

A HISTORY OF THE 306th BOMBARDMENT GROUP - EIGHTH AIR FORCE
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I am endeavoring to put together a good history of the 306th Bombardment Group, an idea which has been in my mind for some years. I am working diligently on the matter, collecting all kinds of data and working through the official history and records of the group. I served as a navigator with the 367th Squadron from June through November, 1944, and currently am Director of news and information services at Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio. I solicit your assistance in my project.

I am interested in any special materials which you may have, such as good photographs of personnel, battle damage, plane insignia, etc. I am also interested in commendations (other than the usual Air Medal and DFC) you may have received, special stories which you may have in your possession, letters that are highly descriptive of combat action, or any other documents. I would appreciate receiving several copies. But, if you do not have such facilities readily available, I would appreciate the loan of materials which I might copy and return to you immediately. I am also interested in manuscripts of memoirs which you may have prepared, particularly if they were done within a couple of years of the events. Again, I would appreciate copies or the opportunity to copy them.

Name BENNETT JOHN E
Address 3213 N. LINHILL CT PEORIA, ILLINOIS
Telephone 309-688-2638 Date 3-1-76
Occupation _____ Employer CATERPILLAR
Address _____ Telephone _____

Service Record:

Before joining the 306th:

After leaving the 306th:

306th Record:

Arrival Date _____ Squadron or other unit _____
MOS _____ Combat Status _____
Missions Completed _____
Promotions _____
Decorations AM olcs DFC olcs SS DSM DSC MH SM
PH Battle Stars _____ other _____

Russ:

I visited with John Bennett Sunday night-Feb 29, 1976. He is not very talkative but his wife, who he married in Bedford during the war, wants him to get involved with the 306th reunion etc. He said, he didn't have much material but he went upstairs and came down with an album of pictures of the early days of the 368th at Thurleigh. He had an excellent picture of the 368th personnel with the plane "Eager Beaver" in the back ground in fact it is the same picture in Bove's book but clearer and larger. He has many other pictures of Col Reagan and other 368 personnel. Elbert Odle, he was at the Miami meeting, was S-3 of the 368th for quite a long time in fact I think I flew two missions with him

John Bennett said he joined the 306th (368th) at Wendover, Utah when the group didn't have a plane and Curt Lemay was one of the squadron commanders. He was assigned armament officer of the 368th and remained at that job through out the war and after the war helped on the mapping mission the 306th did in Europe. He has an excellent picture of the armament section taken at Thurleigh. He flew overseas with the group and was one of the first personnel on the base at Thurleigh.

All I remember of him at Thurleigh he roomed in the barracks next to me. He ate at the permanent party mess over by the Base commanders barracks so he did not mix with flying personnel. He said he lost a lot of friends who were the combat men in the early days; later in the war he just didn't make many friends of the combat crew because he hate to lose them. I met him here in Peoria and served in the Reserve and Ill. Air National Guard He was Comptroller of the local unit until he was mandatorily retire after 28 commission years.

I am sending you his name and address. He said he had other material and pictures upstairs so I am going to get in touch with him again soon. He said he has an up to date address list of his armament section so I want to get that list and forward it to Bill Collins. I gave him a form from Bill Collins and an envelope stamped and addressed to mail

Russ if there is anything in particular you think Bennett has let me know and I will talk to him and get the info

Ralph

Squadrons

As well-known as the 306th was becoming were the four squadrons and their picturesque names: the 367th or *Clay Pigeons*; the 368th or *Eager Beavers*; the 369th, or *Fittin' Bitin'*; and the 423rd or *Grim Reapers*.

Dubbed the *Clay Pigeons* by a *Saturday Evening Post* correspondent, because as one of the members said, "They went down just like clay pigeons, losses were so heavy," the name the 367th had acquired stuck, and by the end of the year 1942 the squadron, in truth, appeared to be living up to it. It seemed for a time that no one could possibly stay in combat in that squadron and survive. Losses were heavy, heavier than those of any other squadron in the ETO at that time, but the calibre of the work of the men behind the planes was evident in the comparatively few turnbacks due to mechanical failure.

During the early part of 1943, the 369th, known as *Fittin' Bitin'*, established the phenomenal record of completing forty-two consecutive missions without loss. This almost unbelievable feat started on the first Wilhelmshaven attack and was broken on the July 29th mission to Kiel. The record stood until after D-Day, when of course, several squadrons in many groups broke it. However, the fact remains that *Fittin' Bitin'* accomplished this remarkable action when the opposition by the Luftwaffe was at its fiercest.

The 368th, or *Eager Beaver* squadron, fully lived up to its name by being the first heavy bombardment squadron in the ETO to drop 1,000 tons on the Nazi war effort. The squadron's semi-official mascot was an old white horse that lived in a field adjacent to the squadron area. Many a time the nag was startled into sudden activity by base guns fired by exuberant combat men following a particularly successful mission or squadron party.

