

163 AERO SQUADRON



MISSION

Day Bombardment

LINEAGE

163 Aero Squadron organized Dec 1917
Demobilized, Jun 1919

STATIONS

Kelly Field, TX,
Wilbur Wright Field, OH, Dec 1917
Garden City, NY, Feb 1918
Port of Embarkation, Hoboken, NY, Feb 1918
AEF, Feb 1918
Hazelhurst Field, NY

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

One Hundred Sixty-third: The One Hundred Sixty-third shows the silhouette of a cat with one eye closed, standing on a bomb.

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Service Period: March 16 to August 30, 1918

Locations: Crail, Easton-on-the-Hill, Narborough, Witney, Wittering

On September 2, from Flower Down Camp to France, where it operated as the 163 Bombardment Squadron.

The One Hundred Sixty-third Aero Squadron was a day bombardment squadron, and was assigned to the Second Day Bombardment Group, Second Army, October 27, 1918, reaching the Front three days later at Ourches. It engaged in the operations of the Argonne-Meuse first and second offensives. It accomplished several war missions during this period of activity, but never received official confirmation for any victories, neither did it suffer any casualties. It finally ceased operations April 8, 1919.

I ain't wrote you since I been in the army because I heard you signed up with the fighting Quartermasters and I knowed you'd still be here for me to tell you the whole story at one time. Well Bill here's what happened to me since I told the man I could do it that day in December 1917 out at Keokuk.

I been all over the United States and Texas and a lot of England, Scotland and France but Bill Keokuk is good enough for me. Well it was this way. I got a ticket to Kelly Field at San Antonio Texas and soon as I got there I could see something big was on the boards. They was collecting all the best men in the place and it didn't take long before they roped me in and they put the whole gang together and called it the 163rd Aero Squadron.

After we got our uniforms we didn't stay long. We moved up to Wilbur Wright Field at Fairfield Ohio and got there Xmas eve. Bill the northpole is a summer resort alongside of that place. We didn't have much fun there either because some gink got some disease and the doc put us all in quarantine for six weeks. We made up a band and some of the pugs worked out in the square circle and we all got to know each other better so it wasn't so bad.

Next thing we knowed we was back east again and all stowed away on a swell boat called the Olympic. That was on February 25th 1918. Bill she was as big as all of Keokuk but boy she could

do more stunts than an airplane and thats going some. Guess we must of all smoked to much because pretty soon we began to feel kind of sick and I sure was glad when we pulled into Liverpool on March 6th, They put us in a "rest camp" at Romsey but Bill don't never let'em fool you with that rest stuff. The only thing that got a rest was our stumachs and boy they needed it.

We only rested a few days then they sent us to be a training squadron at Narborough. We worked with the Royal Air Force and them Englishmen thought they was the whole show and so did we but after a while we got better acquainted and everything was Jake. They don't speak our language so we learn-ed theirs and some of the guys got along so well they married English girls but Bill I couldn't find none as good as the Keokuk girls and you can tell em so. Soon as we got so we knowed propeller wash was not soap and a tail skid didn't have nothing to do with a flivver they put us to operating a all-American flight and we showed em a thing or two.

Bill did you ever see a English Sergeant Major? You'd think he was the Kaiser himself. Well one day this bird sends for me and I just saunters into his office and asks who wants to see me. He says stand at attention and salute. Do you know who I am ? I says no. He says I'm a Sergeant Major in His Majesty's Service. That kind of made me hot and I says do you know who I am? I'm a buck private in the United States Army and that's more than you ever will be you big stiff and Bill do you know Lt. Markes gives me four weeks K. P. for it.

Along in August they busted the squadron all up and sent four flights to different places but we got together again and had a final inspection at Winchester. They told us we were some boys. Said if we had only been airplanes or cigarettes or something like that we would of been good enough for the S. O. S.

Then we crossed the Channel and they shipped us to St. Maixent in the doggondest little freight cars you ever did see. They look like Mike McCanns wood-shed on wheels and they put 40 of us or 8 horses in each one. I wished I was a horse so I could stretch my feet without tweaking some birds nose. We got near the front at Colombey-les-Belles and then went to our own airdrome at Delouze (That's the name of a town not a cootie-killer) but Fritz was on the run and we moved up to Ourches on the 1st of November so we could get a crack at him. Well they gave us a bunch of pilots and observers and Liberty planes and bokoo (French slang for a lot of) bombs. We did a few patrols along the lines just to get used to it and then the order came to bomb Germany but I guess Gott must of been with the bosh because we had cloudy weather until the nth of November and then just when the boys had all the motors warmed up and was about to take Heinie a basket of eggs up comes Major Reinburg and calls off the whole war. Gee we was mad.

Since then all we been doing is K. P. and football and basketball and some of the Loots are still flying but Bill they ain't got good sence or they wouldn't of learned to fly in the first place. It ain't healthy. We go to school too and learn all about machine guns so we can put all them prohibition guys to pushing up daisies when we get back to the U. S.

Well Bill this has been a long letter but I ain't told you half of what we been doing. When

I get back to Keokuk you can call out the band and get all the gang around the post office and I'll tell em how us boys of the 163rd won the war.

USAF Unit Histories
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Sources

US Army Order of Battle 1919-1941. Steven E. Clay. Combat Studies Institute Press. US Army Combined Arms Center. Fort Leavenworth, KS. Nd.