

Jane F. Kirby
10001 Bellevue
Kansas City, Missouri 64114

22 July 1995.

Dear Mr. Strong,

My husband, Charles K. Kirby was a member of a B-17 Bomber Crew, in the 306th, Sqn. 367th. He was based at Thurligh and was shot down (8th or 9th mission) on a flight to Lorient. You mentioned him in your book, "First Over Germany." He was a PO 26 months.

Chuck is still alive and in good health, watches movies and documentaries about the B-17s and reads many books concerning them. He just read Andy Rooney's book "My Dad" and enjoyed reading his account of flying five missions with the 306th. However, over the years, he has been reluctant to talk about his experiences - says it's all in the past - "forget it." No reusings.

He did, however, twice crawl up on a restored B-17 - first time I crawled up with him, second time I and our son and wife and four children crawled up with him and he freely talked about what it was like back then.

Now to the purpose of this letter: Chuck recently received a letter from a Mr. Francois Cobic in France. He said his subject is "U S A A F and R A F losses in Brittany during WW II and is interested in allied airmen who came out of France from the coast of Brittany". Wants to gather info to tell the story of the aircraft and crews etc.

He knew where the plane was shot down, date and said it crashed at Ploemeur. Asked many questions about missions, POW camps etc.

Chuck has chosen to ignore this letter, says he doesn't want to reply. Guess he thinks it's not

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legitimate, or unnecessary or something.
I'm not sure. I think it would
be interesting if he followed up
on this.

Just wanted your opinion as to
this matter. If you have time to
reply, I (we!?) would appreciate
it.

52 years after the fact. 'My
 goodness, where has the time gone?

Sincerely,
Jane F. Kirby
✕

16 August 1995

Dear Jane:

In answer to your letter of 22 July, I regret not responding earlier, but I have been on a two-week trip to Northern Michigan and returned to a large pile of mail.

I don't Charles' response to WWII is unusual. We have others who react the same way. One man told me that he would only talk to me, and I get anguished letters from people in France because this man will not respond to them. Its all a very individual matter.

I also find the demands of some Europeans for information to be rather bothersome, and I refuse to respond immediately to almost any such request.

Perhaps children or grandchildren might get him to talk to a recorder and to put HIS story on tape for them. This might provide a possible answer to French requests. But it would be nice if he told them his story so that they would have a permanent record and something of him of which they would be very proud.

I tell my children that immortality lies within the family, and if you don't do something about such matters, no one will ever know what happened to you. Perhaps a mature grandchild could interview him to get him talking. Its far more important to the family than to anyone else. And I would hope you could get him to talk without any idea of letting anyone outside the family hear it or read it.

All this happened a very long time ago, and each passing day makes it more important to do something for his loved ones before its too late.

Good luck, and let me know if you can "crack" him on this matter.

All the best,

Jane F. Kirby
10001 Belleview
Kansas City, Missouri 64114
11229 Oak #202

31 May 1996.

Dear Russell,

Thank you for your last August response to my letter in which I discussed my husband, Chuck's, reluctance to talk about his experiences flying & P.O. days during It's II.

No, I haven't been able to "check" him - he just won't talk and I guess we'll just have to accept that and honor his need to just keep it to himself. However, we've had a few glimpses and that will have to do.

Thankfully, he's still in good health, slowing down, certainly, but aren't we all!

He recently sold our house where

we had lived for 29 years, unloaded
tons of "stuff" - furniture, dishes -
name it - and moved to an apart-
ment in pretty much the same part
of town. It's cozy, comfortable, and
convenient and we love it. No more
upkeep on house and yard.

New address for your records (we
read every word of 306th Echoes -
good job.

Charles K. Kirby (Jane)

11229 Oak #202

Kansas City, Mo. 64114

Phone (816) 942-2723

If you and your wife are ever in
Kansas City, it would be a privi-
lege to meet you.

All the best,
Jane
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CHARLES KENNETH KIRBY



Charles Kenneth Kirby went to be his Lord on March 19, 2002. Born in Pittston, PA, on August 15, 1918, he and his brothers, Robert and Ervin, were raised there by parents

Charles and Mary Ellen Wilkinson Kirby.

Charles graduated from West Pittston High School in 1936 as President of his class. He entered the Army Air Corps in September of 1941. As a Tech. Sergeant with the #306 Bomb Group, he flew missions out of Bedford, England. Captured off the coast of France, he became a prisoner of war for 26 months. While in prison camp, he was awarded the Air Medal by the Army Air Force.

Upon his return, Charles married his high school sweetheart, Jane Elizabeth French, on November 22, 1945. They then relocated to New York, where he completed his degree in Business Administration at Syracuse University. Charles had a lifelong career in the transportation industry, serving at Sealright Co. for 24+ years in Fulton, NY, and Kansas City, and later as Vice President of Freight Rate Service.

Charles' interests included antique restoration, genealogical research, computer technology, Christian studies, and following the adventures of his seven grandchildren.

He is survived by his sons, Charles Richard Kirby and Jeffrey French Kirby; daughters-in-law, Linda Cornelius Kirby and Tracy MacClement Kirby; and grandchildren, Charles Aaron Kirby, Ryan Ashley Kirby, Jessica Thea Kirby, Michael Jeffrey Kirby, Jillian Thomas Kirby, Jeremy Theron Kirby and Joanna Tess Kirby, all of the Kansas City area.

A graveside service was held at Mount Moriah Cemetery on Thursday, March 21. The family suggests contributions to the American Diabetes Association as a support for one of Charles' granddaughters.

"If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your hand will hold me fast."

-- Psalm 139:9,10

(Arrangements: Mt. Moriah & Freeman Funeral Home, 816-942-2004)

3/26/02

He will be missed. We'd like copies of the issue in which you include his obituary and will reimburse you.

New address:

14341 Chadwick

Leawood, Kansas

66224