

PERSONNEL RECORD UPDATE

306th BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION

Date. 12 JUL 95

Complete this form and return to Russell A. Strong, Secretary, 306th BG Assoc., 5323 Cheval Place, Charlotte, NC 28205, to be filed with 306th records.

LAST NAME: GOEPPNER FIRST NAME: JOE MI: - TITLE: DR LTC

Street Address: 107 FOREST HILL DR Telephone: (803) 375-0367

City, State ANDERSON, SC Zip + 4: 29621-4125

Winter Address: — Telephone: (—)

City, State — Zip + 4: — — — — —

Date of birth: MARCH 6, 1922 Wife's name: "WINN" #c 2
#gc 4
#ggc

College(s) attended: REGIS COLLEGE BALDWIN COLLEGE UNIV OF ARK, UNIV OF FLA WASH UNIV AT ST LOUIS Degree(s), & when: ABA-1953 ASME-1972 BJA-1955 SLD-1966

Last employment & job title & retirement date: USA MED DEPT, CHIEF MAINT, USAMRDC OFFICER ARMY SURGEON GENERAL, 1984

Serial #(s): 6572877 (RA ENL) 05462650 1ST LT Squadron: 367 Specialty: GUNNER

Date joined 306th: AT WENDOVER SUMMER 1942 If combat, what crew? "UNCLE BIFF" 1942- ATCHD 72ND SQ 5TH GP 7TH AIR FORCE JUN 42

Special duties or assignments w/306th: ASGD WENDOVER - CREW OF A.L. BIRLEFFI

No of missions flown: NONE w/306 Date of last mission: —

Date leaving 306th: 1942 AUG (?) Highest rank/grade w/306th: PFC

Other 8AF units served with, and when: NONE

Top service assignment after 306th: ARMY SURGEON GEN OFFICE - PENTAGON

USA USAF retirement date: 1 JUN 1984 Rank/grade: LIEUTENANT COLONEL

Copies of old 306th orders, either from the Group or Station 111, or any of the Squadrons or other units serving with the 306th, are sought by the secretary, as many of these do not appear in any collections of materials in National Archives or the Air University.

If you know of others who served with the 306th and who do not appear in the current 306th Directory, please add their names and current/WWII hometowns or other addresses to the back of this sheet so that searches may be implemented to add them to our present 306th roster.

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPACE

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|---|-----------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| DATE <i>June 15 / 42</i> | AIR FORCE <i>H</i> | COMMAND <i>AC</i> | BRANCH <i>B-17 C</i> | ENGINE MODEL <i>R-1820-65</i> |
| STATION <i>Bellows</i> | GROUP NO. AND TYPE | | AIRPLANE MODEL <i>H-2415</i> | (1) ENGINE SERIAL NO. <i>41-22143</i> |
| CREW CHIEF OR AERIAL ENGINEER <i>Curlett</i> | SQUADRON NO. AND TYPE | | AIRPLANE SERIAL NO. | (2) ENGINE SERIAL NO. <i>40-4537</i> |
| | | | | (3) ENGINE SERIAL NO. <i>40-2616</i> |
| | | | | (4) ENGINE SERIAL NO. <i>40-5185</i> |

| PERSONNEL | | — PRINT PLAINLY — NAME — RANK — ORGANIZATION | USE AS DIRECTED LOCALLY | ALWAYS ENTER DUTY SYMBOLS. WHEN APPLICABLE, ENTER N-NIGHT OR I-INSTRUMENT. ENTER TIME FLOWN THEREUNDER | | | | | | | | FLIGHT DATA | | | |
|-----------|------------|---|-------------------------|--|---|----|---|------|----|----|---|-------------|---|---------------|-----------------|
| CLASS | SERIAL NO. | | | DUTY | N | OR | I | DUTY | N | OR | I | DUTY | N | OR | I |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | | | | | | |
| 11 | 0-24109 | BIELEFF, AL 1ST LT | | P | | | | | | | | | | FROM: BELLOWS | 06:15 |
| 21 | 0-435805 | STEWART J M 2nd Lt | | P | | | | | | | | | | TO: BELLOWS | 16:15 |
| 21 | 0-724139 | CREAMER J A 2nd Lt | | P | | | | | | | | | | MISSION: 0-2 | 10:00 |
| 21 | 0-724020 | CONSOLMAGNO J 2nd Lt | | P | | | | | | | | | | FROM: | |
| 16 | | MEKI WETHEK 1st Lt | | P | | | | | | | | | | TO: | |
| 16 | | GOEPPNER J 1st Lt | | G | | | | | | | | | | MISSION: | NO. OF LANDINGS |
| 16 | | LOSKOT. PVT | | P | | | | | | | | | | FROM: | |
| 16 | | Schmoyer, R.C. Pvt. | | G | | | | | | | | | | TO: | |
| 16 | | Langdon, H.L. Pvt. | | AE | | | | | | | | | | MISSION: | NO. OF LANDINGS |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | FROM: | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | TO: | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | MISSION: | NO. OF LANDINGS |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | FROM: | |
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| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | MISSION: | NO. OF LANDINGS |

