

1401 Kathryn Lane
Salem, Va. 24153
July 1, 1988

Russell A. Strong
2041 Hillddale
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007

Dear Mr. Strong:

In response to your request in April, 1988 Echoes, I am sending you some pictures and other information in regard to the crew of Wilbur C. Weiland, having arrived at the 423rd Squadron on 04-03-44.

Some time ago I sent copies of this material to Keith and June Paull of Bedford, who are very much interested in the 306th and its history. My son, Daniel, and I visited there in May, 1985, and in our search for the old base, we were kindly directed to Mr. Paull who operates an electronic school there on the base. He picked us up and took us to the 423rd area, and on a tour of the present airfield. We were very close to the spot where the old operations day room was located. There was only one building still standing in the old barracks area. A new barn had just been erected where some of the barracks once stood. A farmer there at the barn said that when he was 16 years old he delivered milk daily to the Mess Hall, and I concluded that our ice cream ration was probably made from this.

In the January issue of Echoes, the list of Pilots did not show a Lt. Neddo, with whom I was once scheduled to fly as Radio Operator. The mission was scratched, but we had to take our load of bombs to the North Sea and dump them. It runs in my mind that he may have been a Co-Pilot originally-not sure of that, however.

Soon after arriving at the 423rd, I met Millard Bryant, a waist gunner, that I had known from our high school days. The waist gunners were alternating on flights at this time, and he was fortunate to have been on the ground the day his crew was shot down. I don't know who his Pilot was, as this happened prior to our arrival there.

Millard died in Roanoke, Va. in 1980, and perhaps it had not been reported in Echoes.

I hope that some of this information may be helpful to you in your research efforts pertaining to other 306th personnel. The pictures need not be returned. Good luck and good health to you.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mosby".

Mosby L. Hodges

This picture was made probably in December, 1943, shortly after we arrived at Alexandria Air Force Base, Alexandria, Louisiana—from Salt Lake City, Utah—to begin combat training. Each person had completed training in his particular flying specialty, and was now ready to begin training as a combat team.

Crew Members are as follows, in the front row-left to right:

Lt. Wilbur C. Weiland	Pilot	Rochester, New York
Lt. James C. Seymour	Co-Pilot	Atlanta, Georgia
Lt. Fred A. Brockway	Navigator	San Antonio, Texas
Lt. James C. Chambers	Bombardier	Midland, Texas

In the second row-left to right:

Sgt Stanley J. LaGory	Engineer	Cincinnati, Ohio
Sgt Calvin R. Pomodoro	Asst. Engineer	Cleveland, Ohio
Sgt Mosby L. Hodges, Jr.	Radio Operator	Salem, Virginia
Sgt Vernon A. McQuinn	Waist Gunner	Kansas City, Kansas
Sgt John A. McShaffery	Waist Gunner	Scranton, Pennsylvania
Sgt Albert Berman	Tail Gunner	Boston, Massachusetts

We shipped out from Alexandria to Grand Island, Nebraska about the middle of February, 1944, and were assigned a brand-new B-17 with only 7 hours of flying time on it, eventually flying it to Prestwick, Scotland, via Presque Isle, Goose Bay, Reykjavik and Stornoway. Leaving Prestwick by G9 truck and Glasgow by rail, we arrived at Stone, Staffordshire. The Gunners were sent to The Wash for further gunnery training, while the Officers and myself were sent to Bovington, near London, for training in EJO Procedures. About 2 weeks later the crew reassembled at the 306th Bomb Group/ 423rd Squadron, Thurleigh, Bedfordshire.

Our first mission as a crew was to Hamm, Germany on April 22nd, but the Pilot had flown a couple of missions as Co-Pilot before taking his own crew out. Our Navigator, Lt. Brockway, and I flew our first missions to Kassel on April 19, with an old crew, but I don't remember who the Pilot was on this mission. Neither of us knew that the other was on the flight until we returned to Thurleigh.

Two of our crew members dropped out soon after we began our tour of duty. McQuinn was eliminated when the change was made requiring only one waist gunner aboard. He later went to a Medium Bomber Group. Pomodoro didn't like flying the Ball Turret position, so Jack Subal flew with us on several missions in the ball. Subal, from Steubenville, Ohio, was a ground mechanic or armorer, I don't remember which, who began flying whenever he could in order to get in a tour and go home. I understand that he completed a tour, went home, and returned for a second one.

