

RECORD UPDATE

306th Bomb Group Association

(Please complete as much of this form as you wish, and give)
(to Russ Strong at the Las Vegas reunion, or mail to his ad-)
(dress: 5323 cheval Pl., Charlotte, NC 28205)

Date completed

LAST NAME: LANFORD FIRST NAME: William Title: Col.

Street address: 5861 E Club View Dr Telephone: (209) 251 2567

City, state, zip: Fresno CA 93727

Date of birth: 1/16/18 Wife's name: Betty Jo Lanford

College(s) attended: Degree(s): Year(s):

Last employment & job title:

Year joined 306th Association:

Reunions attended: (by year or location)

Serial #: Sqdn: 368th Speciality: Commander

Date joined 306th: March 1942 If combat, what crew?

Special duties or assignments w/306th: Squadron C.O.

If commissioned w/306th, date & specialty:

Date departed: March 1943 Highest rank/grade w/306th: Major

Other 8thAF units served with: none

Top service assignments after 306th: Group Commander 355 Ftr Gp.

USAF retirement date: July 1 1964 Rank/grade: Colonel

Most memorable experience w/306th: (use back of sheet, too)

A HISTORY OF THE 306th BOMBARDMENT GROUP - EIGHTH AIR FORCE
Russell A. Strong, 4900 Appleridge Ct., Dayton, Ohio 45424

I am endeavoring to put together a good history of the 306th Bombardment group, an idea which has been in my mind for some years. I am working diligently on the matter, collecting all kinds of data and working through the official history and records of the group. I served as a navigator with the 367th Squadron from June through November, 1944, and currently am director of news and information services at Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio. I solicit your assistance in my project.

I am interested in any special materials which you may have, such as good photographs of personnel, battle damage, plane insignia, etc. I am also interested in commendations (other than the usual Air Medal and DFC) you may have received, special stories which you may have in your possession, letters that are highly descriptive of combat action, or any other documents. I would appreciate receiving xeroxed copies. But, if you do not have such facilities readily available, I would appreciate the loan of materials which I might copy and return to you immediately. I am also interested in manuscripts of memoirs which you may have prepared, particularly if they were done within a couple of years of the events. Again, I would appreciate copies or the opportunity to copy them.

Name William A LANFORD Col USAF (Ret)
Address 5861 E Club View Dr Fresno Ca 93727
Telephone ⁽²⁰⁹⁾ 251 2567 Date 3-23-76
Occupation Mngr. Securities Firm Employer State Bond Sales Corp
Address 1550 E Shaw Suite 120 Telephone 209 222 7441
Fresno Ca 93710

Service Record:

Before joining the 306th: Feb 1, 1939 joined 17th Attack Gp March Field. - Gp split three ways. - I was with the 47th Lt Bomb Gp (one of the three Gps) at OKI City when ordered to 306th (as Sqdn CO of 368th) which was forming at Salt Lake City in March 1942.

After leaving the 306th:
1944- with 483rd Gp in Italy was shot down and spent the rest of the war as P.O.W. After war spent rest of service (26 years) in various jobs and theaters and retired as Col in 1964.

306th Record:

Arrival Date March 1942 Squadron or other unit 368th Sqdn.
MOS Sqdn C.O. Combat Status _____
Missions Completed 9 with 306th (16 1/2 with 483rd)
Promotions to Capt. June 1942 to Maj. Aug 1942
Decorations XAM 4olcs XDFC olcs SS DSM DSC MH SM
XPH Battle Stars _____ other _____

Details on any missions which you consider to have been unusual in any way;

Some recollections

March - 1942

Several of us were with the 47th Lt. Bomb Gp (A-203) at Will Rogers Field, Oklahoma City, when orders came in sending us to various bases to form new Heavy Bomber units. Captains Delmar E Wilson and Harry Holt and 1st Lts. Ralph Oliver and myself (William Lanford) were sent to Salt Lake City, Utah, to form the 306th. At Salt Lake, we joined Lt. Col. C. B. "Chip" Overacker, the Group Commander, who was formerly with the old 17th Gp. as were the others of us. *Capt.* Del Wilson was assigned as Gp. Operations Officer; Lt. Oliver, Commander of the 367th Sqdn.; Lt. Lanford, Commander of the 368th Sqdn.; *Capt.* Holt, Commander of the 369th Sqdn. (Another Sqdn., the 423rd, was later assigned with Lt. J. W. Wilson as Commander.)

We transitioned new pilots into B-18s. *- Then in B-17E*

We moved to Wendover Field or or about April 1, 1942, where all facilities were under construction - all structures were tarpaper covered. Lt. Col.

