

HISTORY
of the
480

AERO CONSTRUCTION SQUADRON

From North and South, East and West they came, bankers and plumbers, artists and waiters. Are these the men that are to represent America, to form the greatest army in a few short months of training that the world has ever seen (!)

To free humanity from the bonds of darkness and slavery, selfish uncrupulous, unprincipled might and raise the torch of liberty that all the world may enjoy its light, that American manhood with its high ideals of courage, confidence, respect for home and country, the sacred rights of womanhood, honor and integrity may be stamped ineffably upon civilization and advance humanity.

Well, so we poured into this military post at Kelly Field, where we were soon to forget the comforts of home and loved ones and make friends with strangers, bivouacs, marches, camp fires, mess kits, beans, bugle calls, reveille and Texas dust.

But each man was a general in his mind, with high ideals and had that do or die spirit; fighting for her, his country and girl, whether mother or ## sister, sweetheart or wife, that spirit which is unconquerable which laughs uncomplainingly at hardships and horrors, torture and death. It was this group of men and this spirit which formed itself August 12th, 1917 into an organization which from the first was known as the "Fighting Sixty Eighth". The organization was most ably commanded by 1st Lieutenant Dudley H. Mills, who not only commanded their movements from a military standpoint, but also gained their admiration and respect. There was no end to his energy. When he gave the order "Attention" that's what he meant and if you scratched your ear for one second, you were sure to have to scratch pots and pans for at least a week. We learned to call a coat a blouse, a rifle a piece etc., but this was only the beginning of our training which was followed up by drill, and then drill again, and ended up with more drill.

Soon we knew that "Squad Right" was not the same as "Right by Squads" and that the command "Fall in" did not literally mean what it expressed, that there was such a thing as 1-2-3-4-Hip, that you must keep the cadence and hold your forty inches and snap out of it.

From drill we were promoted to guard duty - instructed that our rifles were our only friends when on duty, shown how to walk a post that was not a post, and advised that we must tell the Officer of the Day who only came out at nighttime, that we recognized him in the dark, six paces away, and that our orders were divided into two classes - General and Special; that we were to give the alarm in case of fire and discharge our piece, when we were never given ammunition.

At last Saturday would come and we would be lined up for inspection, stood at attention and supposed to look straight in front of us, while an Officer would walk down the line looking for trouble and trying to make a contortionist out of some farmer, instructing him with a punch in the stomach that he must suck it up into his chest, throw back his shoulders, keep his chin in, his hips must be straight and his hat not on the back of his head like a cowboy but over his eyes so he could not see the enemy. After that quarters were inspected; if your overcoat was on the wrong nail, your fork where your knife should have been, or if someone had accidentally put a wrinkle in your blanket or kicked your shoes an eighth of an inch from their proper place you were sure to hear about it later.

Now all those that had not scratched their ears at the wrong time or had their stomach or shoes out of place were given passes for the weekend.

This permitted them to go out on the Frio Road which ran through camp and hail a Ford, which already looked like a morgue with heads, arms and legs sticking out of all possible openings, doors, curtains and roof and tell the driver they would give him two bits to take them to town - San Antonio. There they were allowed to squander their money on everything but booze, they were allowed to take their girls to the movies, (The Majestic), or have a meal at the Menger, Gunter, St. Anthony or other hotels where beans or hash never figured on the menu.

To some of the men such names as the Buckhorn, Allied Village, White City or Soladad will bring fond reflections and vivid recollections. While those of a serious mind, the sight seers and globe trotters will never forget the old Spanish Missions and the Shrine of the Lone Star State, the Alamo.

The unfortunates doing "K.P" and Company punishment contented themselves by slipping over to the Buckhorn Saloon or Kelly Inn, where many a wild party too place.

However, every day was not a Saturday or a Sunday and there were parades to be gone through, in which incidently the "Fighting Sixty Eighth" took first place each time it passed in review. In spite of these records due to our Commanding Officers efforts, he was ordered to another post, and Capt. Kellerher filled his place for several days and then passed the buck, to speak in a military fashion to 2nd Lieutenant S. Arthur Love, Jr., who took command November 8th, 1917.

