

# 306<sup>th</sup> Echoes

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## What Happened to Someone's Airplane?

We wondered too. That is until we happened to think of the Control Tower Logs, which we have, thanks to Bill Carlile, which explains most of it neatly. Bill didn't happen to be on duty when the above crash took place 5 miles SSE of the field. "Y-Yoke called us on r/t and gave us the position. He said some of crew were out near plane. Called Division, crash crew, hospital, M.P.s, Col. Robinson, Ops. That was logged in at 1630, and by 1640 "Div wants information on crash when we get it." 1845 "Notified Div re: Crash a/c. Fire broke out in #2 engine and cockpit, #2 & then #1 engine stopped so they made an emergency landing in field. No one hurt". This plane was not on the combat mission flown to Thionville, France, on this date, 9 May 1944.

## Schedule of Events

306th Bomb Group Association 2006 Reunion  
Wednesday, November 1 thru Saturday, November 4, 2006  
Doubletree Hotel • 1616 Dodge Street • Omaha NE 7600

### Wednesday, November 1st

Noon 'til whenever	Registration	Lobby
6pm to 9pm	Reception Buffet	Winnabago/Flanagan

### Thursday, November 2nd

Morning	Explore Old Market on your own
10am	Officers & Directors
1pm to 4pm	Joslyn Art Museum or Henry Doorly Zoo
7pm	Dinner Theater at Blue Barn Theater

### Friday, November 3rd

9:30am	Board bus for SAC Air and Space Museum (Approximately four hours to include guided tour and transportation.)
6pm	Buffer dinner- <i>River City Ragtime Band with sing-along</i> Winnabago/Flanagan

### Saturday, November 4th

10am-noon	Annual Member's Meeting Winnabago
Afternoon	Free for lunch-on-your-own, shopping, browsing, pubbing, etc. in Old Market. (Roy found a great place for lunch- he is willing to share this secret.)
6pm	Formal dinner- <i>Leonard Elby four-man combo for dinner and dancing</i> Winnabago/Flanagan

### Sunday, November 5th

Aloha, 'til we meet again.

## We've Been to Omaha Before!

For several years the 306th had its reunions with the 8th Air Force Historical Society Group. Not only did we have the largest membership of any Bomb Group in the 8th, but at each reunion we also had the biggest representation.

At that period we learned that those who were running the big reunion were not paying much attention to the attendees. We asked for space to get the 306th together at Cincinnati and they told us to go find our own rooms for any such activities, and essentially said they were not interested.

So, with a little ingenuity we did manage a meeting of the 306th only, with a large number of the men on hand, at which time Judge Donald R. Ross, a onetime 306th Group bombardier who had later moved through legal circles to an appointment as a Federal Circuit Judge. (It is a lifetime appointment, and his declining health has forced him to take inactive status).

He had been hopeful that he could handle this Omaha reunion, so the membership a year ago at San Antonio voted to have the 2006 reunion in Omaha. But the health of the Judge and his wife, Janice, is such that we just hope they will be able to participate this year on a limited basis. In their place, Roy Connally, a late 367th navigator, has volunteered to serve as the Omaha chairman.

The dates for us to be there are 1 November through to Sunday morning, 4 November. Registration will begin Wednesday noon and will carry on as long as it is needed. On page 8 of this issue of Echoes are registration forms for the hotel and for registration for the 306th. Adequate information will be found there and note that the two registrations go to different places.

On this page to be found is the various activities and the necessary time schedule to get you where you need to be and when. Included on the schedule is the annual business meeting for the 306th Association and presiding will be Dr. Herman Kaye, 423rd. The chairman of the nominating committee is the immediate past president, Albert McMahan. Also participating will be Robert Rockwell, vice president, Russell Strong, secretary, and Royce Hopkins, treasurer.

## Curmudgeon is in Control Now!

Your "friendly" Curmudgeon is in the driver's seat right now. He started *306th Echoes* about 40 years ago and has been at it ever since.

He also controls the mailing list, which is the reason for him writing you today. In notes which came to me after the last issue, and for which I duly made corrections for this issue, I noted some timbre in the communications, which occasioned this expatiation on my part.

When we got that first mailing list going, with a lot of help from Bill Collins, I reasoned that WE were representing a wholly Male organization, and the mailing was set up around those males, most of whom had gone to England for a few days to three

years, and each entry therefore put that ground pounder or fly boy in the "Cat-Bird" seat. As some men tended to die early we removed their names from the list. Then some wives told us that they read Echoes and even read it to their husbands. We began keeping widows, etc. on our mailing and in order to be able to keep track as to whose name was on the list we kept the men's name there.

Now, as the Curmudgeon has trouble remembering anyone's name we are NOT going to change the system as we reach the end of our lives. We can't keep track of the widows and others, so we are going to stick with our present method of handling names.

## A Treasure for Family and Other Enthusiasts

When it was decided to print a one volume edition of *Three O Sixth Echoes*, as a tribute to the 25 years that our quarterly newspaper had been appearing, we moved along on planning, but almost stalled when it came to binding "our" edition of the "Sears Roebuck Catalog."

The book is 800 pages long, with pages reduced to 8 1/2 x 11. And in order to get it printed and bound, we had to commit to 500 copies. Initially we sold a bit over half of them, and they are a slow but constant seller.

As it is getting late in the life of the 306th, we are anxious to unload more of them. The editor finds it is still interesting

reading and interesting looking.

The price has been reduced to a bargain basement \$40. We urge you to place your orders so that we can sell as many as possible. There may be a few on hand at the reunion, but don't count on getting yours there. Instead, order it now, so you can use it for your leisure time reading this summer.

The order form for our publications appears on page 2 of this issue of *Echoes*. We also suggest that you will enjoy the crew pictures, more than 300 of them in a book, and "The Reich Wreckers", a statistical study that was done several years ago, and which makes a nice addendum to "First Over Germany."

## OBITUARIES

**Walter H. Albertson**, 369th crew chief, died 17 Mar 2006 in Wilchford, Cambridgeshire, England. He joined the Group 1 Aug 42, and got to Thurleigh 6 Sep '42. He departed Thurleigh 28 Jul 45, with his British wife Peg. Recalled to service during Korea, he worked on B-29s in Okinawa. He then completed a flight engineers' course and went to B-502 flying over Russia from Alaska; then 3 yrs. in Bermuda with the 59th Weather Squadron. Then it was back to school for training in jet aircraft ending up flying C-140s in and out of Vietnam. Retirement caught up with him in Sept 1967. On 9 Oct he and Peg returned to England and he worked on American bases for 16 years.