Curtis Le Curtis Lemay joined the Group as Deputy C. O. Sometime during the summer of 1942, Overaker was promoted to Col. Lemay was sent to Salt Lake, where he became C.O. of the 305th Bomb Gp. and was promoted to Col. Del Wilson became Deputy and Bill Cleveland became Gp. Opns. Officer. Direct from civilian life came our officer staff - Capt. Douglas Coleman was appointed Gp. Adjutant. We were a group of recruits. For example, except for my Tech. *Supply* ~~Sq.~~ Sgt. and my 1st Sgt., I had more service than anyone else in the 368th - and my service totaled 3½ years. Sgt. Cordery was the 1st Sgt. of the 368th. All pilots *were* were fresh out of flying school (AT6's) and the enlisted men from their various mechanics, gunner, radio, cook & bakers schools, etc.

During the summer of 1944 we were equipped with B-17-F's. Sqdn. complement was three flights of three aircraft each. *one extra aircraft per sqdn was assigned before we left Wendover*

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Promotions were fast. Sqdn. C.O.'s became Majors; Flight Commanders, Captains; Crew Chiefs, M/Sgts., etc. Example: When we left the States in Sept., John Regan was a Flt. Commander in the 368th as a Captain with less than 1 year total service (including cadet time).

In August the Air Echelon processed through Westover Field, Mass. The Ground Echelon went through Fort Dix.

The Air Echelon flew the North Atlantic the night of Sept. 11th, landing at Prestwick, Scotland. Enroute, the 368th lost one aircraft when it ditched just off the Scottish Coast. Capt. Melton, A Flt. C.O., and crew were saved. The next day, the air group proceeded to Thurleigh, where the ground echelon was already in place.

Our first mission was on Oct. 9, 1942 - the marshalling yards outside of Paris. We lost our first aircraft to fighters (Lt. Olson ^{Pilot} ~~first~~) on that mission. Our losses averaged 10% per raid on those first few missions. An article appeared in the Saturday Evening Post entitled "The Clay Pidgeon Sqdn." It was about the 367th, which suffered such high casualties.

Thurleigh was the first base in England to fly the American Flag. The King (George VI?) came down for the ceremony.

The first decorations were the DFC to Col. Overaker and Air Medals to each of the 4 Sqdn. Commanders for the low altitude raid over St. Nazaire. Gen Ira C

AKER came down for the presentation of medals.

Col Overaker is living somewhere in the SF Bay area - I can get his address if you don't have it.

To the best of my recollections, these comprised the air echelon of the 368th.

Maj. Lanford*	Lt. Hogan
Capt. Melton	Lt. Green
Lt. Smith	Lt. Borin
Lt. Smiley+	Lt. Owens+
Capt. Raper	Lt. Bergen
Lt. Seelos*	Lt. Levy+
Lt. Ferguson*	Lt. Ketchie
Capt. Regan	Lt. Bruenig+
Lt. Buddenbaum+	Lt. Daniels+
Lt. Reber	Lt. McKelvey
Lt. Friend+	Lt. Fredrick+
Lt. Odle	Lt. Kowsakowski
Lt. Sterling	Lt. Wilkins*
Lt. Kramerinko*	Lt. Saunders*
Lt. Gillogly*	
Lt. Miller*	+ Killed in action
Lt. Fryer	* Became POW's (most of them were waiting for me when I arrived in 1944)
Lt. King	
Lt. Elliot*	
Lt. Dresp.	
Lt. Jankowski*	
Lt. Judas*	
Lt. Lally*	
Lt. Grimes+	
Lt. Jones*	
Lt. Strauss+	
Lt. Ross*	

306th Bomb Group Historical Association



GORDON & CONNIE RICHARDS

Telephones
Oakley 3357 & Bedford 211974

4 Pavenham Road,
Oakley,

BEDFORD

England

306th Bomb Group Historical Association



KEITH & JUNE PAULL

Telephones
55241 Ex 8324

2 The Lodge, High Street,
Clapham,

BEDSHIRE
England

STATE BOND SALES CORPORATION



October 4, 1977

1550 EAST SHAW AVE. • SUITE 120
FRESNO, CALIFORNIA 93710 • (209) 222-7441

Col C. B. Overacker
2 Barn Road
Belvedere, Calif

Dear Chip:

281
A week ago yesterday Betty Jo and I got home from a quick 8 day trip to England. On the Thursday before we left, having a free day, I took the train to Bedford and a taxi on out to Thurleigh. It was a surprise to find that it is now a large functioning RAF test base, much like our Edwards AFB.

