

Give <sup>over</sup> regards (my wife, Mary Ellen & mine) to Johnny & Sara Stewart B-377A  
 R+4, (1), Laurinburg, N.C. He is an industrial arts teacher in DR HIGH of HS. in Laurinburg  
 A HISTORY OF THE 306th BOMBARDMENT GROUP - EIGHTH AIR FORCE SHOULD BE LISTED IN TELEPHONE DIRECTORY  
 Russell A. Strong, Rt. 1, Scotch Meadows Dr. Laurinburg, NC 28352

11/19/78

Dear Russell:

I want to apologize for not completing these questionnaires sooner. I started them sometime ago, but just completed tonight. I'm sorry I can not much help to you. You probably have received many similar answers from other ex-306's & ex-Pow's. I have no 306 borders, a matter fact all of my "belongings" including ordnance were misplaced someplace along the line when I was a P.O.W. at least the material never reached home. I'm very much interest in your project.

Name BEN G. IRONS  
 Address 207 ARCHER DR. SANTA CRUZ, CA. 95060  
 Telephone (408) 426-8410 Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Occupation CLAIMS REP. SOCIAL SECURITY ADM Employer U.S. GOV'T (SOC SEC. ADM)  
 Address 175 WALNUT AV. SANTA CRUZ, CA. 95061 Telephone (408) 426-8111

Service Record: Serial No(s) {6943715 (ENLISTED AV. GAST) 0671441; A0671441 (OFFICER)}

Before joining the 306th:  
 ENLISTED IN THE U.S. ARMY AIR CORPS ON 11 JAN. 1938. THE MAJORITY OF MY ENLISTED TIME (JAN '38 TO JUNE '42) WAS SPENT AS AN AIRPLANE MECHANIC AND AS AN AIRPLANE MECHANICS INSTRUCTOR AT LANGLEY FIELD, VA. & CHANUTE FIELD, ILL. WAS ACCEPTED FOR BOMBARDIER (AVIATION CADET) TRAINING IN JUNE 1942. RECEIVED MY BOMBARDIER'S RATING & 2d LT'S COMMISSION ON 28 JAN '43 AT MIDLAND, TEX. AFTER COMPLETION OF 6 WK COURSE IN AGRICULTURE AND PROCESSING THRU VARIOUS STAGING AREAS ARRIVED 306TH BOMB GP ON 20 MAY 1943 AS A REACEMENT BOMBARDIER. WENT OVERSEAS ON TROOP SHIP "QUEEN ELIZABETH".  
 After leaving the 306th:  
 SHOT DOWN 28 JULY 1943 AND WAS P.O.W. GERMANY 7/28/43 TO 4/29/45. REMAINED IN SERVICE UNTIL 31 JULY 1958 - RETIRING AS A MAJOR, USAF ON THAT DATE, AT MARLB A.F. BASE CA. WAS STATIONED MANY PLACES DURING MY SERVICE CAREER. PRIMARY DUTY CONSISTED MOSTLY OF BOMBARDIER-NAVIGATOR ON AIR CREWS IN SAC BOMBERS - MOSTLY B-47A.

306th Record:  
 Arrival Date 20 MAY 1943 Squadron or other unit 423  
 MOS 1035 Combat Status BOMBARDIER  
 Missions Completed 7+ (SHOT DOWN ON #8)  
 Promotions NONE IN 306TH. I WAS TOO "SHORT-LIVED!" [AUTOMATIC PROMOTION AFTER LIBERATED FROM POW CAMP]  
 Decorations (AM) olcs DFC olcs SS DSM DSC MH SM  
 PH Battle Stars \_\_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_

If I can be of any help please let me know. The "306th" directory is very informative. I recognize some of the other personal data: names in the "306th Directory" but only a score few. I note that my co-pilot JOHN A. BARTLETT, WAS LISTED IN THE OBITUARY COLUMN - D.O.D. 13 FEB 74. My pilot, Scotty Peck was killed in an aircraft accident in latter part of 1945, while on a flight in northern Calif. I learned this from his mate. Also from the "306th Directory" I note my navigative address. I will probably drop him a X-mas card (DANIEL J. BARBERIS) Sincerely, Dan J. Barberis

#### 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?)

AS STATED BEFORE I WAS A BOMBARDIER. THE 7+ MISSIONS I FLEW ~~WERE~~ <sup>WERE</sup> FLOWN WITH AT LEAST THREE (3) DIFFERENT CREWS. AS STATED ABOVE I "WENT OVER" AS A REPLACEMENT BOMBARDIER. WAS FINALLY "CREWED UP" ON SCOTTY PECK'S CREW. I FLEW MY ~~MY~~ LAST 3 MISSIONS (# 6, 7 & 8) WITH THIS CREW. SCOTTY HAD TRANSFERRED OVER FROM THE RAF TO THE USAF IN ABOUT MAY OR EARLY JUNE 1943. RECEIVED MINIMAL B-17 CHECK OUT BUT HE CAUGHT ON IN A HURRY. HE'D BEEN A FLYING SGT WITH RAF, BUT WAS COMMISSIONED ON TRANSFERRING TO 306th.

