

7 April 1975

Dear Col. Sutton:

I am working on a history of the 306th bomb group and therefore am seeking out those persons who held important positions with the organization at various times.

My own service with the group was as a navigator from June to November 1944, flying with the 367th squadron. I remember when you arrived on the base and will never forget being in the back-ground one day when you reorganized the combat mess so that it worked better than it ever had before.

I am aware that a history of the group appeared nearly 30 years ago, but I would like to think I could improve on that effort immeasurably.

I am now reading through various official records of the group, and expect to continue delving into the archives for some time, as well as seeking out those with command responsibilities to ask questions and hopefully to recover a lot of the pieces of the mosaic.

I would like to know if you have written any of your impressions of the 306th, and if you have, if I might be able to read such a document.

I would also like to ask if I might impose on you from time to time with questions to which I need answers?

Would you also be so kind as to briefly sketch for me your military career both before and after your service with the 306th? I have a West Point directory, but I fear that the sketch therein is far too brief for my purposes.

If I can bring about a full fledged history I would expect to include in it a number of sketches of key personnel.

I have also taken the liberty of including a list of names of persons whom I am seeking and I would ask if you presently know the whereabouts of any of them or can give me any pertinent information about them.

I enclose a stamped, addressed envelope for your convenience.

Sincerely yours,

Russell A. Strong
4900 Appleridge Ct.
Dayton, Ohio 45424

P. S. I am being given considerable help and encouragement by the staff at the Air Museum, which is about three miles from my home.



COLONEL JAMES SYLVESTER SUTTON
O-18122 RA
COMMANDING OFFICER

COLONEL SUTTON was born at Oil City, Pennsylvania, February 2, 1907. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. J.P. Sutton, who now reside at 830 Beach Avenue, Findlay, Ohio, where COLONEL SUTTON attended and graduated from Findlay High School in 1925. He later attended Findlay College prior to his appointment to the United States Military Academy in 1926. He was graduated in 1930 and was appointed 2nd Lieutenant, assigned to CAC.

Civilian activities of COLONEL SUTTON have been rather limited due to his early association with military life, which began with an enlistment in the Ohio National Guard from November 1923 to June 1926, serving in Company "C", 148th Infantry. However, while attending school he developed the dynamic qualities characteristic of the Colonel today. After school hours he occupied himself in various part time jobs. He was quite active in sports, participating in football, basketball, and softball.

An early interest was taken in aviation when he was detailed by W.D.S.O. #242, dated October 16, 1930 to duty involving flying. Graduated A.C. Primary Flying

SECRET

School, 1931. On October 10, 1931, 2nd Lieutenant Sutton (CAC) was rated pilot on W.D. Personal Orders #265, dated November 11, 1942, at Air Corps Advanced Flying School, Kelly Field, Texas. Then completed the AC Technical School (Communication Course), 1937, and the Tactical School, Maxwell Field, Alabama, 1939.

Promotions and Ratings

12 June, 1930 - 2nd Lieutenant, CAC
12 September, 1930 - AC Training
10 October, 1931 - Rated Pilot W.D.P.O. #265, 11/11/42
22 December, 1931 - Transferred to A.C.
20 April, 1935 - 1st Lieutenant (Temp)
1 August, 1935 - 1st Lieutenant
23 January, 1940 - Rated Combat Observer - W.D.P.O. #19 - 23/1/40
12 June, 1940 - Promoted Captain
29 October, 1940 - Rated Senior Pilot - W.D.S.O. #258 - 1/11/40
15 July, 1941 - Promoted Major (Temp) accepted 22 July, 1941
5 January, 1942 - Promoted Lt. Colonel - W.D.S.O. #20 - 23 January, 1942
20 July, 1942 - Promoted Colonel - W.D.S.O. #193 - 20 July, 1942
5 November, 1942 - Rated Command Pilot - Hdqs. VIII A.F. P.O. #21

Awards

Presidential Unit Citation - 1st B.D.
Air Medal
E.T.O. - 2 clusters
American Defense
American Theater

