



Royce Hopkins Military Summary

US Army Air Force - World War II

8th Air Force – 306th Bombardment Group-Heavy

367th Bomb Squadron

Royce joined the Army Air Corps in December 1943 in Oklahoma at the age of 19. He was sent to Santa Ana California for basic training from December 1943 until February 1944 when he was then sent to Minter Field in California for Aviation Cadet training. In April 1944 he was sent to Douglass Arizona for pilot training. He trained in Douglas Arizona where he achieved the rating of Pilot on June 27, 1944. Royce was assigned the rank of 2nd Lieutenant.

He was sent to Drew Field in Florida for his final certification on July 27, 1944 and then on October 31, 1944, he was sent to Hunter Field in Georgia for training flights and flight crew assignment. In November 17, 1944 Royce was assigned to a flight crew and given orders to board a train to Camp Kilmer in New Jersey and then report to New York City for transfer overseas to Thurleigh England. He was attached to the Eighth Air Force, 306th Bombardment Group - Heavy, 367th Bomb Squadron – known as the “Clay Pigeon Air Force”. He was assigned to a crew led by First Pilot Jesse Patten and he flew with this crew most of the time.

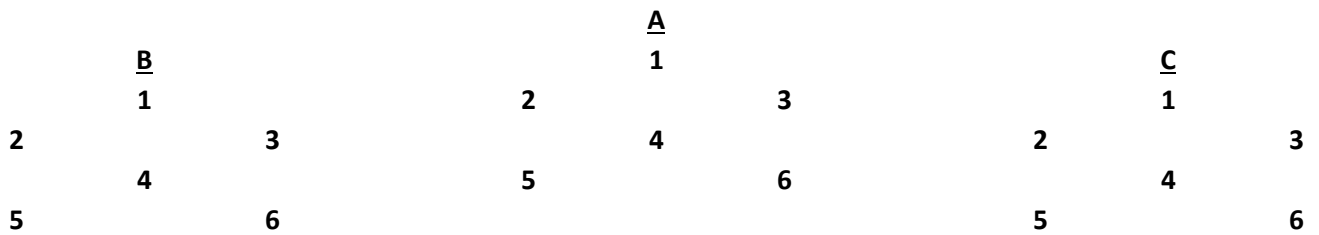
The 306th Bomb Group was known as the “First over Germany” as they flew the first missions to bomb Germany. Royce arrived at Thurleigh in December 1944 where he flew training missions and trained on a “link trainer”. His first combat mission was January 1, 1945. He flew 26 combat missions (his last being April 8, 1945) before the war ended and then he was assigned a dual role of air army occupation in Europe and the Casey Jones project to map Europe and Africa. He became Squadron Commander of the 367th Bomb Squadron. One of the first duties they had was to help move troops across Europe for shipment back to the US – the “Green Project”. The AAF was reorganized and the 306th became part of the 9th AF in May 1945. He remained at Thurleigh until December 1945 when he was assigned to station Giebelstadt in Germany. It had been a base for Germany’s ME-262 Jet Fighter – later determined to be the first successful jet fighter. During this period after the war in Europe ended he was also assigned to the Flight Evaluation Board and was certified as an Instrument Flight Examiner and trained pilots. He was promoted to 1st Lieutenant on April 27, 1945. On December 26, 1945, while at Giebelstadt in Germany he was appointed as the Commanding Officer during the absence of Major Darby. In January 1946 he was assigned to be a member of the military court to hear any trials that came up. In spring 1946, the 367th was transferred to the 305th Bomb Group and moved to Istres Air Base in southern France. Royce became the Commander of the prisoner of war camp there where his duty was to find and ship German prisoners back to Germany. In October 1946, he was assigned to the Pilot Standardization Board and remained

part of the 305th. He continued to serve in Europe, including serving at Lechfeld Air Base in Augsburg, Germany - performing various duties for which the records are not very complete until his honorable discharged on April 12, 1947. During his service he was awarded 4 air medals, 5 battle stars, a commendation medal for a special assignment, a Purple Heart and two Presidential commendations for the group. The Purple Heart was for a flak injury to his neck on one of his missions but it is unclear which mission due to the lack of detailed records for all his combat missions. A couple of pictures of Royce and a B-17:



Below is a listing of his combat missions along with excerpts from the 367th Squadron diary. He flew as second pilot in most of these missions. A map from one of the missions is included at the end of this report to help illustrate the flight path taken for the missions.

