

6 Dec 1990

Dear Russ,

This research is quite different from Textile Dyeing and Finishing research.

Enclosed is a sample of the letter I sent to Dolan, Hoffer, Levenbach, Racz, Berda, Ganner, Evans and Garrity. These are my selection of names with X's in your reply that are most likely to write. I hope we get results.

If you have any suggestions, I would be willing to try again.

Personally, very few of these men are likely to still be living with their parents that they left to go to war. In 45 years I've had seven changes of address, and that is quite normal.

On all envelopes, I put my return address and in addition to the veteran's name on the envelope I added (or occupant).

The reason is that the "occupant" may know the man and forward the letter rather than return it.

Happy Holidays

Abe

A.F. Grondin
82 Des Ormeaux Apt 2
Joliette, P.Q. Canada
J6E 7N5

Dear

Russell Strong, secretary for the 306 Bomb Group Association, is trying to improve the Directory of men that did service in Thurleigh during W.W.II. He asked me and several others..if we could help him find the present home address of former members of Det. A 876 Chem. Co. AO that served at Thurleigh with the 306 Bomb Group.

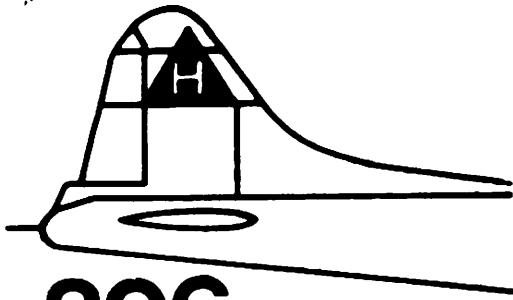
If you are in contact with any of the following men that were part of our Det., I would appreciate a short letter giving me the desired information.

James H. Branyan		Beaumont, Tx.
James J. Jeter	R.R. 2 Box 64	Natchitoches, La.
- Charles H. Dolan	575 N. 172 St.	N.Y.C.
- Ernest Hoffer Jr.	Pox 148 B	Rahway, N.J.
- Robert Levenback	274 N. 19 th St.	N.Y.C.
- Stephen Racz	152 Brighton Ave.	Woodbridge N.J.
James Thornton	1900 W. 47th St.	Cleveland, Ohio
Louis Osiel	2228 Shakespeare Ave.	Chicago, Ill.
Elmer Ross	R.R. 1	Jerome, Idaho
- Peter A. Berds	4112 Belt St.	Niagara Falls, N.Y.
- Robert Ganner	818 McDonald St.	Sewickley, Pa.
Alvin Kott		
Merts		
A. Cox		
L. Hartnagel		
Merced Lujan		La Mesa, N.M.
- Albert I. Evans	400 Riverside Dr.	N.Y.C.
- Joseph Garrity	4012 N. Hermitage Av.	Chicago, Ill.
Robert Cebelak	927 Michigan St.	Grand Rapids, Mich.
So far we have confirmed addresses for		
Harry Smits	R.R. 3	Appleton, Wisc.
Sam W. Smith		River Forest, Ill.
Abe Grondin	82 Des Ormeaux Apt. 2	Joliette, P.Q. Canada J6E 7N5
Donald Plym		Galesburg, Ill.
James Weathered	Box 581	Crowell, Tx. 79227
Barney Spross	R.R. 4	Columbus, Tx.

It's a start. And we are trying to locate the other sixty. Please help if you can: but please make the effort.

I would appreciate at least acknowledgement of reception of this letter. That would assure us that your address is good.

Hoping to hear from you before Christmas,
Abe Grondin



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

306TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP ASSOCIATION

Secretary/Historian

Russell A. Strong
5323 Cheval Place
Charlotte, NC 28205
704/568-0153

6 November 1990

To: Abe Grondin
Floyd Williams
Donald Plym
Sam W. Smith
Harry W. Smits
Barney H. Spross
James B. Weathered

Author

First Over Germany
Command and Staff
Officers, 8th Air
Force, 1942-45

Editor

306th Echoes
306th Directory

Re: Roster of 876th Chemical Co, Detachment A, personnel

The accompanying list was sent to me by Abe Grondin, and is an identification of a picture which he also sent me for use in an upcoming issues of Echoes.

Following the receipt of the list, I checked it against my card file and current roster for Echoes mailing.

I have made notations where I had information.

Those marked "OK" appearing on the mailing list; an "X" indicates that they are not in my card file, and will be added; one I have marked as deceased; others have had further name information appended.

