



# 384th Bomb Group Heritage Association News & Journal

384th Bomb Group, Inc.



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

August 2024

## Our 2024 reunion in New Orleans is on final approach – will we see you?

*The 384th will join other bomb groups as part of the Eighth Air Force annual reunion*

Over the years, 384th Bomb Group Heritage Association reunions have been a great way for people to connect and share their common interest in preserving the history and legacy of the 384th Bomb Group. Oh yes and have a great time too!

We are but a month or so away from our reunion this year with the 8th Air Force Historical Society annual reunion in New Orleans, 25-29 September. **Membership in the 8th AFHS AND registration for the 8th AFHS Reunion** are required to attend their events and for the reduced hotel rate.

The 384th does not require a registration fee. We will have a beautiful hospitality suite in the Higgins Hotel that we are sharing with three other bomb group associations (385th, 466th and the 96th). It's a large deluxe suite with comfortable accommodations and windows with dramatic views of The National World War II Museum across the street. The suite will be open throughout the reunion for meetings, casual conversation and making friends.

Registration for the 8th Air Force Historical Society Reunion is required to attend their events and the 384th Bomb Group Banquet on Friday night, September 27. To receive the group hotel rate, registration must be done SEPARATELY at the reserved reunion hotel. Links to the 8th AFHS Reunion registration and hotel reservation information are in this newsletter. The hotels are filling fast – we are now booking into a third official hotel, so make plans soon if you can!



**The interior of the National World War II Museum in New Orleans, across the street from the Higgins, one of the headquarter hotels for the 8th Air Force Historical Society reunion, 25-29 September.**

If you are unable to attend Wednesday and Thursday due to work but can take a Friday off to travel, please consider attending Friday-Sunday so you can attend the 384th Banquet on Friday, 27 September at 7pm, and the 8th Air Force Historical Society Banquet Saturday night. Again, 8th AFHS Registration is required to attend both events. The 384th hospitality suite and The National WWII Museum will be open every day of the reunion.

We hope to see as many of our cherished 384th Bomb Group veterans as can attend. They include Peter Bielskis, John DeFrancesco, George Alan Purchase, Hank Sienkiewicz and Henry Kolinek.

If you're a new or returning member, a non-member, young or not so young, we welcome everyone. Be confident you'll be warmly welcomed by us all!

**A special note: the last time we met with the 8th AFHS in New Orleans, the 384th had the largest contingent! If you join us, you can help us repeat that showing! We will be surveying members on email about attendance as well.**

We've shown our keen spirit in the U.K., at our previous reunions and on our 384th Bomber Group Facebook page. Let's show our esprit de corps and how we "Keep The Show On The Road" in New Orleans!

— Patty Bielskis and Christopher Wilkinson

## In this Issue

384th reunion update!	P. 1
President's letter, your board	P. 2
TAPS	P. 3
384th museum update	P. 4
A visit to Madingley	P. 5
384th Veteran at D-Day event	P. 6

## 2024 Calendar

The 2024 384th BG reunion will be held 25-29 September in New Orleans in conjunction with the 8th Air Force Historical Society. Check the 384th website, our Facebook page and the 8th AFHS online (links below) for updates.

## On the Internet

### 384th BG website

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

### 384th BGHA Facebook page

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

### 384th BG Museum Facebook (Grafton Underwood)

*Stay updated on the museum progress and live vicariously as it comes together!*

### 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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## We ignored reports of our premature death – to grow!

And to think that ten years ago – at our "Final" reunion in Dayton, Ohio – we were seriously considering whether to keep the Group going into the future! Now, with a rejuvenated Membership of 171 at press time, and heading to the reunion in New Orleans with 18 of us registered to attend as of 1 August, we can confidently say that we will continue to *Keep the Show on the Road* to honor the valor and sacrifice of the 384th Bombardment Group (Heavy) in WWII for years to come.



Volunteers are needed to help ensure the future of the website. While we already have several Volunteers who maintain and update the data and Photo Gallery; the critical need is for someone to help the website evolve with changing technology into the future. While some experience with websites will be helpful, no special skills are required, other

than a willingness to jump in and learn how to accomplish that goal. If you are not afraid of getting your hands dirty, contact me and let's make a plan for the future.

