

A HISTORY OF THE 306th BOMBARDMENT GROUP - EIGHTH AIR FORCE

Russell A. Strong 2041 Hillisdale Kalamazoo, MI 49007

Name CHARLES F. MILLER

Address 1115 SKYLARK DR. (mail box 176) LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA 92037

Home Phone (714) 454-6324 Date MAY 11, 1980

Occupation WHOLESALES LIQUOR SALESMAN (RET) Employer -----

Address ----- Bus. Phone ---

Serial No(s) 32 07 9119

Service Record:

Before joining the 306th: Inducted Fort Dix, N.J.--Gunnery School, Tyndall Field, Fla.-  
School and training, Salt Lake City Air Base, Utah--Geiger Field, Washington--Ephrata,  
Washington--Blythe, CA.--Assigned to 96th., Group, 337 Sq. Pyothe, Texas--Fire Control  
school Whendover, Utah--Smokey Hill A.A.B., Salina, Kansas--Assigned to B-17 F #230000-  
Left for overseas 4/10/43--Stopped at, Fort Wayne, Ind., 4/10, Bangor Maine 4/11, Goose  
Bay, Labdor 4/16, Iceland 4/17, Bovington, England 4/21

After leaving the 306th: Arrived by ship June 29, 1945, Virginia--Sent to Fort Dix, N.J.  
given 60 day furlough--Reported to Atlantic City, N.J. September 3, 1945--Sent to the  
convelesant hospital, Cochran Field, Macon Georgia--Discharged November 9, 1945.

306th Record

Arrival date at Thurleigh May 4, 1943

Squadron or other unit(s) 367th.

MOS # 611 Specialty Armorer Gunner

Missions Completed (and date of last) 5/13/43 France-5/14 Kiel-5/15 Wilhemshaven

Promotions Sgt. --S/SGT.

Decorations X AM olcs DFC olcs SS DSM DSC MH SM PHX Battle Stars

(On unusual DFCs, and Silver Stars and above would like to see a copy of the  
citation)

Other personal data:

Description of Air Missions:

(What were the highlights of your combat career? What was your role? What heroics did you witness? What events were there of which you have special knowledge?)

23 May 1980

Mr. Charles Miller  
1115 Skylark Dr.  
LaJolla, CA 92037

Dear Charles:

Having just obtained your address from Mrs. R. E. Lee, I am anxious to hear from you as to details of your last mission, etc.

She gave me addresses, I believe, of all the enlisted men on your crew that she had: you, Novak and Burkett. Do you know anything about the others? I understand Ritland is deceased. What do you know about the other officers on the crew?

The accompanying information should tell you what I am about, and I hope that you will be able to tell me other things.

Sorry I had not known about you before, as I stayed over night in LaJolla last June, when I spent some time visiting Mrs. August Winter. Her late husband and I had corresponded about his 306th experiences. I also talked on the phone with Bill Tackmier.

Sincerely yours,

Name Charles F. Miller Address 1115 Skylark Dr (bx. 176) La Jolla, CA. 92037  
Telephone (714) 454-6324

### MISSING AIRCRAFT REPORT

Pilot Gaylord O. Ritland Plane # and Name Black Plague  
Mission Date May 15, 1943 Target Wilhemshaven, Germany  
Cause of loss: AA fire  Fighter attack  Other, explain \_\_\_\_\_

Describe conditions in the plane as completely as you can: Two engines were completely gone, other two badly damaged. Order came to prepare to ditch. Everyone was busy throwing articles from the ship, hoping, we could make it nearer to England. There was no panic. Radio operator had been hit, and bleeding from cheek, I wiped his face as he continued to send a distress call, blood flowed quite freely. The pilot and co-pilot told us to take our ditching positions which we did. The plane hit tail first, skidded along the surface of the water then came to an abrupt stop. All crew members left the plane in an orderly fashion, getting into the life rafts, five men per raft.

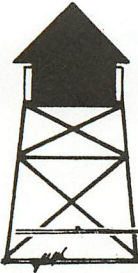
How and where did you leave plane? Approximately 85 miles from Germany in the North Sea. Officers left from nose section, enlisted men through radio room hatch.

What happened when you got on the ground?(water) Once in the rafts, we lashed the two rafts together. Floating approximately 24 hours, we were picked up by a German Patrol boat

Did you meet any of your crew mates?

How were you treated, if captured? The German seamen treated us with kindness. The ship's commander had two of his men dry me off and place me into a bunk (was injured) German crew men got out of their bunks and we were told to use these. A doctor or medic came and gave me tea and medication, and told me, I soon would see a doctor when we arrived at a seaport.