NOW, we need your help to further fill out the name list. Can you help with names, WW II hometowns, last known place of residence, or current addresses?

While you are working this over I will begin a telephone search for a number of these men. Perhaps together we can present a much more complete roster than we now have.

A reply envelope is included.

Thanks for your help,

82 Des Ormeaux apt. 2
Joliette, Que., Canada. J6E 7N5
29 Oct. 1990

Dear Russ,

The last time I wrote you were organizing "First Over Germany" information. The results were very good. It helps me explain what I did in England when my grandchildren ask about WW II.

In the last issue of 306 Echoes, there was an article headed "Do you remember His ~~First~~ First Name?"

I can help with some of the 876th Chemical Co.

Paul Olson - R.R. 1, Forest Lake, Minn.

Fred R. Raffaelli, 1802 Leclair Ave., Chicago, Ill.

James A. Thornton, 1900 West 47th St., Cleveland, Ohio

Warren F. Wiseman, Tule Lake, Cal.

O'Kerns was called Jack so it probably was John.

I hope you can use the enclosed photo of the men in Det A, 876 Chemical Co. These men, working in cooperation with Ordnance men, loaded the bombs for all the bomb missions. Every one of them did over three years overseas

duty. I am proud of, and admired
each and every one of them. My
biggest regret is that our
"Table of Organization" was limited
to three sergeants and I couldn't
give promotions to reward
their faithfulness to duty.

In addition to the 876th
roster, with the home address
when they left England, I will
give you two more names that
should show in the 306 Directory.

Joseph LaMotte 312 Scottish Court
Greenville, N.C. 27834 756-6855
Joe was with Sp. Hq. - he replaced
Paul Baille as Sp. Adj.

~~In~~ Ira Fatheree, 6244 San Martin St.,
North Highlands, Cal. 95660
368th Electronics Officer

I hope the information in this
letter will be useful to you.

Yours,
Abe Grondin

2 April 1991

Dear Russ,

You are having more luck than me in getting addresses of 876th men that served with the 306th in Thurleigh.

Last December I sent letters to
Albert Evans - came back
Joseph Garrity
Elmer Ross - came back
Peter Berds
Robert Ganner - came back
Ernest Hoffer Jr.
Robert Levenback - came back
and Stephan Pacy - came back

So far five have come back to me with remark "not deliverable", "addressee unknown", "refused", "no such street no."

What do I do now?

I got your note on Sylvester Manicki and saw new addresses in the "Echo" for Robert Cebelak, Anthony Paszkiewicz, and Bennie Westberry.

In an exchange of Christmas cards Ira Fatheree was glad to know how you got his name and address.

I had a heart attack on my trip in late Feb. I'm just now starting to feel OK, again
Yours Abe Grossin

11 April 1991

Dear Abe:

Sorry to hear about your heart attack, but hope you are feeling better and continuing to improve. I had a little problem last fall, not an attack but a warning, so have taken a bit better care of myself since then. The doctors tell me I am doing fine now, and I am as active as ever--but, then, I am a few years younger than you are.

I don't know what else you can do on finding people. I have those names on my "search" list, and have done some work on that--sending double postcards to any 306th people who lived in cities where we had "lost". That is how Manicki's name turned up. Have had a fair response, getting a dozen names and addresses back so far, and at least an equal number of deceased.

Next I am going to be writing libraries in larger cities, and to town clerks in smaller places, to see if I can turn up some more.

Its tough sledding, but most of the "finds" are delighted that we located them, and wished we had done it 15 years ago.

As to Robert Ganner from Sewickley, PA., a small town in the Pittsburgh area, I have a brother-in-law who lives there, so we visit on occasion. Haven't found Ganner, but a fellow who lives there is not a 306'er, but his father-in-law is, so I have asked this man to work on CGanner. The Sewickley resident is an avid military researcher, even though he is an artist by trade, and I am sure he will turn up something eventually.

If you still have your 201 file about, I would like copies of any orders you might have that were issued at Thurleigh--Group or station special orders, squadron orders, etc.

I found when I got into this that Special Orders were not in Federal files prior to 1 Dec 43, so I began collecting them. I now have about 400 from 1 Mar 42 through 30 Nov 43, and they provide all kinds of snippets of information that help to support the history of the 306th.

Grondin⁴ 2

Its from this kind of material that I have compiled a 10,000-card file of 306th personnel. Today I am sending my card file off to copied on microfilm so that there is a backup in case anything should ever happen to my card file.

