

18 Mar 80

Bill Collins

I have just received information from the 8th AF Clearing House, and they gave me your names as the contact point for the 306 BG.

I was assigned to the 306th in early 1942 when it was only on paper at Salt Lake City. Col. Oueraker was the Group Commander. Shortly afterwards it was officially organized at Henderson, Utah. He had 4 B-18s and 1 B-17C when we arrived at Henderson. He lived in tents, while the barracks were being built.

I was assigned to the 367 Bomb Sqdn and was the acting 1st sqt until the cadre arrived. Maj Harry Holt was commanding. I have been in contact with Col. Holt while he was assigned at the Pentagon until he retired.

At the present time I'm working at HQ SAC and have threatened to retire from this civilian job, but haven't because I still enjoy being associated with the military.

I am really interested in the roster to see if I can find the names of friends I served with. Most of them would have been with me prior to Nov 1942, when I was hurt and spent 1 year in hospitals before I was given a medical discharge.

Sincerely

"A Charter Member of 367 Bomb Sqdn"

Norm Johnson

Norman L. Johnson
3124 South 134th Street
Omaha, NE 68144

28 March 1980

Mr. Norman L. Johnson
3124 South 134th St.
Omaha, NE 68144

Dear Norman:

I am delighted that you have finally come to light, as I have wanted to contact you for some time.

I am in the process of writing a history of the 306th, along with putting out 306th Echoes, and last summer I finally unearthed a squadron diary at Maxwell AFB. The source of my concern about you is indicated on the accompanying sheets.

Could you write me more about the incident detailed herein? What happened to you after this happened? How did you happen to be in the right place? Was anyone other than Yahn around? Did you get any kind of decoration? Any other recollections you have will be welcome.

As to a list of those you may have served with, that will have to wait until summer. We will then publish a new directory of the 306th, which now has 1300 names and good addresses. At that time we will also be publishing squadron designations, so that should help in your quest.

Let me hear from you on the above incident, as I do make mention of it in chapter 3, and would like to flesh it out in any way I can.

Also, why were you hospitalized, and when did you leave the 306th?

Sincerely yours,

Russell A. Strong

PS: I was a 367th navigator from June to November 1944.

16 Apr 80

Mr Russell A. Strong
2041 Hilldale
Kalamazoo, Mich

Dear Russell:

I was suprised (pleasantly) to receive your 28 Mar letter. When it arrived, I was enjoying myself, getting a sunburn in Miss while trying to outwit some fish.

One of the things you will notice is that I always write in pencil because my writing is much slower than my thinking and it's easier to erase pencil and put in the words I have skipped. At least most of the words.

Since I have located this organization, I have become very enthused with 306th Cbss and enjoy reading it and I start daydreaming and reliving those years.

As to answering your questions, I have been trying to relive the incident and after this many years, I am fuzzy on some of the details, but I'll give it a bloody go.

On the evening of 12 Sept 42, the bar was closed because of a mission scheduled the next morning. I had a very "Hot" date that night, so I went through a "hole in the fence" and walked into Bedford. I met the girl and also her friend who Yahoo escorted. The bar had close at the Swan Hotel and we were walking along the river near the bridge. There were some people on the bridge, but this was very common and we gave it no thought. We heard a splash in river below where the people were on the bridge, then a few seconds later we heard a feminine "Ugh". I shed my blouse, shirt, shoes and (why I don't know) my dog-top, and dove into the river. It was very dark and I swam toward the bridge and about the middle of the river, then treaded water looking around for whoever it was. I was getting very tired

and in desperation I yelled "Where the Hell are you?" The Good Lord was with both of us, because then I saw just fingers rise out of the water about 6 feet away a little to my right and then disappear back into the water. It reminded me of a dorsal fin of a fish that had risen to the surface. I swam to where I saw the fingers and went under water grasping to find her. The second time I went down I caught clothing and swam to the surface. I remember I clinched my fist to hit in case she panicked and would start to struggle, but she was unconscious, so I got a new hold and swam the long way to shore. I am now utterly exhausted. I started debating with myself, the girl is dead, let go and save yourself; No, you can make it if you don't hold her up but keep her coming; I'm so tired now, that I can't make it, so quit trying. I remember that at this point, I did quit and let myself and the girl slip below the water, when I started taking in water, I got my senses back and the debate started again. Within a few minutes people grabbed me and the girl and brought us onto the steps.

I was never so glad to be able to lie on concrete and do nothing but rest. Someone was working on the girl and soon after she let out a groan or something and it was music and it made everything worthwhile. Someone else pumped the water out of me.

I do not remember what transpired after that, I cannot recall how I returned to the base. As I remember it was business as usual after that.

About 9 months later, I was reading "Yank" in Walter Reed Hospital and in the centerfold was a list of Decorations and who was awarded them. My name was listed under Soldiers Medal. That was the first I knew that I was awarded a Decoration. I put that back in memory and waited for my release so I

could return to the 367th.

You also asked why I was hospitalized? The 367th was given leave to go to London so we could blow off steam. I enjoy seeing sights, as I still do, and went to Canterbury to see the church and at the same time the Germans decided they should bomb it. Being a "yank" I showed my bravado by not going into a shelter.

One bomb landed close to me and I was thrown some feet. Afterwards I got up and tried to help with rescue. I saw a woman's leg and skirt under some rubble, and when I removed the rubble, that was all there was, a woman's leg and part of a skirt. That ended my help and I returned to London. When I got there I discovered my wallet, money and all my identification was gone. I found Maj. Holt, explained what happened and he personally brought me back to Thurleigh with him. I was never so glad to get home.