The missions contained 3 Groups of air craft (a/c) – a Lead and a High and a Low Group. Each group contained 12-16 a/c. The following flight pattern chart will show where in the flight formation his B-17 flew for the mission. This chart indicates one of the groups as they all had similar formations.



Royce arrived in Thurleigh on December 13, 1944 and below is the Squadron report for that month.

December 1944 – Squadron report - Again we have gone through a month's combat operations without encountering an enemy attack. May our good fortune continue. There have been some improvements to our site due to weekly inspections. Fences have been erected to control traffic and reduce the mud. For several weeks now the squadron has been publishing a weekly newspaper, "Pigeon Poop" that gives the things of interest that happen in the squadron. It has created a sense of unity that is hard to attain on a base where so many organizations function as a unit. Every section contributes to each edition so that a full picture is presented each week of the entire activity and social life of our unit.

A sign has been erected at the entrance to the orderly room giving the new squadron name "Clay Pigeon Air Force". This new moniker adds a bit of zest and an air of dash to the organization and even though we may be a bit small to fulfill the name, our determination, aims and efforts fully justify it.

On New Year's Eve the group had a party. It was held in the 8 Mess with all the trimmings and decorations that would be expected on such an occasion. A buffet supper was served and dancing to the music of the Esquires made it a real celebration. Everyone put their best into having a good time hoping this would be the last.

Our squadron for this month has set an unprecedented record in its training program. In filling all assigned trainer hours. We must have set some kind of record.

January 1, 1945 - First combat mission – **KASSEL, GERMANY** - to bomb an Oil refinery and Marshalling yards. The 306th sent 36 a/c as 40th B Group, and our squadron flew nine a/c in the high squadron, which bombed Limburg, Ten a/c were damaged mainly from flak and one was mia. There were no detailed flight records.

January 2, 1945 – KYLLBURG, GERMANY - The 306th flew 36 a/c and three spares as 40th A Group to bomb the railroad tunnel at Kyllburg. Our squadron sent nine a/c as the lead flight and low element of the lead group. The plane Royce flew in had to return to base with an engine fire. All returned safely to base.

January 3, 1945 - HERMULHEIM, GERMANY - The 306th flew 36 a/c and three spares as 40th Group to bomb the M/Y at Hermulheim. The 367th sent nine a/c as the three three-ship high elements of each squadron. Royce flew in a/c 574 in position C 2 of the Low group. They dropped all bombs on target. On the return they lost an engine and left the formation around Brussels but made it back to base safely.

January 5, 1945 - NIEDERMENDIG, GERMANY - The 306th Group flew 36 a/c as 40th A Group to attack the air field at Niedermendig. Our squadron sent nine a/c as the lead flight and low element of the low group. Royce flew with the 398th in the low group at position A 6. All bombs were dropped on the target and all returned to base safely. They flew in a/c #42-102578 known as "We Promised". (Picture)

January 8, 1945 - SPEYER, GERMANY - The 306th flew 40th A Group to bomb a communications center south of Landau. Our squadron sent seven a/c as the lead flight and lead a/c of the low element of the low squadron. Major Earl W. Kesling, the C.O. of the 306th flew with Capt. Edward W. Magee to lead the mission and flew in position 1 of the lead. Royce flew with this plane in the tail gunner position. All bombs were dropped on the target and all returned safely to base.

January 10, 1945 - GYMNICH, GERMANY - The 306th flew the 40th B Group to bomb Gymnich Air field just east of Cologne. Our squadron flew nine a/c in the high squadron as the lead flight and low element. Capt. Y. Bradley Butterfield, our operations officer, led the squadron. The route from the IP to the target lay just to the south of Cologne and on the bomb run our formation was crowded north over the city. The clouds had broken and we were visual targets for Jerry's flak guns. The lead caught the worst damage, and our squadron got off comparatively lightly, with five a/c damaged and no personnel injured. The mission had 15 a/c damaged and 5 MIA. Royce flew in the high group in position #A3 in a/c #43-38683Q – no name. His mission report showed they observed a/c 446A pulling out of formation with a wing on fire. Their a/c was severely hit by flak close to the target and had a rack malfunction where some bombs dropped short of the target. They made another pass over the target and other bombs were stuck and would not drop. The stuck bombs were jettisoned over the channel on return.

