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HISTORY OF THE 469TH AERO CONSTRUCTION SQUADRON
(Formerly the 57th Aero Constr. Sqdn).

On August 8, 1917, between the hours of 10:00 A.M. and 12 A.M. 1000 men arrived at Kelly Field, Texas, from Fort Slocum, N.Y., where they had been mustered into the service a few days before. From this 1000 men one of the squadrons organized that day was the 57th Aero Squadron.

In this squadron were men representing the States of Mass., New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Nebraska. They were issued cots and blankets, quartered in tents and placed under the command of corporal Sundine who designated "Duke" Billings acting 1st Sergeant.

On August 25, 1917, Major H.M. Clark was assigned to take command of the squadron. The men were called before the Major and rated according to experience in construction. Most were machinists, chauffeurs, clerks, and traveling salesmen. Each man enlisted to work at his trade, but soon learned that if the major said, "You're a blacksmith", when you are a candlestick maker, why the commissioned officer was right.

On September 5, 1917, 1st Lieut. Clifford C. Parrish, MORC, was assigned to the squadron. On September 10, 1st Lieut. Henry G. Canda replaced Major Clark as commanding officer. Canda was our first real C.O., Major Clark having been but temporary and organizational.

Full equipment had been issued and on September 17, 1917, the squadron left Kelly Field for Mineola, "Billy" the mascot accompanying. The Squadron arrived at Mineola late in the afternoon on September 21, 1917 and was quartered in tents.

On Sept. 25, 1917, Capt. George F. Kearney was assigned to command the squadron.

While at Mineola the squadron had overcoats issued along with "Gat" and construction tools. Daily drill, a little guard duty and fatigue which came very seldom were the duties of the squadron at this camp. Supplies were packed, misfits were exchanged and everything was placed in readiness to leave for overseas.

On October 12, 1917, preparations for overseas were completed and at 2 a.m. on Oct. 13, 1917, the squadron left Mineola in heavy marching order through the mud and water ankle deep to Garden City. From Garden City they went to Long Island City, took a ferryboat to Pier No. 54, and boarded the S.S. Panonia of the Cunard Line. In all there were 1800 officers, cadets, and enlisted men on board. "Billy" the goat was smuggled aboard in a burlap bag as beef for kitchen.

The Panonia embarked at 10:30 on the morning of October 13, 1917. Fine weather was encountered during the

first day of the trip the routine of life boat drill breaking the monotony of cramped quarters below deck. Rough weather on Oct. 23, caused sea sickness to prevail. Continued rough weather caused the Panonia to become separated from the convoy on Oct. 25. Two destroyers appeared on Oct. 27 and were a welcomed sight.

On the 28th the rocky coast of the north of Ireland could be seen. That night the Panonia anchored in Belfast Harbor and the next morning, accompanied by four destroyers steamed into the Irish sea. At 1:00 p.m., Oct. 29, 1917, the Harbor of Liverpool was entered. The Squadron debarked at 8:00 p.m. "Billy" the mascot again became a problem.

But Tuffey placed him in a barrack bag, slung him across his shoulder and started to take him down the gang-plank - but Billy did not seem to like the situation one bit. He failed utterly to see the humor of it and his cries of "Ma-a-a" would probably have resulted in his being inspected and condemned had not some of our fellows with their punctual cries of Ma-a-a drawn the English Officer's attention and the Officer in blank amazement asked, "Wot the bloody 'ell is the matter with them?"

The Squadron entrained in cars that did not look capable of standing up under much of a train. After riding all night the squadron detrained in Borden, England and marched to the Camp, a distance of about two miles, ~~where~~ ^{where} it was quartered in tents with wooden floors.

The second night in Camp the air raid alarm ^{was} given and everyone ~~all~~ scattered, but nothing showed up and a half hour later the all clear signal was given and the ^{squadron} spent the rest of the night at ease.

