

243rd AERO SQUADRON

MISSION

LINEAGE

243rd Aero Squadron

STATIONS

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

SQUADRON "G"—THE GAY LIVE-WIRES

LIVING in this manner the brief history of Kelly Field Squadron "G," the writer endeavors to show the manner in which our days were spent in Kelly Field. We trust that in years to come it will be a source of pleasant recollection to such squadron-mates as read it and recall familiar faces and incidents. On a typical Texas morning, April 20, 1918, 150 men were assembled at Division Headquarters from

the different sections of the First Training Brigade to form what was thereafter to be known as the 243rd Aero Squadron. Lieut. L. L. Perrault, who had been assigned as Commanding Officer, took charge of the newly formed squadron and with the assistance of Lieut. Frank M. Fretwell, Supply Officer marched us to the 2nd Training Brigade. Here we were ordered to Lines 50 and 52 and after being assigned to tents, given the necessary equipment to assure comfort for the night. After a hastily prepared meal, a general policing was ordered and the lines rapidly assumed the appearance of an old organization.

As a foundation for an efficient organization, the following appointments were made: Sgt. 1st Class Hamilton, "Top"; Sgt. Holgren, Sgt.-Major; Sgt. 1st Class Lusby, Duty Sergeant; Sgt. Nangle, Supply Sergeant; Sgt. Erskine, Drill Sergeant and Sgt Roth, Mess Sergeant. Under the guidance of these men, the squadron soon gave the impression of being an organization of Regulars. Overseas equipment was hastily issued and rumors were rife concerning our early departure for an Embarkation Port. These rumors, however, were quickly dispelled for on May 2nd we were ordered to Kelly No. 2 for training. Although our hope of an early departure from the Land of Dust and Cactus had been given a severe jolt, we still had hopes of realizing our ambition of "Immediate Service in France."

We arrived at Kelly No. 2 with the idea that our stay would be but a short one and all had such in mind. Men were assigned to the Motor shops, Hangars, Airplane Division, offices and warehouses. All unas-signed were used for squadron duty or held available for fatigue. It might be well to mention that at this time our worthy Supply Sergeant was besieged with requests for exchanges of hats as a result of newly appointed Crew Chiefs who had just learned to call an airplane a "ship."

After the evening meal (appropriately termed "Mess") the chief diversion was the discussion of the Mess by the weary Mechanics and of Motors by the Cooks while in the distance could be heard the Popular Squadron Yell, "MO-O-O-O-RE RICE."

On May 13, Lieut. Ellis G. Smith was assigned as Supply Officer and instantly won his way to the hearts of all. Lieut. Fretwell was then made Adjutant. On May 17th, a day which will be forever remembered by the members of this squadron the hopes of the squadron were blasted by an order placing us on guard. During three long, restless months, we "walked our post in a military manner, keeping always on the alert" for the day when we would be relieved and once more resume the pleasanter tasks of Special Duty. 'Twas then we came to the full realization of guard duty through a Texas summer.

Lieut. Perrault, our commanding officer, was ordered to report for duty elsewhere. Lieut. Fretwell then assumed command, ably assisted by Lieut. Smith. On July 22nd, the Squadron designation was changed from the 243rd Aero Squadron to Kelly Field Squadron "G."

After 82 days of gruelling guard duty, we were relieved and the event was fittingly celebrated by a squadron picnic at New Braunfels, 35 miles north of San Antonio. As Government trucks were not permitted to go more than twelve miles from camp on picnics, arrangements were made with a local carrier for trucks to transport the over-joyed soldiers to their destination. Arriving at Landa Park at 5

P. M.. a rush was made for the swimming pool, while others occupied all the available telephone booths and sought out dancing partners for the day. The evening was spent in diversified entertainment and needless to say, was enjoyed by all. Some preferred hotels or bungalows in which to spend the night, rather than the park, there to be caressed by the affectionate mosquitoes.

The following day, a baseball team was organized which met the strong Squadron "H" team at the New Braunfels Ball Park. "G" winning by a wide margin. This impromptu team was later reorganized and represented Squadron "G" in all the games of the Flying Department League of which we were a member, tying another squadron for the championship, under the management of Corporal Walters. After spending an exceedingly enjoyable day, we departed for Kelly Field arriving at 11 P. M. All agreed to make the picnic a monthly affair. The following month saw us again at New Braunfels, this time to stay two days, over Labor Day. Too much cannot be said of the hospitality of the people of New Braunfels who made such keen enjoyment of these picnics possible. The acquaintances we formed while on these picnics will always remain dear to our memory. The cool weather soon compelled us to abandon our trips to New Braunfels on monthly picnics.

On September 5th, Sergeant 1st Class Hamilton was transferred to the Central Officers Training Camp at Waco Texas. The loss of our "Top" was a loss indeed but we realized what it meant to him and the best wishes of the squadron went with him.

Lieut. T. J. Capron was assigned to the squadron as Supply Officer on October 25th, filling the vacancy left by Lieut. Smith who was ordered away. On the eve of his departure, a banquet was given in his honor by the members of the squadron. On November 20th, Lieut. Fretwell was relieved of the command of the squadron to devote his whole time to securing flying instruction. On the same date, Lieut. Frank M. Paul was assigned as commanding officer, and, by his practical qualities and sincerity, has won the admiration and loyal support of all. Lieuts. Henry B. Poindexter and Joseph R. Wilkinson, both competent wanderers of the air, were assigned to the squadron on December 4th as Mess and Supply Officers, respectively. Lieut. Capron was discharged from the service on December 28th to resume his business in Wayland, N. Y.

Thanksgiving Day was observed in the good old-fashioned way with Turkey and all the "fixins." Mess Sergeant Roth and his staff of competent cooks established a reputation for themselves by preparing a bounteous spread. Appropriate Menus were prepared which included a roster of all Officers and men of the Squadron and were distributed to all.

Christmas was a real holiday for most of the men as 75% of the enlisted strength of all organizations were granted from five to ten day furloughs, thus allowing most to reach their homes. Those whose homes were too far away to reach in the allotted time were amply taken care of by Mess Sergeant Robinson as far as the Christmas dinner was concerned. But as a substitute for Home—it can't be done!

The influenza confined us to camp for six weeks after the 2nd of October. Many of the men contracted the disease and were placed in the Hospital. It is with deep regret that we mention here the loss of two of our fellow-soldiers: Cook Herman Tobola and Private Russell H. Eyre, both

having contracted pneumonia following influenza. They were with the squadron since its organization and as the Squadron is as one large family, their loss assumes the proportions of the loss of brother to each and every one of us. On December 7th, we left the old line of tents which we had occupied for the last eight months and moved to the barracks formerly occupied by the 84th Aero Squadron. Although the advantages are many nevertheless we miss the free and open life of the tents.

There are many incidents and phrases characteristic of Squadron "G" which could be mentioned here but they are too numerous to state and too well known to be forgotten. Then, too, "Ho-o-o, Hum!" the authors are about 'pooched out.'

We now anxiously await the order for our demobilization when we will bid each other farewell and return to our happy homes and climb into our "Civies." The friendships we have made while members of the "Texas Expeditionary Forces" will never be forgotten and our minds will often revert to the days spent in Kelly Field with the 243rd Aero Squadron, now known as Squadron "G."

Air Force Lineage and Honors
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Sources
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