**Donald W. Baltzer**, 368th bombardier (J. Ray Coleman crew), died 7 Apr 2005 in Escondido, CA. He joined the 306th 18 Nov 43 and completed combat 9 May 44. Don retired in 1978 after 30 years as office machine repair supervisor 18 Nov 43 for the San Diego schools. After combat he was a bombardier instructor on B-29s. His wife had died in 2001.

**Cecil L. Brooks**, 367th radio operator POW (Lawrence Kooima crew) died 1 May 2006 in Bonham, TX. He had come to the Group 28 May 43 and was MIA 8 Oct 43 on a mission to Bremen. Captured, he was in Stalag Luft XVIIIB until freed 3 May 45. He leaves his wife, Eva, 4c, 11gc, 15ggc.



**Paul M. Campbell**, athletics coordinator, died 22 June 2006 in Charlotte, NC. Assigned to the 4th Sta Comp Sqdn, he also played baseball for our base team



**Dr. Herman Kaye**, President  
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**306th Echoes** is published four times annually: January, April, July and October, and is mailed free of charge to all known addresses of 306th personnel, 1942-45. Contributions in support of this effort may be remitted to the treasurer.

**SECRETARY/EDITOR:**

Handles all changes of address, editorial contributions and records. Book orders should also be placed with him.  
Russell A. Strong  
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Brookshire, TX 77423

The 306th Bomb Group Historical Association is a Federally tax-exempt organization and as a veteran's group is classified as 501 (c) (19).

and in 1944 was on an all-star team that played at American bases throughout England. Following WWII he played major league baseball with the Boston Red Sox and Detroit Tigers, after service, beginning a life that included 57 years in professional baseball. After his playing days stopped he was a minor league coach and manager. In 1957 he was with the Louisville Colonels and the next year went to the Cincinnati Reds, first as a scout where he signed Tommy Helms, and then in 1964 was signed as traveling secretary. In 1978 he retired from that post and went back to scouting for the Reds, in Tennessee. He had played with Ted Williams, Dom DiMaggio, Jimmy Foxx, Bobby Doerr, Rudy York and others, against Lou Gehrig, Joe DiMaggio and Bill Dickey, and saw Babe Ruth play. His two wives died before he did and he leaves 3c, 3gc, 2ggc.

**Raymond J. Dann**, 423th pilot, died 11 Apr 2006 in Titusville, FL. He had arrived with the 306th 9 Apr 45 and flew three combat missions. He flew with the Casey Jones aerial mapping project of Europe and North Africa, then retired from the USAF Reserve in 1961. He retired 1 Sep 87 and leaves his wife Maxine.

**William H. Feeser**, assistant crew chief and airplane inspector, died 12 May 2006 in Morehead, NC. After he left the service he became an auto parts manager for a Chevrolet dealership. Services were held in Silver Spring, MD and interment was in Arlington National Cemetery. He leaves his wife, Polly, and a son.

**Howard C. Frombaugh**, who worked in the salvage section of the 12087th Quartermaster Group, died in Oct. 2005 in Johnstown, PA. He was a crane operator for US Steel for 21 years. He died of cancer,

leaving his wife, Kathleen, 1d.

**Clayton M. Gilliam**, 369th waist gunner (Edward Sandini crew), died 13 Apr 2006 in Jefferson, IA. He arrived with the group 2 Mar 45.

**Burnell C. Hoffacker**, 369th waist gunner, died 22 Apr 2006 in Hanover, PA. He had joined the Group 20 Feb 44 and flew eight missions. He left the 306th in Sep 45, then later retired as a service technician for Columbia Gas Co. He leaves his wife, Pauline.

**Frank L. Krzyston**, 368th pilot, died 26 Aug 2005 in Elizabeth, NJ. He came to the 306th 21 Apr 1944 and completed his 30 mission tour 21 Apr 44. He leaves his wife, Wanda.

**Daryl W. Phillips**, 423rd, a co-pilot upon coming to the 306th, Daryl progressed to pilot and completed a 35-mission tour. This was followed by a stint as a transport pilot until he moved to the USAF Reserves. He became a Fresno city fireman until recalled to active duty in 1951. Assigned to SAC, he checked out in B-50s, B-47s and B-52s. He was a squadron commander in SAC, and then went back to combat duty in Thailand during Vietnam activities. He said his best duty ever came with a five-year stint at Hickam Field, Hawaii. He died 20 Jun 2006 in Clovis, CA. He leaves two daughters, a son, 7gc, 8ggc. Son, Scott is a full colonel on active duty, Col. Scott R. Phillips, whose wife is Lt. Col. Linda M. Phillips (ret.)

**Richard W. Russell**, 367th gunner, died in November 2005 in Long Beach, CA. He was flying with Edward Magee's crew on a Noball mission planned for bombing just over the French Coast. The waist (left) gunner was hit by .50 caliber, which came through behind the ball turret in the direc-

tion of the tail, hit the left waist gunner and splattered several fragments in his head and neck. Magee turned back 7 miles from the enemy coast on course at 0925 hours. Russell leaves 2c.

**Donald M. Sandercock**, co-pilot for the 368th (Richard Jones crew) and also flew as a pilot for the 367th Squadron. He completed his combat tour in Apr 45. For 35 years Sandercock was a research engineer for NASA. Don leaves his wife, Louise, 6c, 9gc, 2ggc.

**Charles Vondrachek**, 367th engineer (Alden Mann crew), died 7 Dec 2005 in Manitowac, WI, after a long illness. He flew his first mission 1 May 1943, Snuff Smith's Medal of Honor day, and which was a day for a number of medals to be given out. Chuck received a Distinguished Service Cross, America's #2 medal. When his top turret was hit by attacking Luftwaffe planes, Vondrachek was knocked to the floor. But



he climbed back into his turret and continued firing his twin guns. He later survived on another mission when he bailed out of Clyde Cosper's stricken plane over

England. Vondrachek also received a British Distinguished Flying Cross (pictured). He was the 241st EM to complete a tour, 4 Jan. 44. He leaves his wife, Bette. 3c, 5gc.

**Pervis Earl Youree**, an original pilot with the 423 Squadron, died 10 Apr 2006 in Wagoner, OK. He was the seventh officer to complete a combat tour, and left Thurleigh 5 Jun 43. After service he completed his law degree at the University of Oklahoma, and had been in private practice since then. He leaves his wife, Juanita, 3c.

**Air Zoo Players Perform at Aviation Museum**

Kalamazoo Air Zoo visitors have been able to interact with flyboys and flygirls of history, thanks to the Air Zoo players. This summer there will be more players doing more than just what Artistic Director Lynn Jacobson called "guerrilla theatre". "We build everything from the bottom up here" Jacobson said. The troupe, which has expanded to nine, has actors who also write, perform music and do research on historical events as figures.

The players often wander about the museum in costume and in character telling stories of aviation history. This summer they will broaden their act. They have been improvising on new scripts that will become one-act plays, to be performed in the round on the museum floor.