The good work of the organization was carried on; the outfit being advanced to such a point of efficiency that they were now ready to partake of the duties of an Aero Construction Squadron. Every man had been promised by the recruiting officers all over the country, that this was the branch of the service to enter if you desired to fly, and so one bright sunny morning we were lined up in front of our aeroplanes and which turned out to be picks and shovels - the only thing we ever made to fly with them was Texas dirt and dust. Oh! it was a great life; especially after it had rained, then you would start out with only your pick and shovel, and come home well set up in the Real Estate Business with half of Texas on your feet. In the meantime all kinds of tools from a cobblers outfit to a buzzsaw were nailed up in boxes, the desks were crated, the chairs were crated, and everything went through the stages of being packed and unpacked daily - for there were rumours and dope such as only a body of soldiers can coin, floating all over camp, that we were to move in two days, requisitions were put in for everything from mosquitoes to housewives, for we must be prepared.

The two days and yes two months rolled by, and we were still at Kelly. However, do not imagine that these were months of idleness. Ah, no! that is an unknown word to army men.

There were Liberty Loan drives, Insurance Attacks, Compulsory Allotments, where one was asked if married or single, if so, state how many children and other embarrassing questions, then finally the doctors got hold of you and you received your first wound in the army - a shot in the arm, not once, but three times if lucky, for if unlucky and they lost your vaccination record or the dope did not take, then your arm was likely to look like a pincushion.

Those that survived these various attacks were now urged to come out and try for the football team and see if Kelly Field with a bunch of pick and shovel fliers could not beat the doughboys of Camp Travis on Thanksgiving Day. That will ever be a memorable day to most of us; everyone turned out for the big game to be played at Camp Travis at two-thirty after having enjoyed a wonderful turkey dinner. They arrived in all sorts of vehicles, machines, Fords, buckboards and trains. It was a great sight, that amphitheater crowded with men by the thousands in O.D. uniforms and spotted here and there by bits of color worn by the fair sex all blended together harmoniously by the warm tones of a sunshiny day.

Aeroplanes flew over the crowd and from one of these, the football which was to be used for the game was dropped, Cheers rent the air, military

bands played, and officers and enlisted men moved and yelled as Kelly Field repeatedly gained until Camp Travis was scored upon. Then it was that Travis attempted to introduce a goat which they claimed was Kelly Field's goat, in a conspicuous place before our bandstand. Like lightning from a clear sky the "Fighting Sixty Eighth" left their seats in one impulsive mob rush, followed by the men from the other organizations; a riot nearly ensued. However, our squadron never attempted anything half-heartedly, so we brought the goat, more dead than alive to be sure, and then were forced to give it up by the Colonel and his band of M.Ps. Kelly drew first blood of the next quarter but was defeated the last few minutes of play, the score being six to seven - defeated by one point.

Some more of that up in the air flying stuff. While the gridiron battle was raging, another one was going on in the barracks of the sixty eighth, for Private Guy D., was in charge of quarters. He was put there and told to exercise his authority and he did in a herculean way that nearly proved disastrous to several members of the outfit. All things must come to an end and so at last we received orders on December 15th, to move to Morrison. Va., our port of embarkation. With wild cheers and yells, the men greeted the news. Within twenty-four hours a weeks work must be done, that is to say, crates nailed up, barracks bags packed, quarters cleaned, the organization filled up to strength, and everyone with anything in their name which sounded like German must be transferred out and everyone must have their inoculation complete. It was a busy night but morning dawned at last and everything was ready and before we realized it, we were snapping out of it - marching to the train. The train whistles; we wave goodbye to Kelly Field, her northerners, dust storms, heat and dust - for we were on our way "Over There".

Now kind reader probably you enjoy traveling, we do also under certain conditions but this time we were to realize that "too much is enough" for we were on this train for five days and nights. But let me describe it to you day by day and then you can form your own opinion of this trip "The terrors of war or five days on a troop train" To begin with it was a misty grey Saturday morning and looked any minute as if it would rain, but we were so anxious to start for "Over There" that even in spite of the gloomy weather and the fact that the most of the men had been up all night, all the boys were in jubilant spirits. There were two other squadrons on this train with us the 70th and 71st. First came the several baggage cars, then our squadron and part of the 70th, then the diner and commissary car and afterwards the other half of the 70th Squadron and ended up with the Officers car at the end of the train to which temporarily a caboose and extra engine were added in order to hustle us through the immense state of Texas.

The men were crowded in the cars, three in two seats, so that at night one man could take the upper berth and the other two men sleep on the two seats which were converted into a bed. So many men were being rushed to the concentration points at the ports of embarkation that the trains could not be held long enough to be thoroughly cleaned, so ours proved to be no exception.

