



# 384th Bomb Group Heritage Association News & Journal

384th Bomb Group, Inc.



March 2025

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

## 384th returns to Dayton for 2025 reunion, 29 October-November 2

*Air Force museum, B-17 Champaign Lady among the highlights planned for our visit*

Thanks to Carol and Frank Alfter, the 384th Bomb Group Heritage Association will be returning to Dayton, Ohio for our 2025 annual reunion. A lot has changed since our last Dayton reunion in 2018, so this will be an exciting return.

Carol, a veteran of many reunion planning efforts, graciously came out of event planning retirement to arrange this year's get-together. Frank's long relationships with the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force and the Champaign Aviation Museum in Urbana, Ohio will grant our group special access to unique B-17 experiences, including the restored Memphis Belle at the Air Force museum, and the ongoing restoration of the B-17 *Champaign Lady* at the Champaign museum.

Please see page 7 for the registration form and details, and here's our schedule, by day, and hotel information:

### Wednesday, 29 October, Arrival Day

- Evening meal at our hotel, taco bar

### Thursday, 30 October

- Breakfast (included in room rate)
- Tour National Museum of the USAF, including *Memphis Belle* (picture, top right)
- Lunch: On Your Own
- Evening meal at hotel: pizza & pasta bar

### Friday, 31 October

- Breakfast (included in room rate)
- Tour Champaign Aviation Museum, including *Champaign Lady*, (picture, bottom right)
- Lunch: Box lunch on the bus
- Evening meal at hotel: Plated chicken with Tuscan cream sauce

### Saturday, 1 November

- Breakfast (included in room rate)
- Tour Carillon Park
- Lunch: On your own — several restaurants at Carillon
- Evening meal at hotel: Banquet plated prime rib

### Sunday, 2 November

- Breakfast (included in room rate)
- Departure day

Your board has voted to establish an affordable registration price for the reunion of \$280. This fee, per person, includes all meals above unless otherwise noted. Attendees will pay for their hotel rooms directly (details below). Throughout the reunion, we will travel by chartered bus between the sites we visit.

Our hotel is currently branded as the Holiday Inn Dayton/Fairborn I-675. Before our reunion, it will be rebranded as a DoubleTree by Hilton hotel, but all other details, including room rate, will remain unchanged. The address is: 2800 Presidential Dr., Fairborn, Ohio 45324. And the room rate is \$150/night, breakfast included.

**Reservations:** Doubletree by Hilton Reservations (Group Code "BOM"), or call the front desk at 937-426-7800 and request room block "384th Bomb Group." Cutoff date for reservations is **29 September, 2025**.

— Paul Furiga



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## 2025 Calendar

Our 2025 reunion is taking shape. Please see the Page 1 story for details on the event, which will be held 29 October- 2 November in Dayton, Ohio. We have lots of fun activities, and we'll see more than one B-17! The Eighth Air Force Historical Society reunion will be held 1-5 October in Colorado Springs, CO. Visit the 8th AFHS website below for more details.

## 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."*

### The Arrowhead Club

Cindy Bryan's wonderful and inspiring blog. Her father was a 384th crewman and POW.

### 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."*

## Contact Us

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## The 384th in 2025: To Dayton and beyond!

For those of you who may have missed it, in a determination letter dated 9 December 2024, the IRS notified the Board of Directors that our application for 501(c)(3) status was accepted. The effective date is 3 June 2024, so donations made on or after that date will be tax-deductible for donors. It was a good end to an eventful year!



How are we going to top our previous year's accomplishments?

To start with, the Board of Directors has approved contracts needed to hold our own reunion in Dayton, Ohio this year, from 29 October to 2 November. More details are to be found on Page 1 of this issue, so save the dates and start making your plans – I have my plane tickets already! The Alfers are to be thanked for volunteering again to negotiate with the hotel and bus company on behalf of Group members and put it all together for our

benefit. Our Group operates only due to Members volunteering to pitch in.

On a similar subject, I am now looking forward to 2026 reunion options. I have compiled a long list of places to go, but our friends at the 8th Air Force Historical Society will be holding their 2026 reunion in Savannah, GA. Please share your thoughts on this subject with me.