MY MISSIONS WERE:

- 1) 11 JUNE 43. WILHELMSHAUEN, GERMANY
- 2) 13 JUNE 43. BREMEN, GERMANY
- 3) 4 JULY 43. NANTES FRANCE
- 4) 14 JULY 43. VILLACOUBLAY, FRANCE
- 5) 17 JULY 43. N.W. GERMANY
- 6) 24 JULY 43. HERØYA, NORWAY
- 7) 26 JULY 43. HANNOVER, GERMANY
- 8) ~~KASSEL~~ 28 JULY 43 - KASSEL, GERMANY (WE NEVER REACHED TARGET, SHOT DOWN)

ON ALL RAIDS EXCEPT THE HERØYA, NORWAY RAID OUR AIRCRAFT SUFFERED FLAK AND/OR FIGHTER DAMAGE. ON AT LEAST 3 RAIDS (NOT COUNTING #8) SOME CREW MEMBERS WERE INJURED BUT NOT FATALLY. AS STATED ON SEPARATE SHEET 7 OF US SUFFERED PARACHUTE OR BAIL-OUT INJURIES ON MISSION #8. ON AT LEAST 3 RAIDS WE "CAME HOME" ON LESS THAN 4 ENGINES. ON ONE RAID WE CAME HOME ON TWO ENGINES. LANDED ON RAF AIRFIELD ON COAST ~~BECAUSE~~ <sup>BECAUSE</sup> OF FUEL SHORTAGE. THE HERØYA, NORWAY RAID WAS THE ONLY MILK-RUN RAID, IE, NO FLAK OR FIGHTER OPPOSITION TO ~~SPEAK~~ <sup>SPEAK</sup> OF. HOWEVER, IT WAS ONE IN WHICH WE ALL "SWEATED OUT" FOR FEAR OF RUNNING OUT OF FUEL. SOME DID & DITCHED OFF COAST OF ENGLAND ON WAY HOME. OUR CREW LANDED ON A BRITISH COASTAL STRIP, WE WERE VIRTUALLY DRY.

Add additional pages, if necessary

Name BEN G. IRONS

Address 207 ARCHER DR., SANTA CRUZ, CA. 95060

Telephone (408) - 426-8111

MISSING AIRCRAFT REPORT

Pilot SCOTTY PECK

Plane # and Name B7F <sup>7 DONT RECALL #</sup> "PECK'S BAD BOYS"

Mission Date JULY 28, 1943

Target KASSEL, GERMANY

Cause of loss: AA fire  Fighter attack  Other, explain WEATHER. WE WERE

FLYING AT 30,000' + ENCOUNTERED TREMENDOUS CLOUD BANKS. AFTER PENETRATING THESE WE WERE IN "LOOSE" FORMATION. ME-109's &/OR FW190's ATTACKED FROM ABOVE - APPROX 32,000' TO REAR. ALSO SOME FLAK. TWO ENGINES ON LEFT WING KNOCKED OUT AND ON FIRE (AS THE OLD SAYING GOES, "TWO BURNING & TWO TURNING"). NEITHER PROP ON THESE ENGINES ON ~~LEFT~~ LEFT

Describe conditions in the plane as completely as you can:  
WING COULD BE FEATHERED, THUS RESULTING IN TERRIFIC VIBRATION. AS I RECALL WE ALSO STARTED LOSING POWER ~~ON~~ IN AN ENGINE ON RT. WING. LARGE HOLES WERE SHOT IN WINGS & FUSELAGE. THE "GIG" WAS UP. PILOT GAVE ORDERS TO BAIL OUT.

How and where did you leave plane?

BAILED OUT THRU THE NOSE DOOR OPENING - "DOUBLED UP" IN MORE OR LESS OF A KNOT AS I RECALL. I MUST ADMIT I USED POOR BAIL OUT TACTICS. OPENED CHUTE ALMOST IMMEDIATELY & HAD NO BAIL OUT BOTTLE. MOST ALL OTHER CREW MEMBERS DID LIKEWISE, AS A RESULT MOST OF US SUFFERED SOME BAIL-OUT & PARACHUTE INJURIES.

What happened when you got on the ground?

I WAS CAPTURED IMMEDIATELY NEAR DETMOLD, GERMANY - A SMALL FARMING COMMUNITY. APPROX. 50-70 GERMANS (CIVILIANS) WERE WAITING FOR ME TO "LAND". A YOUNG GERMAN SOLDIER CAME TO MY "RESCUE" ALMOST

Did you meet any of your crew mates? AT SAME TIME I LANDED AMONG THE CIVILIANS.

OUR WHOLE 10-MAN CREW WAS TOGETHER WITHIN ABOUT 2 HRS. THE INJURED (7 OF US) WERE GIVEN MEDICAL ATTENTION. FROM DETMOLD WE WERE TRANSFERRED TO DWAG-LUFT (?) POW CAMP NEAR FRANKFORT, GERMANY

How were you treated, if captured?

