

LAW OFFICES OF
OWEN ROBERTS
BRADY BUILDING - P. O. BOX 677
BROOKHAVEN, MISSISSIPPI 39601
TELEPHONE 833-4441

February 14, 1980

Mr. Russel A. Srong
2041 Hillsdale
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007

Dear Russel:

I am on the mailing list for 306th Echoes, as I was a navigator on the crew of Lt. Richard Vogel of the 369th from about Easter 1944 to September. My ship was the "How Soon" and was listed in an earlier issue. I mentioned to Bill Collins in a letter last summer that when I finished my missions on 12 Aug 1944, I was given a paint job, with water paint in various colors, from waist up, and that I had a photo. He suggested that it be sent to you. Do you have others?

I enclose a copy for the archives. The inscription on my forehead was "Fighting Biting" for the 369th. Other things I can make out are "Say again" (a frequent intercom request), "Good show", "Rebel" (as I was from Mississippi even then) plus assorted faces, hearts, stripes, a swastika and "Hy B'klyn" on my left arm from Sgt. Hyman Portnoy, a gunner on our crew, who did most of the art work on me.

I stayed in the reserve and was recalled to duty in the Korean War, and flew 50 missions in B-26's, and recently passed the necessary age (60) to start drawing my Air Force retirement pay, which makes it all worth it.

My wife and I hope to get over to England and Thurleigh some summer before too many more years pass.

Thanks for all your good work,



THOMAS O. ROBERTS
LTC, USAF (Ret)

TOR:s
Encl.

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July 1, 1986

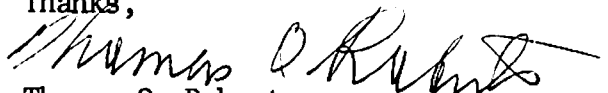
Mr. Russell A. Strong
2041 Hillsdale
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007

Dear Russ:

I just got my copy of the 306th directory for 1986, and I am sending \$5.00 to Bill Collins.

I am listed in the 367th, when I was actually in the 369th. I hope you can correct this. I am going to make a copy of my crew list, and send it to you. Only one of our crew is a member, other than myself.

Thanks,



Thomas O. Roberts
LTC, USAF (ret.)

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October 21, 1991

Mr. Russell A. Strong
5323 Cheval Place
Charlotte, NC 28205

Dear Russ:

I keep hoping that the Archives will release the mission report on the 306th Cottbus raid of May 29, 1944, which was a ten hour mission, according to my records. Please keep me in mind if this comes down to you.

Very sincerely,



Thomas O. Roberts
LTC AF Ret.
formerly of 369th Sq.

TOR:s

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6 February 1992

Mr. Russell A. Strong, Secretary/Editor
306th Echoes
5323 Cheval Place
Charlotte, NC 28205

Dear Russ:

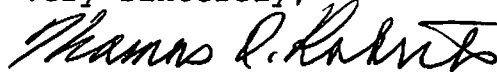
I was extremely interested in reading in the January, 1992, issue of 306th Echoes, about what happened to my crew's plane after we all finished. (All of us, that is, except Sgt. Cecere, who was killed flying with another crew. His death was mentioned in First over Germany.) I was a navigator.

I was on the crew of 2nd Lt. (later 1st Lt.) Richard F. Vogel, and we started our missions in the ship which we later named as the "How Soon?", a B-17G, no. 42-97297. I do not know the date of the first mission of that ship, but it had to be in May, 1944. After flying 15 or 20 missions, we decided that our B-17 needed a name, and I suggested "How Soon?" The intercom chatter on missions was made up of numerous calls to me, asking, "How soon are we going to get to the French coast?, How soon will we be to the target?, How soon will we be over the Channel?, How soon will we cross the (English) coast?" Also, there was always the crew question of "How soon will we finish our missions?," "How soon will we get a trip to London?," and "How soon are we going home?" We all agreed that the name was appropriate.

