

The 4th Aviation School Squadron was organized at Chicago, Illinois, by Lieutenant Christie, now Lieutenant Colonel, and Captain Morrow, in the neighborhood of October 1st., 1916.

Little or no flying was accomplished for a few weeks. Most of the time being taken up in laying out a Field at Ashburn, Illinois, a small suburb just outside of Chicago. Tent hangars were erected and a few planes assembled. In a short time more planes arrived, likewise more men. Flying was then started and carried on, whenever weather permitted. On days, when the weather prophets decided the pilots needed rest, flying was suspended but rest was not for the enlisted personnel. They were detailed for fatigue work, unloading freight cars, setting up more hangars, etc. February 12th., 1917, the squadron was given orders to proceed to the Aviation School at Memphis, Tennessee. The entire equipment was taken along and in a few days there was little or nothing left at Ashburn to indicate that it had been used as a Field.

Arriving at Memphis, the grounds were immediately "policed", hangars built, and the unassembled planes housed. A machine shop was rigged up in a short time, and training resumed on a much larger scale.

Orders were received, May 9th., to go back to Ashburn. In a couple of days everything was in readiness for the return trip north. The usual work of placing the equipment together was carried out in spite of rainy weather. The roads were all but impassable on account of the mud. Due to this it took a week before the Field was suitable for training. Captain Christie, on June 1st., severed all connection with the squadron and Captain Roy S. Brown, who was made Major shortly after, took charge. July 10th., found the organization ordered to Rantoul, Illinois. This move gave the pilots the much desired opportunity of ferrying the planes from Ashburn to Chanute Field. Altho' several became lost, things shaped themselves at once.

The majority of the squadron were on cadet status, and along with their flying instructions were obliged to attend classes on the subjects of motors, their construction and up-keep, aeroplane construction and last, but not the least, an hour of drill daily, much to the disgust of all. The remainder of the squadron filled in at various places, such as the Erection and Repair Shops, Transportation Department, Machine Shops and Hangars. Headquarters for the time being was manned by a few sergeants and corporals. Matters progressed smoothly with accidents few and far between, this due largely to the efficiency of the crews detailed to "nurse" the planes. Only one case of carelessness being reported: Some one filled the radiator of a Curtiss with gasoline instead of water. However, this was discovered before the planes was taken out of the hangar.

The latter part of July the 10th Aero put in its appearance on the Field. About a month later the 38th and 39th., along with a detachment of men, arrived from Kelly Field. The detachment was ordered to the 4th School Squadron, taking the places of the cadets, who were transferred to an organization of their own. The new men were skeptical, when their barracks containing neat double-deck bunks, shower baths, electric lights, etc., were shown to them. One weatherbeaten



individual, who still had Kelly Field's tents and sandstorms in his mind, remarked "Nothing short of a General would be allowed to live in these quarters." But it was only a matter of a few hours until every one felt perfectly at home, and was awaiting "chow" call.

The next morning crews were picked to assist the men already assigned to the hangars. Considering the fact that they were "rookies" so far as planes were concerned, they showed up exceptionally well.

An event of exceptional importance - to the minds of the members of the squadron - was the changing of the name of the Organization from the 4th School Squadron to the 16th Aero Squadron. This action created much comment and was the cause of many rumors, commonly known as "Official Dope" of overseas' duty spreading around the Camp.

September 21st., saw a change of Commanding Officers: Major Roy S. Brown being relieved of the command in order to take charge of another Aviation Field. Captain W.W. Spain of the 4th Infantry, South Dakota, National Guards, was placed as "C.O." of the squadron.

Nothing of importance occurred between this date and October 25th., when the original rumors of overseas' duty were to be confirmed.

Lieutenant Elliot P. Hinds, otherwise known to Officers and enlisted men of the Post as "Pop" Hinds, was to be the "Old Man" of the Organization. Captain Spain was relieved to give his attention to other duties on the Field. Lieutenant Hinds was extremely popular among the men, always having a good word for them and always ready to listen to a "hard luck" tale.