At 11 a.m. Nov. 1, 1917, the squadron marched to Borden, entrained, rode to Southampton, and boarded the steamer "Huntscraft". "Billy" still remained with the squadron, a little travel worn. On board the Huntscraft were English, Scotch, Africans and Australian soldiers. The boat left Southampton at 6 p.m., ^{and} arrived in Le Havre in the morning. MW 2

The squadron debarked at noon and marched a mile to the would-be "Rest Camp". After a restless night there the squadron entrained in box cars marked "Hommes 40, Chevaux 8" MW 3

During the 24-hour ride to Issoudun a wine barrel was tapped at one of the stops and it was reported to the Major. For punishment this squadron and seven others had to walk a distance of some eight miles in heavy marching order to the 3rd Aviation Instruction Center. It was some muddy place. We had to unload our baggage, pull trucks out of the mud and we were mighty glad to drink water from wagon ruts and sleep on the ground in a large hangar about 65 ft x 100 ft x 25 ft. The following morning when we felt like it we got up and were at ease all day, but most of us helped carry pails of water from a well half a mile away. We got straw for our mattresses and tried to make ourselves comfortable in the mud. All in all, we ate on the ground, slept on the ground, washed in puddles and drank water from ruts.

First Lieut. Joseph H. Reilly, 1st Lieut. Rutgers S. Kasson, 1st Lieut. George W. MacNamara, 1st Lieut. William Barrett, and 1st Lieut. Henry R. Shepley, were assigned to the squadron on an order dated October 26, 1917.

The 48th, 51st, 52nd, 53rd, 54th, 55th, 56th and this Squadron were the first Construction Squadrons at the 3rd Aviation Instruction Center and it was nothing but a mud hole when they arrived. These squadron were also the first Construction Squadrons to land overseas.

After resting another day the squadron reported to a Construction Officer for duty. Sergt. Manning picked out the carpenters and started them to work on the Hospital building of American type. The rest of the Squadron was put to work carrying lumber and digging post holes at barracks. Sites, Quartermaster buildings were erected and American barracks 225 ft. in length were started. The squadron built bunks, benches and tables for these buildings. All the wood used for this work was rough material.

The squadron had to walk about a mile from quarters in the hangars to this work and it took nearly every ounce of energy to walk that distance in the deep mud.

Some of the squadron helped lay sewers and build roads. The squadron also furnished an unloading detail as all freight arriving had to be unloaded immediately.

First Lieut. Parrish, MORC. was relieved from duty with the Squadron on November 8, 1917.

The squadron lived in the mud in the hangar until December 10, and then moved into three of the barracks which they had erected.

On December 20 a Detachment of 50 men from our squadron with M.S.E. Manning in charge went to build an outlying field called Valentine Field. This Detachment put up 15 barracks, 6 Besseno Hangars, finished the interior of buildings, dug wells, established an electric plant, erected water towers, put in sewers, built roads, sidewalks and unloaded freight cars. The material was unloaded at a siding three and a half miles from the Camp. The part of the Squadron that remained at 3rd, did general construction work and the men were gradually getting placed at their own trades on various permanent jobs.

On December 25, 1917, 1st Lieut. Reilly, Kasson, Macnamara, Barrett and Shepley were transferred out and 1st Lieut. John F. Bartlett, and 1st Lieut. James H. Van Buren, were assigned to the Squadron.

On January 19, 1918; the squadron moved from the French barracks into the American barracks and the 50 men returned from Valentine Field. The squadron was changed from Construction to Maintenance and many transfers were made. The new men had permanent jobs, and the squadron then had men running the Power Houses, Water Plant, Switchboards, and Railroad. It also had men in the Post Office, and had plumbers, Painters, M.P.'s, about 30 men on Construction, and men on the Plane News, the Camp newspaper, of which Captain Kearney was Managing Editor.

On January 20, 1918, the number of the squadron was changed from 57th Aero Construction Squadron to the 469th Aero Construction Squadron.

Captain Kearney was appointed Post Athletic Officer and started boxing and wrestling tournaments at the "Y". There were four entries from the 469th including Kennedy, middleweight, who annexed the Post championship.

On March 8, 1918, 23 men were taken from their various jobs and put on a special hangar guard, as a result of recent suspicious happenings in the hangars.

The 30 men left on construction work built a group of Headquarters buildings, did various jobs such as moving buildings and hangars and making necessary changes for the expansion of the field.

