

26 May 1977

Mr. Eddie F. Espitallier  
745 Lamos Av  
Salinas, CA 93901

Dear Eddie:

As the accompanying material will tell, you, I am working on a history of the 306th group.

Your story is one of those I have been looking for, and I hope you will be able to supply some answers to my questionnaires.

Incidentally, since moving back to North Carolina last summer, I have gotten to know Clay Wilson, who was with you on the t last mission. I have considerable information on your last mission, as well as the Saturday Evening Post story on your mission to St. Nazaire that was written up there. I have also seen Col. Williams on two occasions recently.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely yours,

Russell A. Strong

cc: Clay Wilson

Interview with  
EDDIE ESPITALLIER  
13 June 1979  
Salinas, California

The #4 engine was hit by flak, aflame, and we dropped out of formation. The plane was hit by fighters, then, and was hit very hard.

Pilot Bill Warner and Navigator Wm. Utley were both shot through the forehead and killed instantly by a headon fighter attack.

Espitallier was hit in the left hip and leg by 20 mm cannon fire.

Williams came out of the tail, but then went back to his position.

Copilot Carlson was also hit by gun fire.

Neeley was killed in the plane.

Kisling was lying in the waist and bleeding badly.

Clay Wilson came back and said to bail out as there was no pilot. Clay went out first, followed by Espitallier. Morgan never left the plane, and "I believe he went back up front and tried to fly the plane."

Espitallier made plans to escape as he came down in his parachute, landing in an orchard in a village, but could not walk.

He gave his watch and contents of his escape kit to some Frenchmen and told them to leave him. He hobbled across the street and into a house, where he lay down on a couch.

He saw the plane hit the ground.

He was later taken to a German field hospital, where the sheel fragments were removed, and was hospitalized six or seven weeks. He was then sent to Stalag 7-B at Moosburg.

Espitallier heard that one of the crew was ~~xxxxxx~~ shot on the ground. He thinks if this is true it had to be Morgan, and he knows that Morgan had a .45 with him

PERSONAL COVERAGE  
INSURANCE SERVICE

8 East Alisal Street, Suite 202  
Post Office Box 67  
Salinas, California 93902  
(408) 422-8897

E. F. ESPITALIER, CLU

October 18, 1979

To: Russel A. Strong  
Re: 306th B.Gp Ass'n,  
W.E. Courson & Etc

Dear Russel:

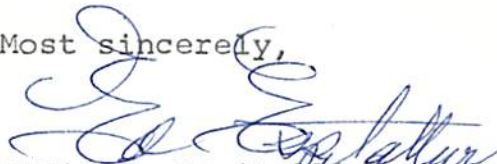
Sorry to have been so long in getting this answer off to you, but the time has come to get it done.

First, you asked me to see if I could find the wherabouts of a "W.E. Courson" who lived in Salinas at one time. By going through the back numbers of the City Directories in the library, I found a "Wesley Courson" listed in the 1971 directory. I wrote him on August 2, 1979, asking if he were W.E. Courson, and the reason why I asked. I told him I'd appreciate a reply either way, and enclosed a stamped addressed envelope. My letter to him (he was listed as living at 1330 Byron Dr., Ap't 3E, Salinas, 93901), was never returned to me as undeliverable, and I did not get any type of reply from him or his family to this date. I could find no other leads to this man.

I certainly apologize for not have written you to thank you for the various copies of war documents that you did send me. Believe me, they are appreciated, and no way was I ever going to find out that some of these existed! Let alone getting copies for that scrap book that one day I may put together to be passed on down the line. Thanks again, and should you have occasion to come through this area again, we'd be pleased to hear from you and host at least a short stay if your schedule allows some time.

In appreciation of your efforts, and the publication (your trip highlights included) of the 306th, am sending you my check <sup>California</sup> for \$20.00. I'd like to pay my way with the publication of the 306th news with whatever it takes, and the balance you may give to the Association or whatever you decide. Thanks again for your thoughtfulness.