Another significant part of our mission is to foster the development of the Museum in Grafton Underwood. We already raised well over \$40,000, which the Museum Trustees – Neill Howarth, Keith Andrews, and Matt Smith – applied to the purchase price of the Ops Block and the Norden Bombsight storage buildings. While we await word from the Trustees on the financial needs of the next major development phase, Volunteers are needed to organize the fundraising effort in support of their next step: contact me to learn more.

Several members have expressed an interest in holding our own separate reunions, as in the past. That is doable, of course, and it is how we operated up until 2016 when we had our first reunion with the 8AFHS in St. Louis. Since then, it has been a 50-50 split between doing our own and going with the 8AFHS. Having our own separate reunion gives us flexibility and control of location, accommodations, activities, and costs. As with all other efforts in the Group, this needs Volunteers to organize and make arrangements. Patty Bielskis is the current reunion coordinator. Contact her at [Reunions@384thBombGroup.com](mailto:Reunions@384thBombGroup.com) for more information or to pitch in.

—Fred Preller

## Know your 384th Officers and Board of Directors

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

## 2024 DUES INFORMATION

384th Bomb Group, Inc., is an Ohio nonprofit corporation, dba 384th Bomb Group Heritage Association. Membership includes this quarterly newsletter for \$25, **renewed yearly in January.**

Our 2024 treasurer is Ray Lustig. **Please pay dues online via PayPal here:** <https://384thbombgroup.com/content/pages/MembershipForm.php>

Or pay dues via check made out to **384th Bomb Group, Inc.** and send to:

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

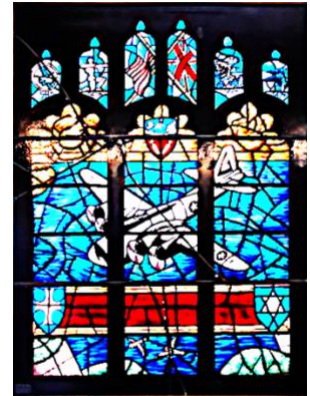
## TAPS: Honoring our veterans who have flown west

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

**S. Sgt. John V. Deeg**, died 23 November 2017, aged 97. Originally a gunnery instructor assigned to the 547th squadron, John was transferred to the 544th Bombardment Squadron, and he flew 8 combat missions, from 9 February to 26 March 1945. John was among the 384th veterans who signed "Wingy," our commemorative B-17 wing panel, now at the Hill Air Force Base Museum in Utah.

**T. Sgt. Reginald Gwin**, died 29 August 2011, aged 87. A radio operator with the 544th squadron, he flew 16 missions (24 August-30 November 1944). On his 16th mission, his B-17, Grewsome Crewsome was damaged by flak and force landed near Rebgeshain, Hesse, Germany. While the crew survived combat, four members were murdered by the local Nazi Ortsgruppenleiter in Beltershain. The others, including Reginald, became POWs. Following the war, Reginald earned multiple degrees, including a PhD, and spent several years as a nuclear physicist at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee.

**S. Sgt. Lester H. "Russ" Russell**, died 16 October 2009, aged 86. Russ was a tail gunner with the 544th squadron, flying 31 missions (24 July-30 November 1944). On his 31st mission, he was aboard Grewsome Crewsome with Reginald Gwin (above) when it was damaged by flak and force landed near Rebgeshain, Hesse, Germany. While the crew survived combat, four members were murdered by the local Nazi Ortsgruppenleiter in Beltershain. The others, including Russ, became POWs. Following the war, Russ trained as an animator for the U.S. Air Force at Paramount Studios and was also a photographer for the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the Pentagon. He retired from the Air Force after 22 years. As a civilian, he became the chief animation artist for the U.S. Navy, retiring from that job as well.



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### *A special remembrance of one of our longtime members, Amy Mazer Meighan*

Over the history of the 384th Bomb Group Heritage Association, the prominence of the Mazer family has brought many memories and milestones to help preserve the contributions and sacrifices of our 384th veterans during World War II.

The contributions began with Col. Nathan Mazer, the group's armaments officer, who is credited with devising innovations to improve B-17 gun positions, for flying some missions himself, and for *Fightin' Hebe*, one of the few 384th ships named after a living person. After the war, his contributions to the group continued, and today, the chapel at Hill Air Force Base and the museum collections there are part of his legacy.