Any additional details, reminiscences, letters, or documents of these events would be appreciated. If you do send such materials, I will copy them and put them back in the mail to you within 24 hours.



# AMERICAN EX-PRISONERS OF WAR, INC. DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA

June 10, 1980

Mr. Russell A. Strong  
2041 Hillsdale  
Kalamazoo, MI. 49007

Dear Russell:

Received your most welcome letter yesterday. You did answer one question for me. In my mail the other day, I received a copy of "306th. Echoes" April issue. Said to my wife Kay, wonder who sent this to me? A few days later your letter arrived with two issues of the Echoe. I did apply for membership at the 8th. reunion in St. Louis, but, never received any material such as application form ect.

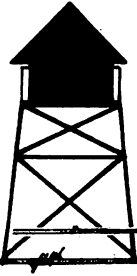
April 1978 and April 1979 was elected Department Commander for the above organization. I did not run this year as I intend running for the seat of Southwest Region Director. I retired in 1976 and have since devoted my time to this organization, as I'm sure you are aware, to do a decent job, one must give 100% effort.

If, I am elected as a director, will have plenty of spare time as this position is not as demanding. I am offering what assistance you may require in you endeavor to complete your research. In my file there are thousands of names of those men that were held prisoner in Germany, many of the addresses are not current. I have made a hobby of tracking these men and their current addresses through letters and the phone company. To date, this has proven most successful. Really enjoy this and it keeps me out of trouble.

Russell, if, you're interested in taking me on as one of your workers will you please if possible do me a favor? Send me a list of those people you now have with their current address. This will save me many hours of reasearch and will not duplicate what you already have.

You mentioned, you had talked with Bill Tackmier. I suppose, he thinks I'm some sort of a nut. At the reunion in St. Louis, I located a man that knows him and this man gave me his address. I wrote Tack and again thanked him for his expert advice he gave Ritland when we were ready to ditch. Talking with R. Lee, he informed me, Tack was not with us the day we were shot down, Gail Burkett and others confirmed this.

A few weeks ago, the name Winchell came to my mind. I called Gravins and he told me, the name also rang a bell with him as it did Burkett. I have had not luck in reaching Winchell, but, will keep trying.



# AMERICAN EX-PRISONERS OF WAR, INC. DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA

Page 2

Russell Strong:

Hope, you don't mind, I made a few copies of your forms. This week, an xpow friend Ed. Seabourn (now living in Norway) will be our house guest. Ed was with the 306th. and will have him fill in one for you. There are others living near by that were also with us in the 306th.

As you, am sorry we did not contact one another before you came to La Jolla, would have enjoyed meeting with you. I did not know August Winter by name. There is no listing in the La Jolla directory for a Mrs. Winter. My sister-in-law told me, she knows a Mary Winter that is a widow. Is this by chance August's widow?

Am not sure, Lee's wife had the correct addresses so will include what I have.

Pilot--Gaylord Ritland--deceased--three years ago according to his wife.

Co-Pilot--unknown

Navigator--Richard S. Callaghan, 36 Willow Rd., Tinton Falls, N.J. 07724

Bombardier--William F. Gravins, 1633 N.E. 3 Ct., Fort Lauderdale, Fla. 33301

Engineer--Harold J. Novak, 31130-71 S. General Kearney Rd., Temecula, CA. 92390

Ass't. Engineer--Al Lambert--address unknown

Radio Operator--Robert E. Lee--deceased

B/TG--William S. Anderson--address unknown

T/G--Gail V. Burkett, 604 E. 8th. Ave., Tarentum, PA. 15084

Armorer/G--Charles F. Miller, 1115 Skylark, Dr. (mail bx. 176) La Jolla, Ca. 92037

I have other names and addresses that are correct and will send to you next week. Today, I will hit the phone company with 10-12 names and go through their directories hoping to come up with more. That's my limit as it gets sorta of a strain on the ole eyes.

Take care, stay healthy, and thanks again for contacting me.

Sincerely,

*Charles F. Miller*

Charles F. Miller

Box 176

La Jolla, CA. 92037

(714) 454-6324

16 June 1980

Dear Charlie:

I appreciate your offer of help, and also the information which you included in your letter. I have waited several days to answer, as a computer printout was in process. I received it today, and am forwarding you a copy of it.

On most of the names we have appended squadron numbers, and some are marked as FR, or friend.