Our first meal on the train was served about 2.00 p.m., we having started at about 11.00 o'clock. Now to feed about five hundred men at the same time from one kitchen with only narrow train isles for circulation is not the easiest thing in the world. Someone will be coming with a G.I. can holding about six buckets of coffee, and then one of those three restless souls, always on the move and never satisfied wants to pass down the isle. The men carrying the can object to having him put his foot in it and those in the seat do not want to be used for a door mat, while the unruly cantankerous individual acts as if his life depended on getting down that isle. But this is only an incident, for the G.I. can proceeds down the isle from car to car, followed by beans and then more beans and then maybe potatoes and always bread, so the first day passes and finally the sovereign sleep reigns throughout the entire length of our seventeen coaches, with the exception of the guards, a sentinel being posted at the end of each

coach, along with a barrel of water, which water we find is only for washing purposes. Of course as usual there is the Officer of the Day who must make his rounds during the wee small hours of the night to see that all is well.

Reveille however brings most of us from dream-land into the cold black reality and the problem of getting washed up from our small wash basin which suddenly becomes most popular. Some succeed and others fail but breakfast comes along and tastes just the same to us all whether our hair is combed or not for we are ravenously hungry.

It always happens that about meal time the signals become confused in some way for the engine in the rear tries to shove us ahead, while the one in the lead puts on all breaks or vice-versa. Anyhow, whatever it is, it proves to be very annoying for the coffee has passed and we are at least a mile further down the track. Such is travel in Texas.

However, kind reader we want to take you to Paris with us, so be patience for it is only the second day out, yet already this far famed city is approaching. There must be some mistake, this really cannot be Paris, the city of our dreams. Whether it is or not, the train decided it is about meal time and we are due for some kind of excitement, so just as we pull into the station and the coffee is being served the engine jumps the track and train and coffee came to an immediate stop, fortunately the coaches remain on the tracks, but the coffee - ?- enough said - ? - Now while the engine is being jacked out of the mud, lunch is finished and then we take our first hike. Up one street and down another we go, led by our Lieutenants and followed by the towns people, who cheer us and wave farewells, then the C.O. says, let her rip boys and we burst into song to the tune of Goodbye Broadway Hello France, followed by other popular songs until it is time to return, then we march for a short space through the crowded section of the town at attention and end up with double time down the hill to the train and are loaded aboard; the train watered and we proceed on our way.

Well, so it went, day in day out being very much alike. The colored porters danced and sang for the boys by day and fought with them over blankets and candles at night, for the gas was always giving out and the electricity did not work.

Our route lay through Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri and across the Blue Ridge Mountains stopping at Huntington, West Va., and finally at Richmond Va., and half a day later at Morrison. Va., where we were to discover the value of patience and wait several months to continue our journey.

It was late on the afternoon of Thursday December 20th, 1917, when a crowded troop train pulled into a siding just beyond the small town of Morrison, Va., and it was from this train, while waiting for our orders to get off, that the members of the Sixty Eighth Aero Squadron first saw the camp to which they were going. The scene that met their eyes was not one of a beautiful camp, as everyone had imagined, but instead the very opposite. It was really nothing but a wooded swamp, with about twenty five large wooden warehouses, running at about thirty degree angle from the tracks. While a little further back was about eighteen barracks, with messhalls for each barracks. These barracks which were nearing completion ran at right angles to the railroad, one of the ~~as~~ we later found out proved to be our future home for the time we were at Morrison.

After receiving the command to "Detrain" we lined up in a column of two's and started to cross what looked like a sea of mud. At first we tried to keep our shoes and leggings from becoming muddy, but finally gave it up as a bad job, trusting to luck that our heads would stay above the water and mud. After walking several hundred feet we reached our destination, barracks number fifteen, and we certainly ^{had} a sorry looking lot. These barracks as mentioned previously, were only partly completed and we were without heat or light of any kind.

After removing our packs, everyone excepting the cooks and K.Ps (Kitchen Police) were detailed to unload and carry our supplies and other equipment from the cars to the barracks. This proved to be a harder task than we imagined as most of the articles were heavy and they also had to be carried over the same ground as we had walked over a short while before. This work lasted until about 8.00 p.m., when everything was safely in the barracks. By this time our cooks had prepared a hastily cooked meal and everyone ate ravenously. The meal being over, everyone was busy making themselves comfortable for the night, canvas cots were set up and it being very cold all available clothing was utilized as blankets in order to keep warm.

The following morning we were awakened at 5.30 a.m., and shortly afterwards had breakfast, this meal being over, most of us wondered what our next task would be - this we soon found out.

Outside our barracks were quite a number of tree stumps which had to be pulled, and this proved to be our first job in the new camp. The boys went to work willingly enough but it was very dirty and tiresome work. With every blow of the axe a shower of mud would fly, covering everyone within range, causing the men to utter words that would not be fit for publication, while those outside the range of mud, would laugh at the plight of the unfortunate victims.