At the outbreak of the war Colonel SUTTON was serving with the 29th Bomb Group at McDill Field, Florida. The 92nd Bomb Group was formed April 1, 1942 with Colonel SUTTON in command. It was here that intensive training was effected, developing a bomb group of extremely high efficiency and morale. The 92nd went to Sarasota, to Westover Field, Mass., and then to Bangor, Maine, in preparation for overseas operation. At this time the ferry route was in short hops to England, but due to the untiring efforts of Colonel SUTTON he presented a plan and data to higher command for a direct route over. After "selling" the merits of such a plan, he was authorized to fly the 92nd to England and did so, making the FIRST COMPLETELY SUCCESSFUL group crossing from Gander, Newfoundland to Prestwick and pioneering the air-way WITHOUT LOSS. The 92nd was then sent to Bovington, where it was relieved of its new and modified B-17F's by the 97th Bomb Group. The 92nd was the third operational group of "Forts" in this theater and participated in missions, sea patrol and personnel ferrying to North Africa, due to the fact Ju88s were patrolling

SECRET

the Bay of Biscay, making transport aircraft quite uninviting. There arose at this time a need for replacement crews, additional men for duty in Africa, and two crews assigned permanently to General EISENHOWER and General SPATZ. As a consequence what was left of the 92nd was transferred to Alconbury for operations, December, 1942. On April 25, 1943, Colonel SUTTON was assigned to the Composite Command in North Ireland. Later he assumed command of the base at Cluntoe, North Ireland. In April, 1944 he was made Depot Commander of 403rd Air Depot, and contracting officer for the Lockheed Overseas Corporation Contract which he was to terminate on June 30, 1944. On September 23, 1944 Colonel SUTTON arrived at 306th Bomb Group to assume command.

COLONEL SUTTON served three years in the Philippines and also three months in Newfoundland, where he assisted in the establishment of the North Atlantic ferry route. Since taking command of this station he has instituted a number of ideas to improve efficiency, conditions and morale of the men, notably being instrumental in the establishment of an Enlisted Men's Club, mud control, post bus service, formal weekly inspections and more intensified operational training.

COLONEL SUTTON is married and his wife, Dorothy M. Sutton, with their daughter Patricia Ann, aged 12, and son James Anthony, aged 11, are now residing at 239 Grove Avenue, Sarasota, Florida.

SECRET

Interview with
Col. James S. Sutton
at Novato, CA, 11 June 1979

Got into trouble with Eaker because he flew the 92nd Group direct to England without the stops others had made. Took two visits to Gen. Arnold, whom he had known as a lieutenant colonel, to get permission.

He thus angered Eaker, who later sent him to Langford Lodge in Northern Ireland as punishment. After Eaker left the theatre, Sutton came to England to see what he could arrange in a transfer, and came to the 306th when George Robinson returned to the 21.

Found poor formation flying when he came to the 306th, which he corrected by carefully monitoring formations.

Busted Snuffy Smith, which brought the IG's staff from 8th AF to station. Questioned why Sutton did this without a board acting. Another 8th AF team also investigated to the same conclusion.

Brought John Buie to the 306th, as Mo Preston was after Buie, claiming he didn't fly combat. Thus, was not qualified as a squadron commander. Sutton had Buie flying six days out of seven.

Most of original group commanders of the 8th came out of the 2nd Bomb Group. Robert Olds had considerable influence on the selection with Arnold. Sutton had served in the 2nd as a squadron commander and Overacker was a staff officer.

SUTTEN, JAMES S.

Group C.O. 9/23/44

LED DIVISION TO MANNHEIM 10/18/44

LED GROUP TO OSNABRUCK 11/21/44 2 engines shot out on bomb run

LED GROUP TO FRANKFURT 12/11/44

LED GROUP TO BINGEN 12/29/44

DULMEN 2/10/45

WITSTOCK 2/22/45 300th mission

Bill Colantonⁿ

Apr 1983

Jim Sutton as c.o. of 92nd, had
a beautiful blond girl friend. One
day two cars arrived, occupants were
British civilians. After casing place,
one knocked on door, others were stro-
tegrally placed.

Sutton came to door, talked w/ person. Two
went in case out - a few minutes
w/ girl handcuffed. Later est. she was a
Klan spy.



