

# FORTRESS FOR FREEDOM

## 388th Bombardment Group (H) Association



8th Air Force, 3rd Air Division, 45th Combat Wing  
Station 136, Knettishall England, 1943–1945  
333 Total Missions



306 Combat Missions, 19 Aphrodite Missions, 5 Chowhound Missions, 1 POW Mission, 2 Revival Missions

### 388th Bombardment Group Headquarters

Station 136 Weather Detachment, Fersfield Air Base (Aphrodite Project), 434th Headquarters Squadron, 860th Squadron, 684th Squadron, 434th Air Service Group, 1211th Quartermaster Company, 1284th Military Police Company, 273rd Medical Dispensary, 1751st Ordnance Supply and Maintenance Company, 2019th Engineering and Fire Fighting Platoon, 452nd Sub Depot, 29th Station Complement, 587th Postal Unit, 877th Chemical Company, 214th Finance Detachment  
560th Bombardment Squadron, 561st Bombardment Squadron, 562nd Bombardment Squadron, 563rd Bombardment Squadron

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## ***From the President's Desk***

As I sit down to write my first President's letter, I am reflecting on recent events. We've just experienced the 75th anniversary of Pearl Harbor. It takes a minute to sink in. And over the weekend, my husband and I want to see "Hacksaw Ridge". Fantastic movie. What has stuck with me most from the events over the past several days is how one decision, one moment in time, can change the course of events forever. The choices we make effects each and every one of us each and every day. The choices our veterans made gave us all the lives we enjoy today. In a single moment, with one decision, they changed their lives forever and they secured our future. I want you to know how honored I am to serve as your President. And that I will attempt to make each and every decision, every moment of my term, the very best it can be in service of the 388th Bomb Group.

I want to give a bit shout out and thank you to my predecessor, Scott Long. Thank you for your service and for setting such an outstanding example for me to follow. I also want to acknowledge our terrific Board of Directors, Officers, reunion organizers, and all the volunteers. I am so excited to work with all of you. No better team could be assembled.

This is going to be a tremendous year for the 388th Bomb Group Association. We have a fantastic reunion in the works for this year – San Diego. We are working to set up an annuity to care for our Knet-tishall Memorial. The 388th kiosk at Hill Air Force Base is coming along. Our website has been updated with new store items that can be purchased on line. We're working to bring our reunion registration on line ... fingers crossed ... for this year's reunion. And so much more. I will keep you posted as we move forward with all of these projects.

It's gonna be great year! I would like to invite all of our members to reach out. We're here. And we'd love to hear from you.

Take care and be safe,

*Cindy*



**World War II experiences of Charles "Woody" Woodford,  
388th Bombardment Group (H), 561st Squadron, tail gunner in Hal Poland's crew, aboard the B-17G Lady Lillian.**

**Submitted by Ben Forrest**

I had the good fortune and privilege to interview Charles Woodford recently regarding his service in WWII. At the ripe young age of 94 we conducted the interview in the employee break room where Charles was about to start his shift as a docent at the Cahoka Mounds Historic site in Collinsville Illinois (really cool place, by the way). We talked for about 45 minutes, after which Charles proceeded to work his three-hour shift as a greeter and information source for guests arriving. Charles' daughter, Terry Woodford-Thomas (388th BG Assn. past President) arranged the interview and produced much of the background verbiage for this piece. Other docents and employees were in the room during the interview and added side notes about how much they loved working with Charles and how much he added to the appeal of the visitor center. His positive attitude, sense of humor and humility about his life and those around him are typical of our WWII veteran hero's and give us all pause to reflect on what is really important in our lives.

While working in the experimental department of Howard Hughes Aircraft in California, Charles Woodford, fondly known to his crew as "Woody", enlisted in the Army Air Corp in 1942. He took the oath on Oct. 31, 1942, and reported to Fort MacArthur near Los Angeles, Calif. He received his basic training in Salt Lake City, and armor training at Lowry Field, CO. At Fort Myers, Florida, he attended gunnery school and then transferred to Moses Lake, Washington where he joined his B-17 crew.