My next recollection was in Churchill Hospital in Oxford, I was told by Sgt Tommy Harris that around midnight I woke up and was hysterical and went a bit berserk, and that was why I was sent to the hospital. The Dr. later told me that the concussion of the bomb and the immediate experience afterwards all let loose when I got back and relaxed.

I wanted very badly to return to my squadron, but I was given a Medical Discharge. I still have ringing in my ears, that nothing can cure and am a bit hard of hearing, and I still draw a V.A. disability check.

I was so disappointed about being discharged, that I dissociated myself with anything military for about 2 years. The friends and family coaxed me into applying to the V.A. Then, I joined a Vets organization. Then I remembered I had a decoration coming and I wrote inquiring about it. It was mailed to me at my request.

The accompanying citation said "While on Special

Military Police duty, and continued with the incident.

Now you and I know the truth of how I was at the right place at the right time and also how I was there "Officially".

It is interesting, the minute details that can be recalled while writing and yet I cannot recall names to faces I remember so clearly. I'll charge that one up to old age.

Writing this has given me a lot of pleasure and I'll be in Orlando, come October and we can meet.

Rereading your letter, I forgot to tell you that I went to the hospital in Nov 42 and was discharged from Walter Reed in Oct 43.

If there are any further questions, please write.

Sincerely

Harm

29 Sep 84

Dear Robbie:

It is with many regrets, but I will have to cancel out for this reunion. I looked forward to being there for almost a year, now.

On 20 July, my left leg was amputated, but with proper care, and a new leg, I would have made it. Few complications arose and an infection had set in. The Drs. are fighting that and it is better but not ready for a leg.

Last night I was ~~tray~~ brought back to the hospital and it now looks they are going to take ^(see note on back. ↘) my right leg. So, I will be in the hospital for some time.

Should you please refund what I have paid for registration and tickets. Also, cancel my room at the Green Oaks.

Thanks

Norm Johnson

3124 So 134th St.

Omaha, Neb., 68144

Russ:

This is for your
info — I talked to
Norm while in Omaha on
Nov 29 & he did not
lose leg as he thought.
Was being fitted for his
"right leg prothesis"
about time I talked
to him
Malcolm
1-12-85

18 Apr 83

Dear Bill: -

I have just returned from a trip to Calif. I'm one who enjoys seeing everything I can, so I drove my car.

It was an eventful trip, while driving through the mountains I hit a deer, and was very lucky, only a couple of dents and a lot of hair. I stopped in Elko, Nev and looked up H. C. Gurr. W/pt H. Clive Gurr was the Chief Armorer for the 368th. He and I go further back than that. We were attending Armament school in Denver at Lowry AFB when the war broke out on 7 Dec 1941.

I have been looking for him for 43 yrs, and located him in Elko. He said, I was the second person from the 8th that he has seen. He knew nothing of the 8th AFHS, so when I returned home I sent him a membership application.

He is very interested in the 306th Reunion in Colorado Springs, so would you send him the necessary registration forms, or better yet, send him the last copy of the Cehos, it will have everything. He asked me if there was a roster of the 306th. I think a copy of the Blue Book is what he wants.

If you could take care of this, I'm sure he would greatly appreciate it. His name and address are -

H. C. Gurr

NEW: 614 Bullion

Elko, Nev., 89801

I was talking to Don Row and I told him that I needed something to do. I suggested and he thought it was a good idea, that I approach you for some type of liaison work for the 306th. Probably covering this area. I'm getting cabin fever.

Sincerely
Norm Johnson

12 Mar 85

Dear Bill:-

I just received my Echoes, and was happy to see a reunion has been settled to be held in Colorado Springs.

In my conversations with Don Ross, all he could come up with were speculations.

This one I'm again planning to attend, Lorraine and I had looked forward to the one in Ft. Worth, but as you probably know, I spent those days in the hospital. I now have an artificial leg (temporary) and my right leg is scarred but is almost back to normal.

With the aid of my crutches, I am quite mobile and I very thankful for the automatic transmission in my car, now I'm not confined to my house. Six months of that was way too long. Now, I'm getting restless and looking for something to keep me occupied.

The reason for this letter is to send a check to help with the expense of the Echoes. I'm sending what I can and wish it could be more. Living on my retirement pay has a tendency to make one a bit frugal.

Sincerely

Norm Johnson

14 Apr 56

Dear Bill:-

I have been away from my home for a while and now am getting bills and obligations caught up.

Enclosed you will find my checks to help defray the expenses of the Coho.

When you see or talk to Russ Strong, you might remind him that I'm still looking for the "Blue Book" of names and addresses of 306th members. I had thought it would be here by now.

Don Racz and I are scheduled for a lunch soon, and he said he had a VCR tape relating to the Group, that he is loan to me. He thought I would be interested in it.

Now after two years, I'm getting very mobile, the distances I can walk without distress are not very long, but they are getting longer. I very seldom use my crutches anymore.

My Brother wants to take me fishing in Canada this coming June, and I'm thinking very strongly about going. I do enjoy catching Walleye & Northern pike.

This will be all for this note, and hope it finds you and yours in good health.

So Long
Glen Johnson

12 May 90

Russ:-

I have been waiting for a while for your book. My niece and her husband who are WW II buffs have wanted this one to add to their collection.

My Brother passed away years ago and I have become their father, because we resembled each other like twins.

I have missed the last several reunions because of physical problems and am not too sure of this one in San Antonio

Lorraine and I celebrated our 47th Anniversary on the 23rd of April. A person ought to get a decoration for living with a woman that long.

This is just a note to say "Hi" and order your book.

So Long
Russ