January 14, 1945 - COLOGNE, GERMANY - The 306th flew 40th A Group to bomb the Hohenzollern Bridge in Cologne. Our squadron flew twelve a/c as the lead squadron. Capt. Henry E. Hanson, the lead pilot, with Col. James S. Sutton, group C.O., was unable to take off due to mechanical problems with the a/c. Lt. Joseph N. Hess, the deputy lead with Lt. Col. Eugene C. "LaVier", 423rd C.O., assumed the lead from the start and flew in this position throughout the mission. The target was perfectly clear and each squadron made a separate run. The lead's strikes were on the west approach to the bridge and the high squadron's bombs straddled the center of the bridge; the low a/c Marshalling yard in the city. Moderate, accurate flak was encountered at the target for four minutes. Twenty five a/c were damaged. Royce flew in the Lead group in position A/5 in a/c 43-38302Z – "Hellcatt Hattie". All bombs dropped on target. They had slight flak damage and one of the crew hurt his back.

For this mission – there is a telegram in the file from Doolittle congratulating all units of the 8th Air Force on the results of the mission to destroy these priority targets.

January 15, 1945 - FREIBURG, GERMANY - The 306th Group flew 16 a/c as the 40th C Group to bomb Freiburg by PFF. Our squadron sent nine a/c as the three three-plane high elements for the squadrons, and Capt. Henry E. Hanson flew the lead a/c. There were only 10-12 bursts of flak at the target, low and inaccurate. Royce flew in a/c 44-6604A – no name – in the High group at position C/2. They dropped all bombs on the secondary target. Some flak was observed but no damage or injuries.

January 17, 1945 - BIELEFELD, GERMANY - The 306th Bomb Group flew 36 a/c and three a/c as spares to bomb Bielefeld by Gee-H. Our squadron sent nine a/c as the lead flight and low element of the low squadron, with Capt. Gordon L. Donkin leading. Lt. Vernon F. Dailey filled in the high squadron and flew the mission. No flak was encountered and no E/A were seen. Our fighters gave close support. Royce flew in a/c 683Q in Low group in position A/5. No damage or injuries reported.

January 29, 1945 - KOBLENZ, GERMANY - The 306th flew 36 a/c as the 40th B Group to bomb Koblenz by PFF. Our squadron flew nine a/c: as the lead flight and low element of the low squadron with Capt. Gordon L. Donkin leading. Capt. Henry E. Hanson led the Group. However, he was forced to abandon the lead to Lt. Richard H. Claeys - 368th, when his electrical system failed. The deputy had no Gee-H equipment and made his run on Koblenz, the briefed secondary. Royce flew in a/c 42-102547F – "Rose of York" (dedicated by Queen Elizabeth) in the Low group in position A/6. All bombs were dropped on the secondary – no damage or injuries reported.

January 1945 – Squadron summary - During January of this year we were able to fly 15 missions. This is a larger number than the combined raids of January 1943 and January 1944. We were very fortunate in having so many operational days. Most of all, it is a tribute to the development of our blind bombing techniques that have made these pulverizing attacks on Hitler's war machine possible. Today many of the pinpoint targets that would do credit to any bombardier under the best visual conditions are being attacked through a solid undercast. It might be said that the striking powers of every a/c has been more than doubled by these developments.

February 3, 1945 - BERLIN, GERMANY - Today's mission has been described as the most devastating raid ever run on the German capitol. The entire 8th Air Force threw its whole weight against the disorganized and panicky aiming points were concentrated in that part of the city where buildings which house the administrative agencies of the German government are located. At this time these agencies were swamped with the many problems connected with stemming the Red onslaught which threatened to engulf them, and the handling of the vast civilian population evacuated from the east. From this nerve center emanated the direction of the whole German war effort and soon through it flowed the bulk of material and troops for the Eastern Front. The 306th flew 36 a/c as the 40th C Group. Our squadron, with Capt. Edward W. Magee leading and Lt. Col. Eugene A. Lavier 4 23rd C.O., riding as air commander, flew nine a/c as the lead flight and low element of the lead squadron. The trip to the target was flown without incident, Buckeye reported that the target was open and when our Group arrived at the target the bombardier was able to pick up his aiming point miles away. Photos show our strikes in the vital area mentioned before amid a scene of destruction such as few men have seen before. The German Air Force was unable to stop or frustrate the stream of bombers, and our crews report no E/A seen. Under these visual conditions, however, Jerry was able to throw up a wall of intense, accurate flak. Just at bombs away Lt. George Lockett's a/c received a direct burst of flak in the right wing that tore off the wing. Up to four chutes were reported from the plane before it disappeared in flames. Lt. Roland A. Lissner's a/c was hit and a fire started in the U3 engine which later went out and he was able to land in Sweden safely. St. George W. Beck, Jr., tail gunner for Lissner, was hospitalized in Sweden with a slight flak injury, the nature of which was not reported. Lt. Vernon F. Daley's a/c, The Rose of York, was hit and lost an engine. A gas tank was also hit and fuel was leaking steadily. On board was a correspondent Guy Byam from the BBC. Last report heard from Daley was he thought he could make it across the channel. His plane and crew was never found. In total 14 a/c were damaged and 3 were lost. Royce flew on a/c #683 in the Lead group in position B/1. There is no complete report of 367 damaged planes but at least 6 were damaged and 3 were lost. No injuries reported by Royce's crew members.

