

A HISTORY OF THE 306th BOMBARDMENT GROUP - EIGHTH AIR FORCE  
Russell A. Strong, 4900 Applleridge Ct., Dayton, Ohio 45424

I am endeavoring to put together a good history of the 306th Bombardment group, an idea which has been in my mind for some years. I am working diligently on the matter, collecting all kinds of data and working through the official history and records of the group. I served as a navigator with the 367th squadron from June through November, 1944, and currently am director of news and information services at Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio. I solicit your assistance in my project.

I am interested in any special materials which you may have, such as good photographs of personnel, battle damage, plane insignia, etc. I am also interested in commendations (other than the usual Air Medal and DFC) you may have received, special stories which you may have in your possession, letters that are highly descriptive of combat action, or any other documents. I would appreciate receiving xeroxed copies. But, if you do not have such facilities readily available, I would appreciate the loan of materials which I might copy and return to you immediately. I am also interested in manuscripts of memoirs which you may have prepared, particularly if they were done within a couple of years of the events. Again, I would appreciate copies or the opportunity to copy them.

Name BEN F. MARCILONIS,  
Address 1500 CAPITOL LINCOLN PARK, MI.  
Telephone 928-7481 Date 2/8/76  
Occupation ELECTRICIAN. Employer CATES ELECTRIC CO.  
Address 4534 FERNLEE Telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
ROYAL OAK, MI.

Service Record:

Before joining the 306th:

2ND. PHOTO SQUADRON.  
FELTS FIELD, FT. LEWIS, WASH.

After leaving the 306th:

DISCHARGED FROM SERVICE

306th Record:

Arrival Date \_\_\_\_\_ Squadron or other unit 367TH,  
MOS 573 (I think) Combat Status NONE  
Missions Completed NONE  
Promotions \_\_\_\_\_  
Decorations AM olcs DFC olcs SS DSM DSC MH SM  
PH Battle Stars LEGION OF MERIT. other \_\_\_\_\_

(OVER)



Other personal data:

Description of Air Missions:

(What were the highlights of your combat career? What was your role? What heroics did you witness? What events were there of which you have special knowledge?)

HAVE NEVER SEEN OR HEARD FROM JAMES C. GREEN AFTER HE WAS SHOT DOWN. HEARD HE WAS A P.O.W.

AT ONE TIME, I KNEW THE ADDRESS OF CAPT. THOMAS THREADGILL, (LATER MAJOR) BUT WE HAVE NOT KEPT IN TOUCH. AT THAT TIME, HE LIVED IN FT. WORTH, TEX. HE WAS THE GROUP SUPPLY OFFICER. SORRY I CAN'T BE OF ANY HELP IN LOCATING ANYONE ELSE, EITHER.

I HAVE BEEN A CONSTRUCTION ELECTRICIAN SINCE 1952. LEARNED THE TRADE AT A TRADE SCHOOL, UNDER THE G.I. BILL, AND LOVE MY WORK. AT PRESENT, AM WORKING ON A NEW HOSPITAL, WHICH WILL BE COMPLETED IN ABOUT A YEAR OR SO. ALSO RECENTLY WORKED AT THE NEW PONTIAC STADIUM, OF WHICH YOU PROBABLY HAVE READ.

Award of Distinguished Service Cross	I
Award of Legion of Merit, Officer's Degree	II
Award of Legion of Merit, Legionnaire's Degree	III
Announcement of assignment	IV
Rescission of general orders	V

I--AWARD OF DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS. Under the provisions of Army Regulations 600-45, as amended, a Distinguished Service Cross is awarded to the following enlisted man:

Arizona T. Harris (Army serial No. 6296272), technical sergeant, 369th Bombardment Squadron (H), Army Air Forces, United States Army, for extraordinary heroism in military operations against an armed enemy of the United States. While on a combat mission over enemy occupied Continental Europe, January 1943, the airplane on which he was serving as top-turret gunner was badly damaged by enemy antiaircraft fire and forced out of formation. A large force of enemy fighter planes then concentrated their attacks on this lone airplane, finally driving it to a crash landing in the sea. Throughout the descent, and as the airplane disappeared beneath the waves, Sergeant Harris was seen to be still firing his guns at the enemy airplanes. The dogged determination to fight against all odds and sheer bravery displayed by Sergeant Harris upon this occasion upholds the highest traditions of the armed forces of the United States. Home address: 603 W. 8th St., Tempe, Arizona. (AG 220.5 M)

