

**PERSONNEL RECORD UPDATE**

306<sup>TH</sup> BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION

Date September 9, 2002

Complete this form and return to Russell A. Strong, Secretary, 306<sup>th</sup> BG Assoc, 5323 Cheval Place, Charlotte, NC 28205, to be filed with 306<sup>th</sup> records.

LAST NAME: **Baldwin** FIRST NAME: **John** MI: **D**

Street Address: **123 W. Sawdust Corners Rd**

City, State **Lapeer, MI 48446**

Telephone **810-664-6153**

Date of Birth **October 18, 1917** Wife's name **Carolyn M. (married 60 years)**

# children **3** #grandchildren **4**

Occupation & retirement date:  
**Business owner / small engine repair**

Serial # **0747370** Squadron: **423** Speciality: **B-17 pilot**

Date joined 306<sup>th</sup>: **Drafted 4/21/41 into 210<sup>th</sup> AA. 1942 passed primary test for flight training. Joined the 306<sup>th</sup> in February 1944** If combat what crew? **306<sup>th</sup> BG**

Special duties or assignments with the 306<sup>th</sup>  
**Squadron leader on all bombing runs**  
**Flew two missions on D-Day**

*Not true. Flew abt 8 missions as 200 pilot. last 306th mission 20 Feb 44*

Number of missions flown **36** *double checked* Date of last mission **August 1944**

Date leaving 306<sup>th</sup> **1945** *?* Highest rank / grade: **First Lieutenant**

Other 8Air Force units served with and when:

Top service assignment after 306<sup>th</sup> **Flight instructor in Rapid City, South Dakota**  
**after returning to the States**

Awards Received *Air Medal & 3 o/c*  
**May 27, 1944 – Oak Leaf Cluster**  
**June 14, 1944 – Distinguished Flying Cross**

## **“Someone didn’t figure that I would be back”**

I was stationed in England about 60 miles north of London at a field called Thurleigh. I don’t think it was a city or anything, it was just out in the country but we could still hear the buzz bombs coming over and hitting around the London area. Germans were buzz bombing at night but it was no big deal. I think we gave them more trouble than they gave us. I was a pilot flying a B-17 bomber in our group of 54 planes. We were designated the 306 bombardment group H. I was assigned to Squadron 423. I flew a total of 36 missions while I was in England. I didn’t remember all that stuff so I looked it up in my 201 file. My rank was First Lieutenant John D. Baldwin my serial # 0747370 and I had the designation of a 1091 four engine heavy bombardment pilot. So that was you might say to begin with, but that was just the preparation to qualify.

A typical day could start anytime but was about usually 4 am or maybe a little later. Many mornings I took off with dense fog or black out darkness of course everything was dark, there was no visible lights anyplace even on our planes. We flew in the black out because of all of England had this same blackout. I don’t know why it just didn’t give the enemy a chance any light spots to shoot at.

Anyway all our group of planes were lined <sup>never</sup> to the take off strip and this #1 plane would have an exact take off time and the #2 plane in the squadron would follow 20 seconds later and so on until all the planes were airborne. We took off and flew on instruments until we would break out of the overcast or at least fly until it got light enough so that we could see the horizon. After gaining about 10,000 feet the crew of 10 put on oxygen masks. It took us about an hour or better gaining altitude in order to get up to where the squadron would assemble at a designated point. Of course it was all prearranged to take our position in formation and was all standard procedure.

But let me share one mission I flew over enemy territory. This was April 30, 1944. Our target that day was Hamburg, Germany. My B-17 F bomber was one of 36 planes in this formation. I flew in the #5 low position in the lead squadron. The intelligence briefing before we took off always gave us any information that might help us on the trip. The zigzag course was always followed to, well I suppose, to throw the enemy spotters off knowing exactly which target we were going to pick out for that day.