This is our current list, plus an additional four, we have located since last week. The list continues to grow, although not as rapidly as it did several years ago. But it is amazing how we find them.

I have worked on it rather intensively for the last five years, and a lot of help has come from a lot of people.

We will certainly appreciate anything you can do.

I am also enclosing a Search List. This has been pretty well worked over in your area, principally by a former POW, Jim Vaughter of the Sacramento area. But you may be able to bring about some results too. I mail the missing pages later.

As we carry a "Deceased" list in Echoes, we also want those names, and it gets them off our search list.

Over the period I have developed a card file, with more than 9000 cards in it on 306 people. I don't claim to have all names, but I would guess that I now have about 95%. Which brings to mind, I don't have a card on Ed Seabourn.

Sincerely yours,

Mrs. Charles F. Miller

1115 SKYLARK DRIVE



La Jolla, California 92037

September 1, 1982

306th Echoes  
2973 Heatherbrae Drive  
Poland, Ohio 44514

Dear Mr. Collins:

I read with interest the article you included in the July issue of 306th Echoes about my husband Charles being elected national senior vice commander of the American Ex-Prisoners of War, Inc. (AX-POW). It occurred to me you would be interested in an update of that article as well as some other information which would be of interest to some of your members who also were POWs.

Charlie is now National Commander of AX-POW. He was elected by acclamation at AX-POW's national convention in July at Colorado Springs. Busy but rewarding.

Of possible interest to some of your members is that AX-POW received its national charter on August 10th. It is Public Law 97-234. The membership is now over the 17,000 mark and growing. Probably a factor in the current influx is the passing of Public Law 97-37 last August (1981) which is the health bill affording the former POWs broader coverage of medical attention than previous to its passage.

Thanks for the article on Charlie, there aren't too many of Ritland's crew left.

Sincerely

*Kay Miller*

Kay Miller

*P.S. I just remembered the attached which appeared in our N.J. hometown newspaper. In case you want to*



put something in 306<sup>th</sup> Echoes.

Kay

Charlie just came home saw this  
and said, "H — I know Bill  
Collins, met him in St Louis  
and he sent me lots of info  
when I was organizing San Diego  
Chapter.

See I learned something  
today.

Kay

# C. Miller Elevated To Commander

Charles F. Miller, formerly of Bridgeton, was elected national commander of the American Ex-Prisoners of War Inc. at the organization's national convention held recently in Colorado Springs, Col.

Prior to his election to AX-POW's highest office, Miller held the offices of senior vice commander, junior vice commander and southwest region director all on the national board of directors, as well as serving as state commander of the California department for two terms. In addition, Miller started an AX-POW chapter and was its commander for two years in San Diego, Calif.

Miller, a gunner on a B-17, was taken prisoner when his plane was shot down during a bombing raid over Germany.

On Aug. 10 Public Law No. 97-234 was signed into law which grants a national charter to the AX-POW, giving the organization the same national status as the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Disabled American Veterans.

AX-POW counts among its over 16,000 members men and women, military and civilian, who were held captive by the enemies during World War I, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.

During his years of membership, Miller has actively participated in the many endeavors of the organization, such as the 1981 passing of Public Law



**CHARLES F. MILLER**

No. 97-37 which—in brief—gives former prisoners of war entitlement to much needed medical care in areas that previously were not considered valid claims due to the difficulty in establishing the correlation between being held a prisoner of war and the disabilities.

Miller plans tentatively to hold the AX-POW annual Midwinter Conference and a Medsearch seminar in New Jersey in January 1983. He hopes at that time to meet with many ex-prisoners of war who still live in this area.

Miller is the son of Sara Foster, a longtime Bridgeton resident who now resides in San Diego. Miller and his wife, Catharine (Jattros), also from Bridgeton, live at 1115 Skylark Drive, La Jolla, Calif. 92037.

For all AX-POWs Miller has a private hot line which any member can use. The number is (714) 454-4476.

82/83



# American Ex-Prisoners of War

CONGRESSIONALLY CHARTERED  
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS  
(817) 649-AXPW

3201 EAST PIONEER PARKWAY, SUITE 40 • ARLINGTON, TX 76010

March 11, 1987

Mr. Russell A. Strong  
2041 Hillsdale  
Kalamazoo, Mi. 49007

Dear Russell:

Enclosed check in the amount of twenty dollars (\$20.00) is for one copy of your "First Over Germany!" As I save my copies of 306th Echoes will you please accept this order rather than me cut the Echoes?