WHERE WE ONLY STAYED A FEW DAYS. THEN TRAINS FERRED TO STALAG LUFT III NEAR SAGAN, GERMANY (FACTUALLY OLD POLAND, BUT PART OF 3D REICH). STAYED THERE UNTIL JAN OR FEB 1945 AT WHICH TIME WE WERE "EVALUATED" SO THE RUSSIANS WHO COULDN'T LIBERATE US, TO STALAG 7A, MOOSBERG, NEAR MUNICH, GERMANY.

THE FORCED MARCH FROM SAGAN TO THE LAST CAMP, MOOSBERG, WAS BY FAR THE ROUGHEST PART OF OUR POW EXPERIENCE. OTHER THAN THAT THERE WAS NO MALTREATMENT TO SPEAK OF. OF COURSE RATIONS WERE "SLIM".

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.

\* OFFICERS SENT TO STALAG LUFT III. ENLISTED MEMBERS WERE SENT TO ANOTHER CAMP.

Air Corps Form #5  
 Prepared at H.A.F.  
 Station No. 111

**INDIVIDUAL FLIGHT RECORD**  
 (Heavier than Air)

NAME IRONS, RAY G. MONTH July 19 43  
 RANK 2nd Lieut., AG. GROUP 308th Bomb Gp (H)  
 AERO. RATINGS Bombardier ORGAN. - Assigned 423rd Bomb Sq (H)  
 TRANSFERRED FROM \_\_\_\_\_ ORGAN. - Attached For Flying  
 TO \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_ STATION A.P.O. 634

D A T E	D U R Y	S M	ATT.	BOMB.	OBS.	PUR	CGG.	TRNG.	ACFT MDL SUBL	NO OF LD	OTHER THAN PILOT	REMARKS
4	D	C		Lt. Hopkins-P			(Operational)		B-17F	2	8:00	634-634
8	B	T		Lt. Steele-P					"	2	2:15	Local
8	B	T		Lt. Kackstetter-P					"	1	1:30	"
8	B	T		Lt. Peck-P					"	1	1:20	"
9	B	T		Lt. Steele-P					"	1	1:55	"
14	B	C		Lt. Sugg-P			(Operational)		"	1	6:55	634-634
14	B	T		F/O Armstrong-P					"	1	2:45	Local
16	B	T		"					"	1	3:00	"
17	B	C		"			(Operational)		"	1	4:25	634-634
24	B	C		"			(Operational)		"	2	9:15	634-Binbrook-634
25	B	C		F/O Jeffries-P			(Abortive)		"	1	3:35	634-634
26	B	C		Lt. Peck-P			(Operational)		"	1	6:30	634-634
28	B	C		"			(Operational)		"			634-----
MISSING												

TOTALS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Total Pilot Time	Ttl. Other Than Pilot	P-Time Non-Mi
TtIs This Report										49:25	
Prev This Fiscal Yr											
Ttl This Fiscal Yr										49:25	
Totals Prev Yrs									Total flying time with this Group.		39:15
Totals To Date									Previous time unavailable.		68:40

Mission Symbols - (T) - Transition; (C) - Combat; (A) - Administrative; (F) - Ferry

**New Directory Due** ADDITIONAL REQUESTED INFO. IN RED.

Our 1992 directory should come out in May, and we need your help!

The Postal Service has been good about sending us changed numbers, but we need more data from many of you.

We also need to have you check your listing in the 1990 directory and to let the editor know what you need changed.

If we don't hear from you we must assume that the data we have is correct as far as your directory entry is concerned.

Check the form below:

Name IRONS, MAJ BEN G

Address 207 ARCHER DR,

City, State and Zip Code SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060-2444

Telephone #, with the correct area code (408)426-8410

Can you give us the four-number addition to your zip code? (Look on one of your utility bills for this, if you can't remember it).

On that street address, please designate whether it is St., Ave., Blvd., Road, etc. Rural routes AND box numbers need to be spelled out. In the alpha listing of the Directory, be sure your unit designation is correct. That's the one that counts. (If you were placed in the wrong listing under organizations, don't worry about it. We plan to get it right this time.)

Other data we will store away for possible later use:

Wife's first name MARY ELLEN

Your birthdate 11 JANUARY 1918

Social Security # 236-62-1142

\* Retirement date/place of employment/job title JANUARY 1984/SOCIAL

SECURITY ADMINISTRATION, SANTA CRUZ, CA / CLAIMS REPRESENTATIVE

Send the above to Russell A. Strong  
5323 Cheval Place  
Charlotte, NC 28205-4937  
704/568-0153  
367th  
June

\* RETIRED FROM U.S.-AF.  
IN <sup>JULY</sup> 1958 AT MARCH AF. BASE, CA  
IN GRADE OF MAJOR.

20 April 1924  
379-12-7272  
January 1988/Western Michigan University/Senior Development  
Officer & Director of Research for the WMU Foundation