



303rd BOMB GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION, INC.

February 14, 1997

Russell Strong, Editor
306th Echoes
5323 Cheval Place
Charlotte, NC 28205

Dear Russ:

I've been an avid reader of your publication for years but the January issue was particularly interesting for several reasons.

Let's start with the address label. I notice you have added the bar-code. My membership chairman has had trouble inputting the bar-code into his computer. So we have put the idea on hold until postal rates forces us to do it. Since you take care of address changes you evidently have everything in your computer. I just edit the newsletter period. I have a computer for just a year and I'm still very much of a novice at what I do. I call it my magician; half of what I type on it disappears.

According to your newsletter you have a mailing list of 3105. That's a lot more than ours. For the February issue (still at the printers) we are printing 2100. That's the highest our press room has ever been. Including our sample copies and overseas copies we will mail out about 1950. We are presently doing an all out campaign to find all our missing members who served at Molesworth.

I liked your front page photo honoring the crew chiefs whose aircraft flew more than 100 missions. And I also notice you are going to honor all the ground personnel at your next reunion. We plan to do that at our next reunion. In the past most of the attendees at our reunions have been flying personnel. In the way of stories we get very few inputs from ground personnel. I notice you are going to run a full listing of Military Occupational Specialities in the April issue. I just saw a newsletter the other day that had the complete list. I forgot what bomb group it was.

The future of our Association will also be on the agenda at our reunion in Pittsburgh in September. Although attendance at our reunions will certainly drop off in the future because of the ages of our members I'm sure the Association will stay together as long as we have a viable newsletter. With a mailing list of more than 3100 I'm sure the 306th will be around for some time. If I remember correctly Andy Rooney used to fly missions with your outfit. At least that's what he told me. He questioned the story we did in our newsletter about one of our members falling 20,000

feet without a parachute and living. He fell through the glass roof of a railroad station in St. Nazaire and a German doctor saved his life. Now we are trying to get German officials to verify the story.

I got to know your former president Jim Cheney quite well during the war. I was a navigator on my second tour when he reported in as Group Navigator along with Col. Raper who became our CO. He was a good boss.

I notice you had quite a few address changes in this issue. Do you put "Forward & Address Correction" on each issue? I do it once a year just before we are going to publish our directory. Otherwise the mailman keeps showing up at my door with his hands out for money.

Since you run your Association with donations rather than dues, you evidently don't take anyone off your mailing list for non-payment of dues. Is that correct?

How long have you been putting out the 306th newsletter? I'm on my 12th year with the 303rd. I believe a dozen years is enough.

Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,



Hal Susskind
2602 Deerfoot Trail
Austin, TX 78704-2716

18 February 1997

Dear Hal:

Got your letter of the 14th today, and I hasten to answer instead of starting a nap now. Guess I'd rather respond than sleep. Maybe after I get the chicken in the oven I can get that nap.

My mailer puts the bar code on the labels, and it does save money. I gave up on doing anything about the mailing years ago. It takes experts to keep up with the rate changes, etc., So, when the issue is ready to go, I transfer my addresses to a floppy disk, which takes about two minutes, and then deliver it to the mailer, or mail it to him. He's 16 miles across town to reach, but sometimes I combine it with a trip to the printer.

We went through the all-out campaign to find people three years ago. I worked on it with my computer for more than two years. Everytime I found a possible name/names I called and thus made a lot of no-response calls, but also got a number of obits, good conversations, answered all manner of questions, and got the name, address, etc., into my files and into the computer. Had to argue with a few people as to whether they had been in the 306th or not. Some fringe people belonged to another unit, but were TD at Thurleigh for varying periods of time. In this exercise I reviewed my card file of about 7800 names (WWII serial #s were handy, particularly in dealing with EMS, as you know, the second digit denotes the WWII Army corps area, and with a map of the corps areas handy it helped me to zero in on names.

Anyway, in the course of that exercise we added about 500 names to our roster. It was easier than trying to find phone books to help you, or to get the membership to work on it very hard. One guy onetime accessed the Ohio police records and helped. A late brother of mine canvassed county clerks in Michigan when I gave him a list of men with WWII hometowns on it. Another man accessed an insurance file, which added about 30 names, and I have never turned down anyone who wanted to help.

Then, last week got a letter out of the blue from a guy in Yonkers, NY, and he is now aboard, with a lot of his questions already answered. I used to carry my search list with me, and landed two men in the Kansas City airport one day, and two or three more in the Houston airport.