Of late you may have noticed that Mission Reports are availbææ to interested persons, and this has been a 15-year quest that began when I started work on a history of the 306th. It is nearly complete now, and I may have that put on microfilm again to keep it safe.

Would you ever consider writing a bit about the Thurleigh football teams, their triumphs and defeats? I would be delighted to use something like this in Echoes, as I am sure tha participants would enjoy it and I think it was a healthy outlet for everyone on the base. I recall attending a game or two while I was there in the fall of 1944.

Continued good health, Abe, and write again,

30 April 1991

Dear Abe:

Gad, but the mail lady was good to me today!

I got your envelope at noon, immediately made copies and am getting them back into the mail this afternoon. I have kept the football stuff until a bit later, but will use it in the July issue of Echoes.

I found in your collection of orders seven that I did not have. I haven't had a haul like that in years. Now I will go through them to match data with my personnel file and put some better information on some of my 3x5 cards.

I am also enclosing a page I copied of four football pictures from my files.

Thanks again for your diligence.

Sincerely yours,

25 April 91

Dear Russ,

Working with you is time consuming but it's lots of fun. Time I've got plenty of. My heart is O.K. now and I'm slowly getting back into golf playing condition.

I did some deep-digging to find the never used 201 file. There were very few pre Dec 1943 Station Special Orders. But I'm lending you the few I found. The Special Order I treasure most is # 317 of 6 Dec 44 which puts my football team on "3 Day TD" to participate in athletic contest. That's how we fought the war. In addition you will find my version of the Football Era of Sta III. On the photocopy sheet Lt. Mattoon is the officer in the middle of the back row in the bottom picture. I don't recognize the others.

If you ever get to Sarasota, Fla., you must try the 306 B.G. restaurant. It has "beaucoup" 306 memorabilia.

Yours
Abe

5May 1991

Dear Abe:

Thanks so much for the loan of the Special Orders. I added eight names to my roster, of 306th men, now showing 10,789 men who served in the 306th from Wendover through the end of the war. I don't think anyone would have ever dreamed there were that many.

Have just read through the football material and put it in the July Echoes file.

To round out the article, I need some further help from you. Where did you come from; did you play high school football, and where, and what position? As you mention wanting to be a high school math teacher and coach, where did you go to College, when did you graduate, did you play football? position, etc.

I take it that Grondin is a French name, so is that why you now live in the Montreal area? What was your postwar career?

Any biographical information you can give me will be appreciated. Do you remember the approximate date that you joined the 306th?

Coming back from the Las Vegas reunion in 1988, I was looking at the Phoenix phone book, and had Floyd Williams name as having been a Phoenix resident. That was how I found him and got him on the mailing list.

All the best,

14 May 1991

Dear Russ,

The story of my life goes like this:
My grandparents migrated from Grand Falls, New Brunswick, Canada to Lowell, Mass about 1886 with ten children. One of the youngest was my father, who was only six year old at the time.

In 1901 my father married a Franco-American girl in Lowell, Mass. Together, they raised a family of twelve. I was among the younger ones.

But I did get to high school where I played Varsity football for three years as a guard. In those days we played both offensive and defensive.

I then played four years of "Sunday" football. There were six teams in the greater Lowell area. Each team represented areas in Lowell or neighboring cities. We called ourselves "Semi-pro" but the collections during the games were so meager we never got paid.

But we had lots of fun and the newspaper coverage was very good.

In my fourth season, our coach was also the coach at Lowell Textile Institute. He like ^{my} aggressiveness and desperate desire to win so much that he offered

me an athletic scholarship to L.T. I, that suited me fine. I always wanted to go to college, so I quit my job (house painting) and went back to school.

Lowell Textile was a small school with only 400 students so we played mostly the smaller New England colleges. It was a lot of fun but most important, I earned my Bachelor of Textile Chemistry degree.

Now while I was in High School, I went to C.M.T.C. summer training camp at Ft. McKinley on Great Diamond Island in Casco Bay, Maine. Then I was commissioned 2nd Lt Infantry, U.S.A. Reserve. This helped me because after college, I found employment with the Chemical Warfare Procurement Dept. in Boston. When Pearl Harbor came along, the CWS Commanding Officer had me transferred from Inf. Reserve to Active Duty Chemical Warfare. That was O.K. for awhile, but there was a war going on and I didn't want a desk job in Boston for the duration. I wanted to be closer to where the action was.