Most sincerely,

  
Eddie F. Espitalier

P.S. Don't expect that  
we shall be able to make  
the Phoenix gala  
E  
H

FOR LIFE — HEALTH — INCOME INSURANCE

PERSONAL COVERAGE  
INSURANCE SERVICE

8 East Alisal Street, Suite 202  
Post Office Box 67  
Salinas, California 93902  
(408) 422-8897

E. F. ESPITALIER, CLU

September 7, 1982

Mr. Russell A. Strong  
2041 Hillsdale  
Kalamzoo, MI 49007

Dear Russell:

It certainly was a pleasure to receive your book "First Over Germany" a couple of months ago. You did a masterful job in putting together what must have been a mass of information. Mary and I have enjoyed it immensely.

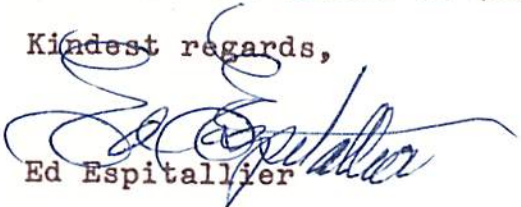
Especially appreciated was your thoughtfull autograph which I personally take pride in showing to my friends.

Now I wish to order another copy of this book for my son-in-law who was greatly impressed by it. He is a CPA in Santa Barbara, and a Naval Battles and naval ship buff. He especially liked the battle descriptions (not to mention his father-in-law being mentioned!) and expressed a desire to have a copy.

I would very much appreciate your autographing it if you possibly can. His name is: Alan Miller.

I hope you will excuse my not using the order form in the July issue of the Echoes. I like to keep them intact, and to have cut out the order form would have ruined the photo on the reverse side. My check in the amount of \$20.00 is attached. Above address is o.k.

Kindest regards,

  
Ed Espitalier



**MARY JANE MILLER**  
**3230 Serena Avenue**  
**Carpinteria, California 93013**  
**805 566-0382**

July 16, 1996

Mr. Russell A. Strong  
5323 Cheval Place  
Charlotte, North Carolina 28205

Dear Mr. Strong:

My father, Eddie Espitallier, a member of the 306th, passed away in Santa Barbara, California on June 30. Coincidentally, shortly before he entered the hospital he received the May, 1996 edition of the *306th Echoes* which contained a picture of him with his crew and plane (page 7).

Other than your book *First Over Germany*, and articles about my dad in *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Time* magazines, our family has no records of my father's participation in the Air Corps or years as a German Prisoner of War. Because of a fire in his parent's home we have no pictures of him as a youth or young adult. The picture in the May edition is so clear that we are hoping the original picture or negative may be available to you. If so, would it be possible for you to obtain three reprints of that photograph? My mother, sister and I would be very grateful to have that wonderful picture. I am enclosing a check in the amount of \$30.00 to cover the cost of reproducing the photo. If that amount is insufficient please let me know. If you are unable to reproduce the photo please consider the check a donation to the 306th Association.

I would also like to order three (3) additional copies of *First Over Germany*. While my father gave copies to my sister and I when the book was printed, I want my three sons to each have a copy. Enclosed is my check for \$114.00 payable to you to for the book, postage and handling. Please forward the books to:

Mary Jane Miller  
3230 Serena Avenue  
Carpinteria, CA 93013

Your assistance is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions please contact me at 805-566-0382 (home) or 805-969-4451 (work).

Very truly yours,

  
MARY JANE MILLER

21 July 1996

Dear Mary Jane:

I enjoyed getting to know your father in the postwar era, and learned more about him because one of his crew members, Clay Wilson, is a North Carolinian whom I have learned to know quite well.

Your books will be mailed tomorrow, book rate, which will take a few days longer, and will be in two packages.

I will also put together some other materials in which he was mentioned, which will probably be of interest to you. I am also including a xerox of two other photos which appear in the set of which the one you saw came. You may want to get smaller prints of them.

Thank you for letting me know about your father's death, and I offer my condolences. The following day I also received a note from Wilson on your father's death,

Sincerely yours,