Years ago I called and ask if you would be so kind as to send me any information you had concerning those that had been in the 306th. At that time I had recently joined the American Ex-Prisoners of War organization and need any information I could gather allowing me to then contact those listed to see if in fact they had been P.O.W. You not only sent me names, you sent me a large print out. Unknown to you I have been one of your salesmen selling both the book and giving information to those that I have not heard of our 306th. organization.

Now, the kicker. Over the years I have been in contact with a man I first met in POW camp, we speak at least once a month over the phone. Last night he called and I mentioned seeing a mans name in your book that I have been trying years to locate, your book gave me some fresh ideas on how to accomplish this. My friend said, "Will you please order the book for me and I'll reimburse you, every time we talk you always bring up that book. This man was in the 305th. I will give it to him as a gift of course with a little dig about the 305th.

Enclosed cards will tell you what my wife Kay and I do hopefully for the betterment of all ex-prisoners of war, we visit VA hospitals and are a liaison between the VA and American Ex-Prisoners of war.

Would appreciate you writing a short note along with signing the book for my friend. His name is Ed. Seabourn.

Thanks in advance, if there is anything I can do to assist you please let me know.

*Charlie*

WE EXIST TO HELP THOSE WHO CANNOT HELP THEMSELVES.

## 1986-1987 NATIONAL OFFICERS

W. Curtis Musten, Sr.  
233 Methodist Drive  
Winston-Salem, NC 27105  
NATIONAL COMMANDER

Albert J. Bland  
738 Joppa Farm Road  
Joppa, MD 21085  
NATIONAL SR. VICE COMMANDER

## NATIONAL JR. VICE COMMANDERS

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889 Randall Road  
Niskayuna, NY 12309

Milton M. Moore, Sr.  
6770 Edgemere #164  
El Paso, TX 79925

Melvin L. Routh  
1025 East Critchett Road  
Tracy, CA 95376

Clydie J. Morgan  
3201 East Pioneer Parkway #40  
Arlington, TX 76010  
NATIONAL ADJUTANT

Sally M. Morgan  
3201 East Pioneer Parkway #40  
Arlington, TX 76010  
NATIONAL TREASURER

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## APPOINTED OFFICERS

Dr. Charles S. Prigmore  
923 Overlook Road North  
Tuscaloosa, AL 35406  
LEGISLATIVE OFFICER

Kenneth L. Jones  
1012 Goodwin Drive  
Plano, TX 75023  
DIRECTOR, SERVICE OFFICERS

PNC Harold Page  
3709 Hotsko Road East  
Buckley, WA 98321  
INTERNATIONAL COORDINATOR

PNC Stanley G. Sommers  
1410 Adler Road  
Marshfield, WI 54449  
MED SEARCH CHAIRMAN

PNC D.C. Wimberly  
711 - 10th Street Northwest  
Springhill, LA 71075  
JUDGE-ADVOCATE

Sue Langseth  
700 West Wabash  
Olathe, KS 66061  
EX-POW BULLETIN EDITOR

NATIONAL CAPITAL OFFICE  
VARO Room 9320  
941 North Capital Street  
Washington, DC 20421

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1410 Adler Road  
Marshfield, WI 54449  
MED SEARCH CHAIRMAN

PNC D.C. Wimberly  
711 - 10th Street Northwest  
Springhill, LA 71075  
JUDGE-ADVOCATE

Sue Langsteth  
700 West Wabash  
Olathe, KS 66061  
EX-POW BULLETIN EDITOR  
NATIONAL CAPITAL OFFICE  
VARO Room 9320  
941 North Capital Street  
Washington, DC 20421



# American Ex-Prisoners of War

CONGRESSIONALLY CHARTERED  
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

(817) 649-AXPW

3201 EAST PIONEER PARKWAY, SUITE 40 • ARLINGTON, TX 76010

April 5, 1987

Dear Russell:

First, wish to tell you what a great surprise to receive your phone call.

Sorry, it has taken so long for me to acknowledge the arrival of the book for Seaborn, it arrived on the 30th. in good shape. My 92 or 93 year old mother had another mini stroke and we had to take her out of the rest home to the hospital. The 1st. of April was our 44th. wedding anniversary, been spending all these years trying to figure which one was really fooled. Of course getting married 9 days before going over seas lead to much yakking from family and friends such as, "It won't last" perhaps they are right? We were married in Salina, KS. but grew up just five blocks from one another in south Jersey.