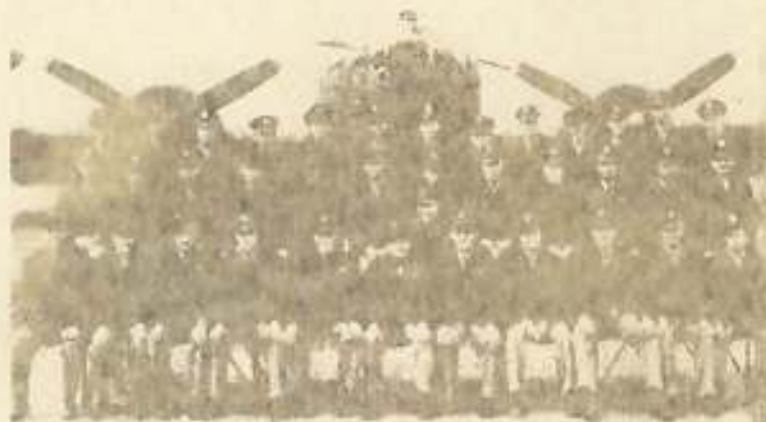
Most famous of the *Eager Beaver* barracks is the *Flak Happy Home* and the equally famous inscription over the door, "Through These Portals Pass the Most Flak Happy Men in the World."

The 423rd squadron had a bad time in acquiring a name for itself. Known originally as the *Grim Reapers* it was advised to change the name as it was too grim and the German propaganda department might take advantage of it. The squadron resigned itself to the relatively tame *Fiery Phantoms* until "some high brass somewhere approved the original name." Now it's officially the *Grim Reapers* again. On the 423rd site is the famous barracks building known as *Dingleberry Hall*. Names that will live in the pages of books are scribbled on the walls and doors of *Dingleberry*.

Bennett has a good large portion of this



*Ed!
Morgan
H. Case
Pogam*



Front Row (left to right) Alexander, ?, W. W. Thomas, Tom Legerwood, "Huhey" Toland, Gab Buckey, William Raper (C. O.), "Doc" ?, "Dick" Walck, "Dinnie" Fuhmeister, Zias Davis. Between and behind Buckey and Raper—"Johnny" Ryan (escapes). Middle row: "Bill" Tachmeier, Alexander, Larch Robinson, Hugh Phelan, ?, "Tommy" Wait, "C. D." Moore, "Red" ?, "Ras" Rasmussen, Art Titus, Frank Kooima, ?. Rear row: Tillery, C. D. Brown, "Doug" White, ?, "Bill" Cunningham, "Benny" Benson, ?, "X" Pierce, Walt Morey, John Fogarty, ?, J. Brown, "Mac" McKern.



368th Squadron Officers

Original

Wm. A. Lanford, CO
Jesse L. Wilburn, Communications
William E. Friend, Jr. Operations
Robert S. Stevens, Engineering
John E. Bennet, Armament
Herold D. Munal, Surgeon

1 January 1944

John W. Regan, CO
Edward Miazza, Executive Officer
Elbert Odle, S-3
Maynard D. Dix, Navigator
Edgar S. Hallman, Adjutant
Sam S. McNeeley, S-2
Stanley Silverstein, Bombardier
Alfred W. Weld, S-2
William Widlansky, Engineering
Robert L. Klawuhn, Communications
Glennon A. Kreher, Mess
James E. McClung, Surgeon
Richard L. Moore, Ordnance
John E. Bennet, Armament

1 July 1944

Maurice V. Salada, C.O.
Edward T. Miazza, Executive
Elbert G. Odle, S-3
John E. Bennett, Armament
James E. McClung, Surgeon
Sam S. McNeeley, S-2 (asst)
Alfred W. Weld, S-2
Wm. Widlansky, engineering
~~Donald R. Ross, bombardier~~
Harold G. Taylor, Operations
William Winship, Ordnance
Roy E. Buchanan, Navigator

1 May 1945

Thomas M. Hulings, C. Q.
Edward T. Miazza, Executive Off.
John E. Bennet, Armaments and Chemicals
Robert G. Matzke, S-3
James E. McClung, Surgeon
Reginald H. Thayer, Jr. Bombardier
Wm. C. Man Norman, S-2
Paul C. Wagner, Navigator
Robert L. Whitney, Adjutant
Albert W. Greaves, Personal Equip.

RALPH J. Norton

*Photo work after Reginald Thayer was
war - Thayer was
good friend, Thayer
was on his second tour
he had flown 50 missions
with the USAF.*

*when I got the job -
I left around the 1st
of February -
I thought Sam Hallton
took my place he +*

368th C.O.s

Maj. Wm. J. Lanford 18 Mar 42-19 Jan. 43

Maj. Mac McKay 20 Jan 43-8 Apr 43

LTC John M. Regan 9 Apr 43-13 Apr 44

LTC Maurice V. Salada 14 Apr 44-24 Oct 44

Maj. Thomas M. Bulings 25 Oct 44-