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| WA DEPARTMENT AIR RPS - FORM NO. 1 TENTATIVE - SEPT. 1940 | FLIGHT REPORT - OPERATIONS | CHECKED: LEGIBLE AND CORRECT | <input type="checkbox"/> OPER. CLERK | TRANSCRIBED: TOTAL FLIGHT TIME ENTERED ON FORM 1A | <input type="checkbox"/> CREW CHIEF | TOTAL FLIGHT TIME : |
|---|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|---------------------|

17 July 1995

Mr. Russell A. Strong
5323 Cheval Place
Charlotte, NC 28205

Dear Russell:

Well, you must appreciate how grateful I am to you for all that has transpired since I first talked with you, and all that followed. I have been in touch with Joe Consolmagno by phone twice - (about a week ago and today - he is on his way to Italy for three weeks, so he won't get my letter which I mailed to him yesterday, until he gets back. Just as well - it will take him about a week to read it (HaHa).

I got a note from him today - he mailed me a copy of a clipping that told about the crew (with him on board) barely making it to a field in England on the way back from Lille raid on the 9th of October 1942. He said on the phone that it was their first mission after arriving in England. I looked up the mission in *The Mighty Eighth WAR DIARY*, and it appears on page 19, thereof. Apparently the group lost one (1) plane on the raid as MIA (that wasn't the Plane Consolmagno was on was it, and they carried it MIA, or was it another plane.

Anyway, all my guys (With the exception of Pvt LOSKOT) was on that flight so, apparently Loskot may not of have even made it to England with the 306th Group. (See the Form 1 of have enclosed from the Pacific for his name) I know he arrived at Wendover with us and flew training flights out of Wendover. Perhaps you may yet find him somewhere in your records. Kemper at 8th Air Force could not find any record of him as a combat casualty.

I am enclosing a copy of my letter to Joe, which you said you would be interested in receiving , and I am sending a copy to Kemper at 8th AF Historical Society. I sent a copy of the Form 1, and a copy of page 23 from the reference I cited above , to Joe with my letter. I also send him a number of personal items and photos, etc., pertaining to myself, which I hope he will enjoy.

I am enclosing \$3.00 cash, which is for the postage you put on getting all the material you sent to me, and I am so very grateful to you. In addition, I am enclosing a check for \$10.00 to the Group. which is consistent with the request by Mr Houser made in the Echo for April 1995. You guys are doing such a wonderful job, and this small token of my support is furnished in that vein

Russell, except for more information on Birleffi and Loskot, I am pretty well filled in at this point, and I will look forward to anything else you can furnish in the way of information on those two. I am not going to be able to make it to the fly in at Knoxville in September because my wife is a full time college student, and we can't be away from school, or our birds, for that long this fall. The ECHOES is exciting and I appreciate receiving it. Please don't forget that I want to buy a copy of the crew photo that I discussed with you on the phone - the one that Joe told me about.

Kemper sent me some additional information about our Pacific travel and attachment in 1942 - I will furnish Joe with copies of that - It relates to the 72nd Squadron of the 5th Bomb Group that we were attached to at Bellows Field, Oahu. He also send me an instruction on how to get more information out of the VA on people who had been in the War. Even though I didn't fly in England with the 8th Air Force, I did belong to the two 8thAF Units (301st and 306th), so I am sending membership in to Kemper, as an Associate.

Not much else in the way of news from here. The copy of my letter to Joe, which is enclosed, will keep you busy for a while if you have time to read it (HaHa). Take care and God Bless.

With kindest personal regards, and best wishes,


Joe Goepner

12 July 1995

Mr. Joseph E. Consolmagno
751 Carla Drive
Englewood, Florida 34223-2219

Dear Joe:

For the life of me, I cannot remember if the officers on our crew referred to you as "Joe", but I know we, the enlisted men didn't. We referred to you amongst ourselves as "Consolmagno" and as "Lieutenant" when we talked to you. I do remember that we had some rather scary navigation problems returning to Oahu (Bellows) from patrols, and we all (the officers as well as the men) kidded you about those, and I believe it was "Biff" who referred to you as "Our Columbus" and we all picked it up. Anyway, having shared a bit of our lives together as crew Members on the "Uncle Biff", sharing close calls with life and death, pleasure and pain, fear and joy, grief and happiness, I feel that I may have the right to call you "Joe". I am writing this summary and synopsis of the days when we were crew members with Birleffi on "Uncle Biff". and our movements and activities from the time I became a part of the crew until leaving the 306th at Wendover sometime in late July or August of 1942. I have also included a synopsis of my military and civilian career after my flying days were over, and until my retirement from the Army Medical Department in June of 1984, which I thought you might be interested in.

After completing the Aircraft Armament Course, US Army Air Corps Technical School, at Lowry in Denver in early February of 1942, I was assigned to the 2nd Mapping Squadron (a Lockheed Lodstar squadron) at Felts Field, Spokane, as Armorer and Gunner in training, on Lockheed Lodstars. I was very unhappy with this assignment, because I did not like the remote Sperry turrets, and because I desperately wanted to be on "Fortresses." I raised a lot of ruckus to be transferred across town to Geiger where the B-17s where. I finally made such a fuss that they were happy to get rid of me and they arranged for me to transfer to the 29th Reconnaissance Squadron (Heavy), 301st Bomb group at Geiger Field. in March of 1942.