By nightfall, the sight in the immediate vicinity of our barracks presented an altogether different appearance. Whenever a stump was pulled the hole was filled and the ground leveled as good as possible under the muddy conditions. While in several places there were to be seen the last flickering flames of the stumps that had been piled up and were burning all day long.

The main purpose of building this camp, was for a concentration and embarkation camp for troops going overseas. It was situated about seven miles north of Newport News, and about three quarters of a mile from the James River. An ideal location, as the Chesapeake and Ohio railroad ran by the camp and from this line track sidings ran alongside each warehouse. Each of these warehouse had a large platform, making it easy for the shipping of soldiers or supplies. A company of soldiers could be ordered from their barracks, and in about five minutes time be placed on trains leaving for the embarkation docks, about forty-five minutes ride.

As this camp was far from being completed, it will be necessary to give the reader an idea of the existing conditions - there were no roads over which a truck of any kind could travel, all material had to be carried from the railroad or else from the state road, which was several hundred yards from the camp. Between the camp and this road was nothing but a wooded swamp covered with underbrush and fallen trees. This of course made it very hard work when any materials were brought into camp, and it was a very tedious job. There was no fire protection, altho at each end of the camp large steel structures were in course of erection, these when finished would have two large steel water tanks to be used in case of fire.

For drainage there was only a small ditch running the length of the camp, this ditch to say the least was very inadequate to drain such a sight as that chosen for this camp. Running alongside this ditch, on the side nearest the warehouses was a small narrow gauge railway, this was used mostly for carrying refuse of all descriptions to a place where it could be collected by wagons. All water supply was temporary and was not connected up to the barracks, this made it necessary to carry to the kitchen in cans and pails, all water used for cooking purposes, which under the muddy conditions was far from being an easy task. From these facts, the reader can get a small idea of what the men of this and also the other Squadrons in camp had to contend with.

The men after getting comfortably settled in their barracks, were sent out on working details every day. These details covered many and all kinds of jobs that were mean and disagreeable. ¶ A non-commissioned officer, preferably took charge of the men while at work, he saw that the men kept busy, while he

himself paratically did no work at all. In spite of the muddy conditions and cold weather, the men of this Squadron did very little complaining. They were always in high spirits and could be seen going to work, or coming home from same, all singing the popular songs of the day, instead of guns being on their shoulder, one could see such weapons as picks, shovels and crow bars. When one considers that the day shortly after our arrival, until a few days previous to our departure for France, we did work of a most disagreeable character, yet the spirit of the men was wonderful. All the time that we were at this camp, we spent working out doors in bitter cold weather, when the temperature dropped to a point between six and ten degrees below zero. The inhabitants claiming it to be the coldest winter on record for that region. Beside the cold the men had to contend with rain, hail and snow, to say nothing of mud and water which could be found everywhere.

Finally towards the end of February the camp was beginning to look as a camp should look. The severe weather was about over and the ground surrounding the barracks and messhall was all leveled off, with grass beginning to show here and there, while throughout the camp there were wooden sidewalks which were later to be replaced by concrete. The drainage systems were about completed and the roads as well. A heavy truck could proceed through the camp without the chauffeur having any fear of disappearing with truck and all into a sea of mud. Our barracks were heated with hot air and lighted with electricity, they were also fitted with a fine washroom, with showers and all modern conveniences.

The Y.M. was our chief amusement center, but many boys enjoyed Sunday and weekend passes, enabling them to visit both Newport News and Norfolk.

The Squadron was placed under quarantine twice during its stay in this camp and we spent our first Christmas in the army, under these conditions; nevertheless with the aid of packages from home and the thoughtfulness of Lieut. Miller, our Commanding Officer, we were well supplied with the good things of life and everyone had a fine time.

Preparatory to sailing to France, quite a number of men received five day passes to go home, and like every other squadron of soldiers, we also had men who went absent without leave. These furloughs were given out as long as it was possible without interfering with the plans or preparations for the days previous to sailing, so naturally there were many disappointed men, but their sorrows were soon forgotten as the long expected day arrived on March 4th, when we received orders to entrain for the first part of our journey overseas.