Patrons will learn about the experiences of Vietnam War chopper pilots. Socialite "Pancho" Barnes will speak on why she rejected high society to become a pioneering female pilot. Katherine Wright will explain how she helped brothers Orville and Wilbur Wright get their flying machine off the ground. Flying aces will bring both World Wars to light.

The focus is on education, Jacobson said. The Smithsonian Institution invited the Air Zoo Players to speak on the innovative program in March at the Mutual Concerns of Air and Space Museums seminar in Washington, D.C.

People "can go and watch a little bit of history," Jacobson said. The Air Zoo Players will perform regularly at the museum between noon and 5 p.m. from June 17 to Sept. 4.

The Kalamazoo Air Zoo will become the repository for records accumulated by the 306th Bomb Group Association since 1975. The records will be shipped to Kalamazoo, MI, where they will be available for use by students and researchers.

**306th PUBLICATIONS**

Published materials now available from the Group will help you follow the 306th through the combat period 1942-45:

**ORDER FORM**

First Over Germany by Russell A. Strong A 325 page narrative history of the 306 <sup>th</sup> . 100 pictures & 1700 names. Fourth edition is paperback.	\$35.00	_____
306th Echoes Book 800 pages, including 25 years of our quarterly newspaper, BxW & color.	\$40.00	_____
306th Combat Crews More than 300 identified combat crews are pictured. Individuals are indexed.	\$35.00	_____
The Reich Wreckers 80 pages of charts & other data covering 341 combat missions. Prepared by Charles J. Westgate III	\$6.00	_____
Squadron Combat Diaries More than 100 pages each, compiled daily after missions by Squadron Intelligence officers. Also included are rosters of Specialty personnel.		
Spiral bound.	367th	\$20.00 _____
	368th	\$20.00 _____
	369th	\$20.00 _____
	423rd	\$20.00 _____
306th Group Directory	1 Feb '06	\$10.00 _____
Mission Reports Detailed information on specific missions flown between 9 Oct. 42 and 19 Apr 45. May range from 1 to 50 pages. Include the name of individual you are interested in to derive most benefits. List dates, etc. on separate sheet.	3 for \$5.00	_____
	Total	\$ _____

Make check to 306th BG Assn. and mail to Secretary: 306 Bomb Group Assn.  
5323 Cheval Place  
Charlotte, NC 28205

## History Book Club Uses Our Pictures

Several Months ago the History Book Club borrowed our color shots of B-17s in formation. Someone else claimed credit for it, but the planes seen above George Washington and some Egyptian pharaonic people are ours!

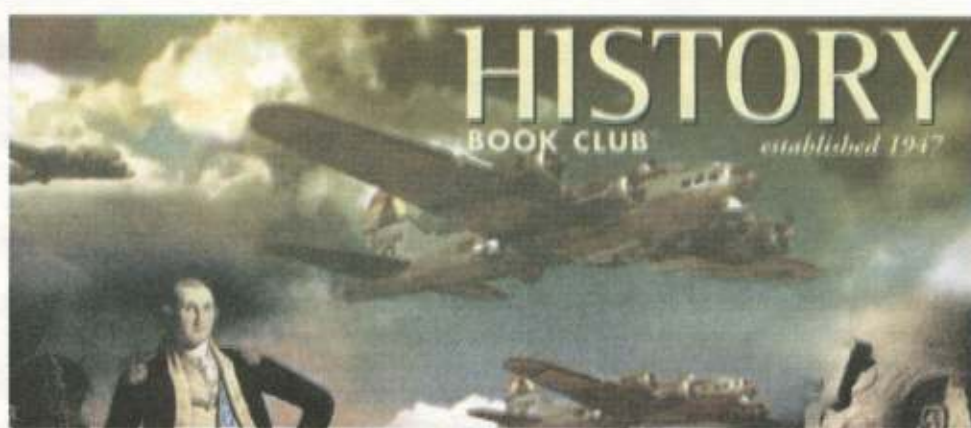
Four 306th planes, all tagged as being 367th planes with the yellow band on the horizontal stabilizer, topped by the red flash at the top, and other symbols were taken in May 1945 just after the war was over. When this formation was put together to give ground personnel a chance to see some of the places our planes had visited while bombing, they often looked like this, only in much greater numbers.

One of the passengers was a welder from

Michigan who had done much of the work in preparing the first nose gun sticking out of the plexiglass and over the bomb sight. He was one of two from Thurlough to receive a Legion of Merit for his work.

A number of years later he sent yours truly a roll of Eastman color film that had not been processed. Being very wary of taking it to the corner photo shop for processing, I called my late brother-in-law who was then the top financial man for U.S. Steel. I knew that he and the treasurer of Eastman Kodak were friends, and so I called my brother-in-law and asked him to talk with his Kodak friend, and that the Kodak people process this "special" roll of film.

I mailed the film to my brother-in-law



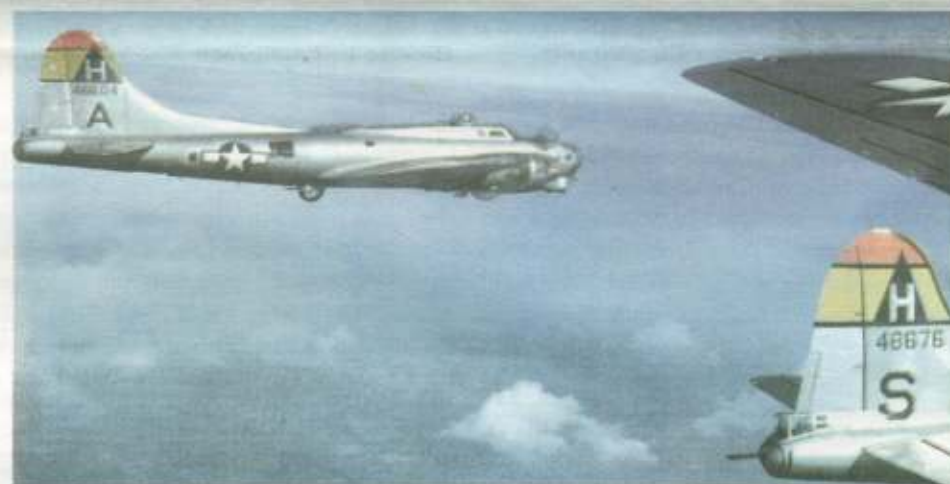
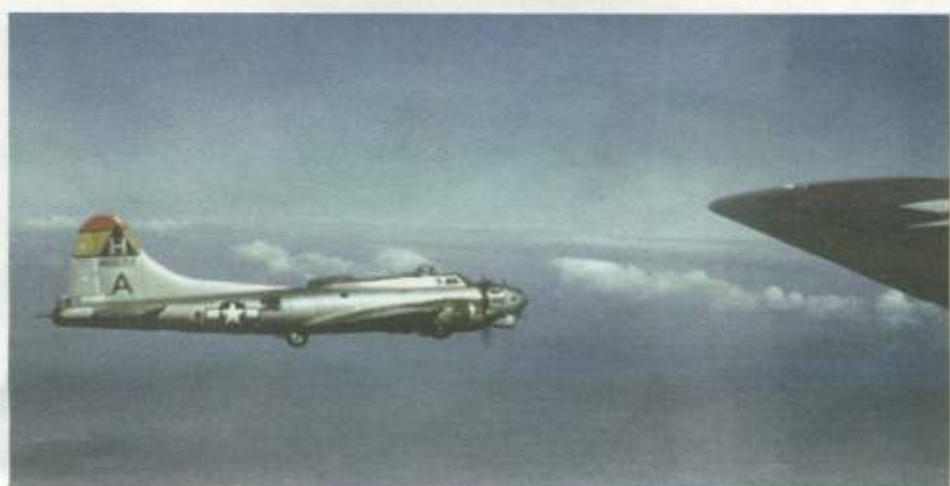
and he sent it on to Rochester, NY. In about three weeks I received a package of 24 slides and a set of 3x4 prints, I did not copyright the slides and used them rather freely.