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THIS PAGE IS UNCLASSIFIED

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12 September, 1930 - AC Training
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22 December, 1931 - Transferred to A.C.
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1 August, 1935 - 1st Lieutenant
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SECRET

JAMES S SUTTON
19 SUTTON LN
NOVATO CA 94947



19 Sutton Lane
Novato, Ca. 94947

Dear Bill:-

Hope you and yours had the
higest Holidays ever. We did - in fact we
were on the GO, almost too much of the time.

Just got thru' reading the December 306th
Echoes, and enjoyed it as much as Always -
- every little bit of it.

In answer to your Questionnaire: - Yes, I very
much recommend a separate Reunion for the 306th
- NOT just at the 8th AFHS. As you know (at
least I think I told you, the first time I wrote
you) I was Father of the 92nd Bomb Gp, and
seemingly will always be President of our
Historical Assn. We only meet every two years,
and last October, we had our 4th Reunion, at
Kansas City, Mo. A number of us were at the
8th AFHS Reunion at St. Louis, and we agreed
that ours were much better than the 8th
Reunions. In fact we almost decided that we
would always set our date to conflict with the
8th AFHS.

I didn't dare go to the 8th in Washington, D.C.
Don't know if you know that I was the one who
peremptorily BUSTED snuffy Nixon - because he
was absolutely NO GOOD in any assignment he
had in the 306th - after his historic flight.

P.S. If the 306th Asso. is incorporated, and an estate where Donations are Tax deductible? Our 92nd. And it always irritated me that he had gotten the Congressional Medal. Many don't know, but when there were no more fire-extinguishers, there still was a small fire in the radio room. Well, snuffly - to save his own life pulled out his pecker, and proved the fire out. They didn't dare tell just what he did, and they did make it sound heroic.

Another reason for not being at Wash. D.C. was Ira Eaker. I battled unmercifully with him, while I was command of the 92nd. He had me transferred to No. Ireland, with instructions that I was NOT to step foot out of there without his personal permission. He even personally briefed his IG staff and numerous others - to find something/anything to court-martial Jim Sutton for. After over six months of that his Head IG, who I had known at Langley before the war, made a special trip to No. Ireland to tell me how proud I should be of myself, because the professionals who had been working at it, for over six months had NOT been able to find anything. And after the war he saw to it that I would never be promoted or put in Command, so I took an early Retirement.

But enough of that. The enclosed check should help a bit on the expenses.

Always All the Best

Jim Sutton

FINDLAY, O.
REPUBLICAN-COURIER

Cl. 11 Cir. D. 15,854

1930
APR 88



Col. James S. Sutton, son of Mr. and Mrs. J. P. Sutton, 830 Beech avenue, commanding officer of the veteran 30th bombardment group recently has been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross as announced by Brig. Gen. Howard M. Turner, commanding general, first air Division, in England.

The citation read in part:

"While over Merseburg, Germany, Colonel Sutton's group encountered intense and accurate anti-aircraft fire. Numerous aircraft were severely damaged and the deputy leader was shot down.

"Colonel Sutton's own aircraft received such severe damage that one of the engines was rendered useless. In spite of this and the additional fact that the officer-tail gunner had been wounded by the same anti-aircraft fire, the colonel contrived to maintain the lead for sufficient length of time to locate and bomb the target.

"Still maintaining the lead with only three engines and numerous flak holes Colonel Sutton was forced to drop behind his formation when one of the remaining three engines failed. Subsequent inspection revealed that there were more than 15 gaping holes in the wing and body of the stricken aircraft.

"Alone in enemy territory, it was not thought that the trip home could be navigated for although the two remaining engines continued to perform satisfactorily, instruments were indicating the contrary.

"Colonel Sutton took up a heading for England but over the Channel it seemed that the ship would crash into the waters. Guns, ammunition, and other removable equipment thrown overboard and air sea rescue services were notified to stand by. However, through persistent application of superior flying skill Colonel Sutton succeeded in returning the crippled aircraft and wounded crew member to home base without further incident.

"Colonel Sutton's actions throughout this unusually difficult and dangerous series of events were in the best military tradition of the United States Army Air Forces, setting a fine example for all members of his command and reflecting high credit both on himself and the armed forces of his country."

Colonel Sutton, a graduate of the United States military academy in 1910, is a qualified command pilot, aircraft observer, navigator and communications officer. He also holds the Air Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster.

The colonel's wife, Mrs. Dorothy M. Sutton, and their two children, James Anthony II, and