We left camp about 11.00 a.m. and after a very slow journey, eventually reached the docks at Newport News, here after much shifting and moving around we finally boarded the transport at 2.15 p.m. We were among the last troops to go on board, and were therefore not put down in the lower hold as some of the troops were, our quarters being only one deck below the forward hatch. After being assigned to our bunks we were permitted to go on deck, but only in the vicinity of the ship in which we were stationed. We soon out the name of the transport was "U.S.S. Madawaska" formerly one of the interned German liners, known as the "Koenig Wilhelm II" We did not leave the docks until 3.30 p.m. March 5th, and after the ship was well under way, we were given lifeboat drill to get us accustomed to our positions in case of emergency. By this time we were away from land and we thought on our way North to New York Harbour. This proved to be correct, for the next day about 11.30 a.m., we dropped anchor in upper New York Bay, opposite St. George, Staten Island. We stayed here for about an hour, and then weighed anchor once more and headed to sea. The day was a very foggy one, and we proceeded through the Narrows with caution. At 3.00 p.m. we once more dropped anchor, this time in the midst of a large convoy of ships, about half way between Fort Hamilton and Coney Island, we remained here until late the following day, during this wait other ships began move out to sea and about 6.15 p.m. March 7th, we weighed anchor and started on our first adventure. Everyone was happy and gave vent to their feelings and emotions

by singing popular songs.

The trip across was rather a long one, and the men passed the time boxing, reading magazines and singing. At night there was really nothing to do but sit around the deck and talk in low tones, no smoking was permitted between Sunset and Sunrise and there were no lights above deck at all. Below there were just enough blue lights to enable one to see the passageways.

In our convoy there were four ships, with the battleship North Carolina in the lead. The ships usually traveled four abreast unless the weather was very rough when they only traveled two abreast.

There were several duties the men had to perform each day, among them being K.P. and Guard Duty. Men were also posted as lookouts in different parts of the ship, these men had to report everything that was seen floating on the water, whether it was paper, driftwood or ships, as U.Boats have been known to disguise their periscopes, making them look like driftwood, floating boxes etc.

By this time quite a number of men were seasick, and those fortunate enough to be well had the time of their lives fooling their seasick comrades.

Everything aboard ship went along fine, the sailors quarters were opened almost every night for the soldiers, also a movie show twice a week, and a well stocked canteen was run on board where men could buy almost everything desired.

Late in the afternoon of March 15th, we entered the so called danger zone, and from this day on we had to sleep with our clothes on, also our life preservers. On Sunday March 17th, we entered the Bay of Biscay, until this time we only had one cruiser as a means of protection, altho each ship was armed fore and aft with six inch guns but on Monday the 18th several destroyers were sighted and these were to take us into port, the speed with they circled around the ships was wonderful and they seemed to be everywhere at the same time. Our cruiser left us on this date and we were told it was going back to the States.

Lifeboat drills were a daily event, every man having to take part, and go to his proper station when the alarm was sounded. At first there was a little confusion but after a few days practise we took our positions as soldiers should.

The 19th of March proved to be the most exciting day of the trip, about 2.00 p.m., the Abandon Ship Alarm sounded and every man took his place on deck. There were rumours of a submarine having been sighted and the destroyers were circling around all the ships, the gun crew on our ship were at their posts and the powder magazines were opened up ready for action. One of the destroyers several hundred yards away on our starboard side was seen to drop two depth bombs; these caused the water to rise to a great height and the vibration could be felt on our ship. After this there seemed to be no more excitement but as a safety measure, no one was allowed below deck until dark and then an extra watch was put on. During this danger the discipline of everyone on board was to be highly commended.

It was just about twilight of this same day when the convoy was split, two ships and four destroyers going in one direction, while the remaining ships and four destroyers went in another.

Wednesday March 20th, Belle Isle was sighted, all around us were to be seen small sailboats, mostly painted red, these were used as fishing smacks by the French and comparing them with the boat we were on they seemed very small. Overhead two aeroplanes circled around several times and then headed for shore. When we dropped anchor about 10.00 a.m., we seemed to be in a small bay but quite a distance from shore. Quite near us the masts and smokestacks of a sunken ship were sticking above the waves; no doubt a victim of the U.Boats.

Here, we were told to write letters to our folks and friends, letting them know we had reached France safely. Preparations were also made for debarkation.

When we awoke the morning of the 21st, we saw that our position had been changed, instead of being a great distance from shore we were quite close to it, and we later found out that we were standing off the locks running into St. Nazaire.

About noon we started on our journey through the locks and then through the canal, finally reaching our destination, we tied up at the docks at 12.30 p.m.

We filed down the gangplank and through the narrow passageway like cattle and at last were on French soil. No one needed to tell us that we were in a foreign country, for everything we looked at had an unfamiliar appearance, from the railroad cars on the dock, to the signs on the buildings in the street, where we were lined up waiting for the remainder of the troops to leave the boat.