So that is the story of some treasured color photos of our B-17s, taken in a day when

few color prints were made.

But now through the good graces of Dr. Herman Kaye, our *Echoes* is the most colorful of the publications of the 8th Air Force bomb group associations. We hope that you enjoy *Echoes* in color as much as he and I do.

## Other Pictures Taken the Same Day



**Detailing the Insignia:** Triangle H is First Bombardment Division, 8th Air Force; red tip on fin is the 367th Squadron; horizontal yellow band is 40th Combat Wing & the 306th; Numbers under H is plane number, large letter just above fuselage is 367th Squadron designator.

49 30th Street  
Gulfport, MS 39507-1804  
June 8, 2006 Robbv49@cableone.net

Dear Russ,

Many thanks for your inquiry regarding "Katrina". First let me apologize about the telephone. It has been nothing but trouble since the storm and many times we are forced to use a stand-by cell phone. Add to this, I do not use the phone as I am not able to understand what is being said. I have one cochlear implant, but it has not remedied the situation. We were at the VA Hospital in Birmingham, AL last week to have blood work and CT scan for an additional implant on the remaining side. Unfortunately the surgeon resigned and hired on at the Jackson, MS Medical Center and I will now have to wait until August for the next VA consultation.

As for Katrina, we were not here during the storm, so I cannot give you an eye witness account. Having weathered Camille and about ten other hurricanes in the past I knew that this would be a killer and there would be a mandatory evacuation ordered. Accordingly we left Gulfport the morning before (Sunday Aug. 28) and drove to our daughter's home in Columbus, GA. The mandatory evacuation order was not given until 4pm, so we had no trouble with the bumper to bumper traffic that occurred following the directive. We monitored the storm via TV and some cell phone calls from our son and his family who lived in Gautier. His home is directly on the gulf, so we knew he would need to evacuate but he just wanted to drive a few miles north out of harms way. He called Monday morning to say that he was able to get a first floor room for him and his two children (one four years and the other 8 months) at the Comfort Inn just off Interstate 10 about ten miles north of the coast. His wife who is the American Red Cross Director for South East Mississippi remained in the storm command post in downtown Pascagoula. The storm remained over Gulfport for about eight hours, so I knew I could not return home for a few days. I have an emergency generator and some other supplies stored in my shed which I knew could be put to good use if the shed was still intact.

On Tuesday morning, August 30th we got a cell phone call from our son saying on Monday afternoon the water began to rise around the motel and they were forced to move to the second floor where they spent the night in a dark hallway as all electricity was cut off. There had been four feet of water in the hotel and adjacent parking lot. His car had been flooded. His wife's dad was able to drive up and check on them and they then went down to view their home. All that was left was the concrete slab; the house had vanished. They then drove to Pascagoula to check on his law office and found that the building was still standing, but four feet of sea water had caused heavy damage to the building and ruined all the contents. He doubts if it is worth patching up. He then said he, the two children and his in-laws were driving to Columbus hopefully to stay at my daughter's home with us for a few days until he could figure out just what to do.

Against Norma's wishes I started back for Gulfport on Wednesday, but only traveled 50 miles when I realized there would be no supplies available in Gulfport and I had no food, water or clothes and gasoline was scarce at \$3.00 a gallon. On Thursday we went shopping at Sams' Club and loaded up the van with supplies and I started back the next morning. Norma remained in Columbus for two more weeks. When I arrived home I found the house socked in with downed trees, fencing, roofing etc., but still standing. After chopping my way through the yard, I entered the house and discovered the electricity on, but no gas, water or telephone. I estimated my total damage about \$2500 which is exactly my insurance deductible. But, how lucky we were! The storm surge came up to the field abutting my backyard, no rain water came through the damaged roof and I could make emergency repairs on my own, I was one of the very few to get power restored thanks to the sub station that I cursed when it was constructed behind the house ten years ago. Most of Gulfport got their power back weeks after I did. It was mid-afternoon when I was able to make a personal tour in and around Gulfport to assess the storm's impact.

The National Guard had been called out, but they had not yet sealed off the areas adjacent to the Gulf, so I was able to drive down to the beach areas along U.S. Highway 90 before all the barricades were erected. The destruction was total as far as I could see. In making the difficult drive from downtown Gulfport to West Biloxi there were only three homes left standing and these were damaged beyond repair. Nearly all the homes and business were washed away. Parts of three of the larger churches were still standing, but they too will need to be rebuilt. Two condominiums were still standing but suffered major damage. All the casinos on Highway 90 except one were washed either on or north of the highway. The President Casino crossed the highway and was beached on top of the Holiday Inn. The destruction continued inland for as much as a mile in some areas. The water in the back bays far from the beach rose twenty feet in some places and thousands of homes which never had rising water even in Camille got as much as 12-15 feet of water. The last estimate I noted in the local paper was 70,000 homes destroyed in South Mississippi. The story was the same from nearby cities. Waveland, 75% of all dwellings gone. Bay St. Louis and Pass Christian half of the structures and all the school buildings gone. Those few restaurants, stores, motels and other places of business that did not get wiped out were closed as there was no electricity, gas, water or phone service. Thanks to the foresight and ingenuity of several churches, help began to arrive about the third day.