After his passing, Nate's daughters Amy and Harriet continued their father's legacy. Sadly, Amy Mazer Meighan passed away 6 June, aged 78. In addition to attending many reunions, often with her sister and husband Bill, Amy was also instrumental in planning our 2021 reunion at Hill Air Force Base, where she worked for several years, and where she met Bill.



**Amy Mazer Meighan (center) with husband Bill and 384th member Bridget Howarth (left) at our 2018 reunion in Dayton, Ohio.**

A celebrated equestrian and water colorist, Amy was an "Air Force brat," growing up around the globe, wherever her father was stationed. Amy was two years old when she accompanied her mother to Japan on the first boatload of military dependents after World War II. Her

favorite home abroad was Norway where Amy first learned to ski. From Norway, the family moved to Bozeman, Montana where Amy acquired her first horse. She competed at the national level, and she trained, rode, and showed registered quarter horses throughout the intermountain west for much of her adult life.

Amy and Bill were married in September 1984. Bill brought two boys, Patrick and Peter, from a previous marriage to the union. In 1985, Amy gave birth to their daughter Anne. From Utah, Bill was assigned as an Air Force Program Manager at Boeing in Seattle, where Amy was a management assistant with the Air Force Plant Representative Office (AFPRO). After a lifetime on the move, Amy and Bill returned to Utah, first living in Roy, then in 2013 moving to a small ranch in Bothwell, where they built and lived in Amy's 33rd and final home. Amy leaves behind her sister Harriet, her beloved husband of 39 years, two sons, a daughter and their spouses, five grandchildren, and many close friends all over the world.

# Theft emboldens 384th Bombardment Group Museum effort

*Despite material loss, volunteer momentum grows through airfield walks and event participation*

In the early morning hours of 21 June, the 384th Bombardment Group Museum effort suffered a heavy blow when all the tools and materials for the Nissen hut being built at the Grafton Underwood museum site were stolen by thieves.

On Facebook and across the internet, shock and despair led to anger and then a renewed spirit to donate. The museum trustees, while disturbed by the brazen theft, have pressed on with an even deeper commitment to honor the service and sacrifices of the 384th Bomb Group.



**384th President Fred Preller (left) and museum trustee president Neill Howarth and the 25 July tour (photo at right).**

As we finished up this issue, 384th Bomb Group Heritage Association president Fred Preller had the opportunity to tour the airfield with his grandson Owen and provide a firsthand report:

*“The volunteers (and the Trustees) remain enthusiastic and upbeat for the future, with plans for completing the Nissen hut moving forward. They will not be publicizing progress until it is completed and enhanced security measures are in place.*

*“The key priorities are (a) electric power to the site and (b) site security - with b necessitating a. Additional project needs include a few other things, and everything costs money ... a goal of about \$100,000 over the next 18 months would be close to covering expenses.*

*“The power and security will be immediate and critical, requiring up to \$40,000 real soon so the need for a fundraising effort is immediate ... And I want to reiterate that the mood of the Trustees and Volunteers remains upbeat, and progress continues on all fronts.”*

As the museum trustees and volunteers press on to replace materials, they continue expanding their presence in the local community to raise awareness of the museum. Trustee president Neill Howarth said of Fred’s visit:

*“On the 25th July 2024, the 384th Bombardment Group Museum had a brilliant airfield tour. To make it extra special for us, we were able to welcome 384th President Fred Preller, son of 546th Sq Pilot Robert Preller and his grandson Owen.*

*“It was great to see Fred’s boots ‘On the ground,’ to see tour guide Matt Smith in top form and the morale of the museum volunteers in great shape after recent events ... (it was our) largest tour to date, the interest is growing.”*

As yet another measure of the museum group’s commitment, trustees and volunteers are now “taking the Show on the Road” so to speak, including an appearance at the American Air Day at the Imperial War Museum’s Duxford location.

Please follow this exciting project at the [384th Bombardment Group Museum Facebook](#) page. As well, please support the work by donating to the online fundraising GoFundMe at <https://gofund.me/d4b70c99>.



**The museum team at Duxford: (left to right Keith Andrews, Matt Smith, Bridget Howarth, Suzy Hobblett Hobbs, Neill Howarth.**

# A summer pilgrimage to remember those who didn't come home

During my trip to England this summer with my grandson Owen, we visited the Cambridge American Cemetery at Madingley (near Cambridge) on a sunny Friday afternoon. I wanted Owen to see how we – and the U.K. - honor our warriors who gave their all for our freedoms.