Upon arrival at Geiger, I was assigned to the ground crew as an armorer, servicing Airplane Number 41-2415, piloted by Arthur Birleffi, "A Regular Army Pilot". I was literally in heaven, except that I wasn't yet on "flying status" with the Group. I have to go back to the beginning of our acquaintance, to a day in March of 1942, on the hanger line at Geiger, when the crew was flying gunnery missions to a bombing/gunnery range in southern Oregon.

At the time I was a ground armorer, assigned to Birleffi's airplane, and had serviced the guns and bomb racks before the ship took off on a gunnery run. After some time, the plane returned to the field, and when it taxied up to the hanger line I approached the aircraft, as Birleffi (Biff) got down and came striding to the rear of the airplane where I was standing. He demanded to know what I had done to the tail guns (twin 50's) because they malfunctioned and the tail gunner assigned to the crew said that the guns

would not fire because they were not properly adjusted. I remembered telling him, "Lieutenant, there is nothing wrong with those guns - the problem has to be your gunner". Well, Biff called to the gunner (I can't remember him or his name) and said to him, "tell me again what is wrong with the guns". The gunner in effect told Biff that the "Armorer just didn't set the head space right on the guns, and they won't fire." Well, that made me mad, so I said to Biff: "Lieutenant, I'll stake my life on those guns the way I have them set up, and I will guarantee you that they will fire if they are properly operated, and I could make them fire if I were operating them." Well, Biff said to me "if you are that sure you can make them fire, then you get in the airplane and we will go back to the range, and see who is telling me the truth."

Shortly after that we took off and flew back to the range. I went back to the tail guns and hooked up to the intercom with Biff. He made several runs over the target, and the guns fired just beautifully - I used up all the ammo we had, and Biff flew us back to Geiger. Upon returning to Geiger, he was profuse in his appreciation, and when I let him know that I was "Regular Army" (as he was) and would like to be his Armorer Gunner, he let me know that he was going to request my immediate assignment to his ship, which he did, and so I became a part of the crew.

I'm sure you remember our many escapades, adventures and misadventures during the assignment at Geiger, i.e., cross-countries, bombing and training missions, some other very hairy and frightening experiences.

One I recall vividly. We were flying cross-country over Utah. We had been across Wyoming, and had made an over night landing in some small town airport somewhere in that area, and had a hard time being able to take off because there was some doubt that we would be able to lift off from the soft runway, with the plane. We did make a very tenuous takeoff, and had buzzed Biff's house and girl friend's house in Wyoming (I can't remember the town), and were up about 8,000 feet over Utah. Schmoyer, who was the belly gunner, and I changed places for training, and I was in the ball turret. Somehow when I got in the ball, I did not latch both handles on the door, and as I swung the turret around horizontally after rotating the guns up to a horizontal firing position, the slipstream wind literally blew the door open and I was (with no parachute on) hanging on to the control bar for the triggers, with both hands - there was no support for my back since I would have lain on the door if it were closed, screaming into the throat mike for Loskot and Schmoyer to "Crank me up" They eventually manually cranked me up into the plane after what seemed a terrifying long time. Of course, I(we) were scared to death. That was the closest call I ever had, and to this day, I shudder when I think how close I came to tumbling out of that turret, at about 8000 feet over the Utah desert.

There were other "stressing" times - the night a couple of us got in jail in Dallas when the crew made a cross-country across the Southern United States to Florida and back to San Diego. I forgot who it was that was with me, but we had to ask Biff to call by phone from Love Field to bail us out so he could take off. I'm sure you remember when we got to San Diego, that our Co-Pilot Stewart (None of us had confidence in his flying ability when Biff let him do the flying), tried to land at Lindberg Field and blew out a supercharger (or two) because he didn't realize that the field was below sea level. In pulling up to go around, we fought our way between the masts of destroyers and

cruisers in San Diego Bay, right across the downtown area, between two hotel buildings in a buzzing of the town to an emergency landing. Biff had to do a lot of explaining to the tower people. We were joyfully stuck in San Diego for several days while parts for the engines were flown in. Through all of these experiences, we, the crew became very close, and we eventually got around to discussing a name for our plane. I'm not sure how much input we got from the officers, (if any), but Biff finally agreed that we could call the plane "Uncle Biff", (I was the principle instigator of that name), and we collectively painted it on the nose of the plane.

Biff very jealously guarded his airplane whenever we travelled away from Geiger. and were serviced and maintained at any location. He would tell ground crews right up front: "I don't want anybody touching my armament, unless Goepner is involved" and he always questioned me to make sure that I had been present and supervised whenever anybody had anything to do with the armament.. He felt the same way about Meriwether when it came to maintenance on the rest of the airplane.