Our church opened up a relief center even though they had no power, water or gas. Using amateur radio and some cell phone service we were able to get water tanks, portable stoves, food, bedding and clothing hauled in by the truckload. On Saturday, our church had power and we were serving food and providing clothes and drugs to anyone who needed them. I continue to work four days a week feeding and housing volunteer workers from churches all across the country. Assistance now is limited to gutting homes and then major repairs to homes that had rising water and no flood insurance. I could go on and on about conditions, but you have read and heard about this catastrophe in the papers and on TV. It was the worst I have seen in my 85 years, and that includes some bombed cities I saw in England in 1943.

It is now nearly nine months since the storm and erection of temporary facilities is still the norm. Most of the destroyed schools are replaced by temporary buildings, while others will be permanently closed and students sent to other areas. Rebuilding of homes and businesses is about one percent of those destroyed. People are waiting for insurance settlements, FEMA height guidelines, new zoning ordinances and grants. Twenty thousand of Gulfport residents have not yet returned. There is no place for them to stay. Their wait for temporary trailers goes on and on. They just graded a part of the VA hospital lot next to our home and put in 40 trailers. The hospital itself has been gutted and will be torn down. A site just north of here has been auctioning off flooded cars and they estimated there would be 125,000 that would pass through their books before they are finished. I just read in the local paper that congress approved 174 million to restore the armed forces retirement home which is just a few blocks east of our home. If I could give one word of advice to visitors: If you plan to stay overnight be sure you have reservations or else bring a tent. Rooms are extremely scarce and I don't see any rush to rebuild the hundreds of motels that were washed away.

*George*

George Roberts



In casting about for stories for our 306th readership, it occurred to me that George G. Roberts, a 367th radio operator and lead crew member for quite some period and a resident of Gulfport, MS, might have something to tell us.

Following Katrina it was not possible to reach him by telephone so I tried by priority mail. Within a couple of weeks I got a reply from him which is now a part of our July issue.

With his letter he included two color pictures appearing on this page, showing his front yard, and the second showing the Veterans' Hospital parking lot near where he lives, with cars having been positioned by the storm surge.

To further identify George, we have included a picture taken in July 1944 of the 367th lead crew during the festivities occasioned by the presence of the King and Queen of England when the Princess Elizabeth christened "The Rose of York". The plane originally was the "Princess Elizabeth" but was changed at the instigation of the Royal Family, that if anything happened to the plane it would be a bad omen.

And, indeed the plane did disappear returning from a mission to Berlin on 3 February 1945.

Two officers at the left are Col. George L. Robinson, 306th commander, and Capt Perry Raster, pilot of the plane. George Roberts is indicated by the arrow over his head and is waiting to be presented to the princess. Other officers on the crew from the left are Talmadge McDonough copilot, William E. Pleasant navigator, Marion J. Northway bombardier, Stephen Tanella bombardier, and Tech. Sgt. Edwin H. Fulmer, engineer and top turret gunner.



## Dope, Fabric and Airplanes

By Rayford G. Neely

In May of 1942 I graduated from a tech course on dope/fabric and aircraft painting at the J. M. Perry Institute at Yakima, WA. Shortly I arrived at Wendover, UT, where my first job was day room orderly for the 368th Squadron.

When I was later assigned as squadron painter, it became my job to paint and stencil all the equipment crates in readiness for shipment overseas. We were moved from Wendover to Richmond, VA, and then Fort Dix, NJ. Next we bordered the *Queen Elizabeth* and were quickly on our way to England, arriving at Bedford 8 Sept 1942. Early on we were billeted in tents, the English variety, which four of us occupied. We burned ours down in the first week. Later we moved to barracks and those centipe mattresses which we endured for the duration.

Each squadron had eight planes, which were pretty well obliterated that first month. At that time I was ordered to Group to perform as dope and fabric mechanic for the

Group. There were no replacement parts for the ailerons, elevators and rudders. The damaged ones had to be patched or recovered. I recall searching all the surrounding bases with Sgt. Edward Gregory to find a sewing machine to completely cover a rudder. We were unsuccessful and I recall doing the entire rudder by hand. Shortly after the 449th arrived on the field, and I worked with the paint detachment until they were acclimated, and was assigned back to the squadron.

I pulled a stint at the Officers' Mess where one day, much to my chagrin and Capt. Bairnsfather's, I spilled a dish of purple prunes on his lap. This was my last day at the Officers' Mess, although I don't think this incident had anything to do with it. An anti-aircraft group established on the base comprised of personnel from each squadron. I was a PFC at the time but we had all grades from T/Sgts. down to privates, and we all pulled the same duty without regard to grades. We were sent to an RAF base at Penhale, Cornwall, where we fired .50 water cooled machine guns at a target

towed by a B-17. We were taught to lead the target and I remember the pilot radioing to us that he was pulling the target, not pushing it!

Back at Thurleigh we had eight .50 cal water cooled guns mounted in a circular sandbagged underground emplacement. There also were two Hispano cannon at the east and west ends of the field. We were required to man the guns before mission takeoffs and landings and during air raid alerts, usually late at night and we were on call 24 hours around the clock.

On 1 May 1943, a cadre of us were on detached service with an RAF station at Kimbolton to build and man anti-aircraft gun pits until the 379th Bomb Group arrived about 12 June 1943. In Sept 1943 the 4th Station Complement Squadron assimilated the anti-aircraft Group at Thurleigh where I remained until June 1944. At which time I transferred to the 449th sub depot and rejoined the group that had displaced me earlier. With the transfer I acquired corporal stripes. We also acquired a flat bed cab over engine truck that was aban-

doned by the Polish Air Force which had preceded us at Thurleigh. It proved invaluable for hauling scaffolding, working on the aircraft stabilizers of the aircraft. We painted the triangles, Hs, stripes, squadron colors, radio letters, etc. I named the truck *The Beat Up Bitch*, which was painted on its visor.

For a little extra cash along the way, I painted, mainly in Old English letters, the names on some of the planes. Namely- *Bonnie Lee*, *Lassie Come Home*, *Larrapin Lou*, *Pretty Baby* and *Combined Operations*.

A less desirable task fell on us when we had to clean paint interior catwalks and areas of the planes missions where injuries occurred. Another chore to which I was assigned was vulcanizing the inside of damaged rubber gasoline tanks.

August 18, 1945, I was one of two chosen by virtue of accumulated points to return to the States for a 45-day furlough to return for an indefinite period. However, I was granted a discharge instead 18 Sept 1945, having served 3 years and 8 months, of which 3 years were with the 306th.

## Co-pilot Recalls Exciting Move to Thurleigh

by Edward Hennessy

When the Group was activated 1 March 1942, at Gowan Field, Idaho, the aircraft assigned to the 306th were three twin-engine, already obsolete B-18's plus one single-engine A-17, an aircraft with a singular characteristic - it took off, cruised and landed at a constant 100 miles per hour. On 1 April 1942, the 306th was relocated by a variety of conveyances to Wendover, Utah, about 120 miles west of Salt Lake City at the Nevada border. Perhaps the kindest reference to the Wendover of 1942 was made by Bob Hope when he called it "Leftover". Today it is a thriving casino-resort community. The original runways are in remarkably good condition, but the remnants of the old base buildings better befit a ghost town. There is some private aviation activity and an occasional exercise by visiting USAF fighter units.

