Star in Geddington (once frequented by 384th personnel). We’re planning on attending the excellent Battle of Britain air show at the Imperial War Museum’s Duxford location on Sunday 17 September, for which we were able to obtain Gold Experience VIP seating and privileges in 2019; this meant we were under cover in case of bad weather, had access to upgraded food and restroom facilities, and we were right on the flight line! We’re also working on a probable Monday visit to the Cambridge American Cemetery, where several 384th personnel are buried. In 2019, we laid wreaths and spent some time there in the beautiful chapel as well as honoring the graves of our 384th lost in action and still missing.

A true highlight of Memorial Junket XII will be the ability to tour the progress on the museum site now underway by the Friends of the 384th. Great progress has been made in the clearing of the site and with the financial and legal structures

necessary to make the museum possible.

As well, members of the 384th have been generous in donating personal funds to make the museum possible (**please see last page for donation details**). At press time, those donations from our members and friends have topped \$40,000. Thank you!

Please stay tuned for more information on the Junket as plans are finalized. We’ll be sharing details with you

*Paul Furiga*



**384th veterans on the 2019 Junket at the memorial event: H.J. Kolinek, Hank Sienkiewicz, Len Estrin**



**Brick reclamation is a key activity at the 384th museum site, making it possible to add to the museum with bricks used in original construction. The Ops Block, at rear, is a main museum**

in the newsletter. For up-to-the-minute developments on Junket plans, please check the 384th Bomb Group website maintained by Fred Preller or the 384th Facebook group.

## Our 2022 384th Bomb Group reunion ... in pictures

The photos on these pages are courtesy of Gerad Blume, Neill Howarth, Rosie McNair, your editor and others who attended our 2022 reunion 19-23 October in Washington, D.C. Thank you all!



**Top:** The scene inside the 384th Bomb Group hospitality suite at the Crystal Gateway Marriott



**Left:** 384th board member Tom Swift, 384th President Frank Alfter, Friends of the 384th Chairman Neill Howarth and 384th board member and webmaster Fred Preller

**Bottom:** A view of the World War II memorial from the “official” tour taken by one of several 384th attendees ... there were also several “unofficial” visits to the Lincoln Memorial, Washington Memorial and Capitol since our hotel was close!



## We clean up well: Pictures from the 8th AFHS Saturday night dinner

**Top right:** The ladies of the 384th – Billie Swift, Cindy Bryan, Bridget Howarth, Carol Alfter, Gail Preller, Susan Taylor, Rosie McNair



**Middle:** Fred Preller, Gail Preller, Ray Lustig, Susan Taylor.

**Bottom left:** Chris Wilkinson, Carol Alfter, Frank Alfter, Andrew Gilmore

**Bottom right:** Paul Furiga, Cindy Bryan, Bill Bryan.



## Hangar Thirteen makes a special appearance at 8th AFHS reunion

If seeing is believing, then it's surely time to believe in the [Hangar Thirteen](#) project that's deep into the process of rebuilding a famous B-17F of the 384th Bomb Group, *Lucky Thirteen*.

To demonstrate the progress of the project, Gerad Blume — key evangelist, official historian and hands-on participant — traveled to D.C. with his dad Gerald, toting a nearly complete cockpit instrument panel that they shared with our members and interested visitors in the 384th hospitality suite.

The instrument panel itself is fashioned from wood — that's the only "mockup" portion of the panel. 384th next gen Bob Hachmann CAD modeled the dual mag switch linkage and it was 3D printed in aluminum. The panel and console was fabricated by Anton Hermans, a Dutchman in Thailand, whose family was deeply affected by the Chowhound food drops at the end of the war. The VHF control bracket was fabricated by Stijn Claus, a Belgian who runs the B-17 Parts Project. Gerad did the rest. Bob is now fabricating the housing for the instrument panel.

Hangar Thirteen was founded by Ray Moore as a means of paying tribute to the thousands of U.S. airmen who fought in history's largest aerial confrontation. Inspired by his great uncle, Marvin Hudson, Ray began rebuilding *Lucky Thirteen*. His great uncle was the line chief of the 546th Squadron, and the sole surviving photo of *Lucky Thirteen* shows him supervising repair work nearby.

*Lucky Thirteen* will be unique — one of only two surviving late B-17Fs, the only one to have seen combat. She will be the only surviving B-17 to pay tribute to those aircrews who fought and died in the bombing campaigns against aircraft factories and ball-bearing plants in the autumn of 1943.