My I.D. wouldn't admit me for a "look-around" but an accomadating security guard knew of a civilian employee on the station that had an interest in the American unit that had once been stationed there. A call brought him to the gate. It seems that he has been at Thurleigh for about 17 years as an electronics instructor. One day he discovered some candle smoke grafiti on the ceiling of a building that was being dismantled and got interested in "the blokes" who wrote it.

His interest in the 306th Group led him to an organization made up of English men and women who call themselves "The Friends of the Eight Air Force". They are a group who are most enthusiastic in their endeavors to preserve the memory of the Eight and its units. It seems that each group has its sponsors. My newly made friend's name is Keight Paull. He, his wife June, and one other couple Gordon and Connie Richards who live in Bedford have, in a sense, adopted the 306th. They have even gone to the trouble and expense of having cards printed "306th Bomb Group Historical Association". They each have a blazer which were promptly donned - each with a large patch of the "Friends of the Eight" on the left breast pocket.

Well, needless to say I was much pleased and surprised - and such hospitality! After Keith took me for a tour of the base, he "knocked off" for the afternoon. We went to have tea with Gordon and Connie Richards in their lovely home in the outskirts of Bedford. Out came some old photographs, a roster or two, even a copy of the flight orders of the air eschelon. They needed some help in identifying some of the people in the photos, and I was able to help them out on Doug Coleman, John Lambert and John Regan; but, it was shocking what 35 years has done to my memory. They even had the membership book and the guest book from the Key Club (they could even tell me my key number). One entry in the guest book that I noticed was where C. B. Overacker brought as his guest one Frank Armstrong. Also was entered "Walter Cronkite, correspondent".

page 2 cont'd

Then surprise of surprises, they got Stella on the phone - we had quite a visit - she asked about you, "Tiger Terry", and several other of the troops. Norman, her husband, that used to play the drums in the little Saturday nite combo, died 14 years ago. Although Stella was ill at the time we talked, her health is good and she seems happy.

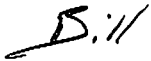
There was so much enthusiasm and genuine friendliness that afternoon that Keith was slow in getting me back to catch the London train. Naturally it was rather late when I arrived back at my hotel, but what a great day!

Keith is trying to put together a small museum and a memorial at the base. Any orders or photographs that any of us might have are being solicited. He will copy them and return the originals if the donor so desires. If you have something that you can send him, I know that it would be appreciated. He has occasional correspondence with George Robinson.

I'll inclose a reproduction of the cards of the two couples for your address book.

Please give me a ring when you are coming through Fresno again, its always so much fun to "toss one" with you and talk of old times. I wish you were going to be here this Saturday, the trout are hitting up at Hunington Lake and I'm going up.

Best personal regards,



William A. Lanford

Interview with
WILLIAM LANFORD
at Fresno, CA, 13 June 79

There was a gung ho spirit in the 306th.

Raper and Melton had only four-engine experience in the 368th.

Got uniforms, equipment and planes at Westover, MA, for flight.
All planes equipped with belly tanks.

Melton lost an engine about halfway over. Later lost second and third, and then ditched off Magilligan's point, Ireland.

Eaker sacked Lanford:

Briefed on mission of 3 Jan 43 to return to Land's End.

After staying there, finally got word that Thurleigh would be open by the time the planes got there. Briefed pilots at operations about flight.

Got close enough to Thurleigh to talk with tower, but unable to land because of weather. Turned around and headed back to Land's End. Altitude winds were very high. Blown left of course out over channel. Broke into clear over water, saw land and turned towards it--Brest Peninsula. German fighters made a couple of passes, and then brought flight into Land's End.

Brandon's plane was lost, probably to fighters.

Was sacked because:

Took off without a clearance, which Lanford did not know was necessary.

Lost a crew.

RAF raised hell because they lost two planes looking for Brandon--and this may have been the most important factor in dismissal.

Eaker called him in, and said: "I haven't seen you since I pinned that medal on you.

"You've been an outstanding commander in this theatre, but you made a mistake. And you are going to pay for it.

Chip had told him: "They are going to can you and take your rank away from you."

Eaker told him: "Chip tells me you want to go home. If you'll stay, I'll assure you I'll give you your rank back and probably one more promotion."

Lost majority.

LANFORD

Couldn't see much future in heavy bombardment with the losses that were being suffered, so said he would go home.

Chip, Lanford, and Frank Robinson of 44th BG were on same plane flying back to states.

Mentioned Key Club and Stella. Officers got drunk there, but Ralph Oliver would not drink with others.

Lanford was interviewed at the Pentagon on return. Assigned to A-20s, after looking at B-29s. Got majority back.

There was much early play with formation, as they tried to uncover all guns.

