

306 BG (H) Supplemental Information / Correction and Explanations

This document adds in additional photos, crew identification, and history that is not included in the original publication.

It is sourced from various people who have sent in the photos and other information.

Gibson Crew

I was Charles Gibson's copilot. Our crew flew a new B17 from Kearney Nebraska to Iceland. Shortly after Gibson came down with a Virus and was grounded. After indoctrination of 5 missions I was made 1st pilot and for 30 missions had various crew members. In fact Charles Gibson flew as my copilot on his 1st mission. I can give you the names of a good many of them. You can see why I don't have a crew photo. As I never had training with a crew I had many close calls. I have my own web page with many photos including The Glenn Miller Mystery. The Rhuland Mission in which we lost 10 planes and the origin of the Joystick or correctly Joyce stick.

I see the name of Wendell Larson, 423rd, he was our navigator in our original crew. The copilot in the photo is not me but James Seymour.

More information and photos at his web site: <http://www.stargeezer.net/b17new/Dadshome.htm>

Regards,

Howard

Ethan Allen Crew

Some of Russell Strong's information is wrong. You show an Aircraft Commander named Ethan Allen with no crew photo. I sent a crew photo to Strong years ago. I would like to see the record of names of corrected. The name of the Bombardier was not Donald Casey.... His name was Donald Newell Carey. His rank was 1st Lt. He was from Marblehead, MA and a recipient of the DFC. The name of the Top - Turret gunner / Flight Engineer was not Robert T. Hill..... It was Rupert T. Hill. He was a T/Sgt. from Bellville, OH and like Carey was a recipient of the DFC. The aircraft commander, Ethan Allen was from South Burlington, Vermont and a namesake of his direct relative of his Great - Great - Great Grandfather and U.S. Revolutionary War Hero of the same name. The crew consisted of only 9 men. The waist gunner Charles Armuth, handled both waist guns. The Ethan Allen crew flew all their 35 missions between May of 1944 and August of 1944. All crew members except T/Sgt. Robert F. Behnke survived the war. Behnke, who had fallen behind due to illness, attempted to make up his missions.... Unfortunately, he flew as a replacement R.O with the Eldon Ralstin Crew. On that mission, their B-17G was hit by flak and went down. KIA were Eldon Ralston (P) and Robert Behnke (RO). After the war, Behnke was returned to the U.S. and is buried in the National Cemetery in his hometown of Syracuse, NY. Also wounded in action on the Allen crew was Co - Pilot Armstong. Wounded in the leg he received the Purple Heart. It is interesting to also note that both Allen and Carey were both wounded, but refused to be tapped by medics for the P.H. In his later life, Allen worked for a manager and lineman for Bell Telephone, Carey came back to Marblehead and worked in nearby Boston selling appliances, Rupert T. Hill went back to Ohio and like Navigator Wendell Leggett worked a US postal route. Charles Armuth, farmed as his father did, in Indiana, Armstrong recovered from his wounds and stayed in the A.F. and retired as a Col. with The Strategic Air Command. Little Stanley Falkowski, (B.T.) was from Chicago and returned there. I believe (after only speaking to him once) that he was an educator. Earl Fick (TG) was from Bay City, MI and still has family there. At this point, I believe that all have passed away from this crew. The last of which was the old man of the crew. Rupert T. Hill.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey D. Dance

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Crew of "Bioya" B-17

Waist Gunner Warren Goss S/Sgt. Engineer Wayne Warner S/Sgt. Radio Oper. Henry Stelmach S/Sgt. Tail Gunner Andrew Barris Sgt. Ball Turret Howard Chatelain Sgt. Waist Gunner Leander Aurie Sgt.
Pilot Ross McCollum 2nd Lt. Co-Pilot Marcus Thomas 2nd Lt. Navigator Daniel Jones 2nd Lt. Bombardier Lloyd Crabtree 2nd Lt.