On Saturday, March 16, 1918, the Hon. Newton D. Baker, Secty. of War, and General J.J. Pershing, with their staffs, visited the Post. They inspected the Camp, the planes and hangars, and commented approvingly upon the works accomplished.

On April 6, 1918, we celebrated America's entry into the war by a banquet in our Mess Hall. The cooks were largely responsible for the success of the banquet. Captain Kearny, introduced the toastmaster, Lieut. Canda, who performed his task well. Among the entertainers were Miss Elsie Janis, who danced, sang and told stories, Lieut. Hunt with his "Camouflage" song and Lieut. Prinz with his "Hula" dances.

The men still on construction work moved one of the out-lying fields about 9 kilometers. This field had 5 barracks and 6 hangars. The 469th men were gradually being taken off various jobs and put on guard as they were awaiting orders to move.

On May 20, 1918, Captain Kearny was relieved from his duties with the squadron, Lieut. Canda was made C.O. and 1st Lieut. Joseph H. Reilley, was assigned to the squadron. On May 28 the squadron entrained for Tours, arrived in Tours at 5 p.m. and marched to the 2nd A.I.C., a distance of three miles. The squadron was split and quartered with the different squadrons temporarily, until more barracks were erected.

The squadron rested for two days and then began Construction. With the help of 60 men of the 492nd Detachment at this Post the following work was accomplished: 41 barracks were erected of which 20 were officers' quarters requiring floors which were made out of scraps of lumber, eight were mess halls, which had to be equipped with tables, pantries, erected stoves and furniture. The enlisted men's barracks had to be furnished with double wooden bunks. The first barracks were built for the 469th and moved into by them immediately after completion. Irrigation trenches were dug around all barracks.

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WERE ERECTED.

Three radio buildings, with concrete foundations, cement floors, brick curtain walls and roofs of slate, were erected. The interiors of these buildings were finished with beaver board and had tile partitions. A wooden radio tower was built for the use of observers in studying maps. A large supply building of wood, with sheet metal roof was built, trusses spanning 40 feet being made from very short and uneven sizes of lumber. The interior of this building was finished to accommodate airplane parts ranging in size from six inches to compartments large enough for a wing ~~of a wing~~ of a Liberty plane. A blacksmith shop was also built.

In addition to complete buildings erected, extensions and additions to other structures were built, including the paint shop, the machine shop, the vulcanizing plant, the test block and the wing covering house.

General maintenance work done at the 2nd A.I.C. includes, water and sewer lines to mess halls and barracks, painting exteriors of all barracks, building of two miles of permanent road, conversion of a Red Cross building into an aerial gunnery school, installation of a large electric pump and three miles of 4 inch water main, and the wiring of all barracks. Most of the material for maintenance and construction work was transported by the squadron from a siding about three miles distant.

During this course of Construction Lieutenant Canda was relieved from duties with the squadron and Lieut. Reilly assumed command on June 22, 1918.

On July 23, 1918, 2nd Lieut. George B. Jurden was attached to the squadron, 2nd Lieut. Jurden was relieved of his duties on July 31.

On September 26, 1st Lieut. Charles M. Pardee was attached to the squadron.

On October 22, Lieut. Van Buren left the squadron to go night bombing.

On October 29, 1918, the squadron had a banquet to celebrate the first anniversary of arrival overseas. "Billy" the mascot assisted in the celebration.

At the time of the signing of the armistice the 469th Aero Construction Squadron was still located at the 2nd A.I.C., Tours, doing maintenance and construction work.

ROSTER OF OFFICERS OF THE 469TH AERO
CONSTRUCTION SQUADRON SINCE ITS ORGANIZATION.

Major		H. M. Clark
Capt.		George F. Kearney
1st. Lieut.		Henry G. Canda
"	"	Joseph H. Reilley
"	"	Rutgers S. Casson
"	"	George W. Macnamara
"	"	William Barrett
"	"	Henry R. Shepley
"	"	John F. Bartlett
"	"	James H. Van Buren
"	"	Charles M. Pardee
2nd. Lieut.		George B. Jurdan
1st. Lieut.		Clifford C. Parrish Med. Officer.