Wendover was a learning experience for everybody. B-17's were slowly accumulated. Tech orders were assiduously studied by ground and aircrews in unison as they shared a burning ambition to unravel the mystery of starting the engines and getting these high-tech dreadnoughts airborne. John Regan, with an enviable six hours in the B-17, was a designated pilot instructor!! There were some successes and many failures during these trying times. It is a tribute to the basic airworthiness and forgiving nature of those Boeings that the mission was ultimately accomplished.

The 306th began flying to Westover, MA, on 1 August 1942 to start an impromptu tour of anti-submarine patrols and ad lib training during this staging for assignment to the 8th Air Force. It was here that the Group was equipped with brand new B-17Fs. Slow delivery stretched an expected 10-day stay to over 30.

Starting on 2 September 1942, the 423rd Squadron was first off on the initial leg of the overseas movement. The first destination was Gander, Newfoundland. Radio silence was required and there were no high-tech navigational aids - the Germans could home in on such systems, too. Compass deviation caused by variable magnetic forces in this sub-Arctic region provided new and dismaying navigational problems for many. As a matter of fact, some were found wandering about in forlorn skies by patrolling Coast Guard PBYS which kindly, but condescendingly, led them into Gander. Since the PBY might make 95 miles per hour wide open, our big birds skulked along behind

with flaps and wheels down. A B-17 with its tail between its wheels is not a pretty sight. After one of those Gander "white outs" of several days duration, when even the gulls were grounded, the Group took off in the blinding white, yet dark of night, on 10 September 1942. It was not widely reported that this was accomplished by having jeeps with flashing orange lights positioned about 10 feet in from of each #2 engine so pilots could follow them to the invisible takeoff position. This was a test of faith in itself since who could be sure that the jeep driver knew the way? Nobody could see even 30 feet.

The jeep team then hand-signaled the pilots into what they perceived as alignment with the runway, gyro-compasses were zeroed and at a given signal the pilots advanced throttles to full on. Staying on the runway was achieved by holding the gyro compass needle on zero with course corrections made by judicious use of throttle, rudder and brakes. A chilling and nearly cathartic experience, to say the least. Such "prehistoric" actual instrument takeoffs were definitely not SOP in 1942.

Since instrument flight conditions were correctly predicted for much of the transAtlantic route, the pilots were well-advised to fly at precisely prescribed altitudes and airspeeds in order to maintain, hopefully, a 30-second separation from the justifiably nervous lads ahead and behind. Because of the need for radio silence, this imaginative but hazardous routine called for the Squadron leader's radio operator to hold down his CW key for 30 seconds every half hour. The followers had their radio compasses tuned to this frequency. As the signal was sent, each pilot could breathlessly check to see if his radio compass needle was pointing forward. If it did, joy and gladness. If it did not, gloom and despair- he had overruled the parade and could not tell with any certainty where anybody was in the soup. Stress time!!!

It was 2100 miles to Prestwick, Scotland, in heavily loaded B-17's equipped with 800-gallon bomb-bay tanks, equivalent to a full bomb load. That was some exercise. This was about 900 miles beyond the normal range of the airplane. Remember, most of these lads were less than a year out of civilian schools!!!! Nevertheless, 33 out of 35 aircraft made it safely, to use the term loosely, to Prestwick. Weather there was below minimums but the Group had to land. Earl Youree was just flaring out when one of our Allies taxied across the runway in front of

him. By this time Youree was below flying speed so his only hope was to use full power, slam the wheels on the ground, bounce over our Ally and mush down beyond him. He did it- and had some pointed comments about the chap who nearly spoiled his landing.

Lt. John Leahy's B-17F exploded about an hour out of Gander, killing all on board. Having flown most of the North Atlantic route on three engines, and partly on two. Bill Melton had run out of gas. He ditched the airplane and he and his crew waded ashore on a lonely beach on the west coast of Ireland. The rising tide soon swallowed the plane, including some "precious personal cargo," it is said. Some fast diplomatic footwork expedited the crew's on-going trip to Thurleigh.

This odyssey was not yet over. Getting from Prestwick to Thurleigh was complicated by bad weather- so what else was new- unfamiliar, confusing non-geometric ground patterns and a mind-boggling array of airfields too numerous to mention. The common complaint was "there are too many camouflaged fields- how can we find our own?"

Of some significance was the fact that on 11 September 1942, when the 306th arrived at Thurleigh, 80 sections of concrete were still being poured by a bunch of nomadic, civilian Irishmen to finish the main runway- a dubious piece of work that simply followed the contours of the land for all of its

niggardly 5,910 feet! The other two runways were 4,200 feet each. Landing uphill or down dale on any of these was usually an adventure in itself. In the days and months that followed, our lives- us lucky ones- were an unending series of adventures.

Anything else you want to know about the Group can probably be found in Russ Strong's "FIRST OVER GERMANY", a history of the 306th Bombardment Group (Heavy). As you read through this book, you will realize how much the conditions improved as experience was gained, as war production turned out improved equipment and as formalized advanced training better prepared all the later arriving personnel for the missions that lay ahead. The greatest improvements were the addition of forward-firing nose guns in later B-17's and the arrival of P-38, P-51 and P-47 fighter escorts. The original group never had escorts.

*Editor's Note: Hennessy flew the first 306th Bombing mission, 9 October 1942, as a co-pilot and then four more until he took over his own crew in January of 1943. He completed his tour of 25 missions on 29 May 1943 as a Flight Commander with the rank of Captain, not quite ten months after being commissioned as a 2nd Lt. Pilot. He was one of only 21.6% of the original 306th airmen to survive 25 missions and he flew the first mission against Germany, 27 January 1943.*



This A.A. gunner is Pfc. Rayford G. Neely of Hollidaysburg, PA, who spends long hours each day at his gun defending his heavy bomber station against possible attacks by enemy aircraft. Working as a house painter in civilian life, he supported his widowed mother before joining the Army Air Forces. When he was asked if he liked England, he replied, "Certainly, I love it. But I'll be glad to get home again."

HEADQUARTERS VIII BOMBER COMMAND  
Office of the Commanding General  
AFO 634

6 January, 1944

Colonel George L. Robinson, 0-22362  
Commanding Officer,  
306th Bomb Group,  
AAF Station 111

Dear Colonel Robinson,

The VIII Bomber Command during 1943 has successfully accomplished that phase of the major directive issued by the Combined Chiefs of Staffs at Casablanca which required the forcing of Germany to concentrate her fighter strength on the Western Front to such a degree that Allied air superiority would be assured for the Russian and Mediterranean Fronts.