During the last week at Westover everything was frozen, but Olsen went to Chip and told him that he knew he was not coming back and wanted to go see his parents. Chip let him go.

Marlin Reber put the Eager Beaver on 368th airplane.

"Floor Board" Ferguson

Third of early damage to US planes was .50 casings and shot.

On Low level mission to St. Nazaire, took his squadron down on the deck. Had no problems, and throttled back to keep one plane with two engines out with them.

Remembers "dinings in" with RAF bases. Formal dinners. Then followed by drinking in bar, where British played very rough games.

30 March 1979

Col. Wm. A. Lanford
5861 E. Club View Dr.
Fresno, CA 93727

Dear Bill:

I am wondering if I might get you to do a little detective work in Fresno for the 306th?

Our search list has two names on it of men who came from Fresno, but I have not been able to locate them long distance.

William C. Colliday was the group communications officer from 19 Nov 43 to 10 Nov 44. I think he is the one we referred to as "Capt. Colgate" because the call sign for weather information was always Colgate.

Gerald F. Thomas, Jr., was a pilot in the 369th in mid-1943, the 59th officer to complete a tour of duty.

Please let me know if you can get any leads on them.

Sincerely yours,

Russell A. Strong

LANFORD, William

Original group member

C.O. 368th 3/1/42

Major 6/20/42

Led squadron on 1st mission 10/9/42

Mission to Romilly-sur-Seine 12/12/42

Air Medal 12/5/42

Relieved as C.O. 1/19/43. Assigned to 11th CCAC

2 February 1989

Col. William A. Lanford
5861 E. Club View Dr
Fresno, CA 93727

Dear Bill:

Writing for myself, and for Don Ross and Reg Robinson,
let me express our thanks to you for your recent gift
to the 306th BG Project Fund.

Your interest in the Association as evidenced by your
gift is much appreciated, and you will be hearing further fr
from us on this matter.

Sincerely yours,

Russell A. Strong
President

Amount received: \$15.00

"FLYBOY'S" BENEDICTION

May the runway rise softly to meet you.
May tail winds favor your flight,
And your destination be clear and unlimited,
Bright stars to guide when it's night.
With trouble free "birds" at your beckon,
Fully serviced and ready to roll,
May you savor each moment of freedom
Unbound by earth's grasp on your soul.

Until your tour of duty is over
And you have filed your last flight plan,
May God continue to comfort,
And keep you safe in his hand.

William A Lanford

Russ

The other evening after watching "Wings"
on T.V., I had a few minutes of nostalgia.
I sat down and scribbled out the above.

Next morning I put it on the word
processor. - Do you like it?

Bill Lanford

August 11 1992

Russell A Strong
5323 Cheval Place
Charlotte, NC 28205

Dear Russ

When I first read your request for some of my recollections of our 9 October mission, for some reason my mind focused in on the 9 November low altitude mission to St Nazaire and I reduced to writing my thoughts of that day. When I went back and re-read your letter, I discovered my error, so now I'll start over.

For me, the most noteworthy thing about that day was that upon our return. Ralph Oliver and myself were notified that we had received our commissions as 2'nd Lieutenats in the regular army (we had applied while at Wendover). At the time, we each held three ranks, temporary major in the AUS/AC, temporary captain in the AUS, and the permanent rank of first lieutenant U S Army Reserve. We retained our temporary ranks but dropped our 1'st Lt status and started over again in our new regular status.

I believe that it was on this, our first mission, that Captain Olson (367'th Sqdn?) went down. It probably was not well known throughout the group, but he had had a premonition of his fate. While at Westover, he went to Col Overaker and asked for a special leave to visit his family. He told Col Overaker that he didn't expect to return from his first mission.

I'm sorry that I can't be of more help but the 368'th came through the Lille raid without much happening to us, hence not much in my memory bank.

Best Personal Regards



William A Lanford

August 10 1992

Russell A Strong
5323 Cheval Place
Charlotte, NC 28205

Dear Russ

As you requested, here are some of my observations, as I recall them, about our 9 November, low altitude mission to St Nazaire.

The problem with trying to recall an adventure that happened 50 years ago is muddled memory. Either one forgets most of the details, or those details when recalled, have become embellished by imaginative yarn swapping over the years to the extent that the teller begins to believe them himself. It has happened often to many of us World War II flyboys.

I will, try never-the-less, to relate for you a couple of things about that infamous flight and a mind-picture or two that remain fixed quite vividly in my mind.