Finally, the Museum at Grafton Underwood continues to make progress, overcoming challenges, obstacles, and setbacks. This year should see major progress for on-site electric power, security, and the Visitor Center Nissen Hut, to name a few. We have raised a small fraction of the money needed to assist the Museum's progress, so expect a fund-raising effort – as soon as we get Volunteers to kick it into gear.

I will see you all in Dayton, Ohio!

— Fred Preller

## Know your 384th Officers and Board of Directors

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

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.

## 2025 DUES INFORMATION

**IT'S TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2025!**

*Membership years run January to December, so it's time to join or re-up for 2025!*

Please send dues to our treasurer is Ray Lustig at this address:

Ray Lustig, 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 group activities are financially supported.

# TAPS: Honoring our veterans and family 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.

**Pfc. Nicholas John Fama**, health inspector, 854th Chemical Company, served at Grafton Underwood from 18 December 1943-17 May 1944. Died 10 August 2024, aged 102, in Ansonia, Conn. He was a health inspector and when not attending to his regular duties, he helped with the wounded. He worked in manufacturing after the war. He is survived by three children, eight grandchildren and seven great grandchildren.

Mantle, Paul Jr., nephew of **S. Sgt. Lester Levi "Slip" Davis**, top turret gunner, 544th squadron, 32 missions (28 May-9 August 1944). Died 23 November 2024, aged 71. A U.S. Marine Corp veteran of the Vietnam War, Paul attended many 384th reunions while escorting his uncle. He is survived by his wife, Vicky, two children and six grandchildren.

**Lt. George Alan Purchase**, navigator, 546th squadron, 16 missions (14 February-20 April 1945). Died 27 December 2024, aged 99, in Saratoga, Ca. He was a member of the Lt. Leif Robert Ostnes crew.

**Sgt. James Larry Yarbrough**, tail gunner, 545th squadron, 5 missions (14 April-20 April 1945). Died 2 January 2025, aged 99, in Atlanta, Ga. James was the owner and operator of Cox & Yarbrough Glass. He is survived by his three daughters, six grandchildren and 11 great grandchildren.



## There's more 384th history at the World War II Museum in New Orleans

In our last issue (December 2024), we featured some of the World War II Museum exhibits with 384th Bomb Group connections. As you might imagine, there are more if you look. Jeanne Ostnes, daughter of 1st Lt. Leif R. Ostnes, 546th squadron pilot, has graciously shared other stories in the newsletter, and provided this personal perspective on her recent trip to the museum in New Orleans, a few weeks before our reunion:

“Here are a few pictures from a visit to the WWII Museum in New Orleans. I am a Charter Member and one picture shows me in front of a screen of the WWII veterans I sponsor. One is my Dad, 1st Lt. Leif R. Ostnes of the 384th, and the other three are my husband's uncles. The next two pictures show me pointing to the brick and a closeup of the brick for my Dad. The brick is in front of the staircase in the Campaigns of Courage building that houses the Pacific Theater and The Road to Japan exhibits. One of the interesting facts they had on a wall was that 5,800,000 tons of aircraft bombs were manufactured. Sadly, I was in New Orleans a few weeks before the reunion for an American Legion Auxiliary National Convention.”



# 384th museum group keeps the show on the road in 2025

As work continues on the 384th Bomb Group Museum at Grafton Underwood, museum volunteers have embarked on a year-long effort to live the 384th motto. They plan to “Keep the Show on the Road” by traveling across the United Kingdom to share displays about the museum, give new audiences a peek at mementos and artifacts that will be housed at the museum, and build support for the day that the museum is fully completed and open to the public. Museum treasurer and volunteer Keith Andrews shared this update on the road show effort:

“We have now attended around 7-8 events during the year ... In January 2024, we had no gazebo/tent, no material to display, no literature etc. We have (since) attended a number of events throughout 2024. We will expand in 2025 with more events, and the offer we have will significantly improve also.”