As a unit they trained there and in Walla Walla, WA. In summer 1943, he and his crew were transported to England by troop ship, the USS Patrick Henry. After a 6-day delay in Greenland to better avoid U-Boat patrols, they arrived and were first assigned to the 100th Bomb Group (the Bloody Hundredth) at Thorpe Abbots, but then immediately reassigned to the 388th Bomb Group and traveled by truck to their base at Knettishall. Charles



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**We are now accepting credit card payments!**

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*All profits go to our Memorial in Knettishall.*

thought this a very lucky and fortunate event. He and his crew were together for only 2 weeks at Knettishall before their 1st mission. During that time, they continued their gunnery training at The Wash and practiced flying in formation.

Charles's first mission was to an airfield and munitions factory at Reims, near Paris, flying the Purple Heart corner. His aircraft was attacked incessantly and he realized at that point more than ever that combat was serious business.

His crew survived the Schweinfurt mission on Oct. 14th, 1943, one of the few to do so. He stated that he shot his 50 Cal tail guns so much the barrels overheated and drooped. The bombing of Schweinfurt, a ball bearing factory, is said to have shortened the war by 6 months.

On the Munster raid, Nov. 11, 1943, his was the only B17 crew in his barracks to come back. The rest were shot down, he lost so many friends.

Charles carried a stove cover (seat protection), a lucky rabbit's foot and his soon-to-be-wife's picture in his knee pocket (against rules, but he insisted). He also modified the Tail Gunner position straps so he could sit upright instead of kneeling by using an old bicycle seat, which all helped to accommodate his long frame.

Charles least favorite target was Bremen, he "hated" Bremen, Germany, the target of his third mission.

On Nov. 26, 1943, on his 11th mission (to Bremen), his B-17 received heavy flak damage, flying at 31,000 feet. The last thing Charles remembers is flak hitting the tail that sounded like "rocks in a barrel". Charles was wounded and lay unconscious in his remote tail gunner position, lacking oxygen. His waist gunner, Frank "Smitty" Smith, finally pulled Charles out of his predicament after the first waist gunner rescuer passed out from lack of oxygen. "Smitty" had to





remove the first rescuer before he could get to Charles, lengthening exposure to the 50deg below zero cold and no oxygen.

Charles' heated flight suit was rendered useless during the attack causing him to develop severe frostbite to his fingers and toes on the flight back to England. He remained in the hospital for nearly 6 months. In Jan. 1944, during his hospital stay, he was one day away from the decision to amputate all his fingers, and likely his toes. Charles said a doctor tested the feeling in his hand by pushing a sharp object into the top of his hand, asking him if he had any feeling. Charles replied that he did feel, even though he did not. As a result his fingers were kept intact and he kept his hands and feet, and eventually made a full recovery. His hospital stay lasted until summer 1944. When he returned home, after a stay at Walter Reed, Charles went back into active service, and prepared for a second tour of duty in the Pacific. The war ended just before he was deployed. Charles was discharged from his military duty in 1945, having served exactly three years in the Army Air Corp.

What was Charles' favorite experience in WWII?  
"Getting back safe!"

After the war, Charles married his high school sweetheart, Phyllis Bondhus, of Oska-loosa, Iowa, attended William Penn College and Iowa State University on the GI Bill, and then transferred to Spartan Air College in Tulsa, Oklahoma where he received his diploma. In 1949, he worked at Middletown Area Army Material Airbase in Pennsylvania in air support for the federal government. He was offered a job

at Scott Air Force Base near Belleville, Illinois where he worked as a flight mechanical engineer, a plane inspector and financial manager at the base, eventually helping to oversee a \$16-17 million annual budget, a large sum of money for those times. Planes that he became familiar with included the B-25, T-6, C-45, C-46, C-47, C-54, C-118, C-119, T-28 and T-39. At Scott AFB, Charles eventually worked with the DOD's Defense Communications Agency, in the Defense Commercial Communications Office (DECCO) at Scott AFB, IL, as well as with Air Mobility Command within the USAF 3310th. He still maintains a home business, called Air Navigation Service,

selling vintage airplane maintenance/repair manuals. After his retirement from civil service, among other activities, he worked as an air controller at Parks Air College, now Parks College of Engineering, Aviation and Technology, part of Saint Louis University, near St. Louis, MO. Charles enjoys woodworking and continues to make WWII wing rib bookcases and wooden plaques for airshows and exhibits. Charles has one of the most complete helicopter postage stamp

collections in the world and he is still looking for the stamps that he is missing.