There was considerable confusion and as soldiers we probably made rather a poor impression on the few onlookers present. As soon as all were off the transport, we started our march to the "Rest Camp" on the outskirts of the town. Contrary to our expectations we had no big reception, no little Mademoiselles came running out to kiss the boys, true the people did seem to watch us with interest, but there seemed to be few on the streets and most of these were women in mourning or else wounded French soldiers. It was a beautiful clear warm day and with our packs and overcoats we soon began to feel the effect of our three weeks inaction on shipboard. "Was there ever such a long steep hill as that one leading to camp! - Well, we don't remember where it was". For the reputation of 480 be it said that no one fell out, and we finally came into camp.

First we expected to use Pup Tents but after driving the cows out of some barracks, we made ourselves comfortable on the bare slats or on the dirt floor and ~~we~~ waited for our supper. It was here that we had our first taste of "Corned Willy and Hardtack". The Officers were in the same boat as the rest of us and were getting pointers as to how to manage their messkits and new "Sam Brown" belts all at the same time. That evening we changed our good American Dollars into Francs and Sous, having a hard time to realize that those "Soap Wrappers" could really be money.

Our second day in France was taken up mostly in having much needed baths and washing clothes. The whole Squadron will remember this as the coldest bath on record, as the season was March and we stood under a two inch stream, ice cold, in an old shack with no stoves present. The next day in our "Rest Camp" we were occupied in drilling and fatigue duty, a carpenter detail being required for shovel and wheelbarrow work on a new Base Hospital.

The following morning we received orders to break camp and marched through town to the railroad yards. This was our first experience with "Side door Pullmans". We were lucky and got second and third class coaches instead of cars of the regular "Forty Men - Eight Horse" variety. As the day was hot and we had not received a noonday meal, our first thoughts after reaching the train, were of food and drink. The squadron cooks gave us baked beans and hard tack and men in each compartment were issued their three day traveling rations. French women and children crowded along the side of the train selling fruit and chocolate and through the fence on the other side of the track, bottles began to appear and the train pulled out to the sounds of Yankee cheers, broken glass and popping corks.

Our route followed through the beautiful valley of the Loire. We passed through Nantes and the country beyond was very picturesque with its red roofed houses, white winding roads, green fields, vineyards covered slopes and big windmills on the hill tops.

After traveling all the afternoon and the following night we arrived at Romorantin our destination at 9.00 a.m. March 25th.

We shall all remember the morning when we lined up in the station yard under the big trees. We were here in France and our work just ahead of us. The weather was like a day in May and the only question was "How far is camp?" and "Why do we have to carry our overcoats". After marching about an hour and a half we found the answer to the first question but never did learn the answer to the other.

On the outskirts of the town we passed trenches and dugouts which the French had used in training their recruits in trench warfare. About a mile further on we came to the edge of the American camp. There were about three or four one story wooden barracks and a small Y.M.C.A. Hut half hidden among scrubby pine trees. A little further on, we passed a group of French houses and a mill with a tall chimney beside the river to our right. Soon we could see the frame of a steel building on the left where American soldiers, in their blue denims, yelled a welcome to us and a little further we passed a company of Chinese laborers on road repair. We thought now we must be nearly to our stopping place but instead we kept on for about a mile, passing once in a while a French house but no more American buildings until we came to a group of about a dozen barracks and a small "Y" tent on the right with the skeleton of a steel building on the left.

Here we turned in and rested in a field while the cooks prepared a meal and members of an older Squadron finished our barracks so we would have a shelter for the night. A few hundred yards back of the camp was the river Sauldre and on the far side the little town of Pruniers. As this was in the good times before the days of M.P.'s (Military Police) the fellows proceeded to inspect the town. That night we had our first experience with the enemy, known in squadron history as "The first battle of Cognac". We received a few casualties but were all present at reveille.

That morning we were set to work helping the Chinese laborers dig the main drainage ditch. It was here that we learned that Chink Drivers were not armed, that non-commissioned officers were expected to work in France and that men could lean on their shovels to rest but must never sit down.

All the construction squadrons were under the orders of camp engineering headquarters. Our men were detailed on different work, some on drainage, some on water supply, some on building barns and latrines and others on telephone and road building details.

