



384th Bomb Group, Inc. News & Journal



"Keep The Show On The Road..."

September 2023

We're off to England! Junket XII brings 35 to Grafton Underwood

Battle of Britain air show, tours of other airfields plus memorial and museum visits

On 13 September, 34 friends and family of the 384th Bomb Group and 384th veteran S. Sgt. Henry Kolinek (35 missions as a tail gunner with the 545th squadron) will gather in Cambridge, England for Junket XII, our 2023 reunion.

Here's a look at our six-day itinerary and highlights:

13 September: We'll gather at the Sheraton Heathrow to travel by coach to The Hilton Cambridge City Centre, our base for the trip, for a welcome dinner.

14 September: We visit Parham Airfield & Museum (390th Bomb Group), an excellent restored Eighth Air Force base (**see photo, right**), which also has the British Resistance Organisation museum. Then we're off to Great Ashfield, home of the 385th Bomb Group. The 385th and 384th are both B-17 heavy bomber groups. We are sequentially related, one digit away in group and squadron numbering (we had the 544th, 545th, 546th and 547th squadrons; the 385th had the 548th, 549th, 550th and 551st). We also have two 385th junketeers with us: the Schultes. We'll end the day with a Traditional English Tea at the historic Swan in Lavenham, with its historic Airmen's Bar (**see president Frank Alfter's picture, page 2**, taken at the entrance to this bar).



15 September: We have the day to explore historic Cambridge, including the River Cam or maybe the historic Eagle Pub and its RAF bar (**see photo left, of 384th vet Henry Kolinek signing a wall in the bar on our 2019 Junket. It's a time-honored tradition for flyers dating to World War II**). Several of us will join our British hosts instead for a workday at Grafton Underwood (**see story, page 3 for a museum update**).



16 September: We spend the whole day at Grafton Underwood, including the memorial and museum site. We will end the day at The Star in Geddington, a pub frequented during the war by 384th personnel.

17 September, we will enjoy a Gold Experience package at the Battle of Britain Air Show at Duxford.

18 September: We will visit the Cambridge American Cemetery to honor 384th and Eighth Air Force fallen and missing. We are working on seeing Buckingham Palace and maybe a few other London sites. Thanks to Rick Hobson, our tour manager and a former RAF C-130 pilot, our last reunion activity will be dinner at the RAF Club in London, followed by transport to a hotel near Heathrow Airport.

19 September: We bid each other farewell, whether going home or continuing travel in the UK or on the continent. (Some of us are arriving earlier as well for touring and to catch up with old friends.)

Check the [384th Facebook group](#) for updates during the junket. We'll have an expanded next issue reporting on activities and photos! — Paul Furiga

In this Issue

384th reunion update	P. 1
President's letter, your board	P. 2
Remembering Bill O'Leary	P. 3
TAPS	P. 3
Big Stupe V at Schweinfurt	P. 4
A Hangar Thirteen report!	P. 5
B-17 airworthiness update	P. 6

2022-2023 Calendar

The 384th BG Memorial Junket XII is set for Wednesday, 13 September through Tuesday, 19 September 2023. See page 1 story and check the 384th website and our Facebook page (links 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

Editor Paul Furiga
newsletter@384thbombgroup.com
222 Courtney Place
Wexford, PA 15090
412-427-0597

From our president: Junket XII and what's next

This will be the last newsletter before some of us lucky folks will travel back to Grafton Underwood for Junket XII.

For those who will participate, it will be a reunion to remember, much like the one in 2019 (Rick Hobson will be with us again!). After Junket XI, there was such clamor for a repeat the following year, but Covid got in our way. We will be sure to take lots of photos and share in a newsletter to follow this one.



Your Board of Directors are looking for ways to improve our connectivity with each other and had a very successful Zoom meeting on 2 September to discuss pertinent board business.

We will include results of that meeting in the next newsletter and are considering annual or semi-annual meetings via Zoom. This will help all of us to keep our fingers on the pulse of the organization.

Following the reunion in England, our thoughts will be focused on future reunions.

Since we are now a very small organization, and it's not cost effective to have our own reunions, we plan to join up at the 8th AFHS reunions as we did last October in Washington, D.C. Their reunion calendar shows one in New Orleans in 2024 and another in Denver in 2025.

We hope you all will join us at these future reunions and help us grow our numbers. Please help us recruit more of our generation and the generations that follow. We need to keep the memories of our WW II veterans alive. —Frank Alfter

Know your 384th Officers and Board of Directors

Chairman of the Board	Peter Bielskis
President	Frank Alfter
Vice President	Fred Preller
Secretary/Newsletter Editor	Paul Furiga
Treasurer	Ray Lustig
Member	Carol Alfter
Member	Dennis Bielskis
Member	Nathan Bosdet
Member	Thomas Swift
Member	Chris Wilkinson

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.