Interesting note for all of us descendants-

Charles received about \$96 per month for his AAC service + \$45 in combat pay. That's about \$1.26 pay per day to fly combat in WWII.

Thank you, Charles, from all of us in the 388th Bomb Group Association and the rest of our great country for your grit, determination, heroism and sense of duty that helped us maintain our freedom.



# SAVE *THE* DATE

**September 7-10, 2017**

**Join us in sunny San Diego for the 68th Annual 388th Bomb Group Reunion! With several activities planned for all ages, you'll not want to miss out. Bring the whole family for an experience they'll never forget, all while honoring our wonderful Veterans who've made it possible for us to celebrate!**

**See you there!**



**Don't Miss Out!**





# 388th Bomb Group 67th Annual Reunion in Oshkosh, WI.



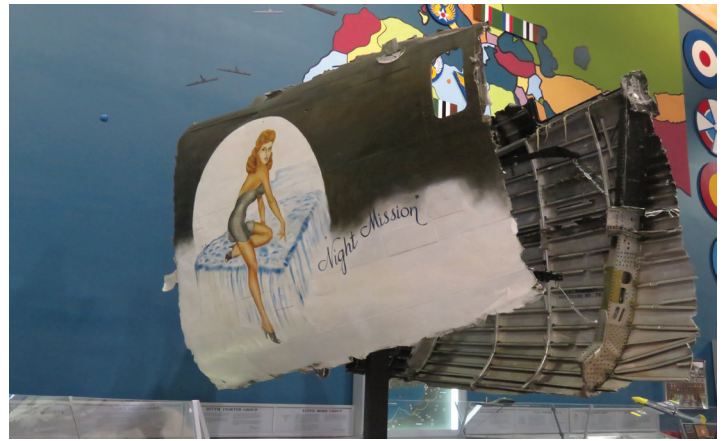
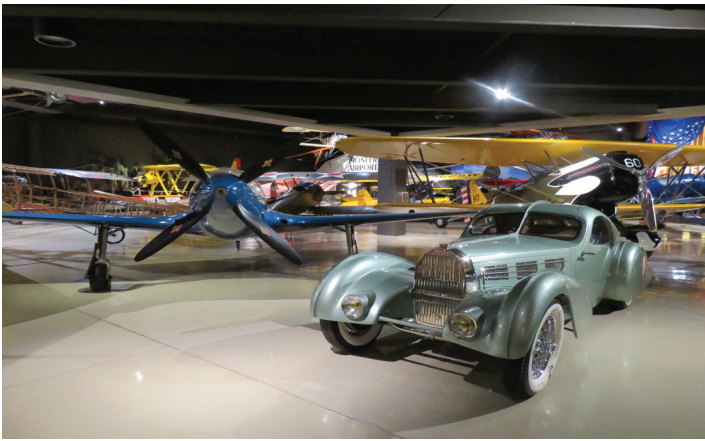




## Museum







## River Boat







## Banquet















## TAPS



### George Bartnik

George Albert Louis Bartnik passed away on June 21, 2016 at Heritage Health in Streator, IL. The longtime Braidwood, IL resident was 93.



Mr. Bartnik was flying his eleventh as navigator on the Joseph Ellis crew in the 560th Sqd. when their aircraft Karen W was hit by flak over Nurmberg on February 20, 1945. He spent the remaining months of the war as a POW. He received the Purple Heart.

Born and raised in Chicago, IL, Mr. Bartnik attended John Marshall Law School for pre-legal courses, and the College of Advanced Traffic, graduating with a degree in traffic management before enlisting in 1943.