February 6, 1945 – FULDA, GERMANY – The 306th flew 36 a/c as the 40th B Group. Weather was very bad and many planes were unable to find their formations and flew with other groups. Royce's plane was a/c #42-37840Y "Combined Operations" – that returned to base as the navigator was unable to find the formation. This did not count as a combat mission for him. On this mission only 9 a/c landed back at base due to the weather.

February 9, 1945 – LUTZKENDORF, GERMANY – The 306th flew 36 a/c as the 40th A Group to bomb the synthetic oil plant at Lutzendorf. The Clay Pigeon Air Force flew 8 a/c in the lead squadron and low element of the low squadron. Some flak was encountered but all returned safely. 6 a/c damaged and 1 MIA. No crew reports were available so we do not know where Royce flew in this mission.

February 10, 1945 – DULMEN, GERMANY – The 306th flew 39 a/c as the 40th C Group to bomb oil storage installations at Dulmen by instruments, after finding the primary, Wesel, overcast. The group had been briefed to circle if the target was not open, with the hope that an opening might appear so that a visual run could be made. The group, after passing three times and finding a solid undercast proceeded to bomb Dulmen by PFF, with unobserved results. Our squadron flew nine a/c as the lead flight and low element of the high squadron. Royce flew a/c #44-65150 "Larrupin Lou" in the High group at position B/1. They dropped all bombs on the target and there was no damage and all returned safely.

February 14, 1945 - DRESDEN, GERMANY - The 306th flew 39 a/c as the 40th C Group to bomb the transportation facilities at Dresden in order to disrupt the enemy's flow of supplies to the Russian front. Our squadron flew eight a/c with the lead squadron. The route to the target was flown without incident. The target was overcast and each squadron made its own run. The lead and low squadrons dropped on their first runs, but

the low was forced to make a second run in order to pick up the target on the Mickey scope. This caused them to lose the Division stream and they were later attacked by enemy fighters. One was disabled and turned back to go towards Russian territory. Another reported that he was low on gas and was landing at B-53, but has not been heard from since. No E/A were encountered by the lead or high squadrons. In accurate flak was encountered along the route, but none at the target. Five of the group's a/c were damaged - neither from our squadron. Royce flew a/c 683Q in the Lead group in position B/1. All returned safely and there was no damage.

February 16, 1945 - DORTMUND, GERMANY - The 306th flew 39 a/c as the 40th B Group to bomb a coking plant at Dortmund. The 367th squadron sent nine a/c as the three-plane elements in each squadron. The bombing was visual and excellent. Although we had been briefed to expect a ground fog for the target, it was perfectly clear and easily identified. All three squadron's bombs are identified on the target by our photos. Moderate AA fire was met at the target but none, of our planes were damaged. Royce flew a/c 683Q in the High group in position C/1. All bombs were dropped on the target and all returned safely. Eight a/c were damaged but none from the 367th.

Operation Clarion - In mid-September 1944 General Henry H. ("Hap") Arnold, commander of the U.S. Army Air Force, proposed that every available British and American airplane be used on some clear day to swarm all over the German Reich, attacking military objectives in towns that had hitherto been unmolested by the air forces. This type of operation, he felt, would afford the Germans an opportunity to witness at firsthand the might of the Allies and to reflect on their own helplessness. But clear days that opened up the entire expanse of Germany to such a venture were rarities, especially during the autumn, and during the winter the Allied air forces were tied up, in part, with the German counter-offense in the Ardennes, and, in part, giving first priority to attacking German oil targets.

By the middle of February 1945 the several Allied land armies were prepared to resume the offensive toward the Rhine which the Germans had interrupted in December. The Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) requested the air forces to utilize all available air power in a blow at German rail and water transportation facilities which would result in an immediate disruption of the German lines of communication and transportation system in general, and that the impact would be of direct and immediate benefit to the ground forces. Each of the Allied air commands which participated was given an area for attack, secondary targets and targets of opportunity to be chosen in the same general area as the primaries if the latter could not be seen. The operation was code-named "Clarion."