Sometime in mid May of 1942, our crew was selected to be detached from the Group, on "Secret" orders (for where we knew not), and believe me they were really secret . We had no clue where we were going, but we were sent through Kelly and Sacramento to get extra fuel tanks put in the bombardier's compartment, one-half of the bomb bay, and one half of the radio room. We were then sent to Hamilton Field, for departure for "Pacific" (final destination, not defined).. Because of requirement for fuel and 50 rounds of ammo per gun, Biff could not take the entire crew by air for the first leg of our trip out into the Pacific. Near the last week in May, part of the crew flew to Hawaii in the airplane - I believe I was the only gunner, and I don't recall who else beside Biff and Stewart were on the plane. The rest of the crew were sent by ship from Fort Mason to Honolulu. We all got together at Hickam, at Seventh Air Force Headquarters, and from there were attached to the 72nd Bomb Squadron of the 5th Bomb Group, at Bellows Field.

We were assimilated into the Group's missions, and flew quite a few patrol missions out of Bellows during the late May and early June time frame in conjunction with operations of the 5th Group, which was involved with the Battle of Midway. I recall that we made lots of long 10 hour missions toward the Midway area as a part of the Group's operations to detect any enemy aircraft or ships found prowling around the area .

I recall that on at least one flight , we intercepted enemy aircraft, but did not engage them. Also, I remember that on another flight, we had to dive abruptly down to near the surface because we had encountered an enemy submarine (or at least since it didn't answer our "black box", we considered it enemy). At that time, we only carried two bombs because we still had the extra gas tank on board (I believe they were 500 pound bombs). I can't recall whether or not we dropped any bombs, because I was in excruciating pain - the steep dive had stretched the tubes in my ears, and I was screaming with pain, and incapacitated until I was able to overcome it after quite a time. To this day, I still have trouble with my ears from time to time. I also recall on another flight, upon returning to Bellows from one of our patrols to the West, we were about to be attacked by Navy fighters as we approached the Island of Oahu because we were returning on a wrong azimuth from that assigned. I believe it also involved an improper functioning of our

"black box". It sure gave the entire crew a few sweaty palms until the Navy was satisfied that we were who we said we were.

The only documentation I have regarding that entire episode is one original copy of a Flight Report (Air Corps Form 1) prepared by Birleffi for one combat flight in June, 1942, from Bellows Field. I am sending you a copy of this form which I thought you might like to have since it shows all the information about the plane, crew, and flight details for that mission, etc.

I recall that throughout that period, while we were at Bellows, we were jacked around a lot as an "attached crew". Some of us flew together on some days, and on other days, we the gunners were split away from the officers. I recall doing patrols in B-18's, and even flew one mission in a Consolidated PBY, etc. We were living in tents at the end of the runway at Bellows Field. I remember that we got at least one pass (as a whole crew) and we all rode the trucks to Honolulu for I believe a week-end. Big deal - the beaches were all wired with barbed wire, walking sentries, and beach patrols - town was packed with GI's of all kinds, and everything almost was off-limits, and of course black-out did away with all the hours of darkness. I will never forget the biting of finger nails as we flew through the "Pali" landing toward to the sea, and always coming up close to the water at the end of the runway at Bellows.

Again, I don't remember or know the details, but one day late in June of 1942. Biff called us together and indicated that we were leaving our beloved plane, and going back to the States. I don't think any of us really knew what the deal was except that we were going to fly the 'Clipper' back to San Francisco. Incidentally, I still have a copy of my orders and my ticket on the Pan American Clipper from Honolulu to Treasure Island.

My name is the only name that appears on the Extract Orders that I have, and of course a separate ticket was issued to me. I also have the transportation request covering the travel, but no reason for the travel is indicated thereon. Upon arrival at Treasure Island, we were all shuttled to Hamilton, and eventually put on orders to travel by train to Wendover, where we reported to the 306th Group. I'm pretty certain that we were immediately assigned to the 367th. We were re-assigned to a B-17-E, as a complete crew, and flew together as a crew almost totally at Wendover. The most terrible thing I can remember at Wendover, except of course, Biff's crash, was a B-24 burning up on the hanger line with the entire crew trapped in it while it was being re-fueled.

During the week that Lieutenant Birleffi was killed, one of the other fellows on the crew, Langan, and I took a pass to go to Elko, Nevada.. Langan got pretty drunk and got into an argument in a bar, and as a consequence, we spent the night in jail. The next morning, the judge, after hearing our tale (We were really jailed because after getting thrown out of a bar because Langan was messing with a guy's girlfriend, and we had been told to get out of town by the cops). After arriving on the highway to hitch-hike out of town, Langan (rather drunk) wanted to go back, and to keep him from going back, I cold-cocked him - the cops were watching and immediately locked us up. Next morning after hearing our case, the judge lectured us, and said he was recessing court for us to get breakfast (Of course he was telling us to get lost - which we did). It took us until night to get back to Wendover, and when we got to the barracks, the guys told us about Birleffi's crash. We went down to Base Operations and raised a lot of hell about

how they managed to murder our pilot (It is a wonder they didn't lock us). That was the saddest days of my life - I had come to look at Birleffi as a Big Brother, and I simply was unable to cope with his death. The rest of the crew of course took it very badly, but I just fell apart, and it took a long time for me to handle it. I was having a lot of trouble flying, with headaches, and had developed serious problems with my stomach, etc., . So the flight surgeon temporarily grounded me, and recommended me for a furlough. I had no money, but Meriwether loaned me \$20.00 (Which I was never able to re-pay - I never saw any of you guys again after I left on furlough).

