

30 March 1979

Mr. David R. Revolti
56 Grant St.
Milford, MA 01757

Dear Dave:

After talking with you I came home and checked my Missing Air Crew report on your crew. It is very vague as to what happened to your crew.

According to the report, it definitely states that you, Mitchelson and Arthur Schultz were returned to the U. S., but it says nothing about the rest of the crew. Were they all killed?

Sasser, McStay, Carlino, Banta, Carroll and Wilson.

In my card file I list Banta and Carroll as KIA, so they must have shown up on the graves registration list. But I have nothing on the others. Any information you have would be appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Russell A. Strong

18 May 1979

Mrs. Sherman Banta
Soldiers Grove, WI 54655

Dear Mrs. Banta:

Thank you so much for sharing David Revolti's letter with me. It is especially valuable because it was written in such a short time after the event. It contains details that he would find hard to remember 35 years later.

As I may have mentioned, I flew on this raid and have used it as a basis for a lecture on WW II combat. Only very slowly have I been able to collect pieces of what happened to those who were shot down. This is the best of the items I have come across.

I appreciate very much your kindness.

Sincerely yours,

Russell A. Strong

Sunday Sept. 16, 1945

Dearest Mrs. Banta: -

I know its been terrible of me not to have written to you sooner and there really is no excuse for it at all, the fault is entirely all mine. I received a wonderful letter from you two days ago, but having been away this is my first opportunity I've had to answer.

I'm just hoping that I can tell you a very few things that may have and still be hanging heavily on your mind. All there is to know, or I should say what I know I told to Nancy Jasser, and by your letter I see that she's told you everything.

I think it would be better if I started from the beginning and told you about the whole mission. The day and one which I don't think any of us will ever forget was Sept. 12, 1944. We were awakened about

2:00 in the morning and as all men
are, we stayed in bed until the last
minute; Finally at 2:30 we got up
and hurried down to the mess hall,
eating as fast as we could so as to
make a 3:00 briefing. At the briefing
all the crew sat together with the
exception of the Bombardier & the Radio
Operator, but no matter where you were
briefed the target and flight was exactly
the same, and when they uncovered the
map, every one almost dropped out of
heart failure. The mission was to be
Synthetic Oil Plants at Rhaland, Czechoslovakia
and it was really a very long trip, but
that wasn't all the opposition was
to be just about all the Germans could
muster in that section of territory. We
still said it was OK. it was always
that way; no matter how rough the
mission was going to be we'd do
a good job and come home, and believe
me Mrs. Banta John & Bob were a
team. We had the best Bombardier
& Pilot in the whole of the Air Force,

And I'm not telling you that just to make you feel good it was really true. Bob received a gold or silver star beside his name on just about every bombing he'd ever made.

First of all before we took off we knew something was going to happen because nothing went right and everything usually worked perfectly, this morning it was just the opposite.

We had trouble with engines, guns, turrets and in general everything, and everyone was jumpy for some reason or another.

We took off and flew the northern route over water and cut down to the left of Berlin. We were leading the high group, so we naturally had to follow the lead group but the lead group was off course to the right and that brought us almost over Berlin. The flak was very heavy and accurate and we lost two engines No's 3 - 4.

We couldn't keep leading so we pulled out of formation and came around behind, (I just ran out of green ink and there isn't any more; I hope you'll excuse it and also all the mistakes and the terrible writing) the lead group, and just as we did German F.W. 190's hit us, and boy they hit 50 at a time about 2 or 3 hundred of them and they shot out another engine and some gas lines. That really put us in a fix. We went as long as we possibly could, I should say about 100 miles or perhaps 75 west south west of Berlin and then had to look for a place to crash land. We finally found a field and started to crash land. Before this on coming to this place all extra equipment was thrown out and the bombs salvaged on an opportune target, this lightened the plane enough to keep us going on a few more miles.

About 250 ft from the ground we all took crash positions, The pilot called

St. Banto + Carolina up behind them and explained to them how the landing would take place, so they'd know just about what to expect.

Everything would have gone along swell but our last engine cut out at an altitude of about 200 ft. St.asser pulled it up as fast and well as he possibly could but without enough height it was all useless. It might have still be alright but in our path there was a tree and it staved us right in the face. The force of the crash threw everyone out of the ship, with the exception of Schultz who was thrown into a corner against a bulkhead. He in the rear part of the ship didn't know when the crash was coming so for that reason Schultz didn't make it to the Radio Room.

Mr. Banto the crash threw Bob from the ship and he was killed instantly. I know you'll be thankful to know that he incurred no suffering. Bob was thrown

about 30 ft. away from me, and was laying
on part of a wing with Gene Canal about
a foot away. When I was thrown out
I did remain conscious for about 1 minute
enough to see Bob + Gene. I landed in
a small pond of water about 4 ft. deep
and then just happened to lay my
arm around a branch, that little branch
really saved a drowning. Mrs. Banta
Bob's face was not scared at all and
as far as I could see he looked all right
all over just as if he were sleeping.
I didn't hear a groan from him or any-
thing which might make me think
he was alive, At first Mrs. Banta I
thought I was the only one who got
out alive, but I didn't really want to
live as long as they had given their
lives. Truthfully I didn't think anyone
could live through it, even John said
the same thing afterwards in the Hospital.
The Germans came after us in about 3 hours
that is the civilians did, The soldiers
came 4 hours later and put us into a
truck for a first aid station, then to a

hospital.

The Germans did however come into our ward about 2 weeks later and told us about the burials of our buddies. They told us of a ceremony given them with full military honors. I was thankful for that because a lot of times they just let the body lay where fall.

John used to ask me hundreds of times each day if I had seen Bob, I told him no I hadn't because his condition was so bad that the shock might have killed him too, so I said that noone had seen Bob and he might have gotten away, then he used to be relieved a very great deal.

Mrs. Bente I know that I haven't given you really too much information, but its all I can tell you about Bob. If I happen to find out anything I may have overlooked I'll write you immediately. I really am very sorry for you

Mrs. Banta because Bob was a son any
mother would give her right arm to have.
Even all the fellows who had ever
come into contact with him had never
seen anyone like him, he was just one
who had a way with everyone, always
happy go lucky with never anything
bothering him. We used to get along
swell because we two used to always
go out to the shoot range and see who
could get the most hits. We always did
come out about even, and he used to
get mad when we used to total up the
score and he used to find it tied.
I'll close now Mrs. Banta and my
heart is with you all the way.
The pleasure was all all mine
to be as fortunate as to have a
Bombardier + Pal to fly with as Bob.
He was the best there is and I'll pray
for him always.
My Mother + Father stand with me in
everything I say. God Bless you all.
Very Sincerely Yours
David