I've been at this since 1975, secretary, editor and historian. My background in college and university relations has been ideal in developing skills that I now use for the 306th. I am a writer by profession, got started on all of this when I decided to write a history of the 306th, started a newspaper in the first year, and kept on going. My Group has been

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very supportive--because I do all of the hard work. BUT, THEY HAVE PROVIDED Me with a computer, FAX, microfiche and microfilm reader, and most anything I want. We have up-graded the computer system once, three years ago to a 486. I have a \$450 month secretary's supply allowance, and I am now paid \$1000 a month for my services. That helps keep me interested.

My wife resents the room I have for everything and the square footage I occupy in the attack with records and supplies/ storage. I remind her of the pay! which has become our travel fund.

I probably went to National Archives 25 times to gather data. They don't like me there because I get horsey over their dalliance. Have been to Maxwell's Air University Library a couple of times and hope to go back in March or April for another deep look. In my book research CI went there and copied 1700 pages of records. That is the backbone of my workshop, and the National Archives Mission Reports.

We have a hard core of EMs who have populated our reunion since we began. Probably have more flying personnel than ground, but I don't count the crowd. We have had several EM ground people serve as president of the organization, and next year will have an old tail gunner there.

I'll enclose the copy of MOS #s with this letter for you. I also get very few inputs from EMs, and those who criticize me for lack of ground stories get letters urging me to do more, and I, in turn, ask them for their contribution--which never comes.

My officers and directors, and most of the membership, are convinced that they will last as an organization as long as I do. I'll be 73 in April, and told them last year I expected to go on another 10 years. Yes, we are losing members, and the quantity of names in our April issue will blow the minds of some people.

Regarding mail returns, I want them with every issue, not just once a year. I pay into an account at the Post Office, which then debits it for my returned mail. Having the mailman wan his money at the door, quickly turned my wife into a sour puss.

Andy Rooney flew one mission with us, and one with someone else. But, the 306th was his port of call before D-Day, just as the 305th was for Walter Cronkite. Hey, I question some of the stories Andy writes now. He tells about a 306th ball turret gunner being killed in a landing at Thurlleigh, wheels up. I find no record of that anywhere and defy anyone to give me proof of it. Could well have happened, but it sure never made the records that I have.

We publish our directory every two years, and the next one is going to be cut to the bone to hold down costs. We do them for about \$2 apiece, including mailing, but our printing totals will decrease by '98 and that will drive the unit cost up.

We have taken only a half dozen people of the rolls for their request. Others generally drop through death, and now we usually end up with a widow on the list or one of the kids.

One of the areas of expertise I gathered along the way, was learning a lot about printing and I have been able to show printers how to go about a newspaper and a directory at much less expense than one might expect. There are tricks in every trade, and I learned a lot of them at one time, although the rapidly changing printing field keeps coming up with new things.

Well, I have rambled on enough. Have given you a few specific answers and a lot of gabble, and if you want anything more than I might be able to help you with, please let me know.

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As I tell everyone, the 306th keeps me out of the bars at night. My wife says she thinks I have another wife down in my study, because I spend most of my evenings there. But it has been, and continues to be, a great hobby, and I am glad I didn't miss the opportunity to help preserve the story of the 306th.

As you may have noticed, we published a set of four Squadron Diaries that had been done during the war by intelligence officers. I also edited them, reyped them and had them printed. I don't know just how many we have done, but over 1000 copies, and everyone seems to have enjoyed them. One of the problems was that there were no first names used, just rank/grade and last names. I put in the first names and also corrected a few egregious areas. But in general I kept my hands off the text.

I did turn over the chicken as instructed by the microwave, and will soon put it in the oven.

Jim Cheney is one fine person. I always look forward to meeting with him, as I will in a couple of weeks in Orlando. And his wife is an absolute sketch!

Also, for the organization, I oversee the reunions, which usually involves a bit of travel, and have led five trips back to England for the Association. I got into foreign travel once as an alumni director, so have established some know-how about it. We are taking probably a final trip back in May. Small group, but will be fun.

It also will give my wife and I a chance to spend a week down in Cornwall as we chase some family history--my latest other hobby. I have gotten into it pretty deeply, and will soon begin a book on my great-grandfather, who settled in Kalamazoo, Michigan, in 1839, and carry it down to as complete a listing of his descendants as I can find, now around some 500 people. Both my wife and I have some Cornish origins, so I have worked on that. Unfortunately data on hers run out before data on mine, so we have to look into her family pretty carefully. My mother also had Cornish ancestors, so we will do both. We will spend 10 days with our tour group, and when they leave for the airport from downtown London, we will pick up a car and drive to Cornwall. We did this also in 1992 before our big reunion over there.

enough, Enough, ENOUGH!!!

Nice to chat with you,