The opportunity to launch Operation Clarion came on February 22, when most of Germany was expected to be vulnerable to visual-bombing attacks. The Eighth Air Force was assigned to bomb several dozen towns in the middle and north central part of Germany. The Eighth Air Force had to depart from its usual operating procedures in several respects. Most important of all, the heavy bombers were to attack from about 10,000 feet or even lower instead of the customary 20,000-25,000-foot altitudes. Also, they were to form small attacking units instead of organizing into the usual large formations. All the Eighth's fighters were to go along, mainly for independent strafing and bombing operations.

On February 22 the Eight Air Force effectively sortied 1,372 bombers (B-17s and B-24s) and 677 Fighter escorts. These bombers would drop 3,895.1 tons on assigned targets and numerous targets of opportunity. Eighty-five of the bombers sustained battle damage from flak, which was not surprising in view of the low bombing altitudes. The operation took place over 2 days – February 22nd and 23rd. The 306th Bomb Group participated in this operation and below are the missions the 367th Bomb Squadron completed as part of this operation.

February 22, 1945 – WITTSTOCK, GERMANY – Today the 306th flew its **300th mission** against the German Third Reich. The group flew First Air Division lead with 36 a/c as the 40th A Group. This mission was something new (see information on Operation Clarion above) in the annals of the 8th Air Force in that widely dispersed targets (marshalling yards) in Central Germany were attacked from medium altitudes – no more than 12,000 feet. We flew 9 a/c as the three-plane high elements in each squadron. The target was clear when the lead started its run. A few miles short of the target a malfunction caused bombs away but the lead was able to warn the low so they were able to drop on the target. The High was unable to communicate within the plane and the bombardier did not drop the bombs. They circled and dropped on the railroad yard instead with great success.

This mission was seen as the greatest insult to GAF of the war. Only 2 E/A were seen and they did not fire on the group. There was no flak. Upon returning to base – the entire group passed over the control tower in beautiful formation in spite of a low ceiling and poor visibility. Everyone who could be away from their job was on the line to welcome the aircraft back. Royce flew in a/c #683Q in the Low group in position C/1. All bombs dropped on target and all back safely.

February 23, 1945 – PLAUEN, GERMANY – The 306th flew 39 a/c as the 40th C Group to bomb Plauen. Our squadron sent 9 a/c as the lead flight and low element of the low squadron. It would need to be PFF due to low visibility and each squadron would make their own runs. There was no flak at the target and none was encountered enroute. Our P-51's gave excellent support and seen to shoot down E/A near Stuttgart. Royce flew a/c # 683Q in the Low group in position B/1 with 1st pilot Rowley. All bombs were dropped on the target and all returned safely.

February 1945 – Squadron Summary - On the 10th of February the officers held a stag party at the A mess. Songs that go well with beer and Scotch had been mimeographed so that the crowd was really beating out the rhythm in short order. Arthur (Doc) Weihe was the star performer, first as the barren wife and later as the coach, to a bunch of soda jerks. The high spot of the evening came when the American hot dogs and buns were brought out. A hot bed of coals and sharpened sticks made roasting them a real pleasure. In fact you could almost forget you were drinking mild and bitter instead of Budweiser. Everyone agreed that this was the best stag party ever held at the base.

On the 13th, the enlisted men held a dance in their new club here at the base. The beer flowed freely and the girls were both beautiful and numerous. Colonel James S. Sutton came early and stayed till the last beam faded. When he could get away from the men he showed he could cut a fancy step with the best of the them. The Esquires made sweet music for the dance until midnight, and then the girls said a fond farewell and GI transport delivered them safely home. By this time the men had made enough passes at the bar to do away with all the beer, and that's a lot of beer even for the Clay Pigeon Air Force to put away. Everyone had a grand time and the party was considered an unqualified success.

March 1, 1945 - NECKARSULM, GERMANY - The 306th flew 36 a/c as the 40th c Group with the 367th flying nine a/c as the lead flight and low element of the high squadron. The target was the marshalling yard. The strikes were obscured by clouds, but the smoke bomb trails indicate a direct hit on the M/Y. No E/A were encountered and there was no flak at the target. A few scattered bursts were observed, but astute navigation carried the 306th clear of this and no damage was incurred. Royce flew in a/c # 42-97133W "Pretty Baby" in position B/1 in the High group and all bombs were dropped on the target.