The camp was known by the name of Air Service Production Center #2. It was located about four miles from Romorantin and extended about two miles on both sides of the main highway which ran about east and west. The whole area was some six miles long by one and a half miles wide. The line of the French narrow gauge Argent to LeBlanc railroad ran through the center of the camp providing passenger service to Romorantin and also to Gievres, three miles away, where a large intermediate supply depot of the American army was located. In order to provide freight facilities, a standard gauge railroad had been built by the Americans into camp from Gievres which connected with the main line between Bourges and Tours. Work on the field had been started in February 1918 and when we arrived we found six squadrons hard at work. About twenty barracks had been built, two supply warehouses completed and two steel buildings started. The drainage system was only just begun, there was no water supply except by tank wagons, no lighting system, no bath houses and the telephone system was just being installed at the Engineering headquarters. A greater part of the camp was covered with pine trees and what was to be the flying field was a wooded swamp.

To give some idea of the work contemplated on the field, it might be said that there were to be eight large plants consisting of eight steel buildings each. These plants were to have a floor space of two hundred and fifty thousand square feet each and were to be used for aeroplane assembling, salvage and motor repair work. In addition, there were to be some thirty warehouses, each approximately five hundred feet by fifty feet of both steel and wood construction, about fifty steel hangers, balloon sheds for repair and inspection work, motor truck repair shops, garages and barracks for not less than fifteen thousand men.

In all, a floor space of well towards three million square feet was to be roofed in and in addition there was a flying field a mile and a half long, by one half mile wide to be cleared of trees, drained, leveled and rolled, several

miles of road to be built and complete water, electric light and power and telephone systems to be installed and also a complete three thousand bed Base Hospital to be built.

During the last few days of March we had good weather and didnt mind our open air mess-hall and river bathing place but during April it rained constantly. We lived in rubber boots and slickers. It was a question of which leaked the worse, raincoats or the barrack roofs. This was the time when the "Second Story Men" in the barracks had their first need of pup tents to keep their blankets dry.

One night, just after being put to sleep by a downpour of rain, we were awakened by the cry, "Pick up your shoes if you dont want them to float away" water had come in under the orderly room door and was four inches deep all over the barracks. Anywhere off the main road was mud and water, and boards laid on the ground while working would sink out of sight if left any time. It was almost impossible to transport construction materials. At times it was necessary for the men to help the trucks by hauling on long ropes. Right here, is where the light Fiat trucks, with their pneumatic tyres showed their fitness for this work. When other trucks were stuck in the mud holes, they were doing the work or else pulling out the big fellows.

During this period, 480 men were doing miscellaneous work. Some were put on detached service at Paris and Tours, some on Military Police duty, some on motor truck convoy work bringing trucks from the ports inland, some detailed supervising Chinese labor and some on special duty at Post headquarters. The greater part of the Squadron were on wood cutting details or else building construction. Many of the men were unaccustomed to construction work and it was at this time that we had our only serious accident, when a staging broke injuring one man so that he was in the hospital for several weeks.

During this rainy season, the boys were getting up at 5.30 a.m. in the dark cold damp mornings having their breakfast of bacon, black coffee, bread and sometimes oatmeal or misnamed hotcakes. This meal was served to the fellows waiting in line under the dripping eaves of the kitchen shack and eating under the tarpaulin shelter which was called our messhall. After a mornings work of carrying steel or crawling around on hands and knees on wet corrugated iron roofs, the men came in at noon a bedraggled, rusty, looking bunch to an unheated barracks but there was no complaining and everybody just took things as they came. Afternoon was just a repetition of morning until dark. To show the spirit of the men - One night about 11.00 p.m. the Sergeant Major received orders to get the names of all truck drivers, as all available men were to be sent to the front with trucks. The Germans were near Paris and the Allies were having their hands full holding them. Well, everybody in 480 was a truck driver that had ever seen a Fliver and all rushed down to the motor park. Unfortunately none of the 480 men were needed and they were a surely a disappointed lot of men.

At first the only place of amusement or entertainment was the little Y.M.C.A. tent or else the numerous cafés where the fellows made their acquaintance with the different kinds of French wines and discovered there was no such thing as good beer in the French scheme of life. On Sunday there was no work except for the unlucky unloading details, made up each Sunday from the unfortunates whose names began with A or B or those who had missed Reveille. On this day, passes were given to town and nearly everybody availed themselves of the opportunity to get a real bath, do a little shopping, see the French movies and most important of all to get a real feed.

When Spring came, work on a camp garden and hog farm was started, one of the 480 Officers being put in charge with the men from the squadron to do the actual work.

The first real chance the 480 had of showing its efficiency, as a

unit, was on warehouse construction. On April 16th, a detail of men from 480 and some from other squadrons, about one hundred men altogether, started work on a five hundred foot by fifty foot warehouse. First of all, the site had to be cleared of standing timbers. The trees were all grubbed out, roots and all, a gang of Chinese helping to clear them away as fast as felled. A portable gasoline saw mill was set up where part of the trees were cut up into timbers, hewed into sills or made into posts. Within a week the building frame was up, where seven days before the trees had stood, and two weeks from the time we started, the warehouse was completed with corrugated iron roof, tile walls and dirt floor all graded.