The pictures here are from a recent “road show” effort, a several-day commemoration at Stanwick Lakes of the 81st anniversary of a tragic mid-air collision of two B-17s, one from the 384th, and one from the 303rd, based at Molesworth. At left is a model by Richard Middleton of the 384th’s well-known formation assembly ship, Patches II, often referred to as “The Spotted Cow” for its markings. At right are volunteers Terry and Carol East in the museum group’s display.



In the 21 February 1944 tragedy, the 384th lost B-17 42-31516 “June Bug,” piloted by Sidney Jeter on his 14th mission. June Bug collided with a B17 from Molesworth in thick cloud. Eight of the 384th crew were lost – only the bombardier and navigator bailed out safely. Nine of the 10 crew from Molesworth were also killed. Below is a photo of the Jeter crew.

In addition to the 384th “road show” materials, the exhibit at Stanwick Lakes displayed photographs and letters from the crewmen, and family members of the crew also visited.



At the museum site in 2025, Keith reports that the museum group will be growing efforts to provide tours to visitors:

“The idea for 2025 is to get a team of volunteers together that are all able to meet visitors and be provided with the necessary information to maximize a person’s time with us ... We have several volunteers who have already expressed an interest.

A priority for the museum effort is creating a website, and of course, continued work on the museum site itself, which Keith says will include water service to the site.

If you, a family member or friend wish to contribute to the 384th museum effort, our status as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit here in the U.S.

will make your contributions tax deductible. Contributions may be sent to our treasurer, Ray Lustig, at the address listed in the box about your officers at the bottom of Page 2 in this issue. With your 384th board, the museum leadership is collaborating on a list of the most urgent needs that donations from the U.S. will help to bring to life.

If you wish, you may also donate directly to the museum effort through its GoFundMe account:

(<https://www.gofundme.com/f/raf-grafton-underwood-museum-fundraiser>).

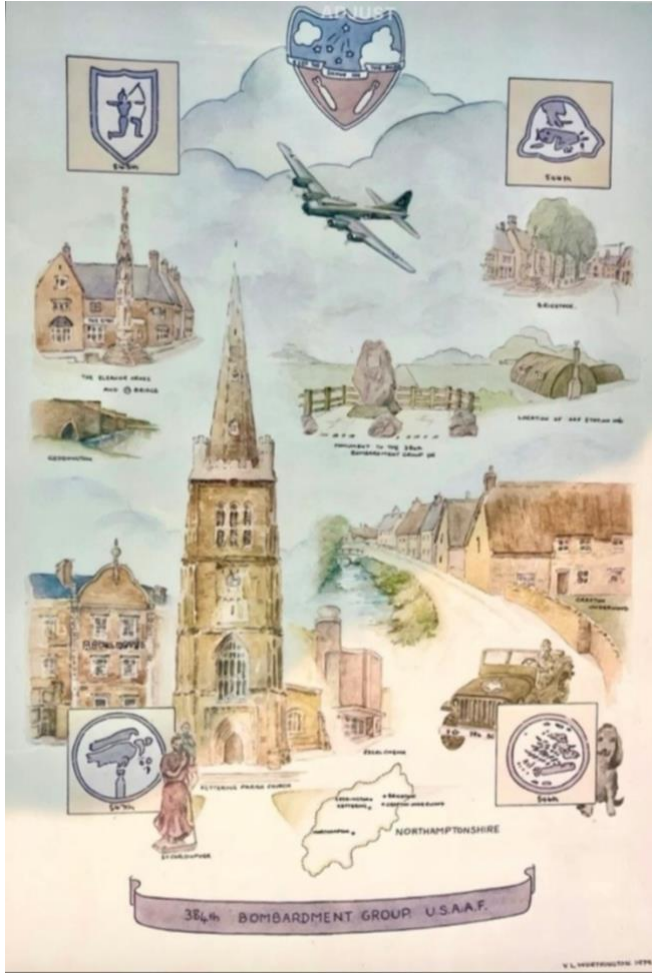
— Paul Furiga

## *A chance encounter uncovers the history of an iconic 384th painting* Now there's a new question: Who donated the painting to its current home?