Orders were received October 28th., which prepared the squadron for their move to the Air Service Concentration Camp at Garden City, Long Island. Along with them came a commission as Captain for Lieutenant Hinds. The usual rush and excitement incident to a contemplated move was much in evidence. Packing, checking supplies and turning in property was done with the usual snap but after all was in readiness, the customary delay of waiting for traveling orders was experienced. In the mean time, the enlisted men undergoing flying instructions, were shifted to the 38th and 39th. This movement was to enable them to complete their training at Chanute Field. Their places were filled by men from the 38th and 39th Squadrons.

Traveling Orders turned up on November 1st., and at 2 A.M. November 2nd., 1917, the squadron left Chanute Field, enroute to Garden City. Detraining at its destination at 2 P.M. November 4th., the men were immediately assigned to quarters that were but two-thirds finished. Every one set about clearing the barracks of rubbish and giving it a general over-hauling. In spite of adverse conditions, due to the Camp not being completed, a field kitchen was set up and supper consisting of coffee, "corned willy" and "hard tack" was enjoyed. Afterwards trucks were unloaded, bunks set up, and things put on a running basis.



Accustomed to living in steam heated cantonments at Rantoul the sudden change to cold barracks (for the weather was frosty) was rather severe, but not one complaint was registered. In a day or two winter clothing requisitions were filled. The men discarded their khaki and other summer "O.D.'s" much to the satisfaction of all concerned. In the mean time Ordnance property and other necessary equipment was issued. It was not long until the squadron was in readiness for its trip overseas. While stationed here, drill, guard duty and fatigue details, were on the daily program. Whenever possible, passes were issued and men not on duty were allowed the privilege of being away from the Camp for twenty-four hours. New York City claimed more than its share of visitors. On Thanksgiving most of the members were in the surrounding towns, a few fortunate ones going home, but those who remained on the Post will long remember the dinner set before them. There was such a variety and in such quantities, that the cooks and the mess sergeant did everything but beg them to return for "seconds" (a thing that army cooks have never been known to do).

Orders to proceed to a port of Embarkation were received on December 3rd., 1917. Captain Hinds, Lieutenants Shiland, Rowe, Shank, Eaton and Rosenblum and a squadron of one hundred and fifty-four men left Garden City at 2 A.M. getting into Philadelphia at 8 A.M. December 4th., where the British ship "Northland" awaited us. Captain Hinds was anxious to have the organization quartered comfortably and made arrangements to march the 16th aboard first. Evidently the policy of this particular English Captain was to fill his ship from the bottom up and as a result, the squadron was quartered in the lowest hold, the bottom of the liner preventing us from getting down any lower. At 1:30 P.M. the "Northland" pulled out into the Delaware River, casting anchor across from Wilmington until 2 P.M. the following day, December 5th. In the mean time we had received our first taste of English cooking, and the universal opinion was that the Britons are excellent fighters, but as far as culinary art is concerned - - - . Anyhow the canteens on board did enormous business. The stewards, cooks and pantry boys laid away neat sums, the result of feeding the "Bloomin' Americans" on the sly.

With the vibration of the engine's constant jar and chug, along with the rough weather that prevailed during the first few days out of port many of the "land-lubbers" were caused to "feed the whales." "Hanging over the ship's railing" was the popular pastime and many a laugh was indulged in by those happy owners of strong stomachs.

In due time the bleak coast of Halifax was reached, just one day after the explosion of the French Liner Mount Blanc. Papers received on board graphically told of the sad affair. A large subscription was taken up among the men and turned over to the Red Cross for relief work among those whose homes had been wrecked by the blast. We were anchored in the harbor impatiently awaiting the forming of the convoy until December 15th., on which date at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, we got under way. The "Northland" being fourth ship in line. Within a few hours we were out of sight of land. The trip across was uneventful, nothing being sighted but two playful whales. Boat drill was held every morning.



Life preservers were for the time being part of equipment "C". The sea was calm during most of the trip, with the exception of the passage thru "Devil's Nest." It is agreed by all that the steamer did everything but "Loop the Loop" while cutting across this rough spot.

Liverpool was sighted on Christmass Day but no one would have realized it if they were not informed by some personage up-to-date on the calender. We were held on board until after dark, then packed onto a couple of river tenders, which carried us to the dock. When we landed our entire feeling could be summerized by the expression of one of the members who remarked "God! it is good to feel the touch of Old Mother Earth once again."

