

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

Russell A. Strong 2041 Hillside Kalamazoo, MI 49007

Name John G. Champion  
Address <sup>2M</sup> 900 First Place, Tyler, Texas 75702  
Home Phone 595-4636 Date May 5, 1981  
Occupation Geologist Employer Self  
Address 900 First Place, Tyler, Texas Bus. Phone 595-4636

Serial No(s) 18106352

Service Record:

Before joining the 306th:

Enlisted in June 1942.

Airplane Mechanics School in Wichita Falls, Texas 1942.

B-17 Specialist School-Boeing Plant, Seattle, 1942.

Las Vegas Gunnery School, 1943.

After leaving the 306th:

Shot down over Hannover, Germany, July 26, 1943.

Spent 18 months in Stalag 17-B, Krems, Austria.

Repatriated February 1945, reached New York February 21, 1945.

Medically discharged at Beaumont General Hospital, El Paso, Texas in May 1945.

306th Record

Arrival date at Thurleigh June 1943

Squadron or other unit(s) 423rd

MOS # 2 Specialty Aerial Engineer

Missions Completed (and date of last) 3----July 26, 1943

Promotions Staff Sergeant

Decorations  AM olcs DFC olcs SS DSM DSC MH SM PH / Battle Stars

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

Other personal data:

After discharge, finished school at University of Texas.  
Have worked as a Petroleum Geologist since 1947.

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?)

Eighteen months in Prison Camp is a story by itself.

Name John G. Champion Address 900 First Place, Tyler, Texas 75702  
Telephone 214-595-4636

### MISSING AIRCRAFT REPORT

Pilot Wess Courson Plane # and Name Hustling Sue???  
Mission Date July 26, 1943 Target Hanover, Germany  
Cause of loss: AA fire  Fighter attack  Other, explain \_\_\_\_\_

Describe conditions in the plane as completely as you can:

We were hit by AA fire going over the target. Our tail section was badly damaged and fighters closed in.

How and where did you leave plane?

Bailed out over Holland. There were 7 survivors. Three men died. Two were seriously wounded.

What happened when you got on the ground?

I was blind from a direct hit by fighter fire to my gun turret. I was captured within an hour by German ground soldiers.

Did you meet any of your crew mates?

Yes, I met my pilot, Wess Courson, and our bombardier, Henry Lynch at Frankfort interrogations. I, also met a waist-gunner, Cedric White in prison camp.

How were you treated, if captured?

It was 12 days from the date of capture until I received medical treatment by a British surgeon who was also a prisoner.

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.

BELLINGWOLDE

10.1.1946

WAARDEVRINDEN.

IK. SAL. U. SCHRIJVEN. OVER  
DIE. PERSOON. WAARVAN. DE  
NAAMKAARTJE. HIERBIJ. IS.  
IN. GESLOTEN. WIJ. DENKEN  
TENMINSTE. DAT. HET. DIE  
PERSOON. ZAL. WEZEN. DIE.  
JOHN. G. CHAMPION. DAN. IS. HIER  
IN. BELLINGWOLDE. VERLEDEN.  
ZOMER. MET. EEN. PARCUTE.  
GELAND. VLAK. AAN. DE. DUITSCHE  
GREN. HJ. HEEFT. HIER. EEN.  
PORTEZUIE. IN. DE. GROND. GESTORT.

MET. INHOUD. NU. HOOP. IK.  
DAT. MIJNHEER. CHAMPION. DEZE  
BRIEF. ZELF. TER. INZAGE.  
KRIJGT. EN. DAT. HIJ. VEER.  
BOUDEN. IN. U. MIDDEN. IS. EN.  
MAG. BLIJFEN. ALS. U. ER. NU  
BELANG. IN. STELD. OM. DAT.  
PORTEZUIE. TERUG. TE. KRIJGEN.  
SCHRIJF. U. MIJ. DAN. MAAR. EVEN.  
TERUG. IS. MIJNHEER. NIET.  
TERUG. GEKEERT. DAN. KAN. IK.  
U. NOG. MEER. BIJZONDERHEDEN  
VERTELLEN. MAAR. DAN. OP. EEN.  
ANDER. KEER. DAN. HDOR. IK. EERST  
WEL. WAT. VAN. JULIE.

HARTELIJK. GEGROET. VAN.  
H. KUIPER. REMKESLAAN. B 211 II  
HOLLAND BELLINGWOLDE

JOHN G. CHAMPION

GEOLOGIST

900 FIRST PLACE

TYLER, TEXAS 75702

PHONE 214 - 598-4836

May 18, 1981

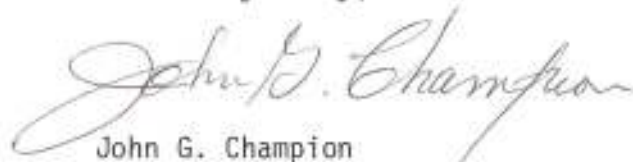
Wm. M. Collins, Jr.  
2973 Heatherbrae Dr.  
Poland, Ohio 44514

Dear Mr. Collins:

I am a new member. Please send me any back  
copies you can.

