

A HISTORY OF THE 306th BOMBARDMENT GROUP - EIGHTH AIR FORCE  
Russell A. Strong, 4900 Appleridge Ct., Dayton, Ohio 45424

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,

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 xeroxed 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 JOE BOWLES  
Address 3803 GREENLAND AVE, ROANOKE, VA. 24012  
Telephone 362-0216 Date June 4-1976  
Occupation SALESMAN Employer SALEM MOTORS INC.  
Address SALEM VA. Telephone 387-0243

Service Record:

Before joining the 306th:  
*Entered service at 1st Lee Co. Basic Training at Keeshig Field, Missis, Sunnyvale school at Denver Cal, Denver Technical school at Mrs Bill Field, Tampa Florida.*

After leaving the 306th:

306th Record:

Arrival Date June 1942 Squadron or other unit 369  
MOS \_\_\_\_\_ Combat Status AERIAL GUNNER  
GUNNERY OFFICER-OBS.  
Missions Completed \_\_\_\_\_  
Promotions CPL, SGT, TECH SGT, M-SGT - 2nd Lt, 1st Lt, CAPT.  
Decorations ✓ AM 50lcs ✓ DFC olcs SS DSM DSC MH SM  
✓ PH Battle Stars 5 other \_\_\_\_\_

(OVER)



# *Army of the United States*

## CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

*This is to certify that*

JOE BOWLES, O 2 044 609 FIRST LIEUTENANT,  
AIR CORPS

*honorably served in active Federal Service  
in the Army of the United States from*

JULY 16 1943

*to*

DECEMBER 4 1945

*Given at*

SEPARATION CENTER FORT GEORGE G. MEADE MARYLAND

*on the*

FOURTH

*day of*

DECEMBER

19 45

*Parnell M. Pafford*

PARNELL M. PAFFORD,  
MAJOR, COAST ARTILLERY CORPS,

# Honorable Discharge



from the Armed Forces of the United States of America

*This is to certify that*

JOE POWLES, AO 204 46 09, Capt, AFRes

*was Honorably Discharged from the*

## United States Air Force

on the 2d day of January 1959. This certificate is awarded  
as a testimonial of *Honest and Faithful Service*

*W. C. Morse*  
W. C. MORSE  
Brigadier General, USAF

# Honorable Discharge

from

## The Army of the United States



TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This is to Certify, That\* JOE (MIL) ROWLES

†33091168 - Technical Sergeant - 369th Bombardment Squadron (H), 306th Bombardment Group (H)

THE ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES, as a TESTIMONIAL OF HONEST AND FAITHFUL SERVICE, is hereby HONORABLY DISCHARGED from the military service of the UNITED STATES by reason of ‡ Convenience of Government (Sec. 7, AR 615-360) to accept appointment as 2nd Lt. and Active Duty in the AJS per par 11, SO 200, Headquarters, ETOUSA, 19 July, 1943.

Said JOE (MIL) ROWLES was born in Bluefield, in the State of West Virginia.

When enlisted he was 26 3/12 years of age and by occupation a Salesman.

He had Brown eyes, Brown hair, Ruddy complexion, and was Five feet Eight inches in height.

Given under my hand at A&F Station 111, APO 63 this 15th day of July, one thousand nine hundred and Forty-three.

GEORGE L. ROBINSON,

Lt. Col., A.C.,

306th Bombardment Group (H),

Commanding.

See AR 315-470.

\*Insert name, as "John J. Doe."

†Insert Army serial number, grade, company, regiment, or arm or service, as "132312"; "Corporal, Company A, 1st Infantry"; "Sergeant, Quartermaster Corps."

‡If discharged prior to expiration of service, give number, date, and source of order or full description of authority therefor.

16-1065

Hi Russell,

Good to hear from you, and I am  
sorry to be late answering.

I am sending along a few items concerning  
the 306<sup>th</sup> and 369<sup>th</sup>, and hope some of it will  
fit in. Use what you can, and if possible I would  
like to have the rest returned.

You asked about my Commission. I secured  
on July 16, 43. Don't know how this stacks up, but  
you will note some an copies of my discharge.

I do hope I can make the reunion in  
Dayton, and I am planning to do so.  
If you have a master of the 369<sup>th</sup> Sqd.,  
I would be pleased to secure it.

Hope to see or hear from you soon.

Joe Bawles  
3803 Greenland Ave NW.