Little time was wasted here. Along with several other squadron the 16th was put aboard an English train, the first for the most of us, and transported to Southampton, the real starting point on our way to "Somewhere." Were held on the docks for the entire day until nearly 8 o'clock in the evening when we again embarked on a channel steamer bearing the name of Archimedes, a ship which some of the prize cattle of England and France had enjoyed passage. This boat had run the "gauntlet" many times. After making ourselves as comfortable as possible, under the conditions, in the various stalls, we settled down, endeavoring to get the proverbial "forty winks" of sleep. In fact, that was about the maximum amount that night for the ventilation of this good ship was more than perfect. If it had a top over the rear end, we failed to discover it.

We landed at Le Havre, France, the following morning. It was snowing lightly, making the ground very damp and cold. At 8 o'clock we "unpacked" ourselves and marched down the gang-plank. Here we saw our first german prisoner "juggling" stoves. We at once proceeded several miles to an English Rest Camp - "rest" only in name - where more English cooking was enjoyed. That night found us in conical tents originally designed for five men at the most, but not one of us felt lonesome as we had fourteen men jammed in each. It was comical to see and hear the men dividing the tent off into fourteen equal section - each growling, in jest, to the other, thinking he was getting less than his rightful share. Instructions were issued, not by Headquarters, demanding that a proprietary command be given when one desired to "roll over" or otherwise there would be an entanglement of arms and legs which nothing short of "chow" call could straighten.

After a three day sojourn here we stowed ourselves away in french box cars labeled Cheveaux 8 - Hommes 40 and resumed our journey, traveling at the "speedy" rate of fifteen miles per hour. For some unknown reason the French Railroads care little or nothing for round wheels - the hexagon type seems to hold the upper hand. This may seem far fetched, but every member of the squadron firmly believes that anybody who has ridden any distance in one of these "Side-door Pullmen" will readily confirm this.



Arrived in the old cathedral town of St. Maixent about 3 A.M. on January 1st., 1918, we found a full fledged American Type snowstorm in progress. A short delay before being quartered in an ancient monestary known as Canclaux Barracks. Drill, guard duty, calisthics and long marches were on the daily schedule again. While stationed here, Sergeants First Class Omer J. Blood and Robert P. Jones, received commissions as First Lieutenants. They were attached to the squadron for duty.

Unexpected orders came thru on January 23rd., to proceed to Tours. The organization left St. Maixent the same day minus Lieutenants Eaton, Blood and Jones. At 12:45 A.M. January 24th., the train was put on a siding a few miles out of the city of Tours. We all remained on the train until 8 A.M. when the march to the 2nd Aviation Instruction Center was started. Reaching Camp we found the usual quantity of mud. After much "plowing" about the squadron was finally quartered in several barracks. In a few days the majority of the men were detailed to the Erection and Repair Shops, Machine Shops, and the Transportation Department.

Captain Hinds was lost to the 16th on February 1st., and put in charge of the Cadet Detachment stationed at this Field. Lieutenant Andrew R. Shiland formerly the Squadron's Adjutant, taking command. Shortly after, February 23rd., Lieutenant Shiland was with the squadron no more and was placed in charge of the 99th Squadron, which was leaving for the front. Captain William E. Goodman taking command of the 16th. On March 1st., about two-thirds of the old men were transferred to the various organizations on the Field, and it was practically a new outfit in as much as the personnel was concerned. Captain Goodman was relieved as Commanding Officer on April 13th., and his place taken by Lieutenant John H. Zoerman, who was also in charge of the Erection and Repair Shops. The 16th soon gained a good name for itself. Some of the best mechanics, motor men and riggers were on its roster. September 3rd., saw another change in Commanding officers, Lieutenant Zoerman was given new duties with the Engineering Division and Lieutenant William B. Durrett becoming the "C.O." in his stead. Shortly after Lieutenant Heath A. Melton, previously stationed at Issoudun, was assigned to the organization as Adjutant.

On the date the armistice was signed the 16th was "plugging" away as usual and living up to the name it had gained.

A Banquet, that would have been a credit to "Broadway and 42nd Street" was held in Tours December 4th., celebrating one year in foreign service. To say the least, it was a success from every stand point.

The main thought at present is "Home" but until that order actually is given, the members of the squadron will continue to do their "bit."