

1952 Antietam Street
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15206
July 8th 1975

Dear Mr. Strong:

Thank you for your thoughtful letter of July 3d 1975. I had just about given up hope of finding anyone who knew my father during his service with the 306th. I'm sorry I didn't learn your address sooner, as I was near Dayton last month, visiting the air museum at Wright-Patterson while on vacation. If you do get to Pittsburgh in the near future, please don't hesitate to call. My number is 363-3244.

As you know, my father was killed August 26th, and I was born December 10th 1944, so I never knew him. My mother was much affected by his death, and could never speak of him without sorrow, so I rarely questioned hereafter I grew old enough to appreciate her feelings. Consequently, I know very little about my father as a man, although I have learned a great deal from official sources about his wartime service.

I would very much like to have copies of documents pertaining to him, and any information about his personality, habits, mannerisms, strong and weak points, skill as a pilot, and so on. I don't want to impose upon you, but I would appreciate your help as I'm sure you can understand. I would like to know my father as he was, and must rely upon the memories of those who knew him. Perhaps I'm asking too much after more than thirty years, but I feel I must at least try.

If you can remember the other members of his crew I'd like to know something about them too, and how they got along together. Perhaps I should simply write that I'm interested in anything you can tell me!

I look forward to seeing your history of the 306th in print. I have read the old history of the Group, and toyed with the idea of writing a more complete history, but that was before I learned of your efforts. May I suggest that you contact Mr. W. W. Fahrenhold, if you have not already done so, and ask him about the mission on which "Snuffy" Smith won the Medal of Honor? His address is 115 Frustum Street; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15204 (telephone 331-2469). Since you are a historian, you may find Mr. Fahrenhold's recollection of that day quite interesting.

I was told that orders were received after my father had taken off on his last mission which retired the three oldest crews from combat because the Group (perhaps the 368th Squadron) was overstrength. His crew was second oldest, so the story goes, and had the weather been a little worse that morning he wouldn't have flown the raid on which he was killed. Do you have any information among your papers which would confirm or destroy this rumor?

I look forward to hearing from you again. I hope I'll have the opportunity to meet you personally, perhaps at the Eighth Air Force Reunion at Miami Beach in October.

In the meantime, best wishes to you and your family for the future, and thanks again for your kind letter.

Respectfully yours,

Chuck Rapp

Chuck Rapp

Don Rapp
446 E. Silver Street
Lebanon, OH 45036

Russell A. Strong
5323 Cheval Place
Charlotte, NC 28205

Dear Russell;

Thanks for the past issues of 306th Echoes. You're doing a great job! And, thanks for the notes about my dad and Dean Allen. I was unaware of Dean's death.

I am enclosing a check for FortyThree dollars to cover the costs of a microfiche of the newspaper from 1975 through 1987, and for a copy of your book First Over Germany (hopefully autographed).

While my dad was in Alexandria, I accompanied my mother, Jean, (Margaret Jean, also called Peg) down for a visit. I we lived in Bessemer, Alabama, at the time. It was in Alexandria that I received my First Communion. As a matter of fact, the place where we stayed was just next to a Catholic Church. At any rate, I remember having a hamburger at some diner with my dad, and hearing the Andrews Sisters sing "Sentimental Journey" over and over. At the time, he seemed to like the song. I also remember one afternoon my dad and his crew went on a picnic in a state park. I had mentioned -being only 6 or 7 at the time- that I wanted "a lizard." The crew immediately set out to find one, and by the end of the day I was a proud owner of a lizard - actually, it was a chameleon. I have a vague recollection of being carried on someone's shoulders. To me he was a huge figure, and had no trouble running through the woods with a young, squirming, laughing child on his shoulders. I believe this might have been Mike Vlahos, the bombardier.

Over the years, I have attempted to find out as much about the 8AF, and the 306BG, as I could. For some reason, I never got around to joining the association. I guess I hesitated because I didn't want to intrude, or force others to relive unpleasant times. I have managed to obtain some information, though, which I would be willing to share with you:

- o A poem by Russ Mercer, titled "Air Corps Heaven" I met Russ in Fort Wayne some years back and he gave me a copy of his poem. He was with the 8AF, but I never did find out which BG.
- o Report of Operations Officer - Mission of 25 August 1944 - Gelsenkirchen, Germany (dated 26 August 1944). The date of the mission in the subject of the report is wrong as the body of the report specifically refers to the "mission of 26 August 1944 to Gelsenkirchen, Germany."
- o Mission Reports of the 368th Bombardment Squadron for the months of June, July and August 1944.
- o Copies of the INTERROGATION FORMS detailing the Gelsinkirchen mission and the fate of 946-T, "Hard To Get."
- o A copy of GENERAL ORDERS NUMBER 268 dated 22 August 1944 covering the awards of Oak Leaf Cluster to Air Medal, and to Air Medal, Posthumous. Among those who received the Oak Leaf CLuster at this time were my dad and Mike Vlahos - along with 16 other officers of the 306th, 9 officers of the 91st, and 30 officers and sergeants of the 305th.

If you like, I would be willing to loan these to you. Or, send you copies. Or, transcribe them onto a diskette. Whatever meets your needs.

Both Chuck, or Ernest if you will, and I will be attending the reunion in September. We also plan to make the '92 trip to Bedford and London, along with our wives. From there, we hope to journey to Belgium and visit our dad's grave.

One final note: I have seven children, four girls and three boys. The boys are named Donald, Jr; Douglas Charles, for my father; and Dean Allen, for 946-T's pilot, and my dad's friend.

And, with that bit of trivia I shall end this.

Sincerely;

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Don", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Don

Gentlemen;

Please enroll me as a dependent member of the 306th Bomb Group Association. My father was co-pilot on Dean Allen's "Hard To Get" B-17G 42-97946 T. Lt. C. U. Rapp, Jr. was KIA over Gelsenkirchen, 44-08-26.

Also, could you send me a copy of "306th Echoes" from January 1991 Vol. 16, No. 1. I'd appreciate info on back issue availability as well.

I'm enclosing \$20⁰⁰ - \$10⁰⁰ for dependent membership in the 8th Air Force Historical Society, and \$10⁰⁰ to assist the 306th BGA in whatever way possible.

Thanks — and thanks for 1942-1945. Some of us won't forget!

Sincerely
Don

Don Rapp
446 E. Silver St
Lebanon OH 45036
(513) 932-2999

P.S. I have an IBM AT Clone w/30 megabyte hard drive, 2400 baud modem, 24 pin letter quality printer and 2 megabytes of RAM. It's at your disposal, as am I, should you need us. I'd be more than willing to type, print lists of labels, or do anything to assist the 306th BGA here in the mid-West.

Plus - a standing invite to members of the Assoc to visit & have coffee with us - there's even bedspace for up to 6, if you ever need it!