By hard work, unswerving perseverance and the resourceful and intelligent employment of technical skill and professional qualifications, the personnel of this Command- ground forces, maintenance men, combat crews and staff officers alike- have written a new chapter in the history of aerial bombardment. The crews of our bombers have, in broad daylight, fought their way through the strongest defense which the enemy could bring against them and have ranged over the length and breadth of Germany, striking with deadly accuracy many of the most important hostile industrial installations and ports.

To you, as Commanding Officer for the 306th Group goes a large share of the credit for this remarkable achievement. Your keen understanding of administrative problems and your superior tactical leadership has obviously been an inspiration to your officers and men. The 306th Group, which has now completed 98 combat missions, is the oldest veteran groups of this Command. On 25 September 1942, the 306th Group became operational in this Theater. Since that date, the 306th Group has repeatedly distinguished itself in combat, including such outstanding accomplishments as participating in the first mission to Lille, France, 9 October 1942; lead group of the first AAF attack on Germany, 17 January 1943. The solid foundation of esprit de corps and the high tradition prevailing the 306th Group is one of the most prized and elusive distinctions that any military organization can achieve.

I hope that you will convey to all your officers and men my unbounded admiration and appreciation for the manner in which they have executed their difficult assignments during the past year. Their courage, skill and resourcefulness have been of such character as to win credit and commendation for Americans in general and for the Air Force in particular.

I firmly believe that the VIII Bomber Command has now reached a state of indoctrination which, with the required quantity of equipment and qualified personnel now arriving, will enable it to destroy Germany's capacity to wage war or maintain an effective defense against invasion.



*As noted in an earlier issue of Echoes this unique piece of military equipment can provide all kinds of aid. We build and use them for combat services, but we have also send aid to far corners of the world to assist stricken peoples in trying to stabilize their lives once again. We are the only country which operates aircraft carriers today.*

HEADQUARTERS 306TH BOMBARDMENT  
GROUP (H)  
Office of the Intelligence Officer  
United States Forces

APO 643  
1 December 1943

SUBJECT: Memorandum of Strange B-17 Reported on  
Mission of 30 November 1943  
TO: Major JOHN A. BAIRNSFATHER  
S-2, 306th Group

On the mission of 30 November 1943, five crews of the 306th Group reported seeing a strange B-17. The most detailed information concerning this A/C was obtained from Lt. C. L. Kinsey, pilot of A/C #143-P, flying No. 2 position in the second element of the low-left squadron.

The B-17 was first seen when it came up behind our formation at 1100 hours during the turn after abandonment by the combat wing commander of the mission. For a few moments the B-17 in question actually joined our formation, flying to the left and just slightly behind Lt. Kinsey. It then lagged, flying 850 yards behind, but followed the 306th until 35 miles off the Dutch coast, at which point it wheeled and headed back on a course of approximately 90 degrees.

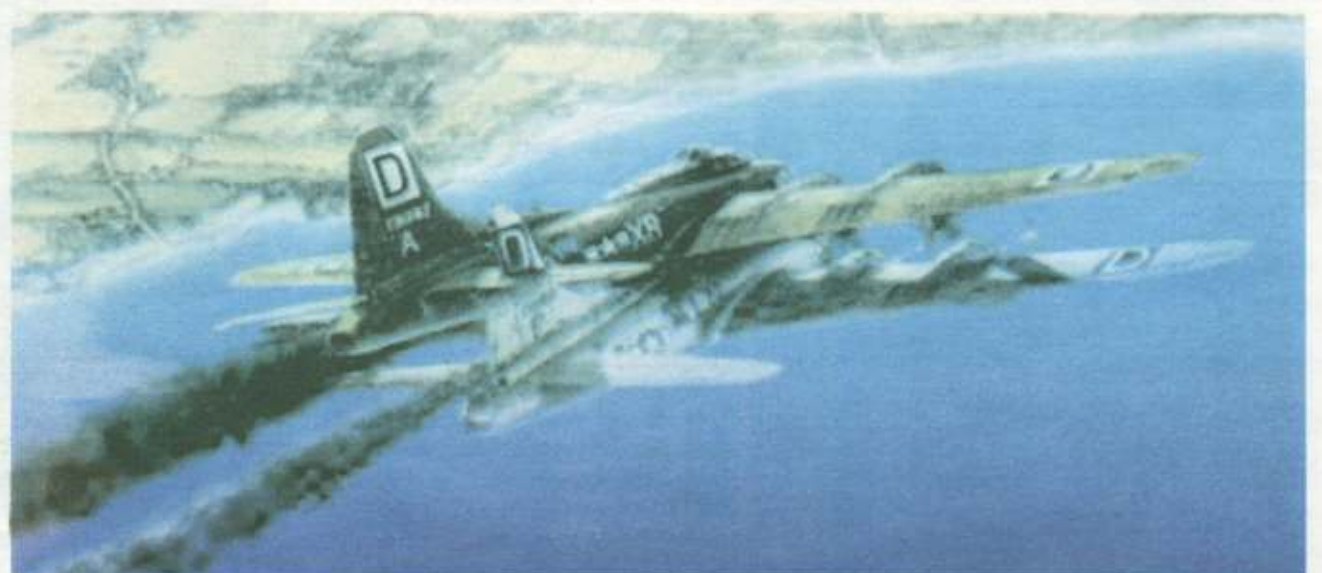
All crews reporting, noted that the waist doors of this A/C remained closed throughout. The top turret was not seen to move, indicating the possibility that it was not manned. It had no triangle or square or white circle. On the vertical stabilizer were six numbers, starting with 2 and ending with either 431 or 321. Underneath these numbers was the letter "W" in pale green. A gray "W" was painted on the fuselage, immediately behind the waist doors. Both of these "W's" were smaller than the letters used in this theatre to designate different units. The entire paint job of this B-17 appeared to be new and of a darker tone than our A/C. New USAAF markings appeared in front of the waist window.

This B-17 was last seen heading toward enemy territory at 1120 hours.