When I returned from leave, I went to what was our area, and it was empty - everyone had left suddenly on so-called secret orders. I was ordered to report to the Base Headquarters and was informed that the Group had dropped me to the Base Squadron when they left.

Within a couple of weeks, in early August, I was promoted to Sergeant, as a clerk, and later became First Sergeant of the Guard Squadron in late August of 1942. In this assignment, I gained clearance for "Secret" materials, and I was able to learn where the Group had gone, and I wrote a letter to the unit, asking about the crew.. After a rather long wait of several months, I believe it was in March of 1943, after I had been transferred as a Technical Sergeant to the Tactical Air Command at Orlando, Florida, I got a letter from you which informed me that the "crew" - less you - had gone down in the channel while returning from a bomb run on St Nazaire - no survivors. You also said in the letter that the reason you were not with them on the raid was because you were in the hospital. I answered your letter, but my letter came back to me marked "Missing in Action", and that was the end of it all as far as I knew about the fate of the crew, including you. I was never able to find out anything else about the matter for many years and I finally closed the whole thing in my mind.

There is still one part of the puzzle that has eluded me. If you will note, that the Radio Operator on our original crew on the "Uncle Biff" was a fellow named "Loskot" I know that he returned from the Pacific to the 306th with us, and in fact flew with us at Wendover, but I can not find out anything about what might have happened to him. The 8th Air Force have no information that he was on the plane when it went down, or that he was even a combat casualty, or was lost in any combat action. I wonder if perhaps you will recall him, and can shed light on what happened to him. I was particularly close to him because he was into amateur radio, and he interested me in learning Morse code so I could get my "Ham License" , which I did - I am still very much into Amateur Radio, being licensed as an Advanced Class Operator (KD8VD). If you can give me any information at all on what might have happened to Loskot, I would sure like to know. It seems to me that if he was not with our crew when it got shot down, he must have gotten transferred or lost in a non-combat action sometime after being on our crew at Wendover.

I have gotten my hands on quite a library on the activities of the B-17 Groups in England. One of them has a page in it detailing the mission on which the crew went down returning from St Nazaire, and there is a picture on that page of the ground crew painting the name "Man O War" on the nose of the B-17 that was lost on that mission. That book is called "The Mighty Eighth War Diary". Until you told me, I did not know that this was our crew's aircraft.

The thing that brought this whole thing to a head recently was that I saw a "reunion" ad in the TROA, The Retired Officer Association Journal, where a fellow in a unit that had been with the Eighth in England was looking for personnel. I wrote him a letter, and he responded with the address of the 306th Association and the 8th Air Force Association. I wrote a letter to Mr Kemper at the 8th AF Historical Society, and you know the rest.

To bring you up to date on my career and life after leaving the 306th, I will take this opportunity to fill you in on the rest of the story.

As the war went on, early in 1943, I was transferred from Wendover to the Tactical Air Command Composite Group at Orlando and Kissimmee Army Air Fields. Was able to fly some anti-submarine missions off the Florida Coast, and in the Gulf, and eventually wound up as a Master Sergeant, Base Sergeant Major at Kissimmee. By VE Day and VJ Day, I was re-enlisted and on orders to the 13th Air Force at Clark Field in the Philippines. After serving there for several months, I came down with a deathly case of severe tropical dysentery, with complications, which resisted treatment, and caused me to be bed-ridden, in the Fourth General Hospital, at Manila, and was eventually evacuated back to the States as a bed patient on board the Army Hospital Ship "Hope" in 1946. After being shipped from Letterman General Hospital, at San Francisco, via Brooke General Hospital at San Antonio, to Oliver General Hospital at Augusta, Georgia, as a litter patient on an Army Hospital Train. After several months, I was finally returned to duty at Warner Robins Air Base, in Georgia. I was the Base Sergeant Major there, and from there, I was assigned the Army Recruiting Command and stationed at a recruiting station in Albany, Georgia. I continued to serve in the Regular Army and then in the Active Reserve while attending Baldwin College in Tifton, Georgia, graduating from there in 1951. Later I attended the University of Florida at Gainesville, and completed a Bachelor of Science degree at the University of Arkansas in 1955, with a cononcurrent commission directly from ranks as a First Lieutenant in The Army Chemical Corps.