Enclosed is my check for \$50 to help support  
the production and mailing of ECHOES.

Yours very truly,



John G. Champion

JGC/db

Enclosure

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

TO MEMBERS OF UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES BEING  
REPATRIATED ON 16 January 1945:

It gives me special pleasure to welcome you back to your native shores, and to express, on behalf of the people of the United States, the joy we feel at your deliverance from the hands of the enemy. It is a source of profound satisfaction that our efforts to accomplish your return have been successful.

You have fought valiantly in foreign lands and have suffered greatly. As your Commander in Chief, I take pride in your past achievements and express the thanks of a grateful Nation for your services in combat and your steadfastness while a prisoner of war.

May God grant each of you happiness and an early return to health.

*Franklin D. Roosevelt*

AAN. DEN. HEER

John G. Champion.

~~516 ST. CHARLES ST.~~

BROWNSVILLE, TEXAS.



PER LUCHTPOST  
PAR AVION  
P 37 AA B 10 K/2



$\frac{1}{2}$  H. KUIPER.

REMKE SLAAN. B 211 II  
BELLINGWOLDE

HOLLAND

I want to write you about the person whose identification card is enclosed in this letter. We think at least that it must have been that John G.Champion who last summer landed here in Bellinwolde by parachute close to the German border. He put here a bill fold ~~in a box~~ with contents into the ground. It is my hope now that Mr.Champion will receive this letter with its enclosure and that he lives among you in good health and that he may remain there. If you should care to get his bill fold back for him, let me know at once. If he should not have returned, I could tell you more details about him. ....

Best wishes from H. Kuiper...



Entlassungsschein  
Repatriation paper

für verwundete und kranke Kriegsgefangene und Sanitätspersonal  
for wounded or sick prisoners of war and sanitary personnel

Sowie Verwundete  
as well as army casualties

Der amerik. Kgf. Ob.Fw.  
The Nationalität Dienstbezeichnung  
nationality military rank

John Champion

Vorname und Zuname  
name and surname

43227 St.L.III

Beschriftung der Erkennungsmarke  
inscription of the identity disc

geb. am 21.2.21 in St. Antonio  
date of birth birthplace

is being released from German detention

\*) ist wegen ~~Verwundung~~ -Krankheit  
\*) entsprechend den Bestimmungen  
der Gastervereinbarung zum  
Kocher von 1929

+) on account of ~~wounded~~ illness +), according to the regulations of the model draft agreement annexed to the Convention of 1929

~~\*) als nicht bedürftiger Sanitäts-  
angehöriger +), Fallsatzlicher +)  
Art. 12 des Genfer Abkommens  
1929~~

~~+) as non-required member of the sanitary personnel +) as non-captain according to article No. 22 of the International Convention of 1929~~

aus deutscher Gewahrsam entlassen

Stalag IV D (Zw.)

Datum 11.1.45  
Date



Rep. Laz.  
Hospital

*Stempel*

\*) Nichttreffendes durchstreichen  
Cross out the incorrect indication

Unterschrift und Dienstgrad  
signature and rank

Hauptmann, Lagerführer

March 15, 1946  
Flovin, California

Dear John.

Many times I have wondered what has happened to you. So a few words to find Out.

I remembered how you looked when I last saw you at Dulag Luft in Germany. you were then as in poor shape and somewhat of a mess. I have heard many rumors that you lost the sight of one eye, of both eyes, and that you had 80 percent of your vision restored. "Champ" you old son of a gun. Write and tell me how you are making Out. you damn fool you would not let me feed you that extra bread at Amsterdam. I always chuckle when I think of you with both eyes bandage, knowing you couldn't see yet you knew I was trying to feed you all the grub you sure needed at that time more than I. I always wondered if you went back to law school. you used speak of it and that you might go back after you got Out of the service. I certainly hope that you did. I for one believe that you could make a success of anything that you tried to do.

