

21 May 1986

Mr. Wayne Stellish  
Aurelia, IA 51005

Dear Wayne:

Enjoyed your letter of 10 May, and especially appreciated the pictures. Several of them of planes were better than anything I have in my files.

This brings me to ask if you would be willing to loan me your negatives at some point in the future? I think there is a 306th man who would make prints for my files of excellent quality. I'll check with him as to whether he has set up a dark room since his latest move, or not. I don't currently have a darkroom available, or I'd do it myself.

You mentioned the "worst incident", and I would agree. I was standing in the interrogation room, heard the noise, and looked out just as the two planes hit. That picture appeared in the newspapers in the states in late January while I was on leave in California. It also appears at the Air Museum at Dayton, OH, with the identification that it was two 305th planes colliding over their base. I told them they'd made a mistake in the identification as to place, but they said it was too much trouble to make a change.

I'll have to check my aerial shots of the base to see if the caravan shows up in any of them. I think it probably does, and I'll be able to use it with the story. Its an interesting piece about something most people knew nothing about.

Some of those foggy days were something to fly in. In late August 44 we took off for the Ruhr, into the fog right off the runway and nothing clear until 12,000. On the way back my plane was flying low man in the low squadron so we were told to take off and find the field. We did. But there were three others planes flying around as well, all of us at 200 feet. We could see straight up and straight down, but not laterally. We finally found the flares off the east end of 24 and came in to land. Just as we did, two planes roared across about 50 feet above us. Only four got home that day. All of the rest diverted.

Good to hear from you and all the best,

In case to check on planes  
lining up on runway, or gear down

Primitive landing system.

Could talk to pilot.

4th star wings splur in Signal Corps.

Worked some in control tower.

If plane didn't have radio operating -  
then used lights.

Pulled by a jeep.

Nose of B-17 on top.



Dear Russell,

Thanks for the wonderful write up of the caravan and the extra issues of the Echoes. I'm giving one to each of the children. Thanks

I finally got the prints back from all of the pictures taken ~~over~~ over there (6 rolls of 36 exp). I'm using the new color film and a great improvement for color. They all came out good. Lucky for never tried the new camera before taking it over, one of total out, and very compact. The ripon and the Rolleiflex were too heavy and not quick enough.

Was given a tour of the field by Ralph Franklin. Went up to the now main gate carrying the enlarged pictures that I had taken of the field during the war. The fellows were very interested with them and finally one of them brought out a map of the field to compare with what I had taken then. When I left the field the map was among the pictures in the large envelope. How it got there don't know.

It seems like it could be classified. Well I made two copies of it, one to Bill Carlile and the other to you. Maybe you have one if not it's the three of us.

over



on the outside of the field there is only the officers mess, three barracks and a cement guard hut left. The last four by college farm (look on map) on the inside enlisted mess (2) (bath house) power plant and one building behind mess halls. The two cement spots where the theater and the chapel stood. Its sad isn't it. I walked around the guard <sup>hut</sup> among the tall weeds and in the back there was still a place for the honey bucket.

I will be disappointed not to be at the reunion this yr. When I called the hotel after I got back it was already filled up. The desk clerk said there were other hotels like #motel 8, which would have been better than nothing but when you said the banquet was filled that ~~a~~ canceled all plans. Maybe see you next yr.

your 306 B. G. Friend  
Wayne



Pear Russell

you caught me by surprise with the phone call. I had just walked in the door coming back from Denver. Was out there for almost a month with the Easter fine weather then the two ft. of snow at one time. They said the worst in 14 yrs.

Wanted to take the Grandsons to the airforce academy to see the plaque we put up but the snow messed up that plan.