In one of the circulars, there was an article requesting qualified

personnel to supervise employees and machinery to gasproof fabrics for military and civilian use in England.

I applied, was accepted, and got orders transferring me to E.T.O. When I got there, the project had been scrapped. The overflow rinse after impregnating the fabric was polluting the river. And they would not send me back to Boston.

In Jan 1943, I replaced Lt. Joe LaMotta as Commander Det A 876 Chemical Co. (A.O.). I kept that rank and position from 9 Jan 1943 to 15 May 1945.

After the war, I was able to transfer to A.C. hoping to get a promotion. On AAF III Spec. Orders 127, dated 15 May 1945 I was transferred to 840 Air. Eng. Sq. and was named Transportation Officer.

Then on AAF III Spec. Orders 141 dated 30 May 45, I was reassigned to Squadron Adj. 423 Bomb Sq. (H) 306 Bomb Group.

Then it was time to go home.

On AAF III Spec. Orders 267 dated 17 Oct 1945 I was relieved from duty and assignment 306 B.G. and sent to France to await transportation to U.S.

After getting home in Dec 1945, I investigated possibilities of

teaching jobs because I always
loved math and found it so easy.
But I found out that the Textile
Industry had more future for
me than teaching. I wound up
in the Montreal area of Canada
because I was also bilingual.

How's that for biography?

Yours
Abe Gordin

Dear Russ,

Writing about the Thurleigh 1944 Football team would have been easy 45 years ago. But now, in 1991, you are pressing my memory heavily.

To start off, the football team was first thought of by Lt. Darrell Matoon and his Special Services staff. They did re-search in 201 files and asked around about ex-football players. When they got to me, I had to beg off because of my "trick" knee. But being interested in football as a possible part of my future life, I volunteered to be assistant coach if they needed help. You see, my goal for return to civilian life was to teach high school math and coach the local football team. This could be an opportunity to assess my coaching ability. Well, two weeks later, the Special Service Sgts. came back to see me and said "It looks like you've got a job "Coach". I think they hadn't looked any further but I was neither dissapointed nor discouraged.

So we made arrangements for the introduction of players to the coach and the first practice session.

The response to warm up drills and grass drill was fantastic. These guys really were interested. So we went into planned plays for line rushes and long passes. our biggest problem for practicing was lack of personnel. Too many of the players were flight personnel and combat missions held high priority over practice.. So we adjusted our practice so that the offensive would run the right side against a left-side defensive and vice-versa. And we didn't have any Joe Montana to throw long passes to lanky sticky fingered ends. We worked on the more certain short quick passes. They worked!

After three weeks of patchy practice, play developement, and grinding grass drills (I wanted hardened bodies to avoid personal injuries) we headed for Bassingborne and our first game.

After pre-game warm-up we were in the dressing-room for the choice of starting eleven and the coach's "Inspiring pep-talk". At that time, my first time, I was more nervous than any of the players. They listened attentively and we ran out to the field full of confidence.

It was not a spectacular game but it was fun. And we all went home proud of the scoreless tie. We were as good as they were. One week later we played Nuthampstead who were better drilled and faster than us. We lost 6 to 0.

We scheduled daily practice drills but the war still interfered. In spite of the patchwork practice session we played a good third game and we beat Bassingborn 13 to 0.

That one really pleased the coach and all the players. But maybe a bit too much. We got careless in the second half of the Nuthampstead return match allowing them to score two quick touch-downs and suffered a 12 to 0 defeat.

The next game against Sta.179 (S.O.S) was more exciting and ended in a sastisfying 13 to 13 tie.

Then came the big exhibition game in the town of Bedford

stadium. It was played up big on the base and in the Bedford daily newspaper. The stadium was packed and we were ready. Warren Sellen was hot and we rolled all over defenseless Harrington for a 25 to 0 victory.

Now comes the part I really like. Twenty-five of us, a medical officer, a special services officer, the coach and twenty-two players got on Station Special Orders #317 to proceed to "Reading, England to participate in athletic contest. TD approx. 3 days". We went by train. We played our hearts out. But we could not win. They did not win either. We made two good goal line stands to hold on to a 13-13 tie against Reading Station #157 group.