Fred C. Baldwin  
Captain, AC,  
Asst. Group S-2



*"Little Audrey" is the aircraft above in camouflage dress. She came to the 306th 28 Nov. 42, and departed 5 Sept. 43.*

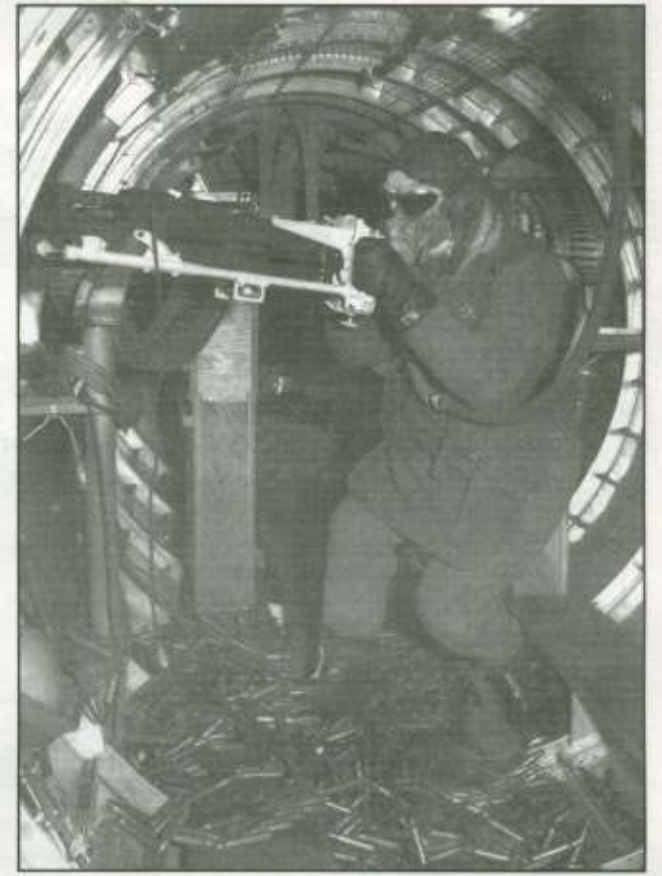


*The two planes above are from the 100th Bomb Group, Third Air Division. They slammed into each and became locked together. Four persons from each plane survived. The pilot of the top plane died earlier this year, the last survivor.*

### 423rd Sticks Together



Original Squadron members at Wendover, UT- From left: Frank Saunders, Jim Keanley and William Warner. Right end: Mack McKay, John Brady, Lewis McKesson and John Leahy.



Robert Taylor spreads a lot of .50 caliber shell casings.



Joseph Cassell with his oxygen truck.



Warren George and Robert C. Williams, pilots.



Unknown gunner with a bandoleer of .50s.



Orman Hamilton and David Steele in their "Piccadilly" uniforms.



Bill Gaylord checks out a visiting German fighter plane.



Tex Custer, Bob Insley, Asher Brown and Ed Beaver.



Ground crew for Chennault's Pappy III March 43

**Dinner Reservations and Charges**

**Wednesday, November 1st**

*Reception Buffet*

Complete buffet dinner with two entrees: Grilled Lemon-herb Chicken Breast and Roasted London Broil.

Reservations for \_\_\_\_\_ at \$37.50 each person  
(Total) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Friday, November 3rd**

*Buffet dinner and River City Ragtime Band*

Complete buffet dinner with two entrees: Catch-of-the-Day and Roasted London Broil

Reservations for \_\_\_\_\_ at \$37.50 each person  
(Total) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Saturday, November 4th**

*Formal Dinner and Dancing*

Complete served formal dinner with choice of two entrees: Pan Seared Atlantic Salmon or 10 oz. Roast Prime Rib

\_\_\_\_\_ Salmon and \_\_\_\_\_ Prime Rib at \$45.00 each person  
(Total) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Reservations and checks, payable to **306th Bomb Group Reunion**, must be received by September 15, 2006. Please mail reservations and checks to:

Roy E. Connally  
509 Seward Park Ave. NE  
Albuquerque, NM 87123

**Reservations and Charges for Events**

**Joslyn Art Museum**

\$7.00 fee plus transportation

Reservations for \_\_\_\_\_

Payable when boarding bus and at the museum

**Henry Doorly Zoo**

\$6.00 fee plus transportation

Reservations for \_\_\_\_\_

Payable when boarding bus and at the zoo

**SAC Air and Space Museum**

Guided tour payable at museum

\$10.00 each for transportation.

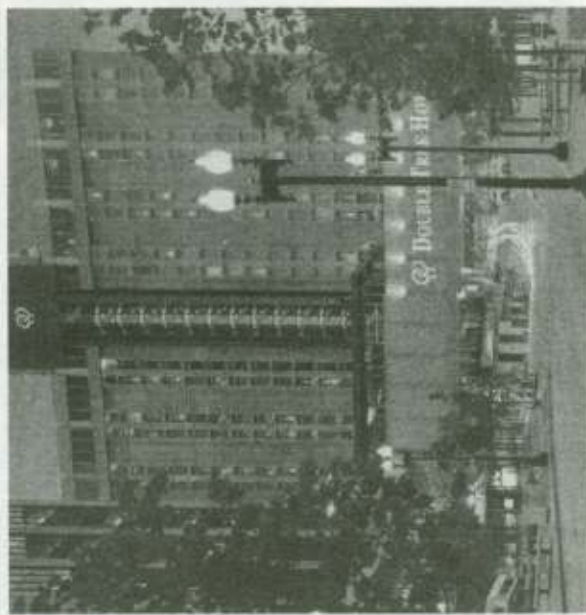
Payable with this reservation.

For (No.) \_\_\_\_\_ at \$10.00 each

(Total) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please send checks for transportation to **SAC Air and Space Museum** to:

Roy E. Connally  
509 Seward Park Ave. NE  
Albuquerque, NM 87123



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**306 Bomb Group**

November 1, 2006 - November 5, 2006

**RESERVATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY Wednesday, October 18, 2006**  
IN ORDER TO INSURE ROOM AVAILABILITY AT THE GROUP RATE.

PLEASE RESERVE THE FOLLOWING :

1 King Bed	\$89.00	2 Queen Beds	\$89.00
Triple Rate	\$89.00	Quad Rate	\$89.00

\* Rates are subject to local taxes

OTHER REQUESTS: SMOKING NON-SMOKING Adjoining Room with \_\_\_\_\_

NAME 1	ARRIVAL DATE	DEPARTURE DATE
NAME 2	ARRIVAL DATE	DEPARTURE DATE
ADDRESS	PHONE	EXPIRATION DATE
CITY/STATE/ZIP		
CREDIT CARD NAME:		
CREDIT CARD NUMBER:		

NAME AS IT APPEARS ON CARD:  
FIRST NIGHTS DEPOSIT OR CREDIT CARD GUARANTEE MUST ACCOMPANY THIS RESERVATION. RESERVATIONS MAY BE CANCELLED UP TO 4:00PM (CENTRAL STANDARD TIME) ON THE DAY OF ARRIVAL WITHOUT PENALTY.

Check in time after 3pm Check out time is 12 Noon

YOU MAY MAIL THIS RESERVATION FORM OR CALL US DIRECT

MENTION THAT YOU ARE WITH **306 Bomb Group**  
TO RECEIVE THE SPECIAL RATE!!!

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