I'm sending some snaps and didn't know if you wanted caravan or not. I have negatives of all the pictures that I took over there and there are a lot of them. The only one I didn't have is one of airfield with location of caravan and the reprint did not come out as good as the original (Caravan in the circle) Fighting papa you had. Remember seeing shoo shoo baby but do not have picture. Was from different field.

most of us went to the airfield control school, Swinden England a British field and after couple months got us to the food and the wild austrian pilots training there. over



The main purpose of the caravan at the side end of runway was mostly visible contact with the planes. Fog was a problem, helping line up with the runway by flares or radio, giving lamps signals to non radio aircraft. The placement of caravan and landing (etc) showed what runway to land for non radio aircraft. I still wonder how they found the runway with the fog and equipment out.

My experience they were all fine pilots, and of course had to be. Sometimes with the bad weather the caravan was the first to see anything wrong with landing.

Some of the planes were in such bad shape it had to be a miracle that they made it in. There were a few mistakes tail wheel up, running gear up, flares not down, to high or to low.

The worst incident (don't if Bill was there) and the one I will always remember was when the two squadrons crisscross over the field in the fog at the same height. I was on the platform of the caravan to see better because of the fog. Two planes landing.



There was a row of planes right over the field. They saw each other at the same time in a little clearing. Some went down others pulled up.

One went so low it shook the caravan. Two didn't make it and they collided in mid air and seemed poised there for ever before coming down very close to the caravan. Someone took a picture. It was in the paper back here. My sister sent the clipping and it said this happened on some American field in England. Howvent all of us lucky to be here come a long way. To the young now it is way in the past. Some it is just a faded memory.

Will try to see you at Payton (God willing). Hope my wife will be back from Ireland by that time. She goes often and sometimes I follow. If I do might go again to Thurleigh. Thanks to the wife she has friends in most countries.

your 306 B & friend  
Wayne



June 1, 1956

Pear Russell

I'm sending some negatives and whenever you're done with them you can send them back. Have many more but will bring the album and you can see what you want. Do you have pictures where the plane hit the caravan and damage to the plane. I have them. Also pictures of Germany that I took just after the war taken from the air, Cologne Cathedral, bombed bridges on the Rhine, Frankfurt, old trenches, Siegfried line Paris and at the field, Thurling and Bedford taken during the war, then at the same angle in color in 1977. What a change, like the main gate, mess halls, barracks sites and etc. I'm going to duplicate the album for the Grandsons. Good thing I have the negatives otherwise it would cost a lot. A print of a print do not come out that good and here they are £2.00. Just looking at Bob Hope on T.V. have a picture of him with Francis Langford when at the field. I traveled all of the British Isles during the war including the Isle of Man, taking pictures all the way. Was the first one to get a pass to Ireland just after the war direct from Eisenhower Headquarters on a teletype form.



What a coincidence that you mentioned the foggy days of flying and the time you took off in the fog. I was on duty at the time in the caravan. We had a man with a walkie talkie and the end of the runway saying when the plane had left the runway then I would give a green light to the next one (we had green and red lamps) The caravan had a direct phone line with the tower to compare plane no. and to log it. I think the whole field left that morning in the fog. Why so early and in such fog I never did know. We had two flare guns red and green. They had a stub barrel about three inches across, really hard on the wrist. I don't know if the Sodium lights helped much or not beside the runway. There were many happening good and bad and one where I was a good diplomat. The time we had a air raid and there was a British landcaster on the runway practicing night landing. The whole crew head for the caravan and cleaned the caravan out of K rations spam and other goodies we always had from the mess hall ~~bakery~~ bakery.

over



I saw the Memphis Bell and choo choo baby  
on our field sometime. Must have been  
for repairs or something. Why I didn't take  
pictures, sometimes I don't know, maybe late  
for work or no camera. That's like many  
things in life that go by only once.

✱  
Taking the wife to catch the plane  
tomorrow for Ireland. She will be there for  
sometime. Maybe just will go in July and  
back in Aug. If I do maybe will see the  
field again. My son from Denver just flew  
in. My son here flies out once a week.

Will we meet in Dayton  
Wayne

P.S.

The wife says I have a picture of the  
Memphis Bell but can't find it as of now.  
Just send sending neg. of caravan and  
the planes if you want to flow them up.