II--AWARD OF LEGION OF MERIT, OFFICER'S DEGREE. Pursuant to authority contained in War Department cable No. R5690, a Legion of Merit, Officer's Degree, is awarded to the following enlisted man:

James C. Green (Army serial No. 18078542), staff sergeant, 367th Bombardment Squadron, Army Air Forces, United States Army, for outstanding services rendered in designing and fabricating, during the month of December 1942, a new type machine gun mount. Working long and arduous hours in cooperation with another soldier, he perfected the highly successful new type armament, thus undoubtedly aiding in the successful completion of many operational missions since its adoption. The initiative, skill, and craftsmanship displayed by Sergeant Green reflects credit upon himself and the armed forces of the United States. Address: Cost, Texas.

Ben F. Marcilonis (Army serial No. 36115466), sergeant, 367th Bombardment Squadron, Army Air Forces, United States Army, for outstanding services rendered in designing and fabricating, during the month of December 1942, a new type machine gun mount. Working long and arduous hours in cooperation with another soldier, he perfected the highly successful new type armament, thus undoubtedly aiding in the successful completion of many operational missions since its adoption. The initiative, skill, and craftsmanship displayed by Sergeant Marcilonis reflects high credit upon himself and the armed forces of the United States. Address: 7127 Reuter, Dearborn, Michigan. (AG 220.5 M)

III--AWARD OF LEGION OF MERIT, LEGIONNAIRE'S DEGREE. Pursuant to authority contained in War Department cable No. R5690, a Legion of Merit, Legionnaire's Degree, is awarded to the following officer and enlisted man:

Robert B. Wallace, second lieutenant, AUS, Hq ETOUSA, for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services in the conduct of surveys of the opinion of enlisted personnel in the Army of the United

R E S T R I C T E D

(GO 19, ETOUSA, 3 Apr 1943, cont)

States, European Theater of Operations. His keen sense of organization, sound technical knowledge, close application, and persuasive cooperation have resulted in obtaining representative opinions of enlisted personnel of the Army of the United States, European Theater of Operations, on matters affecting them as individuals, which have contributed greatly to the maintenance of a high standard of morale and have reflected great credit upon the Army of the United States and upon himself.

Antoni Bednarchuk (Army serial No. 11042689), staff sergeant, 427th Bombardment Squadron (H), Army Air Force, United States Army, for outstanding performance of duty, under extreme difficulties resulting from a crash landing of a B-17F airplane on 5 December 1942. The airplane crashed in a remote section of the country, disabling the No. 4 engine. Transportation facilities were exceedingly limited; Sergeant Bednarchuk, aerial engineer, working long and uninterrupted hours, with only an engineers' emergency kit and improvised devices, changed engines, installing an engine designed for another type of airplane, placed the craft in flying condition, then acted as co-pilot on the flight to the base. The efficiency, energy, and technical skill displayed by this soldier were of the highest order, are worthy of emulation, and reflect credit upon himself and the armed forces of the United States. Address: The Adjutant General, Washington, D.C. (AG 210.5 x 220.5" M)

IV--ANNOUNCEMENT OF ASSIGNMENT. Colonel James C. Longino, General Staff Corps, is announced as Assistant Chief of Staff, G-4, vice Brigadier General George W. Griner, Jr., General Staff Corps, transferred. (AG 210.31-0)

V--RESCISSION OF GENERAL ORDERS. Section II, General Orders No. 4, Hq ETOUSA, 19 June 1942, as amended by Section II, General Orders No. 28, 18 August 1942, is rescinded. (AG 322.2 X)

By command of Lieutenant General ANDREWS:

C. H. BARTH,  
Brigadier General, GSC, Chief of Staff.

OFFICIAL:

*Ralph Pulsifer*  
RALPH PULSIFER,  
Colonel, AGD, Adjutant General. *RP*

DISTRIBUTION: "B"

R E S T R I C T E D

# Yank Solves Hat Problem

## Sergeant Makes Steel Toppers for Fliers

England (AP)—Sgt. Ben Marcilonis, who won the legion of merit for helping develop a nose gun mount for Flying Fortresses, is interested in steel hats.