The raid itself was an act of desperation on the part of 8'th Air Force. We were briefed that the Allied losses of shipping to German U-boats in the North Atlantic had reached such astronomical proportions that the entire war effort was in jeopardy. The Submarine pens at St Nazaire were vital to the continued success of the U-boats. They had to be neutralized, and our previous efforts to knock them out had been ineffective. Hence, the decision was made to bomb them from a lower altitude to, hopefully, improve our effectiveness.

My first recollection is that I was leading the 368'th Squadron which was composed of six aircraft. (Your records can confirm or correct me in this.) Captain John Regan was leading the second flight. I believe that General (then Colonel) LeMay, CO of the 305'th was leading the raid, with the 306'th following. There were four groups of Forts and one group of Liberators participating. This comprized the entire 8'th Air Force at the time.

Our bombing altitude was 9000 feet. There was lots and lots of flak over the target--of both the heavy 90mm variety as well as the light stuff--40mm.

The Germans tried to shield the sub-pens with smoke but it wasn't very effective--the target remained visible.

We had been briefed that there would be barrage balloons but I don't recall having seen any.

Here is a vivid mind-picture. Over the target, A B-17 of the 305'th just in front of us received a direct hit. The nose section was sheared off as with a cleaver. The plane with all fans still turning veered up vertically, exposing a full view of the top of the aircraft, wing, fuselage, tail assembly,--all but the nose. Then as if in slow motion, it fell off to one side and went down.

After the bomb run we turned right out over the sea and there another mind-picture--a plane burning on the water.

We continued a wide sweeping right turn and headed back toward land, to recross the Brest Peninsula. By the time we had again made land fall, John Regan in "Sons Of Fury" was lagging back. Two of his engines had been shot out, necessitating full power on the remaining two, but still slipping back. We were getting ready to reenter the territory of "The Abbyville Kids" and their yellow nosed 190s who just loved to pick off stragglers. I elected to throttle back, tighten up the formation and hit the deck. We flew back across the peninsula slowly but apparantly undetected because we reached Thurleigh unmolested.

Another mind-picture--skimming over France at tree top level, past a church steeple that was higher than we were, and then one of the gunners cutting loose on a motorcycle complete with side-car (a German I hope). At any rate, the rider abandon his cycle and hit the ditch running.

Some of this return flight I captured on 8mm movie film which is now on vidio, thanks to Lee Kessler.

A few days later General Aker came down to Thurleigh and "gonged" Col Overaker with a DFC and each of us Squadron Commanders with Air Medals.

I hope that I have been accurate in my description of the events--it's the way I remember them.

Best Personal Regards



William A Lanford



Colonel William A. Lanford
5861 E. Club Vw Dr.
Fresno, CA 93727



Russell A. Strong, Secretary
306th Bomb Group Association
5323 Cheval Place
Charlotte, NC 28205

ALWAYS USE
ZIP CODE



Name:

William A. Lanford

Cadet class:

38-85-01

39A (Feb 1 1939)

Place of graduation:

Kelly AFB (Advanced)

(Randolph was Primary + basic)

Number of combat missions:

26 - (9 with the 306th)

Wife's first name:

Betty Jo

Other 306th men whom I know graduated with me:

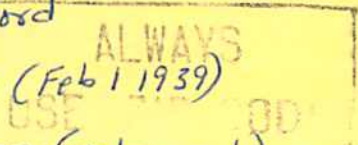
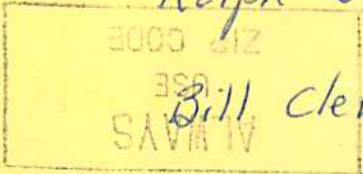
Harry Holt

Ralph Oliver

Bill Cleveland

was upper class
graduated Oct. 1 1938
Kelly Field

Date of entry



January 28, 1994

Russell A Strong
5323 Cheval Place
Charlotte NC 28205

Dear Russ

I was going through a bunch of old papers yesterday and ran across an old 12 by 15 squadron photo of the 368'th taken at Wendover in August 1992. Do you have one of these in your archives? If not, I'll see about getting it reproduced and send it in. Age has turned it a brown color, as happens to old photos, but one can still identify most of the people. I can't remember the photo taking incidence but assume that each squadron had one of these taken at the same time. Let me know if one is already in the archives; if so I won't go to the expense of having it copied.

Best Regards,

Bill

William A. Lanford
5861 E. Club View Dr.
Fresno, CA 93727

reply 1 Feb 94

August 10 1992

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5323 Cheval Place
Charlotte, NC 28205

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Best Personal Regards

Bill

William A Lanford



From the Desk of:

Bill Lanford

Assistant Vice President

2-23-94

Russ

I was a classmate
of Ralph Oliver and Harry
Holt, graduating from
Kelly Field - Class 39-A

Bill Lanford