

PERSONNEL RECORD UPDATE

306th BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION

Date. 4/28/95 . . .

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

LAST NAME: LENSKI FIRST NAME: GERHARD MI: TITLE:

Street Address: 404 WESTWOOD DR. Telephone: ( )

City, State CHAPEL HILL, NC Zip + 4: 27516-2801

Winter Address: Same Telephone: ( )

City, State Zip + 4: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth: AUG. 13, 1924 Wife's name: JEAN #c  
died 6/7/94 #gc  
 #ggc

College(s) attended: YALE Degree(s), & when: BA 1947  
Ph.D 1950

Last employment & job title & retirement date:  
ALUMNI DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY  
UNIVERSITY OF N.C. AT CHAPEL HILL

Serial #(s): 11092164 Squadron: 367 Specialty: Cryptography

Date joined 306th: May or June, 1943 If combat, what crew? \_\_\_\_\_

Special duties or assignments w/306th:  
Cryptographer at Group HQs

No of missions flown: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of last mission: \_\_\_\_\_

Date leaving 306th: Oct, 1945 Highest rank/grade w/306th: SGT.

Other 8AF units served with, and when: \_\_\_\_\_

Top service assignment after 306th: \_\_\_\_\_

USAF retirement date: Nov, 1945 Rank/grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Copies of old 306th orders, either from the Group or Station 111, or any of the Squadrons or other units serving with the 306th, are sought by the secretary, as many of these do not appear in any collections of materials in National Archives or the Air University.

If you know of others who served with the 306th and who do not appear in the current 306th Directory, please add their names and current/WWII hometowns or other addresses to the back of this sheet so that searches may be implemented to add them to our present 306th roster.

April 22, 1995

Dear Russ:

I think we met many years ago at the Carolina Inn here in Chapel Hill.

I was a cryptographer, trained in American codes and ciphers in Pawling, NY and in RAF codes and cyphers at Oxford. There was nothing heroic about the work we did, though it was somewhat unsettling at first to be working in a small room in which we had sticks of dynamite and dynamite caps to blow up the equipment and code books if the Germans dropped in for a visit--also a submachine gun to greet them with. Happily, none of this was ever needed.

The most interesting experience we had was a request sometime in 1944 for one of us enlisted men to volunteer for an unspecified assignment. As I recall it, the three of us involved had either 24 or 48 hours to decide who would "volunteer." Having been well trained, all of us initially declined but as time was running out, Staff or Tech Sgt. George Gruber, the oldest (he was a very old man, already in his mid-thirties at the time) and most senior of us decided to use his rank and take the assignment himself. He had been at Thurleigh since the Group first arrived and at that point it looked like the war might last forever. He decided he wanted a change of scene--no matter what it might entail.

George disappeared and was not heard from again until after VE Day when he appeared back at Thurleigh. Needless to say, my buddy and I who had remained behind wanted to know where he had been and what the assignment was. He told us that he had been in the Soviet Union working at the base at Poltava, which served the shuttle bombing raids over the oil fields in Romania. Naturally we asked him if he was glad he had taken the assignment. He said that if he had known what would be involved he would never have volunteered. But he also said that now that it was over he was glad he had taken the assignment.

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The story he told was that he had gone by ship down to Gibraltar and then through the Mediterranean to Palestine. There he and those he were with were loaded into buses and trucks and taken across deserts, etc. to the southern border of the Soviet Union in the Caucas<sup>a</sup>s. There they boarded a train which took them to the first river where the bridge was bombed out. They crossed the river on rafts or something of the sort, then boarded another train on the other side. This was repeated numerous times until they reached Poltava. George said that as a result of carrying so much equipment (I presume coding machines, books, etc. in addition to the usual equipment) he developed a hernia.



But this was only the beginning of his troubles. While his group was in Poltava it was hard to tell who the enemy was. When the GIs dated local girls they would find when they next revisited their homes that they were all boarded up and none of the neighbors seemed to know where the family had gone. (The GIs soon concluded that these families had been encouraged by the friendly militia or NKVD to move to sunny Siberia for their health.) Making matters worse, for many months the airfield was bombed by the Luftwaffe. German bombers would arrive shortly after dark and as they approached the airfield fires would suddenly be lighted around the perimeter by the local population which was pro-German, or at least anti-Soviet. All in all, not a very pleasant experience--though far superior to that of so many who served in the 306th.

In any case, I thought that you and perhaps some of the others who served in the old 306th might be interested in Gruber's experience, which must rank as one of the more unusual in the Group's experience.

One other small footnote. Those of us who served in cryptography with the 306th served originally in 1942 and 1943 under RAF officers. This may be another part of Thurleigh's history that should not be lost. I forget the name of the first RAF officer under whom I served, but I remember that he had been rotated back to England after being seriously wounded in North Africa. He viewed service in England as the next best thing to heaven and was an exceptionally fine man. Would that the American officer who replaced him had been half the man that he was. Ah well, no one ever said that the Army Air Force was perfect.

Thanks for all you have done to build the 306th organization.

Sincerely,



Gerhard Lenski

P.S. Do you happen to have current addresses for either George Gruber, Anthony Wolchok, or a fellow named Swanson who was an enlisted man in the Intelligence section at headquarters?