March 7, 1945 - SIEGEN, GERMANY - The 306th sent 39 a/c, including three spares, as the 40th B Group to bomb installations at Dortmund. The bombing was to have been Gee-H but the equipment failed and it was necessary for the PFF operators to take over. The primary was not of sufficient size to be seen on a Mickey scope, so the group proceeded to Siegen, the briefed secondary. Our squadron was flying nine a/c as the lead flight and low element of the low squadron. Bombing was successful and no E/A seen. Two planes collided when one dropped back and his tail hit the prop of the one behind. Tail gunner died but all others accounted for. Royce's a/c # 683Q was in position B/1 of the Low group and saw a propeller and other parts fly by without hitting their plane. All bombs on target and all returned safely.

March 10, 1945 - DORTMUND, GERMANY – The 306th sent 39 a/c as the 40th A Group to bomb the Marshalling yards at Dortmund. Our squadron flew nine a/c as the lead flight and low element of the lead squadron. The briefed secondary, the Dortmund M/Y, was bombed by all three squadrons. No E/A were seen and our fighters gave good area support to the target, but few were seen on the return trip. Low tracking flak at the target damaged only one a/c and no one in this plane was injured. Royce flew in a/c # 683Q in position B/1 of the Lead group. All bombs were dropped on the secondary and no injuries.

March 12, 1945 - SWINEMUNDE, GERMANY - The 306th flew 36 a/c to Swinemunde as the 40th C Group to bomb shipping in the port area. Our squadron sent nine a/c as the lead flight and low element of the low squadron. The assembly and route were as planned. Buckeye Red reported the target overcast and the group prepared for instrument bombing. Each squadron made a separate PFF run. Our photos showed a solid undercast with heavy smoke billowing up through the clouds, and it is felt that the target was hit. Meagre to moderate low flak at the target caused no damage. A convoy also fired light flak at the formation and the tracers could be seen thousands of feet below our a/c. All planes returned safely. Royce flew in a/c #683Q in position B/1 of the Low group. All bombs were dropped on the target and no injuries were reported.

March 19, 1945- PLAUEN, GERMANY - The 306th flew 36 a/c as the 40th B Group to bomb Plauen by PFF. The mission was supposed to have gone to Molbis, but weather conditions prompted the Air Division leader to attack Plauen. Dense, persistent contrails made formation flying very difficult and all three squadrons made PFF runs. Only the high was able to make a visual correction, and the contrails and haze were so dense that no strikes showed on the photos. Our squadron sent nine a/c as the lead flight and low element of the high squadron. No E/A were seen and our fighters gave excellent support. Only about six bursts of flak were reported at the target, and meager fire was observed from Mainz on the way in. None of our planes were damaged. No detailed mission reports are available by crew.

March 24, 1945 - Dutch side of the German/Dutch border – In the second mission of the day – we sent 3 a/c to bomb air fields. Jesse Patten flew as the high element with 2 other planes as wingmen. The bombing was successful and there were no injuries. Royce flew with Patten in the Lead group position A/1 in a/c #951. Mission successful and all returned to base safely.

March 1945 – Squadron report - During the month of March the Group flew 21 missions to attack 23 briefed targets. This equals the record for a month's operations which was set last June, when we were preparing for and supporting the invasion of Hitler's "Fortress Europe". There have been no radical changes in the organization during the month. No parties were held and we are all set for at least one blowout in April. With the advent of spring, a number of one strand barbed wire fences have been erected in the site to keep the foot traffic on the paths, so the grass will at least get a bead start this year before it is trampled down. Baseball practice has started and our prospect look for a very successful season.

March has seen the Rhine River crossed in many places and Allied armor is now racing through Germany at an undreamed of pace. It seems utterly impossible that a new line of defenses can be set up. It is with high hopes that March closes and a new month begins.

April 3, 1945 - KIEL, GERMANY - The 306th led the First Air Division with 36 a/c as the 40th A Group to bomb Kiel. Our squadron sent twelve planes as the high squadron. The target was completely overcast and all bombing was by instruments. On the way in the Mickey operator in Lt. Winslow's a/c found that his set would not give a proper return and the lead was turned over to his deputy, Lt. Roy E. Hoffman, who made the bomb run. The flak was low and inaccurate when we passed over the target. No a/c were damaged. Royce flew on a/c 883Q in position C/1 of the High group and dropped all but 2 bombs on target – two were hung up in the rack.