2023 DUES INFORMATION

Our 2023 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

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

384th museum group accelerates renovations for Junket XII visit

With days to spare before Junket XII visitors arrive from the States, the dedicated volunteers behind the 384th Bombardment Group Museum are spending more days at the Ops Building site tidying up to show off their progress for what will be one of the main buildings of the finished museum.

Throughout 2023, weekends have been the primary focus for what the group refers to as “workdays” on site.

As the Junket XII dates near, more weekday visits have been added, and the progress has been dramatic, from trimming (strimming) weeds and tall grass to more elaborate work remaking the roof with fresh tar paper, sealer and bitumen (see photo far right) and fixing the brickwork and stucco (rendering) with patches.

An unwelcome surprise in recent weeks was the discovery of a very mature tree that had somehow seeded and grown into the brickwork of the building and the foundation as well.

While the tree stump is not completely removed as yet, the museum leadership has determined that it hasn't destroyed the structural integrity of the building. Interior painting has also begun (photo, right).

On Friday, 15 September, travelers on Junket XII will join our British hosts for a workday at the museum site. We will return the following day for memorial and museum ceremonies and other activities.

For those not on the Junket, please enjoy these pictures, most of them borrowed from the Facebook page for the museum.

If you are interested in supporting this effort through the 384th Bomb Group, please see page 2 for donation instructions.

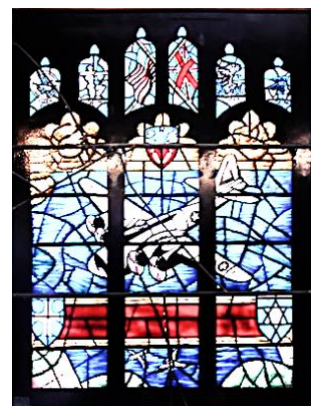


TAPS: Honoring our veterans who have flown west

If you know of a 384th Veteran's passing, please write our editor, Paul Furiga (newsletter@384thbombgroup.com or 222 Courtney Place, Wexford, PA 15090), so that we may honor their service and their passing here.

Audrey Louise Dahlman, widow of **T. Sgt. Marvin S. Dahlman**, radio operator, 544th squadron, 10 missions (5 April-17 April 1945). Died 7 June 2023, aged 98. Along with her husband, she was a longtime member of the 384th. They married in 1947. Marvin, who became a college professor after his service, died in 2010.

S. Sgt. Morris "Morry" Sunshine, flight engineer, 546th squadron, 32 missions (23 May-23 August 1944). Died 24 September 2021, aged 97. Morry was a signer of “Wingy,” the commemorative 384th wing panel and lived in Miami Beach, Florida.



Anatomy of a shoot-down: Big Stupe V and the 384th at Schweinfurt

This is the story of the horrendous shoot-down of 384th B-17s during the mission to Schweinfurt on 13 April 1944. This Schweinfurt mission went down in 384th history as the worst single mission for crew losses during the war.

The 384th flew as high group of the 41st Combat Wing, but my father's squadron, the 545th, flew as low squadron, the "coffin corner" of the high group.

My father, S.Sgt. Glen Alfter, was tail gunner on Big Stupe V, piloted by Lt. Farris Heffley. Dad flew the first half of his 23 missions as waist gunner but was deemed one of the best shooters and flew the last half in the tail. By 8th Air Force data, the tail was the most dangerous position. Dad talked about enemy fighters sneaking up, hidden in contrails.

The group lead was Lt. Joseph Bedsole. The 384th left Grafton Underwood at 0955 hours with 23 aircraft, including two spares. They assembled at 1019 hours at 8,000 feet, then headed for mission assembly and departure from England at Clacton-on-Sea.

The air spares returned to base. Lt. Anthony Gekakis air-aborted with #1 engine running rough and smoking just after Clacton at 1157 hours. Half an hour later, at 1228 hours, Lt. Charles Decker air-aborted with #3 engine losing oil and feathered. This left just 19 B-17s entering enemy airspace with P-47s escorting.