There has been general recognition of fliers' need for flak helmets. Capt. J. J. Manning, Chicago, medical officer, says most of the men coming back wounded are hurt in the head or extremities.

Bomber crews found the regulation helmet unsatisfactory. It slipped and sometimes obscured vision. Ball turret gunners discovered the G. I. helmet was just a little too big to squeeze into their station.

Sgt. Marcilonis, 26, of Lincoln Park, Mich., got hold of some G. I. helmets and began pounding and cutting them into experimental shapes.

Taking out the composition lining and headstraps, he reversed the helmet, stamped out bulges to receive the earphones.

With an acetylene torch, he cut the helmet so the steel ended just above the eyebrows, assuring clear vision.

Fliers wear the homemade hats over their flying helmets.

A U.S. BOMBER STATION, England, Apr. 8.—American heavy bombers in the ETO are using a new type machine-gun mount, designed by two enlisted men in their spare time, and combat crews credited the armament with aiding in the increased destruction of enemy aircraft.

How they spent many spare hours designing the mount and improvising materials to complete the job was told here yesterday when the Legion of Merit, Officer's Degree, was awarded to 19-year-old S/Sgt. James C. Green, of Cost, Tex., and 26-year-old Sgt. Ben F. Marcilonis, of Dearborn, Mich.

An ex-armament chief, Green is now a prisoner of war. He volunteered for combat duty after collaborating with Marcilonis on the gun mount and failed to return from his second-mission two months ago.

Marcilonis, attached to the Engineer maintenance section here and a welder in

civilian life, credits Green with conceiving the idea of a new mount.

While he was keeping his bomber in flying shape, Jimmy got the idea for an improved gun mount," Marcilonis said. "He talked it over with me and we went to work. It only took a week to do the job, but we had to work like hell sometimes, running back and forth from ship to shop to get measurements, fit parts and finally install the mount."

Marcilonis and Green installed the original mount in the plane so Green could use it when he undertook combat duty.

A shortage of material left Marcilonis without welding wire while they were constructing the armament, so he used baling wire from old crates and barbed wire, minus barbs.

"While I was welding for Firestone, in Riverview, Mich., I learned quite a few tricks of the trade," Marcilonis said. "They came in handy for this job."

He also revealed that some of the material used for the mount was salvaged from a scrap pile.

When the new mount was submitted to Eighth Air Force officials for approval they recognized its value and immediately took steps to have it installed in bombers throughout the ETO.

Marcilonis is now working on a new tow bar, used by vehicles to haul planes around the field. He believes it will be a boon to maintenance crews who frequently bring broken bars to him for repair.

In citations from Lt. Gen. Frank M. Andrews, commanding general, U.S. forces in the ETO, accompanying the awards to Marcilonis and Green, they were credited with "rendering outstanding service, working long and arduous hours in perfecting the highly successful armament that is undoubtedly aiding in the successful completion of many operational missions."



## LONDON DIARY

# Ground Crews Work Closely with Fliers

BY MARJORIE AVERY

Free Press Foreign Correspondent

**SOMEWHERE IN ENGLAND**—At a United States Army Air Base—When these men aren't working they're like schoolboys. They often spend hours cooking up a practical joke.

The bombers have just come back from a six-hour flight. Our group acted as decoys to confuse German fighters guarding the coast. That was their job today—rather than bombing the target.