I continued my Army service, variously on Active Duty and in the active reserves throughout the Korean Conflict. During this time I was also employed (while serving in the Ready Reserve) by the Dow Chemical Company as a Technical Development Specialist in chemicals, and later with Armour Industrial Chemical Division as a Technical Developments Specialist in the area of organic chemistry. At about this time, I was awarded a National Institutes of Health Scholarship to attend Washington University at St Louis, thereby earning a Doctorate in Public Health and Environmental Health Sciences in 1966. A few months later, following my appointment as an Assistant Research Professor of Environmental Health and Assistant Professor of Civil Engineering, at the University of Missouri at Rolla, I was ordered by the Army to Active duty to a Top Secret assignment with Army Research at Dover, New Jersey, to work with the Army Research Staff and the Air Force in developing "Agent Orange" and other "Secret" chemical weapons for use in South East Asia during the Vietnam War. I worked on the on Army Staff as a Research and Development Coordinator in Chemical, Biological and Nuclear Warfare and Defense until 1968 when I was assigned to the Faculty at the Army Medical Field School at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. During that period of time, I completed the Baylor University Hospital Administration Course, and later was sent to

Regis College, in Denver, where I earned a degree in Medical Instrumentation. From there, I was assigned to the Office of the Surgeon General of the Army in the Pentagon, and served as the Chief Medical Instrumentation Specialist until my retirement from the Army in June of 1984, as a Lieutenant Colonel.

Since my retirement from the Army, I spent several years, sailing and cruising on my sail boat (Eagle III) in the Gulf of Mexico, Southwest North Atlantic, Bahamas, Turks & Cacaos, Dominican Republic (Hispanola) Puerto Rico, British and American Virgin Islands, returning to the Gulf (Mobile) and finally the Florida Coast, including the Dry Tortugas.

We were struck by lightening while we were anchored in the Shark River in the Everglades about three years ago, and we came ashore soon after that, settling here in Anderson, South Carolina. We recently sold the boat, and now are confirmed land lubbers. I have been totally retired except for some Expert Witness and Consultant work since retiring from the Army. I did operate a clinical and biological testing laboratory in Fort Myers Florida for a spell, but other than that, I am enjoying my "Golden years" as a free agent.

My major interest these days, is my affiliation with the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, where I am a Flotilla Staff Officer in Communications, with the Lake Hartwell, Georgia, Flotilla. I spend almost as much time in a Coast Guard uniform as I do in civilian clothes. I am a qualified Air Observer (I allowed my Pilot Certificate to expire), Certified as Coast Guard Boat Crew, and as a Coast Guard Communications Specialist. Lately, I am spending so much time now that my wife complains about it.

We have literally "gone to the birds!" We have about 15 breeding pairs of African Grey Parrots, Blue Crown Conures, and Sun Conures, and are having poor luck in producing young so far. We have one bird who refuses to grow up and continues to pull all his feathers out, and another who sailed with us on the sailboat as crew - "Petey" with crippled wing and leg - named after Peg Leg Pete, the Pirate. Completing our family is Eb for Ebony, our black labrador, who thinks he is the family child. Our children are all grown up and busy with their own kids in various parts of the country.

Winifred (Winn) my wife, is very artistically inclined, and deeply interested in ceramic sculpturing. I have persuaded her to enter Anderson College to undertake a degree program in Art Education. For leisure, Winn and I are into restoring Volkswagen "Beetles", camping out in mountain camp sites in our pop-up camper trailer, (which is really a motorcycle trailer), and prospecting for gold and treasure with our metal detector.

That fills you in completely on Joe Goeppner since I last saw you on the tarmac at Wendover Field in 1942.

Joe, after submitting you to the ordeal of reading through all of this, I am very desirous of hearing your story. In order to fill in all the gaps in my knowledge concerning you over the years, I would really appreciate it if you would fill me in on your life after getting out of the hospital after the crew got shot down. In particular, I would like to hear your experiences in being shot down, the name of your plane, etc., and the circumstances of the loss of your plane, POW status, return, and life following the war.

I understand from Russell Strong of the 306th Association, that you were in management at Chrysler Corporation for a major part of your life, after leaving the

service, and are now retired therefrom. I believe Englewood is in the Tampa-St Petersburg area. We spent quite a bit of time sailing in and around St Pete - We particularly remember our anchorage in a little bay just to the south of St Pete, and another pretty little harbor just inside Boca Grande. Sailing is like flying - after you get to a certain age, it better to leave the driving to someone else.

A few days after I talked with you, I had occasion to call Russell, and asked him about the crew picture which you mentioned, and he said he would send me one. I told him that I was going to send you the page out of the "Mighty Eighth War Diary" which has a picture of the ground crew painting the name on the ship of "Man O War" which mentioned earlier. He said he had the book, plus some others about the B-17 Groups, and he was going to send me a list of them. I found another book about the 8th Air Force, and there was a very uncomplimentary article in it about the 306th. The article went on to say that the 306th was negligent in dropping its bombs, and that the Group CO was more interested in his men than accomplishing the group's missions, and that Spatz (General) sent a general down to take over the group and straighten it out. Even if this all were true, I felt that the article was in very poor taste because it sullies the memory of all our gallant friends who died flying with the group, as well as those who survived. I didn't buy the book because of that, but in retrospect, I asked Russell to see if he could find it for me because I want to buy it and write to the author. I also talked with Kemper at the 8th Air Force Historical Society who is going to try to find out what the score was with Private Loskot, our Radioman on the "Uncle Biff" - somehow he must have gotten split from our crew in England. Kemper is checking it out as best he can.