The painting below is well-known to many who love the 384th Bomb Group. But where is the original? The artist and others wanted to know, and Paul Teal reports on what he and Sam Coleman, daughter of the late Quentin Bland, learned in their quest for the truth:

“Over the years, there have been so many false rumors thrown around about this iconic 384th painting and Sam and I are pleased to share the recently learned facts related to it.

“I had the pleasure of meeting the artist Yvonne Worthington and her husband Jim, when I was donating a Reg Payne painting to the Grafton Underwood church on behalf of his son David. Yvonne (photo below with me) and Jim are both in their 90s. A couple of months previous to this meetup, via a mutual friend, we learned that Yvonne was very keen to know where her original painting had ended up. At this juncture, it's worth remembering that 500 copies were made and these are mainly in the US and UK.



“Going back to the late 1970s, Yvonne did a painting of the Parish Church in Kettering (where the "American Bell " is). Frank Pearce was the rector at the time and owing to the fact that 384th veterans (including Maj. William E. “Pop” Dolan) were attending a service as part of their U.K. reunion tour in 1979, he asked Yvonne if she could adapt her original painting (now in private hands) to include Grafton Underwood and 384th elements, with a view to presenting it to the veterans. At the back of Frank's mind was receiving donations for the church.

“For the last 45 years the original painting sort of disappeared and was forgotten about.

“My meeting with Yvonne and Jim inspired Sam and me to up our efforts in trying to find the



original. We asked Frank Alfter and although he wasn't sure, he thought that The Pentagon or top USAF museums were a good bet.

Well, we didn't have the phone number for the former, so we asked Keith Ellefson what the main museums were. We emailed three in hope and eureka!, the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force said they thought they had it.

Cutting a longish story short, they sent us a picture and, it was the original! The first thing we did was tell Yvonne and Jim and they're over the moon....so much so that we've been invited over for coffee and biscuits.”

There is still one more mystery to solve: While the original has been confirmed by the Eighth Air Force Museum as belonging to the William E. “Pop” Dolan collection, who donated the original to the museum? That may be the next chapter in the quest for the full history of this iconic painting.

— Paul Teal

# What's in a title on a WW II bomb group base? It depends!

Recently, 384th sleuth and historian Cindy Farrar Bryan (see Page 2 for a link to her excellent website), was reviewing 384th Bomb Group records on our website and found some discrepancies in titles compared to what she was seeing in the Apple TV series on the 100th Bomb Group based on the Donald Miller book, *Masters of the Air*.

In the show, one of the main characters, John "Bucky" Egan, carries the title for a period of time of Air Executive. In searching the 384th website, Cindy didn't see easily corresponding titles for our group leadership.

One of the great resources of the 384th Bomb Group Historical Association is the depth of knowledge among the more experienced members who helped make the association what it is today.

Among them is John Edwards, who is a great source of information and was instrumental in the last few decades in helping to create the great content on our website. Here is John's interesting response to Cindy's query:

"The Air Exec is responsible for all flying and flying related activities. He is part of the staff and command pilots for the group. He is technically a staff member, but he flies based on operational need. He is not first up in the rotation at all. He acts as a command pilot or air commander depending on the time of the war. He would fly lead for the group with a lead crew.

"Our equivalents were not called 'Air Exec' but Deputy Group Commander. They (were) Maj. Selden McMillin, Lt. Col. Thomas Beckett, Lt. Col. William Buck, Col. Robert Thacker, (and) Lt. Col. Thomas Hutchinson. The naming convention

using Air and Ground was based partly on function as well as to differentiate between non-rated ground officers and rated officers."

The photo at left, from our website, includes several deputy group commanders (Air Execs?) referenced by John.

Top left: Major William E. Buck, Jr., Group Operations Officer. Top center: Colonel Dale O. Smith, Commanding Officer, 384th Bomb Group, 23 November 1943 to 24 October 1944  
Top right: Major Thomas P. Beckett, Deputy Commander, 384th Bomb Group. Bottom left: Major Alfred C. "Coach" Nuttall, Commanding Officer, 544th Bomb Squadron. Bottom mid-left: Major Raymond P. "Porky" Ketelsen, Commanding Officer, 545th Bomb Squadron. Bottom Mid-Right: Major George W. Harris, Jr., Commanding Officer, 546th Bomb Squadron (photo taken prior to his appointment as Major). Bottom right: Captain Horace Everett "Ev" Frink, Commanding Officer, 547th Bomb squadron.

