

40 BALLOON COMPANY

MISSION

LINEAGE

40 Balloon Company
Organized, Feb 1918
Demobilized, Aug 1919

STATIONS

Camp John Wise, TX
Brooks Field, TX, May 1919

ASSIGNMENTS

WEAPON SYSTEMS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

Many difficulties were encountered during the early days of the camp particularly in securing suf-

ficient recruits and equipment. Recruits from other camps in Texas commenced to arrive immediately, but the number received was considerably smaller than anticipated. However, by February 5th a sufficient number had arrived to enable the formation of the 37th, 38th, 39th and 40th Balloon Companies. These were designated as depot or home companies, and the purpose of their organization was to train recruits to fit them for overseas service.

THE history of the 40th Balloon Company, known as "Old 40th," might well be called "The History of Eternal Hope," and conclusively disproves the old saying that "all comes to him who waits." For twelve long months we waited: through the cold and stormy months of February and March of 1918, through the changeable weather of April and May, when we alternately froze and roasted; through the long hot months of June, July, August and September, when the thermometer seemed to be competing with Cacquots for an altitude record, through the trying months of October and November, until the armistice was signed, putting our suspense to an end, we waited and hoped day by day that the War Department would take notice of the "Old 40th" and would send us "over there" that we might take part in the greatest war, but we were disappointed. It seemed that our company had been forgotten, and it was not until after the armistice that we learned definitely that we were not—the "Old 40th" was made a permanent company.

The 40th Company was organized February 5, 1918. 2nd Lieut. William E. Woodman was appointed Commanding Officer. 2nd Lieutenants M. A. Andrews, Wm. S. Barker and E. J. Felt were attached to company for temporary duty February 18, 1918. Jack E. Learner acted as First Sergeant, Fred C. Berling, now 1st Sergeant, was company clerk, Jas. P. Morgan, Mess Sergeant, and C. R. Edmondson, Supply Sergeant. The company began its existence with 22 enlisted men. Corporal Peterson is the only member of the original 22 men still in this company, or in fact, the camp, he having been transferred into and out of the company several times. He has finally decided to make the 'Old 40th" his permanent home. The company was quartered in a row of tents between the present 40th Company Barracks and Mess Hall and was attached to the 37th Company for rations. In March the present mess hall was taken over.

On March 15, 1918, Lieutenant Woodman was relieved from command and given the 42nd Company. Most of the 40th Company men were also transferred into that company, and left for port of embarkation shortly afterward. 2nd Lieut. Frederick T. Fuller was then assigned to command the company Lieuts. Andrews, Barker and Felt were relieved during March, 1918, 2nd Lieutenants L. L. Biche and Benjamin B. Cassidy, and Fred H. Lang were attached. Lieut. Lang was made Officer in Charge of Post Carpenter Shop. On March 22, 1918, Fred S. White, who later became First Sergeant of this company was assigned, and given charge of the First Casual Detachment of 60 men. All recruits coming into camp were attached to the 40th Company. The strength of the company on March 31, 1918, was 25 enlisted men, 126 men being transferred to other organizations and 66 men into the company during the month.

March 20, Lieut. Harold R. Hall was attached, and Lieutenants Cassidy and Biche relieved from duty. During May, June and July the average strength of the company was 195 men. During these months the company was in intensive training for overseas duty.

Only three officers were attached to the company during these months. Lieut. Lang devoted most of his time to the Post Carpenter Shop, so the burden of organizing an intensive training fell on the shoulders of the company commander, Lieut. Fuller and Lieut. Harold R. Hall. In spite of being handicapped by the lack of officers, they brought the company up to a higher standard of efficiency and morale than it had ever attained. These were banner months, and officers and men worked together with tireless energy and determination, hoping against hope that the good work would be recognized by headquarters and the "Old 40th" be taken off the "stay at home" list and sent "over there" as a company intact. This did not come about, however, as during the month of July most of the members of the company were transferred into the 7th and 38th Companies which were sent to California, and the work of building up a new company with recruits who were transferred into the company began again. On July 29, 1918, Lieut. Glen E. Wallace and Frederick C. Gribble were attached.

On October 7, Lieut. Frederick T. Fuller was relieved as Commanding Officer and succeeded by 2nd Lieut. 'S. T. Christian.

On October 10 Lieut. Hall was relieved to assume the position of camp mess officer and editor of the camp paper casting another cloud of gloom on the men, which was quickly dispelled when he was again attached to the company for duty in addition to his other assignments". During the month 2nd Lieutenants C. P. Eiffler and George Grady were attached.

On December 19 Lieut. Harold R. Hall assumed command of the company in addition to his other duties as Camp Mess Officer, editor of the camp paper and Aeronautical Information Officer. In choosing the "pioneers" of the company, Lieut. Hall should have first place, having been in the company since shortly after it was organized. He has also acted in every capacity in the company possible for a balloon officer, During the month Lieutenants C. A. Gearish, Carl D. McCarthy and N. E. Galentine were attached for duty and relieved again, Lieut. McCarthy being assigned as Summary Court Officer. Lieut. Glenn E. Wallace was discharged. On January 2nd Lieut. G. E. Sachers joined the company, and was discharged during the latter part of the month. Lieut. Gearish was discharged. Lieutenants Stewart N. Svedeman, now Mess Officer, and Carl D. McCarthy was attached for duty in addition to his duties as Summary Court Officer.

On February 5, 1919, Capt. Wm. Mayer took command of the company and Lieutenant Hall assumed the position of executive officer of the company.

But another change on March C, 1919, Captain Mayer was transferred to Brooks Field and Lieut, Hall again took command.

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORIES

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Sources

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