We visited the graves of two combat crewmen my dad flew his last seven missions with during August and September 1944: they were later KIA on the 27 December 1944 mission to Altenahr, Germany. These two 546th squadron men, S. Sgt. Harold W Rogerson (ball turret) and S. Sgt. Arthur E McCloskey (togglie), were killed during an emergency landing at RAF Manston, Kent, when their B-17 “crashed into aircraft in the dispersal area and exploded, killing the entire crew.” We made sure their grave markers were in good condition and the area was well cared for (which of course it was), said our thanks for their sacrifice, and placed a penny on each of their markers to signify our visit.



The graves of S. Sgt. McCloskey (left) and S. Sgt. Rogerson (right).

We also paid our respects to Major Arthur M Stone at the Wall of the Missing. Stone was the highest-ranking 384th combat aviator to be lost in combat, which happened on 10 January 1945. His aircraft was forced to turn back short of the target and attempt to return to England alone: they were never seen again.

*Fred Preller*

## A 384th crash site and crew remembered — even if vandals repeatedly swipe the plaque

On 6 April 1945, the air war in Europe was winding down, with the Luftwaffe and the German war machine on its heels. It was still dangerous in the air, though, especially on takeoff and landing. The crew of the unnamed 545th squadron ship 44-6923 experienced the ultimate danger when their B-17G exploded shortly after takeoff, killing all eight men on board.

While none of the crew survived, the rear exit door (waist) was recovered after the crash and is displayed in the Harrington Aviation Museum. In recent years, friends of the 384th have worked to help remember the crew and earned the right to post a memorial plaque at the crash site at Walgrave, about 4 miles south of Kettering.

Sam Coleman, daughter of Quentin Bland, and Paul Teal posted a commemorative plaque not once, but twice, unfortunately



discovering it was removed both times, apparently by vandals. Paul reports that the efforts to remember the crew will continue, though the mounting of the plaque may be altered to prevent its loss in the future. Stay tuned for updates on the effort.

Sam Coleman with plaque (left); the plaque affixed to a tree before it was stolen (center); the escape door at Harrington (right)

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We're on the Web at: [www.384thbombgroup.com](http://www.384thbombgroup.com)

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## Henry J. Kolinek, our 384th ambassador to the 80th D-Day anniversary celebration

To commemorate the 80th anniversary of the 6 June, 1944 D-Day invasion, American Airlines flew nearly 70 surviving World War II veterans and their family members to Normandy. Among them was S. Sgt. Henry J. Kolinek, tail gunner in the 544th squadron and a frequent attendee at 384th Bomb Group Heritage Association reunions, including our two most recent junkets to England.



**An 82nd Airborne honor guard salutes Henry Kolinek at Normandy**

honor those who didn't survive the beach landing. The afternoon was spent among the bunkers and bomb craters of Pointe du Hoc honoring the U.S. Army Rangers who scaled the steep cliffs on D-Day.

On Utah Beach, the veterans each laid a single rose in honor of the fallen. A historic chateau served as the backdrop for a special lunch that was attended by senior military leaders from the Department of Defense and other dignitaries. That afternoon, the veterans were the primary focus in Sainte-Mère-Église as thousands cheered their arrival into the town made famous by the Airborne soldiers who parachuted into the area.

The events concluded with a ceremony marking the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings at the Normandy American Cemetery, where more than 9,000 U.S. service members from World War II are laid to rest.

Accompanied by his daughter, Marsha Kolinek Duniven and family, Henry was celebrated during multiple events. While his combat began a few months after D-Day, Henry had his share of tough flying over 35 missions, including a 27 September, 1944 mission to Cologne on which Lt. Richard Lovegren, the navigator, was killed in action.

The Normandy visit began with a heroes' welcome by school children and World War II re-enactors in Houlgate, then a trip to Le Memorial de Caen, a museum and war memorial commemorating World War II and the Battle of Normandy.

At historic Omaha Beach, veterans laid a wreath to honor those who didn't survive the beach landing. The afternoon was spent among the bunkers and bomb craters of Pointe du Hoc honoring the U.S. Army Rangers who scaled the steep cliffs on D-Day.