Bottom left is another photo of one of our deputy commanders in later years, Col. Robert Thacker, who went on to be commanding officer of the 384th. The picture is from his 2011 signing of the 384th commemorative wing panel, "Wingy," which is now on display with other group memorabilia at the Hill Air Force Museum at Hill Air Force Base in Utah.



**384<sup>th</sup> BOMB GROUP 2025 REUNION DAYTON, OHIO**  
**29 October through 2 November 2025**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ GUEST: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDITIONAL GUESTS (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

SPECIAL NEEDS: \_\_\_\_\_

IS THIS YOUR FIRST 384<sup>th</sup> BOMB GROUP FUNCTION? YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

COST PER PERSON IS **\$280.00**. This covers a welcome reception Wednesday, pizza party on Thursday evening, box lunch and chicken dinner on Friday with a cash bar, and prime rib dinner on Saturday evening with a cash bar. For any veggie or kid's meals, please indicate in the "Special Needs" line above. Please select your choice of a turkey or roast beef or veggie wrap for your box lunch on Friday and indicate by number below how many of each selection you will need.

Turkey \_\_\_\_\_ Roast beef \_\_\_\_\_ Veggie \_\_\_\_\_ (if no choice is indicated you will get turkey)

\$280.00 PER PERSON X \_\_\_\_\_ PEOPLE ATTENDING: TOTAL ENCLOSED  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency contact \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail completed registration form and payment in full in the form of a check or money order made payable to the **384<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group**. Mail to **Ray Lustig, 128 Ulster Ave, Walden, NY 12586**. **Registration deadline is 29 September, 2025.** All registration forms and payment in full **MUST be received by mail on or before 29 September, 2025**. Please make it easy this year and make your reservations by the deadline. Calling two days before the event will not get you a reservation and you will not be able to attend. Confirmations will be mailed out

**Hotel Registration** Doubletree by Hilton reservations (Group Code "BOM") or call the front desk at 937-426-7800 and request room block "384<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group." Their address is 2800 Presidential Drive, Fairborn, OH 45324. We have a room rate of \$150 per night. This rate is good three days before and three days after the event based upon availability, and includes breakfast. **Deadline for reservations is 29 September, 2025.** Hotel room cancellations must be done 48 hours out.

**Note:** This hotel is currently a **Holiday Inn and will become DoubleTree by Hilton** in June.

If you have any additional questions please contact Carol at 937-702-9424, or at [fjalfter@gmail.com](mailto:fjalfter@gmail.com).

384TH BOMB GROUP, INC.

384th Bomb Group, Inc.  
222 Courtney Place  
Wexford, PA 15090



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

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

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## What was life like before the war? Vet Henry Kolinek shares his experience

Those of us with family or friends who served in the 384th, and those of us interested in World War II history, have lots of opportunity to learn about wartime life for our veterans. But what about life before the war?

Recently, S. Sgt. Henry "HJ" Kolinek, tail gunner, 546th squadron (below, top left Zoom box), had the opportunity to share the events of his pre-war life with students participating in an oral history project with veterans through the Crestwood school in Toronto, Canada.

The interview is broken into six chapters, beginning with HJ's early life in Texas, then moves through his training, his assignment to a crew and going overseas, details about his squadron and missions, a day in the life for HJ at Grafton Underwood, and reflections on the end of the war and looking back.

The entire interview is definitely worth viewing on the internet, and is available (at least as of press time) [at this link](#).

Many thanks to HJ's daughter Marsha Duniven and her husband Dennis for sharing this story (and for attending many reunions with HJ, including junkets to England). They also accompanied HJ to the D Day celebrations in Normandy last year when he was among a group of World War II veterans honored during days of events in France. — Paul Furiga