At about 1245 hours the Luftwaffe took off from airfields in Germany. At 1320 to 1350 hours, 15 Fw 190s shot down Lt. Verlyn Tollison and the lead, Lt. Clarence Stearns, over Traben Trarbach, on the Moselle River. Now 17 bombers flew on. Minutes later, at 1354 hours, the trap was set by the Luftwaffe as 22 Me 109s drew off the P-47 escorts. Then the Luftwaffe skillfully attacked the low squadron with three heavily armed Fw 190A-7s backed by 15 Fw 190A-6s. Six of the seven 545th B-17s were shot down in less than three minutes; piloting those six were Lieutenants Scott Briley, Edward Fioretti, Heffley, Max Miller, George Poole and Herbert Swanson. Only 11 of the 384th B-17s bombed Schweinfurt and turned for England. Then Lt. James Lavin was shot down by flak over Belgium. That left ten aircraft returning to Grafton Underwood.

Big Stupe V lost two engines during the second attack, forcing the crew to jettison bombs right before the IP. Heffley headed west towards France, knowing they would never make it to England. The gently rolling farmland in France presented better options for a crash landing than the rough terrain in Belgium. The crew threw out everything they could to lose weight and continue as far west as possible. (This was before D-Day.) Then a third engine was hit by flak near Metz, causing lost altitude. They even jettisoned the ball turret, to prevent the fuselage from breaking when making a belly landing without landing gear extended.

Two Me 109s spotted them as they flew into France, firing at the doomed bomber. My father used up all of his ammunition defending the crew. Unfortunately, 20mm ammo from the two 109s found their mark and wounded my father, Heffley and the navigator, Lt. Louis Carini. Although wounded in the leg, Heffley made a perfect belly landing in a farmer's field near the village of Rambucourt.

A Frenchman named Cyriaque (Jimmy) Jamin saw the crash and ran out to help the Americans, but the two Me 109s were busy strafing the downed aircraft. The top turret gunner, T.Sgt. Sam Deutsch, fired at the fighters, damaging one and both left the area. Jimmy helped the crew out of Big Stupe V and led those who were able to woods south of the village where they were hidden from the Germans.

Heffley and Carini were badly wounded and wanted to be captured because they needed immediate medical attention. Dad needed attention too, but tried hiding out, hoping the French Resistance could help. A couple hours later he was discovered by the Germans and taken to a hospital in Nancy, where the pilot and navigator were being cared for.

Years later my father told me that German doctors trying to remove the shrapnel from his arm and temple were concerned they might kill him trying to remove the metal from his temple, but a German soldier in the operating room, ostensibly to guard Dad, whipped out his dagger and removed it.

After two weeks in the hospital, Dad went to Frankfurt for interrogation. Then he was taken to Stalag XVII-B near Vienna, Austria, where he was a POW for 13 months before liberation. His pilot and navigator were imprisoned at Stalag Luft III.

Of the crew of ten, four managed to evade capture and with the help of the Resistance, made their way across the Pyrenees into Spain and back to England by June. The other enlisted crew members were captured and imprisoned with Dad at Stalag XVII-B for the duration.

— Frank Alfter



The Big Stupe V crew before the fateful 13 April Schweinfurt raid.



S.Sgt. Glen Alfter's German POW photo

The latest news from Hangar Thirteen, including a public event!

A great deal has happened since our last update. With the aft fuselage of “Liberty Belle” delivered to [The Liberty Foundation](#) in Douglas, Georgia, Ray Moore has started rebuilding the aft fuselage of the Lake Dyke B-17.

Since this bomber requires starting at Station 11 (the rearmost aft fuselage bulkhead), Ray has taken the opportunity to work on the aft fuselage of our own “Lucky Thirteen” at the same time. This aircraft is a rebuild of a 384th B-17F lost on 6 September 1943, and will be the only completely restored example of this type when complete.

Recently, Ray completed the bracing for the tail gunner’s escape hatch, some of which is original and some of which required rebuilding. With this beautiful metalwork in place, it was a treat to stick the actual hatch in place on the tail of “Lucky Thirteen.” (picture, at right).

Meanwhile, our friend Chris Erdahl of Asheville Product Development Solutions has been helping us with the broken piece of our top turret dome. The top turret dome for “Lucky Thirteen” is a Type 2 dome purchased thanks to the efforts of Keith Ellefson, Karl Hauffe, Ray Moore, Don Price, Andy Rivera, and Chris Wilkinson.

At some point, our dome was dropped and the fairing under the left gun broken away. We had hoped a 3D scan of another Type 2 dome fairing would allow us to design a plug we could weld into place. However, we discovered that the fairing was redesigned partway through production, as the two did not match. This is where Chris stepped in. Chris scanned the right gun fairing and has been using it as a guide to design a plug for the missing left fairing. Since the dome is not a perfect circle, this has taken some time.