Following the war, he returned to his job at Liquid Carbonic Corporation. He retired in February 1987 as vice president of the corporation's international division.

Mr. Bartnik was founder and a member of Country Club Hills Volunteer Fire Department, retiring as a lieutenant. He served as trust-

ee for the newly formed Fire Protection District, as member of the city's fire and police protection board, and as alderman for the 3rd Ward in Country Club Hills, IL. He was a member of the Braidwood Zoning Board the Three Rivers Yacht Club and the VFW Wilmington.

Survivors include sons George, Marc, Thomas, Joseph and Paul, 11 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren.

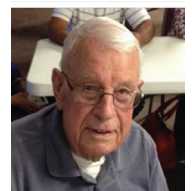
Following services at the Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Braidwood, interment with full military honors was held at the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery.

### Harry Bell

Harry Bell, 97, of Charlotte, MI died at his home on April 22, 2016.

Waist gunner on the Lester Frawley crew in the 560th Sqd, Mr. Bell was flying his sixth mission when, on the September 28, 1944 raid on Merseburg, the crew's plane Millie K was hit by flak. After a successful bail-out, he was captured and spent the remainder of the war as a POW.

Born in Springfield, MA, Mr. Bell was raised





in Michigan. Following the war, he married Marjorie Fairchild in 1946. He worked for the Eaton County Road Commission, retiring as foreman after 30 years. He also owned and operated a pool hall in Charlotte.

Mr. Bell was a life member of VFW Post 2406 and American Legion Post 42, as well as a member of the Charlotte Moose Lodge and Charlotte Eagles Aerie 3552.

Survivors include daughters Bonnie Steljes and Sherry Dexter, son Buddy, eight grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. He was predeceased by Marjorie, his wife of 65 years, in 2011.

Interment was at Arlington National Cemetery.

#### **Paul W. Kattman**

Paul W. Kattman died on October 21, 2015 at Catonsville, MD. The former Smithville, NJ resident was 97.



An S-2 officer at Knettishall, he continued serving in the U.S. Army Reserve until 1976, having attained the rank of major.

Raised in St. Marys, OH, Mr. Kattman studied business administration at North Western School in Lima, OH, 1935 to 1936. He joined the National Guard in 1940 and was activated into the U.S. Army Air Force in January 1941.

Following the war he studied advertising and salesmanship at the University of Pennsylvania night school while working as the sales promotion manager and sales manager at Famise Corporation, Philadelphia, PA. Later, as district sales manager for S. H. Camp and Company, he conducted training seminars for physicians and the National Association of Retail Druggists on precise fitting of surgical support garments and appliances, which Camp manufactured. He retired in 1981.

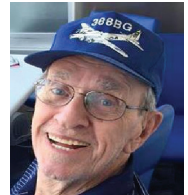
Memberships included the Rotary Club of Jackson, MI, and the Retired Officers' Association.

Survivors include daughters Pau-

lette Watson and Stephanie Brower, son Charles, seven grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by Katherine, his wife of nearly 70 years, in 2013.

A graveside memorial service was held at the Atlantic County Veterans Cemetery in Estell Manor Park, NJ.

#### **James W. Ripley**



James W. "Jim" Ripley, of Pleasant Hill, MO, passed away on August 18, 2016 after suffering a fall at his home. He was 92.

A member of the Bruce Muirhead crew in the 562nd Sqd., Mr. Ripley completed 20 missions between May and September 1944, flying as waist gunner, tail gunner and, on occasion, togglier. Awards included the DFC, Air Medal with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters, and 2 Bronze Stars. He was also considered for the Congressional Medal of Honor for his part in the successful landing of his final flight.

Born and raised in La Monte, MO, Mr. Ripley joined the Army Air Corps shortly after his high school graduation. After the war, he attended college at Central Missouri State University in Warrensburg.

Mr. Ripley was a long time bank officer serving as stockholder, vice-president, manager/vice-president and president/CEO of banks in Knob Noster, Odessa, Pleasant Hill, Sedalia and La Monte. He was also a former mayor of La Monte.