Enclosed are two sets of orders. One is an extract from Special Orders No. 83, dated 23 March 1944 at Kearney, Nebraska, which provides for our movement overseas. Our crew was on page 5, Crew No. 132-33, Shipment Crew No. FG-400-CA-21. We had thought we were going to get a plane at Kearney and fly it across the Atlantic, but orders came out for us to proceed otherwise, which included an Atlantic crossing on the Mauretania. The other orders enclosed is Special Orders No. 115, dated 27 April 1944, issued at AAF Station 111, and most of the crew appears on this set of orders, being assigned to the 369th Bomb Squadron (H). I do not know why Lt. Ford and Sgt. Lane were not on the same set of orders.

I always had special confidence in the "How Soon?", and I am not at all surprised that it was able to make it home on one engine. And I had no idea how many missions the "How Soon?" flew. I assume it was retired after than 10 April 1945 mission to Oranienburg. Thanks for all of this fill-in for my war years.

Very sincerely,



Thomas O. Roberts
LTC, USAF (Ret)

TOR:s
Encl.

P. S. I have a photograph of our crew, but not taken with
How Soon? I believe it was taken in Nebraska.

Sgt. Lawler and Sgt. Piepenbrink were each shot down and
captured on separate missions, flying with other crews.

TOR

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23 November 1992

Mr. Russell A. Strong,
Secretary/Editor
306th Echoes
5323 Cheval Place
Charlotte, NC 28205

Dear Russ:

I am enclosing my original official photo of my crew in the 369th. Lt. Vogel was the pilot, and the ship we flew was the "How Soon?", no. 42-97297, B-17G.

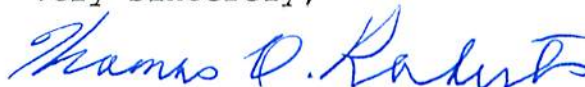
I understand that you will make a copy of this photo and return my original to me after the copy is made.

Note the crew names on the back of the photo.

This photo was made in Kearney, Nebraska, before we started our overseas movement.

I will look forward to seeing it published.

Very sincerely,



Thomas O. Roberts
LTC, USAF (ret)

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November 17, 1993

Mr. Russell A. Strong
5323 Cheval Place
Charlotte, NC 28205

Dear Russ:

On October 22 through 25th, 1993, some of the members of the crew of Lt. Richard F. Vogel of the 369th Bomb Squadron held a reunion in San Antonio, Texas. Sgt. Hal Portnoy worked up the reunion, and we only had four of the original crew on hand. Besides myself, there was Dick Vogel and John R. Lawlor. Sgt. Portnoy gave me a copy of your 369th Combat Diary 1942-45. Naturally I checked for my name, and found that I was not listed among the 369th Navigators and was only mentioned as beginning my missions in May, 1944. There was no reference to my completing the tour. I assume this was a result of an erroneous listing I way earlier which placed me in the 368th.

Since the Diary I saw was a 1992 update, it may be that you will publish another update. If so, I would certainly appreciate proper references to the omitted matters.

Russ, I know you had to deal with a lot of detail in getting this out, and I appreciate the chances for problems with names, etc. You have done a great job, and I was glad to see this Diary.

Very sincerely,



Thomas Owen Roberts

TOR:s

Ans
11/20/93

LAW OFFICES OF
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BROOKHAVEN, MISSISSIPPI 39601
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August 14, 1984

Mr. Russell A. Strong
2041 Hillisdale
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007

Dear Russ:

I have just read you Editor's Note on page 12 of 306th Echoes for July, 1984, and the first thing that came to mind was a B-17 I saw returning from a mission, not during the month of April, 1943, but in May-August, 1944. The ball turret was not in the regular landing position, with the twin 50's parallel with the ground, but with the guns down, but snapped off, and the turret was solid red, with the blood of the dead gunner inside. Possibly he had been removed after the loss of a great amount of blood, as I did not follow the 17 to its hardstand. Possibly he even survived, but I doubt it. Have you seen anything like this properly documented?

Another bit of Thurleigh lore that I have not seen mentioned was the key club in Bedford, in the second floor over a store, entered from the right of the main door. Have I missed any mention of this?

Very sincerely,



Thomas O. Roberts
LTC, USAF (Ret.)
Formerly of the 369th.

TOR:s

P. S. I was glad to see my crew's mention by reference to our pilot, Lt. Richard F. Vogel, as flying two missions on D-Day. We were in the 369th, of course.

TOR