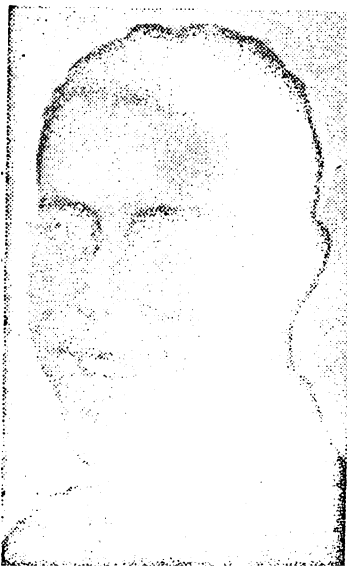
Miss Avery

Everybody is in high-spirits from the officers who are just coming out of the briefing room where they took down the reports of the combat crews—to the men, looking gnomelike in their flying suits and great boots, their faces red, their hair tousled. They look like a football team at the end of the first half, after hard play.

The sun is setting over the great field where the Fortresses are still throbbing. We have to wear dark glasses to look at the horizon. It's thrilling to see the beautiful formation in the sky flying home to other bases, still roaring defiance like a conquering army after the battle.

## Just a Teaser Before Dinner

THE COMBAT CREWS come from the briefing room taking enormous bites out of sandwiches. Sandwiches and coffee



to come home. There wasn't as much laughter then. The strain of their hidden nervousness made them quiet.

I sat out on the field with them in one of the trucks and between watching the sky, they told me bits about themselves and the grim time they had last winter when this base was pioneering in high altitude bombing.

Losses were high last winter when the Americans first started daylight bombing. Ships came home badly shot up. The ground crews worked hours through the cold and wet to get them back into flying shape. It was during these hours that the love grew and was cemented between the men who worked on the ground and the men who flew and battled in the planes.

## Vulnerable Spot of Fortresses

IT WAS a ground crew man who plugged up the only hole in the "Fortress" defense, the spot directly in front of the nose, which the nose guns couldn't defend. It didn't take the Germans long to locate this vulnerable spot, and they came in like rockets straight for the nose. The Fortress had to dive out of formation or risk being shot down.

You probably know the name of Sgt. Ben F. Marcilonis because he's one of this war's famous men. His home is 4174 South Fort, Lincoln Park, Michigan. His parents are Mr. and Mrs. John Toleikis. Sgt. Marcilonis was in the group this afternoon and grinned silently while the men were telling me about him. He deserves fame if it were only for that grin.

Sgt. Marcilonis and Sgt. Jimmy Green, of Cost, Texas, were members of a ground crew last winter that had to watch the Fortresses come back, day after day, shot up from these attacks. They decided to do something about it. They went to the welding shop and picked up odds and ends of parts and built a machine-gun mount which was placed smack in the front nose. A gun was mounted and the thing tested. Sgt. Marcilonis and Sgt. Green were pleased.

## Given an Award for Invention

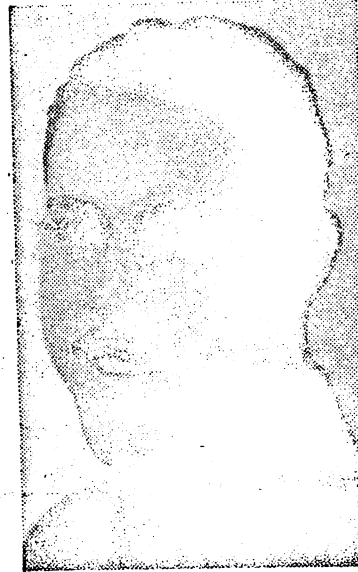
NOT LONG afterwards this new gun was placed in all the Fortresses and when the next

portals of the com-  
the men, looking gnomelike in  
their flying suits and great  
boots, their faces red, their hair  
tousled. They look like a foot-  
ball team at the end of the  
first half, after hard play.

The sun is setting over the  
great field where the Fortresses  
are still throbbing. We have  
to wear dark glasses to look at  
the horizon. It's thrilling to see  
the beautiful formation in the  
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## Just a Teaser Before Dinner

THE COMBAT CREWS come  
from the briefing room taking  
enormous bites out of sand-  
wiches. Sandwiches and coffee



SERGT. MARCILONIS

are fed them as soon as they  
land. But it's only a teaser.  
They're dashing noisily away as  
fast as possible to get dinner.