Shawnee, Va. 24012

00 June 1976

Mr. Joe Bowles  
3803 Greenland Avenue  
Roanoke, Virginia 24012

Dear Joe:

Many thanks for your interesting reply to my queries.

I have kept those things which seemed to be copies, and copied some that are originals, and am returning them to you.

I have also selected four pictures and am having them copied and will return the originals to you as soon as they are finished.

The picture of Banshee was especially welcome. Wild Bill Casey, whom I spent a lot of time with in Miami Beach, sent me a poor snapshot, the only thing he had left and I think it was of Banshee II. I copied it and sent him back an enlargement along with the original. But as soon as I get a print of this I'll send it along to him and credit you. I know he will be pleased.

special

I would like to ask you for one more thing. Do you have in your 201 file, or other records, any orders from the 306th or from the squadrons? I would like to borrow these, or have you send me copies, if you can copy them easily. I am interested in those published from the beginning up to Dec 1, 1943. These were not saved by the group and have disappeared. The government does not have them. Thus far I have been able to pick up 40 or 50 from various people and there are probably about 450 in all. Any you can give me will be greatly appreciated. These are especially valuable in trying to piece together what happened to whom and when.

Sincerely yours,


Russell A. Strong

4900 Apppleridge Court  
Dayton, Ohio 45424

513/233-8735

UNITED STATES ARMY AIR FORCES  
COMBAT GUNNERY OFFICERS SCHOOL  
LAREDO ARMY AIR FIELD

LAREDO, TEXAS



CERTIFICATE

This certifies that *1<sup>ST</sup> Lt. Bowles, Joe* completed the prescribed  
course of training at Laredo Army Air Field during the period *JULY 3, 1944*,  
to *AUGUST 12, 1944* and was granted the aeronautical rating of Aircraft  
Observer (Flexible Gunner) under provisions of AAF Regulation 50-7 as revised.

*Lieut. R. Mansure*  
Lieut. Col., Air Corps,  
Director of Training

Combat Gunnery Officers School

*Colonel, Air Corps,*  
Commanding Officer

Laredo Army Air Field

25 May 1976

Mr. Joe Bowles  
3803 Greenland Avenue, NW  
Roanoke, Virginia

Dear Mr. Bowles:

I am seeking a Joe Bowles who flew with the 306th Bombardment Group during WW II. As he was a resident of Roanoke, and I found your listing in the phone directory, I am wondering if you might be one and the same?

I would very much appreciate knowing, and have enclosed a stamped, addressed envelope for your convenience in replying.

Some of the enclosed material explains what I am doing, and I hope will be of interest to you. If you are not the same Joe Bowles, can you give me any assistance in locating him?

On the supposition that you are one and the same, I would like to ask a question about the notation I found some time ago indicating that you were the first enlisted man in the ETO to receive a field commission. Is this true, and on what do you base this? When were you commissioned?

Any assistance you can give me in my research project will be appreciated.

Incidentally, the 306th Group will hold a reunion in Dayton Oct. 15-17, the second annual such event, the first having been staged last October in Miami Beach. Hope you can attend.

Sincerely yours,

Russell A. Strong

4900 Appleridge Court  
Dayton, Ohio 45424

513/233-8735



11 February 1977

Mr. Joe Bowles  
3803 Greenland Avenue  
Roanoke, VA 24012

Dear Joe:

Came across this picture in going through a large collection, and wondered if you had a print of it.

If not, I'll be happy to make one for you when I get to copying them.

I went through Roanoke at the end of July, driving into the city just at dinner time and in a hurry to get on south to Laurinburg, where we are now living. If it hadn't been for the pressure of time, I'd have given you a ring. I am going to Washington in March and may come home that way. If I do, I'll contact you then.

Sincerely yours,

Russell A. Strong

plane home, we met some friends at the  
airport and stayed for more days at Ronald's.

Have you heard any plans for next  
year? This was my first meeting and I enjoyed  
it. Will look forward to the next.

Taking things easy this week. Have been  
doing extra work for the Company & retired  
from, so I really don't know when I will  
really retire.

Give my regards to the family  
and hope all is in good shape. Always  
glad to hear from you.

Joe Bunker

P.S. How can I get a history of the group  
of the 369 Squadron? need some  
addresses near body.