↳ two-minute break to light up a cigar. Do you still smoke those old ropes. "phew!"

champ when we left Russian camp it was understood  
that we were to put you up for the D.F.C. I have not been  
getting any mail from Lt. Courson or Bronson. So I don't  
know if you ever got it or not. Lt. Geylark writes to  
me often but he knows nothing about it. It was  
my understanding that if it had not been for you  
we would have been far worse off than we were.  
Lt. Coursons never said much about it. But Lt Bronson  
told me if it had not been for your leadership & Courage  
we probably would have crashed. your knowledge of  
Engineering and of 17's probably save all of our lives.  
now if you have never received this award I want  
you to write to me and tell me so. Also I want a  
correct list of the awards that you have received also  
the number of mission that you flew. I think that  
you deserve all that I or anyone else can get for you.  
you can consider the above few lines as a command  
if you don't write and tell me I may have to come down  
and twist your arm of course all in good fun.

now a few words about my self. Arrived  
home last July. spent the summer recovering by  
hunting and fishing. Spent the balance of the  
time in the army going from Post to Post.

got out this February and am now back at  
my old job. They gave me a boost in pay and  
also position. Now head the department here.  
which was very good, I thought, considering I have  
been away for 5 1/2 years. Time flies but evidently  
they thought I could cut the Mustard. Have been  
playing a little baseball the last month. Bounding into  
shape pretty well. Plan to play in a summer Summer  
league here in the valley. getting a little old for  
this stuff but I think I can still compete with the kids.

Enough for now. Write Champ and tell me all what  
you are doing & etc.

always a friend

Henry J. Lynch

Floris

California

E-6-#3



# ALLIED PERSONNEL REPATRIATION TAG

PLEASE PRINT PLAINLY IN BLOCK LETTERS.

Completion of this card will facilitate notification of next of kin.

Personnel with changed identities or aliases will show both true and assumed particulars.

U. S. ✓	CANADIAN	BRITISH	AUSTRALIAN	MIDEAST
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CHAMPION John G.  
 Last Name First Name Middle Initial

T/Sgt. 1810635Z USAF 23 M  
 Rank ASN Branch Age Sex

306th Bomb Group  
 Army Unit before Capture

Stalag IV B KREMS, AUSTRIA  
 Last PW Camp and Location

American Brownsville Texas U.S.A.  
 Nationality Home City State Country

MR. J.A. Champion Father  
 Name of Next of Kin Relationship

111 Elizabeth St Brownsville, Tex  
 Address of Next of Kin

*J. Champion*  
 Signature

## MEDICAL OFFICER TO FILL IN BELOW :

Diagnosis : Blind left eye

Medical classification : IA IB IC 2 3 4 5 6  
 (Circle appropriate classification)

## Bescheinigung

Der amerik. Kriegsgefangene CHAMPION John  
(Nationalität) (Zuname) (Vorname)  
geb. 21.2.21, Dienstgrad S/Sgt, Erk. Nr. (Gef.Nr.) 43.227  
wurde am 18.X.44 der Gemischten Ärztekommision vorgestellt.

Seine Heimkehrberechtigung\*) wurde bejaht\*) — ~~verneint~~).

Er ist der nächsten Kommission wieder vorzustellen\*).

~~Kr. Gef. Lag. - Laz. M. Stammlager XVII B~~  
Er ist in der Befundliste des Lagers\*) — Res. Laz. (Kgf. \*)  
vom 18.X.44 unter lfd. Nr. 6 eingetragen.

Der Vorsitzende der Gemischten Ärztekommision.

\*) Nichtzutreffendes streichen.

*Oberst Di von Erdach*

1803 Biltmore St. N. W.  
Apt. 408  
Washington 9, D. C.  
26 January 1946

S/Sgt. John G. Champion,  
111 Elizabeth Street,  
Brownsville, Texas.

Dear Sergeant Champion:

I shall begin this letter by introducing myself. I am the aunt (father's sister) of Sgt. Robert C. Stevens, one of your waist gunners on the mission to Hanover, Germany, 26 July 1943, which ended tragically with the deaths of Sgts. Thomas and Dayton and Bob, and the internment of the other seven members of the crew.

As an employee of the War Department, I have access to some of the records and files, and thus, insofar as official reports go, I have a general knowledge of this flight. However, from the personal and human standpoint, we know very little, and in the two years since we were notified formally of Bob's death, our minds have been tortured by questions regarding him. With this thought in mind, I am writing you, wondering if you can tell me anything of his last hours. The Hanover flight was, I understand, but his second mission. I assume the same personnel flew the first one. Can you recall how Bob seemed? Did he seem to have any presentiment that he might not return? I have never checked into the time of the raid, but assume it was a daylight mission?

Due to a misspelling of the name Stevens (Stephens) it was necessary for the Department to re-check Bob's identification; accordingly, it was not until December that we were informed that he had died on 26 July. We were notified early in August that he was missing in action. Not so long after our first communication from the War Department, we received a letter from Tech Sgt. Richard Newport, of 6350 Green Street, Chicago, who had met Bob in England on 4 July, and was a member of the same bombing squadron, he explained. Sgt. Newport said that he was in the plane right behind Bob's and from his post at the radio headphones could see what was happening. He saw the plane burst into flames and two men bail out, followed by eight more. He said that he felt sure we would hear from Bob in time.