April 4, 1945 - FASSBERG, GERMANY - The 306th flew 36 a/c as the 40th C Group to bomb the Fassberg Air field. Our squadron sent nine a/c as the lead flight and low element in the lead squadron. The target was covered by 8-9/10ths overcast, and only the lead was able to drop. Lack of detail made identification very difficult but our low element bombs were positively identified as being on and near the munitions factory at Unterluss (secondary) with good results. Clouds prevented identification of strikes at Fassburg, but bombs away pictures seem to indicate hits on the Air field. No flak or fighters were encountered; however, one crew reported seeing a dogfight between P-F1s and an E/A. Royce flew on a/c # 197K – “Punchy” in the A/3 position of the Lead group. All bombs were dropped on the target all returned safely to base.

April 5, 1945 - WEIDEN, GERMANY - The 306th flew 36 a/c as the 40th B Group to attack Weiden. Our squadron sent nine a/c as the three high elements. Capt. Henry Kornegay, Lts. Donald C. MacDonald, and Joseph Hahn, Jr., flew with the lead. Lts. Frederick W. Mitchell, Jackson O. Wells, and Shelby W. Scott flew with the high, and Lts. Hubert Verdick, Verlin Higginbotham and Roy Marks flew with the low. Lt. Hahn was unable to find the formation and joined the 92nd BG to bomb with them. Each squadron made a separate PFF run with unobserved results. There was no flak and only one E/A was seen. It was chased by P-FIs and did not attack our formation. Lt. Higginbotham was forced to land at Friston to refuel before returning to base. No a/c were damaged and no personnel were injured. No detailed crew records are available to show where Royce flew on this mission.

April 8, 1945 - HALBERSTADT, GERMANY - The 306th flew 36 a/c as the 40th A Group to bomb the Marshalling yards at Halberstadt by PFF with last minute visual corrections. The high was forced to drop on the lead as their PFF equipment was inoperative. Photos show strikes in the built up area. The low made a separate PFF run and photos show strikes on a road intersection near the M/Y. Our squadron had nine a/c as the lead squadron. No E/A were seen and our fighters gave good support to the target. On the way back the leader was informed that one group of fighters would be unable to show up; however, support by the one remaining group was adequate. There was no flak on the entire route. 10/10ths clouds covered the base at takeoff and broke to CAVU for a while over Germany, but increased to 5/10ths in the target area. No difficulty was encountered on the mission, and all a/c returned safely. This was Royce's final combat mission and no detail crew reports are available.

April 1945 – Squadron report - The mission of April 19 was the 34th mission of this group and with it we finished our tour of operations against the German Third Reich. The last few weeks have seen the ground forces overrun so much of Germany that the targets left were not really heavy bomber targets. Most of our missions for the month were essentially tactical and the area in which we could operate has steadily diminished until there was nothing left for us to bomb. The end of the war cannot be far distant.

On the 14th of the month, Lt. Robert A. Vieille took off on a practice mission for Ireland to take a number of men on pass there. On the way up the a/c ran into bad weather and crashed into the Isle of Man. Everyone was killed instantly.

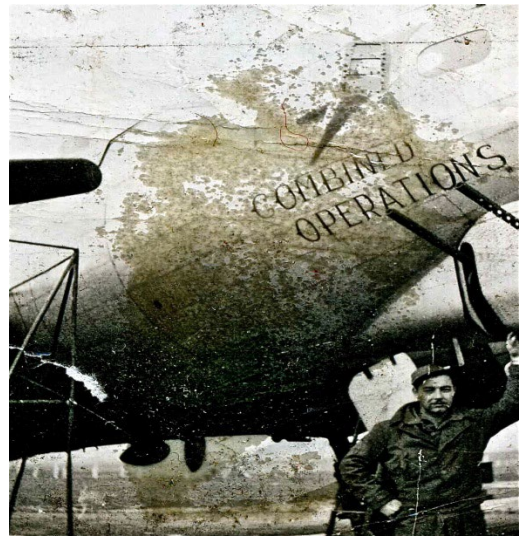
On April 12, 1945, the President of the United States of America, Franklin D. Roosevelt, died and the impact of his death hit the nation as almost no other disaster could have; just as his first objective was about to be won, the defeat of Germany, he was denied the joy of seeing the day of celebration. Most of the mourning rites traditional with the Army at such a time have been stayed in view of the war. All parties have been cancelled for a period and the flag will be flown at half-staff for a month.

Crew pictures, nose art of planes flown and a mission map of Berlin is below

JESSE PATTEN Crew - 367th
Fr: Norman C Hanson e, Robert Stetler bt,
Ira Scott wg, Joseph Lowery tg. Bk: Mur-
phy Elder ro, Royce Hopkins CP, Patten,
Wm A Kelly N, George David B.