3803 Enclosed one 1971,  
Roanoke, Va. 24012

Joe

703/362-0216



367th, 368th, 369th, 423rd Squadrons, and service organizations  
Thurleigh, Bedfordshire, England - September 1942-April 1945

## 306TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP ASSOCIATION

Secretary-Treasurer  
William M. Collins, Jr.  
2973 Heatherbrae Drive  
Poland, Ohio 44514

Hello Russ -

Well I'm sure glad this reunion is over! And though I enjoyed meeting all the 306's - I have to say it was work-work-work right up to the end.

at our Sunday meeting Ed Gregory (remember him - 367th) suggested that each Squadron ask for a volunteer to serve as Contact Man. Ed served as 367th Contact man and as you can see the 367th had the highest turnout... Must everyone at the meeting felt that we should continue to hold 306 reunions - but as an Add-on to the 8th AF... Probably a day or two before the 8th AF reunions and in the same location... Cost and the desire to meet other 306's who went on to other 8th AF units... Since the next 8th AF reunion is

August 79, I have been busier  
than ever. Have several projects  
that keep me quite busy, and  
I am deeper in anchovy than ever.

Now, if possible, I need  
the address of Bill Hyllton. He  
was a pilot in the 369 Squad.,  
and I would like to locate him.  
Can you help?

I'll give more later.  
Please let me hear from you,  
and if you are ever close to Stanaka,  
please stop in.

Best regards  
Joe Paulis

33136 Erick Brook Dr.  
Stanaka, Va. 24014

1 May 1981

Dear Joe:

Enjoyed receiving your letter today, as I had been planning to drop both of you a line and send along the print that appeared in Echoes.

The book is boiling right along and I expect to be done with my rewrite of the manuscript in another month. Then I have only to get back Jack Ryan's critical comments and incorporate them into what I have done, and it will be finished.

As to Bill Hilton, I've had some interesting correspondence with him. He is a realtor in Eugene, OR. 1400 High St., 97401.

Hope I do make it through Roanoke again some day.

Sincerely yours,

Feb 12-83

Hi Russell,

How's tricks old man? Long time  
no see, but have your name before me  
daily.

Don't know how you did it, and I know  
there's a lot of hard work involved, but it is  
a great effort. It is a beautiful work of  
History, and I have enjoyed it so much.  
I discussed buying the boat for quite a  
while, and the wife would tell me to hold  
off a while longer. As it turned out, my  
mother in Law gave it to me for Christmas.

Guess you have a busy routine these  
days. Don't know how you get it all done.

Well, I am writing this in the time  
of a record Snow Storm,

We have 18½ inches now, which is the most on record for a 24 hour period. The entire town of Swanabe is paralyzed at this time.

Have seen some of the old guys in past months. Harold Lightbrown and his wife spent the night with us. also Casey Jones has been to see us and also stayed a couple of days. Had a great time with them. also have talked to quite a few of the guys by phone. Feel real sorry for Bill Casey. He has problems.

I am planning to be in Omaha Aug. Hope to see ~~at~~ you there. If you find time, I'd love to hear from you. Best regards to the family.

See you in Omaha!

~~Joe Bowles~~

33136 Circle Brook Dr  
Swanabe, Wv - 24014

AW/3/17/83

17 April 1983

Dear Joe:

It was good to hear from you. I knew you'd appreciate the book. I get a bit of back talk from some people, and Mack McKay told me he couldn't read it because he got so emotional over it. But most seem to have enjoyed it. A few errors have shown up but not many.

Glad to hear that you will be in Omaha. We are working hard on it and it appears that we ought to have a good program in a good setting. At least it will be all 306th, and I think that will put us way ahead of where we have been in previous years. Don Ross is working hard on arrangements, and the next Echoes you get will have more details in it. We are expecting a goodly crowd for the whole thing. Reservations have come in well since January, and after the April Echoes has made its way around we fully expect the numbers to jump up seriously.

SAC is working hard for us, and even Boeing is getting into the act.

My wife and I are planning to drive out on the Wednesday of the reunion week so that I can get to work on Thursday morning. I imagine she will hit the shops for a couple of days. Don tells us that shopping is great in the area, or at a very large mall a mile awgy.

Book sales have moved along we-1. The ppinter is paid. I had faith we would make it but my wife thought I was taking an awful gamble. It paid off though. At least the 306th has a legitimate history, and thats more than a lot of other groups will ever have.

Now I am working on a biographical directory of command and staff officers of the 8th Air Force, a project which I ought to wrap up soon. It has been entertaining and has given me entry to a lot of interesting men. Also, I think it as a project worth doing in assembling a lot of names from the bomb and fighter groups. No one has seen fit to bring all of this together before. The Air Force isn't interested but will be when they see it because it is the basic stuff on which more accurate histories can be based.