Active in the VFW and American Legion, he served as VFW Post Commander in Sedalia and as American Legion commander in Knob Noster. He was a leader in establishing a war memorial in downtown Pleasant Hill.

Mr. Ripley is survived by Juanita, his wife of 66 years, daughter Janet Wehmeir, sons Warren and Jim, nine grandchildren, 17 great-grandchildren, eight step-grandchildren and eight great step-grandchildren.

Interment with full military honors was held at the La Monte Cemetery.

### Scott Smith

Scott Russell Smith of Whitmore Lake, MI passed away on October 22, 2016 at a seniors' center in nearby Brighton at age 96. He had suffered a stroke in May.



A pilot in the 563rd Sqd., he flew 16 missions, including one to Berlin, between February and April 1945. Awards included the Air Medal with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters, the EAME Campaign Medal and the Presidential Unit Citation.

Born on May 16, 1920, Mr. Smith, who grew up on a farm outside Weston, OH, enlisted in the Army Air Corps in 1942. While undergoing basic pilot training at Walnut Ridge Army Airfield, AR, he met Nina Stanage in March 1944. The couple married three months later.

Following the war, Mr. Smith remained in the Air Force and was subsequently stationed at Sebring, FL; Sioux Falls, SD and Barksdale, LA before transitioning as a Major to the Air National Guards as a reservist at Selfridge AFB near Mount Clemens, MI. He later accepted a position as salvage process analyst with Burroughs Office Machines. He retired in 1982.

He was a regular volunteer at the Yankee Air Museum at Willow Run Airport and spoke frequently about his WWII experiences at local schools. The Smiths enjoyed traveling, and visited 49 states ... all, except Hawaii, by car. They were also regular attendants at 388th BG Assn. reunions.

Mr. Smith is survived by Nina, his wife of 72 years; daughter Rosalie Masters and sons Roger and Todd. Private memorial services with military honors were held at Borek Jennings Funeral Home in Whitmore Lake.

### Noah C. Thompson

Noah Cyrus Thompson, 97, died peacefully on March 4, 2016 at a senior citizens residence in Shel-



burne Bay, VT. A pilot in the 560th Sqd., he flew 32 missions, seven as a command pilot, between January 20 and May 25, 1945. His final three missions were two Chowhounds and a POW repatriation.

Born in Burlington, VT, Mr. Thompson was a graduate of the University of Vermont, receiving a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture and a Master of Extension Education.

He remained in the Air Force and was assigned to the Military Air Transport Service, flying a C-54 to destinations such as Guam, Manila, Tokyo and Shanghai. Transferred to Frankfurt in July 1948, he made 184 Berlin Airlift flights.

After his discharge in 1950, Mr. Thompson and his wife Betty bought a farm with a herd of Registered Jerseys in Essex, VT. In 1963, he joined the staff of the UVM Extension Service, serving first as a civil defense specialist and later in the Community and Rural Development Dept. He retired as a professor emeritus in 1984. For many years, the Thompsons divided their time between Essex and their winter home in Green Valley, AZ.

A longtime member of the Essex United Methodist Church, Mr. Thompson served a two-year term as president of the Chittenden County Farm Bureau, and was a director of the former Milton Cooperative Creamery. He was elected to five three-year terms on the Essex Town School Board and was a member of the Essex Town Planning Commission for 24 years, 14 as chairman. Thompson Drive in Essex was named in his honor. Memberships included the Green Valley Elks Lodge, the American Legion, the 388th Bomb Group Assn., the 8th AF Historical Society, and the Berlin Airlift Veterans Assn. He published a book, *A Pilot's Story*, detailing his military flying experiences, and contributed a chapter to the 388th Anthology, Vol. II.

Mr. Thompson is survived by sons Glenn and Dale. He was predeceased by Betty, his wife of 59 years, in 2004; and by a son, Alan. A memorial service was held March 12, 2016 at the Essex Center United Methodist Church.

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