Enclosed is a picture you asked for, with all the pictures around here you'd think I'd come up with no one else in it. Sorry but couldn't do it. Also enclosed is the information you requested concerning the American Ex-Prisoner of War Organization. Don't know what you want but trash any of it you see fit.

Over the years belonging to this organization has offered me opportunities I other wise would not have had. Studs Terkel came here a few years back and interviewed me for his up-coming book at that time "The Good War" this led to an invitation to participate in a program for PBS, this was produced by the University of California San Diego. The title is, "Remembering War a U.S.-Soviet Dialogue" It was a Space Bridge project. Must say, it was very strange being face to face with the Russians and speaking with them, even tho we were miles apart the very screens gave one the feeling we all were in the same room. I since have contacted by a Jillaine Smith whose boss Helene Keyssar is now co-writting a book with Vladimir Pozner who also was the Russian moderator, we had as our moderator Frederick Starr, President of Oberlin college.. Sorry I got carried away on this subject.

Just wrote a letter to Lawrence Huschle of the 423rd. He is seeking some long lost friends so told him about your book recommending it very highly. He was on the same crew as Earl Mason, the man I asked you about. Hope he sends the loot and purchases a book, therefore by word of mouth to his friends you may end up with many more sales, sure hope so.

Take care and thanks for the added ammunition I will use against ole Seaborn. Your information on your trip to England had Kay and me trying to make arrangements to go but, we already have made reservations to attend the Calif. POW convention on the 22nd. May. Will you be going again?

**WE EXIST TO HELP THOSE WHO CANNOT HELP THEMSELVES.**

*Charles*

Camps where held: 7-A---17-B---Luft 1 (this was an officers but in April 1944 the Germans moved 18 Sgts. here) Luft-6---Luft 4---Luft 1 (as Russians advanced the Germans moved many back to Luft 1 where we were liberated by the Russians May 1945.

EX-POW organization now has well over 30,000 members.

There are 27 Departments and 276 chapters.

A national convention is held once a year---There is a directors meeting 6 months before this. The brochure explains how national convention rotates.

Depart. also have a convention once a year.

We now have an office in the VA Regional office Washington,D.C.,this is not the same office as pointed out in the brochure.

Having Nat'l. Cmdr. I received many letters from former POW they were not receiving the medical attention according to laws by the Congress giving the EX-POW benefit of the doubt concerning their illness. We had no records to back our claim certain medical and mental problems did in fact occur either when held or were after effects due to captivity.

After leaving office I ask that the board establish a committee of two, Kay & I. to be a liaison between our organization and the VA, this they did. Together we have been able to establish therapy groups throughout the country, at the present I believe there are over 80 such groups. At the time I was cmdr. to the best of my knowledge there were two. We now also have a support group for the wives.

We have no obligations so volunteer our time. It sure makes one feel good when someone tells you your efforts has made life just a little bit better for them.

Question: Are there any other reunions for the 306th. people except the national reunion? I have never heard of it if there is. If not, would it be feasible to have mini reunions? Such as within a region or, a state. No big deal more or less a place where we could meet and just visit old friends spend a week-end and be on our way. It has been my experience when setting such conventions up, many of our people just can't afford the expense of flying, hotel rooms etc. Just thought it may create an interest.

Thanks for the item concerning the POW Medals published in the October 86 Echoes.

If, there is anything I can do to give you a hand, please let me know.

This sad news explains our absence  
at 306<sup>th</sup> get together here in San  
Diego. I would appreciate your  
letting Russel Strong know of  
Charlie's passing.

Sincerely & Sadly  
Mrs Charles F Miller  
"Kay"



Catharine J. Miller  
1115 Skylark Dr.  
La Jolla, CA 92037-7736

I am saddened to announce  
the death of my beloved husband

Charles F. Miller

on June 27, 2000

His laughter and warm presence

is missed by us all

---

What we once enjoyed and deeply loved  
we can never lose,  
for all that we love deeply  
becomes a part of us...



AMERICAN EX-PRISONERS OF WAR, INC.  
NATIONAL COMMANDER 1982-83

**CHARLES F. MILLER**

IN-HOUSE VA HOSPITAL  
REPRESENTATIVE

1115 SKYLARK DR.  
LA JOLLA, CA 92037

(619) 454-6324





AMERICAN EX-PRISONERS OF WAR, INC.

**CATHARINE J. MILLER**

REPRESENTATIVE

IN-HOUSE VA HOSPITAL  
COMMITTEE

1115 SKYLARK DR.  
LA JOLLA, CA 92037

(619) 454-6324