I am going to try and get down to Florida for that reunion in the fall, and I hope I will be able to get a chance to see you. I don't know whether or not you still have yours, but at Geiger, they issued us a "Hanger-Line" Pass with our picture on it. I still have mine, and I will try and make a copy of it so perhaps you will remember me. I will send a picture of me taken on the day I took the salute on the parade ground at Fort Meyer, when I retired.

Until recently, I thought the B-17-E was the mostest and bestest B-17 ever built, and I couldn't understand why I could never find a model of the "E" to build. Well, when I did all my research work on the B-17, I found out that the E's that you guys took to England were the last of them. There were only a few used in the Pacific, and very few in England. Most of the E's that didn't get shot down early in England, were taken out of the groups and used for secondary missions. It seems like the bulk of all B-17's that flew in Europe were the B-17-G variety. I guess that is probably the class you got shot down on. Anyway, that is why the model makers made very few, if any, models of the B-17-E, and I have never been able to find an E model for that reason. I do have a beautiful charcoal sketch of the B-17-E done by a fellow in Texas that is a signed numbered print, I will try to send you a copy of it.

Russell is also going to try and find out for me, if he can, where Birleffi was from in Wyoming, and where he is interred, and anything he can learn about his family, etc. I was born in Lusk, Wyoming, so that is something else that we had in common beside being in the "Regular Army" I have a wealthy sister who still runs a string of cattle ranches and a hunting range in the Snowy Range Country, and she has asked Winn and I to visit her this Fall. If we do go out there, I am going to plan on visiting Biff's burial site

and put some flowers on it for the crew. I find it quite sad that all those wonderful guys went down in the Channel, and there was no recovery of their remains. I was going to ask you if you made the trip to England to the reunion the 306th had there, and if you did how did it go. I was traveling through St Petersburg on my sailboat, on my way to the Atlantic, and while I was in the Marina there, I rented a car - Lo and Behold, I was driving South on US 19, and there was "The 306th Bomb Group". Of course, I had to stop and eat, and spent the rest of the day looking at all the pictures and orders and photos on the wall. Too many years had gone by, and I didn't recognize anybody in the pictures, or names in the orders posted around. It was an eerie feeling, and I almost felt that I was in a Chapel. Russell tells me that the restaurant has since gone out of business, and that he was a guest at the opening ceremonies.

One thing which you might find interesting about my retirement ceremony. On the parade ground, they announced my service, and indicated that " I was the last soldier serving on Active Duty in the Army at that time that had served in the US Mounted Cavalry (11th Cavalry at Monterey - I was a bugler in Machine Gun Troop in 1940) and the last soldier on Active Duty that had served in the US Army Tank Destroyers (was a clerk and typed activation orders for the first such Battalion at Fort Lewis in 1941) AND that I was the last soldier on active duty in the Army who had SERVED IN, AND WAS ON FLYING STATUS, IN THE U.S ARMY AIR CORPS. Of course I was tremendously elated to learn that - I did know that there was only one other person on active duty at that time who wore a "Yellow Pre-Pearl Harbor Service Ribbon". and was four months short of my age at that time (62), and that was the serving Chief of Staff of the Army , at that time . While I was in the Regular Army in 1940, came into the Army with the National Guard in 1941, so I ranked him in service and age on the day of my retirement. I guess its true, "Ole soldiers never die, they just fade away".

Talking about fading away, I guess I have ran on and on, and you are sick of this letter, so I will bring it to an end.

Needless to say, I am thrilled and pleased beyond all you can imagine to find that you are alive and well, in the world. Thank God for us both in that regard. I have made many friends and had many buddies in my 41 years of service, but none are so dear to my as the boys from "The Uncle Biff". Take Care and God Bless,

Yours in the faith,

Joe

MY CREW WAS ON MAN O'WAR
Joe

Man O'War was a famous pre-war American racehorse and stud. Its namesake was not a winner, being one of three 306BG aircraft lost while bombing St.Nazaire from 7,500 feet on 9 November. Three days earlier the ground crew were putting the finishing touches to the flamboyant insignia. *Man O'War* flew its first mission 9 October – see single bomb symbol.



9 NOVEMBER 1942

VIII BC 18

| | Despatched | Effective | Target | Bombs Tonnage | E/A | Losses MIA | Casualties | | | |
|----------------|------------|-----------|--------------------|------------------|-----|---------------|------------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| | | | | | | | E | Dam | KIA | WIA |
| 1BW | | | ST.NAZAIRE U/B (P) | | | | | | | |
| B-17 | 91BG | 14 | 1405 hrs | | | 0 | 0 | 10 | 0 | 11 |
| | 306BG | 19 | 1440-1441 hrs | | | 3 | 0 | 12 | 1 | 0 |
| B-24 | 93BG | 9 | 1402 hrs | 137 × 1000GP | | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 2BW | | | | | | | | | | |
| B-24 | 44BG | 5 | 1408 hrs | 180 × 500GP | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTALS: | | 47 | 43 | | | 3 | 0 | 23 | 1 | 11 |

REMARKS: 91BG B-17 c/l on return, Cab AC.