We coasted into the final part of the season with a 6 to 0 victory over Harrington and a 13 to 6 victory over Grafton Underwood. In brief, our record was as follows:

31	october	1944	Thurleigh	0	Bassingborn	0
6	november	1944	Thurleigh	0	Nuthampstead	6
13	november	1944	Thurleigh	13	Bassingborn	0
20	november	1944	Thurleigh	0	Nuthampstead	12
27	november	1944	Thurleigh	13	St.179 S.O.S	13
2	december	1944	Thurleigh	25	Harrington	0
9	december	1944	Thurleigh	6	St.157 Read.	6
16	december	1944	Thurleigh	6	Harrington	0
23	december	1944	Thurleigh	13	Grafton Und.	6

Won 4 Lost 2 Tied 3

Don't forget, Russ, that in those "Good old days" the strong players played the full game, that is both offensive and defensive. These men were strong, tough, and they loved the game and I was proud to be their coach.

But I never became a high school football coach because it did not pay enough and I had a good future in the Textile Industry.

Enclosed are a few Station Special Orders pre-dating 1 december 1943, plus more information and pictures of our football players.

Yours,

Abe Grondin

18 December 1992

Dear Abe:

Here are your pictures, and many thanks for their loan and for the story information. I hope it met with your satisfaction.

The printer failed to return the pictures, and I didn't get around to pushing him until I got the midst of working on the January issue of Echoes.

They came in the mail yesterday, and I am happy to send them on to you, as I try to get all such things out of my hair as soon as possible.

I hope that the weather is dealing kindly with you. Its been a bit cold here, in the '20s that is at night, but we haven't had any snow. Missed out on it, too, last year.

We will be off to Columbus, OH, for New Years, and I am sure will get enough snow then.

All the best, and I hope you have recovered from the rigors of travel abroad,

19 Jan 93

Dear Russ,

I got my pictures a few weeks ago plus two copies of the Echo in which the football write-up appeared. Thank you very much. Cooperating with you has been fun and very interesting.

We found the reunion very good, fun packed, but quite tiring. Sat. in London was so jam packed with touring, we stayed in the Hotel in lieu of the Pub Crawl. Like you, it took a few days to get over the jet-lag.

You lucky guy. You said "it's getting cold, the temp drops to the low 20's." Well our temp. gets real cold. We get -20°F (yes 20 below zero) many nights with a high of zero $^{\circ}\text{F}$ some days. That is why I'm looking forward to our trip to Florida which starts in three weeks.

Thanks again for the write-up.

Yours
Abe Grondin

6 July 74

Dear Russ,

Thank you very much for the Canadian postage stamps that came in yesterday's mail! It was very nice of you to think of me.

What would have pleased me more is getting a call from you saying you were in the Montreal area. Then I would tell you how to get to Joliette so you could come for dinner with us and stay as our overnight ~~guests~~ ~~guests~~ guests (it was right the first time)

We hope your visit to Canada was as pleasant and enjoyable as the trip to England with the Group was for us.

We are all fine in Canada. We hope the same of you and yours.

Alie Grondin

June 1999
82 Des Ormeaux #2
Joliette, Que. J6E 7N5
Canada

Dear Russ,

In the May 1999 issue of the
306 Echoes, Ira C. Fatheree of North
Highlands, Ca. was listed as missing.
I'm sorry to inform you he died
10 Nov. 1991.

It's strange how I got to know
Ira. When I got interested in family
genealogy, someone told me that the
daughter of one of my cousins was
married to a fellow that was very
good at genealogy and had printed
a book tracing my mother's family
back to 1700.

So I wrote Ira Fatheree in California.
After two or three exchanges of
letters, we learned that during WWII
we were both with 306 Group.
He was electronics officer with
368th and I was Station Chem.
Warfare Officer.

Small world.

Yours
Rhe Grondin

Saint-Charles-Borromée, Mai 29th, 2001

juin 5, 2001

306th Bombardment Group Association
Attention of: Mr Russell A. Strong
5323 Cheval Place
Charlotte, N.C.
28205 U.S.A.

Dr Mr Strong,

I would first like to thank you for sending me the 306th Bomb Group Journal of April 2001 with the picture of Abe on it.

Abe has left us on February 10th of year 2000.

I would be very happy if you could send me the issue of the Journal where Abe's death date will be published.

Best regards,

Mrs Lucienne Grondin
82 Des Ormeaux #2
Saint-Charles-Borromée, Québec
Canada J6E 7N5

Mme Lucienne Blanchard Grondin



À la douce mémoire de
ABRAHAM GRONDIN
1915-2000