There were no casualties on  
this trip and no lost planes—  
and the crews are loud with  
the relief of getting back.  
Even if you don't go over the  
target — six hours of flying  
and acting as decoy for Ger-  
man fighters to dive at —  
isn't any fun. It's good to be  
home and all in one piece.

The ground crews are just as  
boisterous. They reflect the  
spirits of the combat men as a  
mother reflects the moods of a  
talented child. The ground crews  
are starting work now on the  
planes—they pick up where the  
combat men leave off.

## Base Pioneered in Altitude Bombing

THEY'VE BEEN sitting  
around in little groups for the  
past hour waiting for the planes

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the Fortress" defense, the spot  
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## Given an Award for Invention

NOT LONG afterwards this  
new gun was placed in all the  
Fortresses and when the next  
group flew over the enemy tar-  
get, it was plain murder they  
said. The German planes swoop-  
ed and came head on and into  
almost certain death.

Marcilonis was given the Le-  
gion of Merit, officers class, for  
his part in the work. He flashed  
his grin again and told me he'd  
never got the medal—just the  
ribbon. "Guess metal's scarce,"  
he drawled.

He was arc welder for Fire-  
stone Metal and Rubber Pro-  
ducts in Riverview before the  
war. His brother, John Tolei-  
kis, works for the Ford Motor  
Co.

Sergt. Green later joined a  
combat crew and went down  
over Germany. He's now a  
prisoner of war.

Pfc. Richard C. Rhinehart and  
Pfc. Charles A. Buck are both  
radio maintenance men in  
ground crews. When a mission  
is pending they get up at 1 a. m.  
and work furiously on a last-  
minute checkup of the plane.  
Then the bombs are loaded and  
everything is ready for the  
combat men to take over. This  
base has a record for loading  
bombs. One whole year of work  
and no accidents. The whole  
base has been given citations  
which won't be awarded until  
the group leaves England.

Sometimes a Fortress goes on  
the next to the last raid and  
then goes down and this is very  
hard to take for everybody.

28 January 1976

Mr. Ben F. Marcilonis  
1500 Capitol  
Lincoln Park, Mich.

Dear Ben:

As you will see from the accompanying sheets, I am working on a history of the 306th Bomb Group, an organization which I feel has always been slighted in books and articles recounting the work of the Eighth Air Force.

Today I received a letter from Bill Houlihan, and included in the listing was your address.

I am very interested in the Legion of Merit which you received, and would appreciate it very much if you could get me a copy of the citation, along with any other interesting background on the award, as well as your story about the development of the gun mount. Was anything on it ever published that you know of? and, if so, where? I'd like to find copies.

Also, by any chance, do you any pictures of the mount? If you do, I would like to borrow them for a few days so that I can get copies made.

Any information you can provide will be greatly appreciated, and I'd also like to have you fill out the enclosed form.

Do you know anything of the whereabouts of James C. Green, who also received the Legion of Merit for the same piece of work? Or for that matter, can you guide us to any other former 306ers?

A reunion for the 306th is now being planned for Oct. 16-17, 1976, probably in Dayton. Hope you can make it and you'll be hearing more about it later.

Sincerely yours,

Russell A. Strong

4900 Appleridge Court      Dayton, Ohio 45424

513/233-8735



## 2 Sergeants Build Bomber Gun Mount

1943  
A U.S. BOMBER STATION, England, Apr. 8—American heavy bombers in the ETO are using a new type machine-gun mount, designed by two enlisted men in their spare time, and combat crews credit the armament with aiding in the increased destruction of enemy aircraft.

How they spent many spare hours designing the mount and improvising materials to complete the job was told here yesterday when the Legion of Merit, Officer's Degree, was awarded to 19-year-old S/Sgt. James C. Green, of Cost, Tex., and 26-year-old Sgt. Ben F. Marcilonis, of Dearborn, Mich.

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He also revealed that some of the material used for the mount was salvaged from a scrap pile.

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