VIII FC

| Despatched | Groups | E/A | Losses MIA | Casualties | | | | |
|------------|--------|-----|---------------|------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| | | | | E | Dam | KIA | WIA | MIA |
| Spitfire | 36 | 4FG | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

REMARKS: As escort to RAF Bostons attacking Le Havre area.

10 NOVEMBER 1942

VIII FC

| Despatched | Groups | E/A | Losses MIA | Casualties | | | | |
|------------|--------|-----|---------------|------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| | | | | E | Dam | KIA | WIA | MIA |
| Spitfire | 36 | 4FG | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

REMARKS: As rear support to RAF Bostons.

On 13 November King George VI paid his first visit to VIII BC installations. At Chelveston Col Ronald Walker, CO of 301BG, showed him *Holey Joe* which had flown on five of the Group's eight missions. At this date the 301st was non-operational and together with the 97BG would soon leave the Eighth and England for North Africa.



November 23, 1995

Mr Russell A Strong, Secy
306th Bomb Group Association
5323 Cheval Place
Charlotte, North Carolina 28205-4937

Dear Russell:

Shortly after my call to you about the possibility of purchasing a crew picture of the crew of "Man-O-War", which Joe Consolmagno had told me about, I was pleasantly surprised to receive the enclosed card in the mail. I immediately thought of you and Joe, and made a copy for each of you.

I had written to Wendover to find out if I could if a small one room shack I had built behind the water tower was still standing, and I had not heard from them. This card was the first acknowledgement of my prior letter.

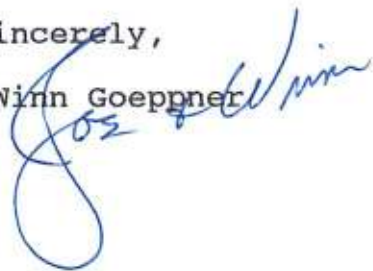
This quaint replica of a 1940's Post Card, showing a pre-B-17-E, really conjured up a lot of memories, and I thought you and Joe would enjoy receiving it, and that perhaps, you might want to turn a copy over to the Group History People. We in the 306th preceded the arrival of the B-29's who trained for the Atomic Bomb Mission, but that is a minor point. The fact that they chose a B-17 for their emblem, and not a B-29, B-24, or B-18 is significant, even if it is not a B-17-E.

I think I told you, I have a charcoal signed and numbered print of a B-17-E, which I cherish. Photos and drawings of B-17-E aircraft are kinda hard to come by, and I have never been able to get a model of the E series. Since this print is copyrighted, I wonder if I would get into trouble if I took a picture of it and sent a copy to you and Joe. If you know about such things, please let me know because I would like to take pictures of it. It is approximately 11 x 14 overall, and is an excellent rendition of the E series.

Hope you have had a nice Thanksgiving, and trust that all is well with you and yours, God Bless and take Care.

Most sincerely,

Joe & Winn Goepfner

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joe & Winn Goepfner". The signature is stylized and somewhat cursive, with the first letters of "Joe" and "Winn" being prominent.

April 7, 1996

Mr Russell Strong
306th Bomb Group Association
5323 Cheval Place
Charlotte, NC 28205

Dear Russ:

Well, I was tremendously pleased and surprised to receive the photograph of the crew of "Man O' War", with a picture of Joe Attached to the photo in the mail this week. I immediately made copies of the photo and have returned it to Joe. I am indeed so very happy to have it, and together with the photo you sent me of the ground crew painting the name on the plane, I am now in possession of that which I was seeking.

I wonder if you have this photograph in your collection of crew pictures. Joe didn't say whether or not this photo is a part of your collection, or whether it was his. In any event, I am sending you a copy in case you do not have it. If you do, then you will have an extra copy.

You are sure doing a nice job of presenting pictures of the crews in "Echoes". Perhaps you had this photo in the paper before I began to receive the paper.

When I sent the photo back to Joe Consolmagno, I sent along a couple of pictures of me taken during the 1941-41 time period, that perhaps he can relate with.

Take Care and God Bless.

Sincerely,


Joe Goepfner

GREETINGS
from



UTAH

Wendover Field - Wendover, Utah. W.W. II bomber training base. Training base for the crews of the 500th Composite Group (B-29) during the war. Bombardment.

SPREAD THE WORD, THERE'S A CELEBRATION!

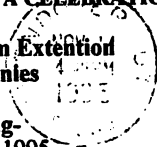
**Wendover Field Museum Extension
Opening Ceremonies**

-Ribbon Cutting-
Date: December 8, 1995
Time: 4:00 pm
Place: Icarus Aviation, Inc.
Flight Operations

-Social Hour & 40's Band/Gala-
Date: December 8, 1995
Time: 7:00 pm
Place: State Line Hotel Convention Center

for room reservations the night of 12/8/95
rsvp State Line Reservations at: 1-800-848-7300
by 12/1/95
rsvp Nevada Crossing Hotel at: 1-800-537-0207
by 12/1/95

You are with the Wendover Field Museum Ext Group
for more info, call 801-467-7777



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Har Truman

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Lt Col Joe Goepner
USA Ret
107 Forest Hill Drive
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