Well, must sign off and get to work on the April Echoes or it will never get printed. Its got to be off to Bill Collins this week for mailing.

My best to both of you, and will look forward to seeing you in Omaha.



march 2-

Hi Gus,

Long time no see or hear.

Hope this finds you and your family in good shape.

Sorry we missed Cal. Sp., but the wife has been sick, she has spent most of the past year in Hospitals, both here and Atlanta Ga. But we are happy and planning to be at Clayton.

Gus, I need a little info.

Do you remember Gov. McLeod?

He was a chaplain assigned to

306 Headquarters. I have looked in  
everything I have, but I find no  
address for him. He married Frances  
and I at Ft. Meade when we were  
going overseas. I would like to contact  
him if possible, also do you have  
anything on Reginald Harris, a gunner  
in the 369<sup>th</sup>?

Best regards and Frances  
sends a big hello.

Joe Hawley

5 March 1986

Dear Joe,

A quick answer to your letter, which arrived today.

Several years ago I talked with Mrs. McLeod, and she reported that he was seriously ill and evidently senile at that time. We do not carry him on our mailing list any longer, and he may have passed away.

I have no information on Reginald Harris, other than that he returned to the US after being a POW. We have not located him at all.

I missed you at Colorado Springs, and am sorry that Francis has had such a rough year. Hope everything is on the upgrade now and that both of you will be in Dayton.

Come to thinkg of it, my previous visit to Colorado Springs was highlighted by having dinner with the two of you.

I am keeping very busy, and right now I am trying to get some work started on our '87 reunion, as well as getting an April issue of Echoes ready.

All the best to you,

Hi Gus,

about that time again.

Hope to see you in Dayton.

Frances won't be able to make it, but insist that I do.

Here's another 306 man I have located. His name is,

JOSEPH F. CASSELL

1318 MORTON AVE. S.E.

ROANOKE VA. 24013

I believe he was 423 <sup>rd</sup>.

See you soon,

Joe Bawls

March 10-87

Hi Gus,

Good to hear from you old  
boy. Do you work all the time?  
Things are about normal here, except  
Frances. another operator last week.  
She's nine in less than two years. She  
in bad shape, but has the best  
attitude I've ever seen.

Regarding the two names you  
sent me. J. H. Cassell is J. H.  
(Pete) Cassell, <sup>(1123)</sup> I sent his name in,  
and it is listed in the last "Echoes"

The other name, Robert H. Brooks,  
should read Robert H. Crooks 6435

M. Barnum Rd. Soanake (H23) 563-5404

Hapechi helps a little. Let me  
know if I can do anything,

See you in Alexandria,

Best regards  
Joe B.

Hi Gus,

It was great seeing you  
again. Hope I can do it next  
year. I thought we had a  
good meeting, and I feel fortunate  
to know that group of men.

I had to leave Saturday night  
and did not have a chance to  
get a Squadron picture. Can  
you tell me how or where to  
secure one? or short note  
but will be back in touch.

Best regards

Joe Pawles 369

Ans,

Where can I get a  
Sgd Photo? I had to leave  
Wash. early and did not get  
one.

Joe

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Hi Sus,

How's trucker old boy?

Hope everything is fine with you  
and the family.

Bad news Sus, by now  
you might have heard that Bill  
Casey is dead. Oddly enough Bill  
was an Irishman and died on  
St Patrick's day. Bill talked to  
me quite often, and I'll miss him.

Looks great for Las Vegas.  
I believe it will be our best  
numbers. Sure hope I can make  
it, our situation at home

dictates my movements, Frances  
is no better, and the doctors say  
there will be no improvement.

I noticed the tag pic in  
Echoes. How about this one. It  
is my tag, I've had it for  
three years now. I am stopped  
quite often by guys who want  
to know my outfit, and has  
brought on lots of good conversations.

Hope all is good with you.  
and hope to see you in Vegas.

Best regards

Joe Bowles

Mr. & Mrs. Joe Bowles  
3313G Circle Brook Drive  
Roanoke, VA 24014

B

21 April 1989

Dear Joe:

Just back from a two-day trip, and had a letter from Lighty telling me that Frances had passed away.

I want to offer my condolences to you, and I know that I speak for all in the Group, who wish you peace and satisfaction in the knowledge that you have accomplished a great deal over the past few years in caring for her.