Hangar Thirteen is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and donations of money and parts are tax-deductible (and greatly appreciated). You can learn more by clicking on the Hangar Thirteen link above or by visiting [Hangar Thirteen on Facebook](#), where Gerad posts updates quite frequently.

In the pictures at right, 384th board member and webmaster Fred Preller explains the cockpit display to a visitor in the 384th hospitality suite; at bottom right, a close-up of the center console that has been fashioned through a combination of sources.



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## Clearing reveals more of 384th museum site at Grafton Underwood; anticipation grows

Friends of the 384th chairman Neill Howarth had several in-person conversations about progress at the future 384th museum site during the recent 8th AFHS reunion in Washington.

Neill reports that details for legal sign-off are in progress. Volunteers are getting ready for heavy plant machinery at the site and are preparing for 2023, which will be the 80th anniversary of the 384th at Grafton Underwood. The plan is to mark the anniversary during the September 16 Junktet XII visit. Thanks to the work of dedicated volunteers, the Operations Building that will be at the core of the planned museum complex has been cleared and secured for eventual restoration into a proper home for the U.K. history of the 384th Bomb Group. As that work continues, the group is tackling the area around that building.

Here are recent before and after photos (2021/2022) to demonstrate the considerable progress in the area adjacent to the Ops Building — it's remarkable. **To donate to the museum effort, see the box on page 8 for details.**



## Seeking a way to preserve 384th history? Consider Wendover's museum

Because the 384<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group was formed and initially trained at Wendover Army Airfield in Utah, our friend Jim Petersen (our host for in October 2021 for our reunion, and President of the Historic Wendover Airfield Foundation) wants our members to know: "If anyone has stories or photos or memorabilia related to the 384th that they would like to have preserved in the museum, we'd be grateful for any of that."

There are already numerous 384<sup>th</sup> artifacts at Wendover, so this is a good option to consider if you, your family or friends are pondering the difficult decision of how best to preserve and honor the service and sacrifice of your 384th service member.



At right, 384th member Cookie Samuels sports a commemorative Wendover shirt during the 384th's 2021 reunion visit to Wendover.

## TAPS

November 2022

We do our best to keep everyone updated when a 384th veteran flies west. Here are the latest obituaries, as of November 2022.

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.

## Volunteers with technical experience welcomed for 384th Bomb Group website assistance

As the technical possibilities for new media (video, etc.) continue to expand, we need help with the technical end of our 384thBombGroup.com website.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the 384th Bomb Group (Heavy) website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 384th Home, WWII COMBAT, WWII INFO, RESOURCES, PHOTO GALLERY, 384TH IN THE UK, and 384TH BG, INC. Below this is a red banner with the text "Grafton Underwood, England (Station 106) 1943-1945". The main header features the group's crest, the name "384th Bombardment Group (Heavy)", and a "P" logo. A tagline reads "Keep The Show On The Road".

The main content area includes a "MISSION FOR TODAY" section stating "Today is November 20th" and "The Group flew one mission on this date:" followed by a table:

Year	Mission	Primary Target
1944	227	Target: Buer Synthetic Oil Plant Type: Oil Industry Location: Geisenkirchen, Germany

Below the table is a "SEARCHES" section with a "Personnel Search" form and a "WEBSITE" section with a "Search This Website" form. A "MUSEUM US FUNDRAISING PROGRESS" section shows "58 Donors" and "Over \$30,000 Raised" towards a "\$30,000 Goal".

He would never say so, but your editor will: the fabulous website is primarily the product of the hard work and diligent strategic thinking of 384th board member Fred Preller.

Much of the content for the website initially came from a dedicated group of volunteers (thank you all, starting with founder Marc Poole!) who were willing to visit the National Archives and other institutions to retrieve, digitize and organize so much of our group's history.

Over the years, the site has grown from contributions of members and friends with personal histories, photos and links to other resources. There is more we can do and that require additional brains, hands and skills to work with Fred, who maintains the site as his personal effort to Keep The Show On The Road.

Please spread the word among people you know. Use the [website Webmaster email link](#) to inquire.

## 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
Secretary	Carol Alfter
Treasurer	Ray Lustig
Member	Chris Wilkinson
Member	Dennis Bielskis
Member	Thomas Swift
Member	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)