The second mission flown as a crew was on April 24, 1944 to Oberpfaffenhofen, near Munich, and only 8 crews returned to base as 10 were shot down that day. At one time we had 4 ME-109's lined up and coming in on our tail single file. Each one shot at us and peeled off to the right or left. Evidently, they must have been inexperienced pilots, in that one of them didn't shoot us down, because in my opinion a B-17 was no match for a ME-109 in experienced hands. Divine Providence was surely with us that day.

On June 18th and 20th we flew both trips to Hamburg, Germany. We were getting a little fatigued by this time in our tour, and on one of these missions our Co-Pilot, Lt. Seymour, came on the Intercom and said, "Boys, this is my last trip." He didn't fly again for several months, but did complete his tour later in 1944.

After returning to the USA in late July, 1944, I was stationed at several different bases, including Sheppard Field, Texas and Scott Field, Illinois, until March, 1945 when a large group of former combat Radio Operators were sent to India. I flew there in converted B-24's and C-54's ferrying gasoline across the Hump to China until November, 1945; leaving Karachi by ship to New York, and being discharged from service at Fort Meade, Maryland on November 29, 1945.

Mosby L. Hodges, Jr.
June 22, 1985

This picture was made upon the completion of 31 missions each for Chambers, Brockway and Hodges, after a trip to Munich, Germany on July 16, 1944. We were all from Lt. Weiland's original crew, with the exception of Lt. Arrison and Sgt. Bloedell. Kneeling in the front row, left to right, are the following: James C. Chambers, Bombardier; Fred A. Brockway, Navigator; ^{GLENN} Roger Arrison, Pilot; and, Wilbur C. Weiland, Pilot, who had already completed his tour a few days prior. Standing, left to right, are the following: Mosby L. Hodges, Jr., Radio; Stanley J. LaGony, Engineer; John A. McShaffery, Jr., Waist; R. M. Bloedell, Ball turret; and, Albert Berman, Tail Gunner. I think the Co-Pilot on this flight, whose name I do not recall, took this picture of the crew; however, I am not positive, it might have been Lt. Seymour, Weiland's Co-Pilot, who took it, since he did not fly on this mission.

** The airplane in the background is #897, which is shown in flight beside the picture of Lt. Col. John L. Lambert in Russell Strong's book, "First over Germany." Also, it is the same one we flew on June 15th to Nantes, as reported on Page 253. However, we landed at Chilbolton, on the Channel coast, rather than at Kimbolton. This airplane was lost over France a few days after this picture was made, on July 20th, with the ball turret gunner, R. M. Bloedell, aboard.

Mosby L. Hodges, Jr.
July 6, 1985

** Wilmer Strawn was crew chief on this plane at the time we were flying it.

June 18, 1996

Dear Mr. Strong:

Some months ago you mentioned that you had received additional copies of combat mission reports. I have a small list here that I would like to get if you do have any of these.

4	19	44	Kassel, Ger.	Interrogation Form
4	26	44	Brunswick, Ger	" "
4	27	44	Nancy, Fr.	Intelligence Narrative
5	15	44	Stettin, Ger.	Formation Plan
5	24	44	Berlin, Ger	Interrogation Form

Also, including obituary of John McShaffery, who flew on Lt. Weiland crew as waist gunner. He was a very reliable person to have along on our crew. The date was written on the clipping by his Wife.

Thank you, *Mosby*

Mosby L. Hodges
1401 Kathryn Lane
Salem, Va. 24153

4 February 2002

Dear Mosby:

I'm not doing very well by you. I guess I covered up the request of 18 June 1996 and only discovered it yesterday.

And, I really have some troubles in answering it as well.

19 Apr - There was no crew interrogation form in the Archives file.

26 Apr - O.K.

27 Apr @ O.K.

13 May - No formation chart in Archives file.

24 May - No crew interrogation.

This last one was a Berlin raid, and much of the Berlin material is missing from the 306th files. I suspect at some early date after all the materials came back to Washington that the file was stripped by someone wanting to write about Berlin missions. Only about half of our Berlin raids have any appreciable amount of data.

I don't have all of the McShaffery clipping for some reason. I had copied it on to my card file entry and must be missing the first few lines. But, here is what I have.

There is just no excuse for my dalliance on this whole matter and I am sorry not to have written you earlier.

Sincerely yours,