Bob, of course, never had a chance, apparently. He either died before getting down, or was wounded so that he could not help himself, as his body was washed up out of the water at Bingum. This is near Leer on the Ems Estuary, a few miles from the sea. Bob is buried at Bingum, unless he has been removed to a military cemetery since I last checked with the Graves Registration Section.

How the other two lads died, I do not know. Actually, of course, I suppose we will never know whether Bob died in mid-air, or drowned, unless some of his crew knows.

Anything you can tell me, Sergeant Champion, will be deeply appreciated, and of course, will be held in confidence if you so wish. I earnestly hope that your experiences in a German prison camp were not such as to leave permanent injury. Harrowing stories have come to light about the treatment of some of our men; one of our young cousins - a bombardier - was taken prisoner, and his story does not make comfortable reading, and of course, he was but one of many such.

Meantime, if there should be anything that I could do for you here in the Department, please know that I shall be happy to try to help.

With every good wish for your future, and my earnest thanks to you, as to every other brave man who did so much for us at home, believe me to be always

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Louise S. Milburn". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name.

Louise S. Milburn  
(Mrs. Chas. W.)



John Chayson

5/18/91

214/595-4636  
595-2765

top turret

hit by flak, dropped bombs.

Tail hit badly, tried to climb.

Fell out of formation

Fighters closed in.

Tail out of ammunition.

R.O. killed by fighters.

B.T. } wounded, bailed out & landed when  
WG } the hit the ground.

Eng. lost one hit, unable to hit because of cut off.

hit right wing, walked across

50 m hit turret & exploded.

Cast ahead in turret. Oxygen was vented.

Could not see.

Wes Courson, pilot.  
Ray Bronson, Cp.

Delport, Ms?  
Kulung TX

hypoch, Bomb.

4

Ted Grezlak

Went back to get set pack.  
Blood froze in eyes in bomb bay.

Went out back door, pulled up cord.

Hit in middle of field.

Captured. 12 days before medical treatment.

Sent to British ~~Doctors~~ <sup>Hosp.</sup> Maj. Charters  
Captured at Crete

Colonel Hanna in Germany.  
60 miles from Frankfurt.

Operated on eyes, saved right, totally blind in left.

Blind 2 yrs.

Operated on in Vienna, reoperated Feb 45

**JOHN G. CHAMPION**

**GEOLOGIST**

**900 FIRST PLACE**

**TYLER, TEXAS 75702**

**PHONE 214 - 595-4636**

May 18, 1981

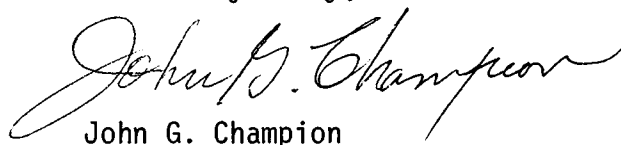
Russell Strong  
2041 Hillisdale  
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007

Dear Mr. Strong:

I am one of your new members whom you contacted recently. Thank you for finding me, and keep up the good work.

Enclosed is my check for \$100 to support the research, writing, and publication of the history of the 306th Bomb Group.

Yours very truly,



John G. Champion

JGC/db  
Enclosure

**JOHN G. CHAMPION**  
GEOLOGIST  
900 FIRST PLACE  
TYLER, TEXAS 75702  
PHONE 214 - 595-4636

November 9, 1981

Russell A. Strong  
2041 Hillisdale  
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007

Dear Russell:

I sure enjoy receiving ECHOES and am looking forward to seeing your book. I am enclosing \$17.50 along with my order for FIRST OVER GERMANY, A HISTORY OF THE 306TH BOMB GROUP. Best of luck.

Yours very truly,



John G. Champion

JGC/db

Enclosures

# Your Help 'Moves' the 306th

I enclose my check for \$\_\_\_\_\_ to support the production and mailing of ECHOES, and reunion activities of the 306th Association. (Mail your check to Wm. M. Collins, Jr., 2973 Heatherbrae Dr., Poland, OH 44514)

I enclose my check for \$100<sup>00</sup> to support the research, writing and publication of a new history of the 306th Bomb Group. Publication is expected during 1981. (Mail your check to Russell Strong, 2041 Hillsdale Kalamazoo, MI 49007). Contributions of \$100 or more will receive a copy of the history without further charge.

Name John G. Champion

Address 900 FIRST PLACE, TYLER, TEXAS 75702