LEFT TO RIGHT

Top

1. R. A. LISSNER PILOT
2. C. J. BRITTON Co PILOT
3. F. G. ROBBINS NAV.
4. F. E. BALLISH BOMB.

Bottom

1. V. L. FENNERTY RADIO OPER.
2. H. R. BEMETZ ARMOR
3. E. J. BARYLA LEFT WAIST
4. L. M. MILLER ENGINEER
5. W. H. CRANFORD BALL GUNNER
6. G. W. BECK TAIL GUNNER

I've noticed that this attached crew photo is not identical to the photo used by Strong. The differences (other than quality) are that:

- (1) the attached photo includes E.J. Baryla, your crew's left waist-gunner, who was not in the photocopy used by Strong, and
- (2) Strong's photocopy included Edward Gregory, crew chief, who is not in the attached photo.

On the back of your attached crew photo you've listed the crew members' initials and surnames; I am including their full names here, for all but Baryla, whose full name I do not seem to have anywhere (If you could let me know his full name, and what name he was commonly called, I'd sure appreciate it):

Back row, left to right:

1. Roland A Lissner, pilot [you; living -- hurray!]
2. Chester J Britton, co-pilot [d.'in 1952' per his '306th Echoes' obit in Oct-1991 issue]
3. Finley G Robbins, navigator [not in our mailing list; no Echoes obit published yet. Unless any info you may have for him fits with him having become "Dr Finley Robbins" who was b.1902 & who died 12 Nov 1981 and was buried in Henderson, KY, then he's not in FindAGrave. They do have, by the way, a Finley Garland Robbins b.1936, d.1956, who of course was born too late to have served in WWII, and was born too early to likely be son of our vet, but could have been somehow related to our vet -- That 20-yr-old served in the military (gravemarker abbreviations for his service show "77 SP Forces Gp ABN") and he is buried at Fairfield United Meth in Guilford County, NC]
4. Frank E Ballish, bombardier [I found he d.21 Dec 1995, so I'll work on an obit for Fall-2012 issue of 306th Echoes']

Front row, left to right:

1. Vere (John) L Fennerty, radio operator [d.9 Feb 1997, per his '306th Echoes' obit in Apr-1998 issue]
2. Harold R Bemetz, armorer [d.2 Jun 1993 & was also waist gunner, per his '306th Echoes' obit in Jan-1994 issue]
3. E J Baryla, left waist [IF it fits for him to have been born 18 Feb 1918, and IF he was known as 'John' and IF it's logical for him to be buried in Scranton, PA, then I've found his burial, so can do an obit for which I would welcome any additional info you have about him.
At FindAGrave.com: John Baryla, US Army WWII, b.18 Feb 1918, d.6 Jun 2001, buried at St Stanislaus Cem, Scranton, PA]
4. Lloyd M Miller, engineer [not in our mailing list; no Echoes obit published yet, so need info about him]
5. William H Cranford, Jr, ball-turret gunner [not in our mailing list; no Echoes obit published yet, so need info about him]
6. George W Beck, tail gunner [d.27 Jan 1994 per his '306th Echoes' obit in Jul-1994 issue]

By the way, I see on p.305 of Russell Strong's book, "First Over Germany: A History of the 306th Bombardment Group" that some, but not all of the men of the attached photo were with you for the 3 Feb 1945 (Berlin mission). This is the mission you were just telling me about, when you were directed to fly that day the B-17 having radar navigation equipment. (That caused you to be in a different B-17 than your regular plane, the 'Rose of York,' which sadly went down over the North Sea that day as it was returning to England after also having been hit.) I understand your plane was hit by flak just after bombs away, causing loss of all

the fuel in the number 3 tank; loss of the Tokyo tanks when the left outer wing was hit; and the number 3 engine was hit. That caused your landing in Sweden that day. Interned in Sweden, as they were listed in Strong's paragraph on p.305 of "First Over Germany," were:

- 2Lt Roland A Lissner (you) pilot
- 2Lt Chester J Britton co-pilot [death info above]
- 2Lt Finley G Robbins navigator [no death info; see above]
- 2Lt Donald C Haagenson bombardier [not one of the above from your usual crew]
- F/O James G White radar navigator [manning the aforementioned equipment]
- Sgt Lloyd M Miller engineer [no death info; see above]
- Sgt Vere L (John) Fennerty radio [death info above]
- Sgt Harold R Bemetz waist [death info above]
- And Sgt George W Beck tail gunner, who was hospitalized at Malmo [Sweden] due to a flak wound of his left wrist [death info above]