As I recall we had very little resistance for the first several hours. Suddenly there was a severe ak ak flack barrage and my plane took a hit in number three engine. Number three engine, quit and lost power. My crew reported we were trailing smoke off the right wing. We lost altitude and fell out of the formation. My navigator gave me an escape heading out over the North Sea. I told the bombardier to salvo (dump) our ~~2000~~ pounds of bomb load. He dumped them in the water unarmed. I decided to fly only a few hundred feet over the water and just keep the low altitude and be able to maintain an altitude. Even though the #3 engine was still smoking the other three engines were adequate to keep us flying reasonably well. But the #3 engine was still giving us trouble. We couldn't feather the prop and the co-pilot used all the fire extinguishers. He couldn't stop the engine from smoking.

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We didn't know whether or not it was just a hot engine and the oil was getting so hot it was smoking or if we actually had a fire. It was impossible to tell what the real problem was. Because we couldn't feather the prop, it added a lot of drag on the right wing, and golly, we didn't really worry too much staying airborne but with three running engines my navigator after a while called and he said that we were out over the North Sea far enough so we were out of danger of attack.

He gave me a new compass heading which was established to head us toward home base. The extra power to overcome the extra drag from the bad engine was using a lot of extra fuel. My engineer was kind of busy transferring fuel from one wing to another trying to keep the lights from flashing red all the time. My ten-man crew stood by me and there was no panic at any time. Another problem we had was radio silence. Our intercom in the plane kept the crew in touch. My navigator was on the ball and we arrived home base 2 ½ hours late.

Number three engine was still smoking and vibrating. My hydraulic was shot out, which means I had no brakes. I didn't have control on the wing flaps and anything else the hydraulic controlled. On the final approach I told my engineer to shoot a red red flare which indicated we needed help. On the final approach and on the landing we touched down, but I couldn't get the old bird to stop it was coasting and kept going and going, no brakes. I was using up all the runway. Finally, the only thing I could do was ground looped the plane off the runway onto the grass and immediately pulled the master switch and turned everything off. We stopped.

After 10 hours and 2 ½ hours late getting home were all tired. A Jeep raced out toward our plane and my crew we were all out of the plane gathered together. When this Jeep drove up here's four military police in the Jeep and one of the MP's was pointing a 50 caliber machine gun right at our midst and that kind of bothered us the "least little bit." Their explanation was any single plane landing at dusk is suspicion. My crew was debriefed and we were served a good meal.

I went back to the Quonset hut where I lived in my 6 x 8 ft space. Someone- or- other didn't think I would be back. They cleaned me right out. My bed was gone, my bike was gone, my space was empty. I found another bed that night so I could at least go to sleep. But it wasn't being used and nobody bothered me so everything was OK until the next morning. But I wondered after I thought it over if all this previous crew that landed they all reported that old # 105 went down in a trail of smoke which and that means we were missing in action. And as soon as that word got out I just wonder if all the other people that were unfortunate got the same treatment. I survived, like it or not.

Old # 105 was repaired and put back in service. I flew many missions after that. My crew painted a crude word on the side of the fuselage "Spare Parts".

Now I'm signing off "Roger Dodger Over and Out"

John D. Baldwin  
123 W. Sawdust Corners Road  
Lapeer, MI 48446  
March 16, 2003

Mr. Russell Strong  
5323 Cheval Place  
Charlotte, NC 28205

Dear Russell

I enjoyed reading the January 2003 issue of 306<sup>th</sup> Echoes. I was sorry to learn Oliver J. (Snapper) Nasby passed August 2002. This is in response and perhaps additional information about him.

Nasby was my tail gunner. He was a good kid and I remember him talking about his motorcycle. My entire crew of the 423<sup>rd</sup> helped me through 36 combat missions. Our 306<sup>th</sup> BG carried out the first daylight mission over Berlin.

These enclosed pictures bring back memories.

Best regards

John D. Baldwin *My daughter helped me  
with this information.  
Thank you for listening  
J D B*