I think of you often, and my mind always runs back to the night in Colorado Springs when you and Frances and I had dinner together. It was a great and memorable evening for me, and I believe that was the last time that I saw her.

All of us in the 306th look forward to seeing you at future reunions, and I do hope that you will be able to join us in Little Rock. I think it might be the kind of therapy you need.

June and I wish you well, and if your travels bring you to Charlotte you should know that we run the very best, no-price hostelry in this region.

All the best,

RECORDS UPDATE

306th BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION

(Please complete as much of this form as you wish to, fold and mail as per address on reverse side. Or, if obtained at a reunion, hand to Russ Strong)

LAST NAME: *BOWLES* FIRST NAME: *JOE* TITLE:  
STREET ADDRESS: *3313 G Circle Brook Dr* TELEPHONE: ( ) -  
CITY: *Aspen* STATE: *WV* ZIP: *24014*

DATE JOINED 306th ASSOCIATION:

REUNIONS ATTENDED: (Years) *6*

WIFE'S NAME: *Frances*

LAST EMPLOYMENT: *1981*

COLLEGE(S) ATTENDED: DEGREE(S): DATE:

SERIAL #: *#02044609* SQDN: *369* MOS:  
*33091168*

DATE ARR: CREW:

DATE DEPARTED: HIGHEST RANK IN 306th: *1st LT.*

SERVICE RETIREMENT DATE: RANK or GRADE:

DECORATIONS WITH 306TH: *DFC P.H. air medal*

TOP SERVICE ASSIGNMENT AFTER 306TH:

SPECIAL ASSIGNMENTS WITH 306TH:

*Summary officer*

QUESTIONNAIRE

CATERPILLAR CLUB - IRVING CHUTE COMPANY

NAME:

COMBAT JUMP DATE & MISSION:

HEIGHT WHEN BAILED OUT:

ANY PROBLEMS WITH PARACHUTE:

306th Bombardment Group. SQDN:

## Joe Bowles, DFC, Got to Fly Because Comrade Became Ill

First Lt. Joe Bowles, much decorated officer on a Flying Fortress whose wife, Mrs. Frances Bowles, lives at 2101 Courtland Ave., began flying only as a "substitute" member of the plane's crew, according to a recent story released at an Eighth Air Force bomber command station somewhere in England. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. William E. Bowles, live at 802 Tenth Street Extension.

Bowles, who has been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters, and the Purple Heart, went overseas as an armorer and a technical sergeant. The authorities refused to allow him to go on combat because armorers were needed, the story relates, but when a ball turret gunner became ill just before the first raid of the group, Bowles took his place.

He stayed with the crew after that, flying always as ball turret gunner, in the famous Fortress "Banshee", which has since been shot down. He completed his tour as technical sergeant on June 28, and was commissioned a second lieutenant last July 16, and promoted to 1st lieutenant Dec. 1. Since he has taken up his duties as gunnery officer, he has evolved new tactics which have been widely used and highly successful.

He was awarded the Purple Heart for wounds received during the famous low-altitude mission over St. Nazaire. His ship was hit badly by both flak and 20 mm shells, tearing away large parts of stabilizer and rudder, and leaving a huge hole in the leading edge of the wing. The co-pilot had the rudder pedals shot right out from under his feet, and both navigator and bombardier were wounded by flying fragments. "The flying controls were hit," says Lt. Bowles, "forcing us out of formation. The side of my turret received a direct flak hit, tearing out a hole and wounding me in the head."

Lt. Bowles is credited with two of the seven planes destroyed by the crew of his ship on the mission. Just before his ship was hit so badly, another F-4U came in at "1



1st Lt. Joe Bowles

o'clock low." "At 500 yards I gave him a 100-round burst," says Lt. Bowles, "and he simply fell apart. I saw the pilot bail out and his black chute open. A few minutes later another F-4U came in at 6 o'clock low. I opened fire at 900 yards and caught him squarely at 400 yards. The whole ship burst into flame and catapulted downward. The pilot didn't have time to get out." In spite of having three wounded men on board and all the damage to the ship, the pilot brought the plane back and landed it safely.

Lt. Bowles enlisted in the air corps Nov. 5, 1942, and took armament and turret training at Lowry Field, Denver, Colo., and McDill Field, Fla. As a civilian he had worked as salesman for Swift & Co., in Roanoke, Va. He graduated from Jefferson high school, Roanoke, in 1930.

BUTE, John J.

VA 0132995

**JUL**

Virginia

VA 292270

**85**

**8TH-AF**