Chris came to the hangar with three 3D prints to test. One was a perfect match (see picture, left). We only need to have this piece cast and welded into place. Then, we can begin restoring the top turret dome!



In other news, our friends at [Planes of Fame Air Museum](#) sent us a pair of Pioneer Type A-12 oxygen regulators. This brings us just five regulators away from a full complement.

If you can help with oxygen needs for “Lucky Thirteen,” brass oxygen fittings, Pioneer type A-12 oxygen regulators, and Pioneer regulator hose fittings are especially welcome. And while we are only three Type G-1 tanks away from a full O2 tank complement, we still need over a dozen Type A-4 Walkaround Bottles for a full complement.

Special thanks to our friends at Planes of Fame! If you have not followed their work on Boeing B-17G “Piccadilly Lilly II,” we highly encourage you to do so – they are some of the most awesome people.

Given that Lucky Thirteen flew all its missions with the 384th in 1943, 2023 is a very special 80th anniversary year. In honor of this we are having our first public event at Triple Tree Aerodrome in Woodruff, South Carolina. Triple Tree normally requires membership in a flying organization to attend, but visitors are welcome to attend simply by contacting us ahead of time to put you on a guest list. We will be attending their annual fly-in 22-23 September, with a display of our work including restored and original pieces, public talks, and working radio and turret displays. To learn more visit this link: <http://hangarthirteen.org/hangar-thirteen-meetup/>

The Hangar Thirteen Foundation is a 501c3 nonprofit charity and donations are tax deductible. If you can help this project, we guarantee that you will see the results here on Facebook and on our website, www.HangarThirteen.org

You can contribute through the donate page of our website, www.HangarThirteen.org/donate, or, to avoid a PayPal fee, you can send money direct to Store@HangarThirteen.org by choosing the Friends/Family option. If you prefer to send something via the mail, let us know and we'll share an address!

Volunteers are also welcome. You need not be an Asheville resident – you can work from home! Persons skilled with metal fabrication, metal casting, 3D scanning, laser/waterjet cutting, plexiglass molding, and canvas sewing are particularly helpful. Just reach out to us to get started.

— Gerad Blume

384TH BOMB GROUP
222 COURTNEY PLACE
WEXFORD, PA 15090



"Keep The Show On The Road..."
 We're on the Web at: www.384thbombgroup.com

All flight-worthy B-17s return to the air after clearing FAA, CAA inspections

As noted in our May/June 2023 issue, the 2023 Airworthiness Directive on the B-17 wing attach structure, led to three airworthy U.S. B-17s being grounded in June. The operators of the only non-U.S. registered B-17 (*Sally-B*) also grounded their aircraft after the directive was issued (Note: Junket XII travelers should see *Sally B* flying at the Battle of Britain show).

Since then, *Ye Olde Pub* complied with the directive based on an earlier inspection several years ago, so it remains flying. *Sentimental Journey* received the FAA blessing as well and is flying again. *Sally B* received the FAA and UK CAA blessing, so it also is flying again. *Yankee Lady* also received its FAA blessing and has tour dates scheduled.

More context is shared by Randy Kemp thanks to Frank Alfter. Randy's leading the project to build Champaign Lady from parts of at least four B-17s at the airport in Urbana, Ohio. She's named for the county that includes Urbana.

As Randy puts it: "all three B-17s have gone through the required FAA inspections and have gone back in the air. The EAA's Aluminum Overcast is currently in repair, both with the (required) work and also hurricane damage. Several other B-17s are in repair mode for earlier airworthy directive compliance. But so far none are grounded permanently. The last three incidents with B-17s that resulted in loss had nothing to do with the AD areas of the wing mate. I'm always amazed at how social media is playing all this."

For a more complete look at what's flying today, there are several B-17s tracked by Scott A. Thompson of Aero Vintage Books that are "close" to flying but don't qualify because either they have not flown for many years, may be out of annual inspection, or are grounded for major maintenance reasons.

By Scott's count, (see chart), there are **three B-17s** flying out of **46 existing complete B-17s**.

Scott's book *Final Cut: The Post-War B-17 Flying Fortress and Survivors*, available on aerovintage.com, has the in-depth story of each of the 48 B-17 survivors in text and photos.

Summary Table of Surviving B-17s from Aero Vintage

Operational (Flying)	4
Long Term Maintenance back to Operational	3
Under Restoration or Rebuild to Operational	4
Under Restoration to Static Display	1
Static Display (near airworthy)	3
Static Display (grounded)	24
In Storage	7
Total Complete Airframes	46
Current U.S. Civil Registered B-17s	18