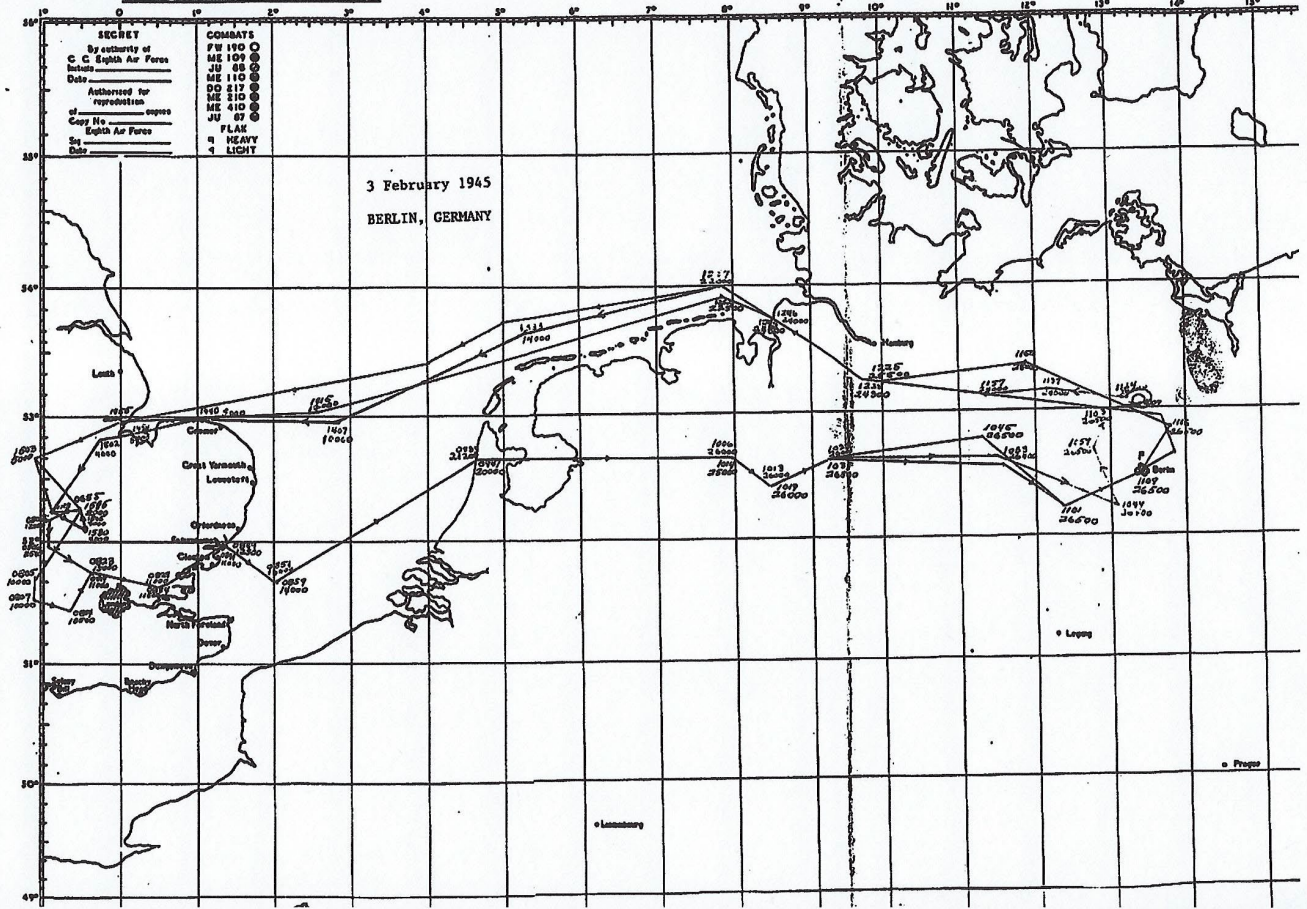


Casey Jones Project – plane to be refitted – Royce
on the right – note the “Clay Pigeon” insignia.



TRACK CHART
DATE 3 February 1945

TARGETS
PRIMARY Berlin, Germany—Bombed.



SECRET
By authority of
C. C. Eighth Air Force
Initials _____
Date _____
Authorized for
reproduction
by _____
Copy No. _____
Eighth Air Force
Sgt _____
Date _____

COMBATS
FW 190 ○
ME 109 ○
JU 88 ○
ME 110 ○
DO 217 ○
ME 210 ○
ME 410 ○
JU 52 ○
FLAK
HEAVY
LIGHT

3 February 1945
BERLIN, GERMANY