May the 16th, we, together with the 485th Squadron, received orders to move the next day. Of course we all expected we were going to the front, but instead we went to Gievres three miles away to build some steel warehouses there at the supply depot. On arrival, we were quartered in tents and worked Saturday and Sunday putting up barracks for ourselves. As soon as these were completed, each squadron started on a five hundred foot steel warehouse. It was a race to see who would finish first, concrete foundations were poured one day and columns put up the next and in some instances, columns were placed in the afternoon on piers that had been poured in the morning. The men were amateurs at steel work but nevertheless the first two buildings were completed sixteen days after starting, there being no stop on May 18th for the celebration of the first Liberty Plane's flight in France or for Memorable Day. The buildings had heavy structural steel frames with corrugated galvanized iron covering riveted on with galvanized straps, all riveting being done cold by hand. Buildings were equipped with ventilators, metal framed windows and sliding doors. It might be said here, that we were able to raise twenty-two gusses in a day, the best record of the engineers or the high paid civilian employees being only eleven.

Two more warehouses were started on Wednesday, the day following the completion of the first two, and the Saturday following that, when orders were received to return to Pruniers, all steel was in place and the roof started, the frames were in place on the second two buildings at the time when the schedule called for the first two to be completed.

The two Squadrons returned to Pruniers camp Sunday and started the following morning constructing some steel warehouses for spare aeroplane parts. It was on this job, that our squadron made their record for steel work. On July 2nd, forty-one steel roof trusses and two gable ends, in other words practically the whole main roof supporting structure for a warehouse was erected in two hours and forty five minutes and on July 11th, forty one trusses were put up in one hour and thirty eight minutes. The squadron was especially recommended for this work by Major General Patrick.

Due to this record, forty were put on Special Duty with the engineers for steel work exclusive.

This reduced the number of men allowed on furlough, so that many were unable to take their seven day leave after their first four months in France. However, some of us were lucky and had a look in at Paris and spent an enjoyable week either at French resorts on the English Channel, the foothills of the Alpes or the Mediterranean Coast, all at the expense of Uncle Sam.

The organization fast gained a reputation with engineering headquarters for hard work and efficiency. Men on special duty from the squadron were invariably in charge of work where they were detailed.

During the months of July, August, September and October, every effort was being made to complete the field at the earliest possible date. At this time the 480 did the major part of the work on several large aeroplane assembly and salvage shops. A group of buildings for the assembling of Handley

Page machines was also well under way. When the engineering department wanted a building rushed, it was 480 that was detailed to the job, many times we left one building to be finished by another squadron while we started a new building or a squadron was withdrawn so that we might get in and push the work to completion.

October was a month of great activity. At this time the production of aeroplanes was at its height, many French women and several regiments of Motor Mechanics being employed. The railroad sidings were constantly filled with wrecked planes from the front or crates of new planes coming from the ports which were speedily unloaded by cranes. After being assembled, motors tested and machine guns timed they were rolled out to the hangers or immediately convoyed to the front. This testing of machine guns and motors could be heard night and day, salvage planes were rebuilt in the shops for the use of student fliers.

Our Commanding Officer Lieutenant Sutton was transferred to the Engineers September 27th, 1918 but he was ably succeeded by Lieutenant Jones one of the Officers previously attached to the squadron.

At the present time, the Armistice has been signed, the construction work has been stopped being practically completed and we are all awaiting that grand and glorious day when our C.O. will say, "Men, pack up your kit bags, we are ordered back to the States. You know there is only one country for us anyway, and that is the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA".

ROSTER OF OFFICERS
480th Aero Construction Squadron.

		Assigned	Relieved.
Carson, Paul C	1st Lt. MRC	Nov 21, 17	Jan 17, 18
Chapin, Harry G	1st Lt. SRCAS	Jan 7, 18	Jan 22, 18
Corby, Thomas A	2nd Lt. SRCAS	Jan 25, 18	Feb 3, 18
Dixon, John F. Jr	1st Lt. SRCAS	Mch 1, 18	Apr 9, 18
Dixon, Joseph F	2nd Lt. SRCAS	Feb 22, 18	Mch 1, 18
Hale, Lawrence I	2nd Lt. SRCAS	Jan 8, 18	Jan 20, 18
Holmes, Louis L	1st Lt. SRCAS	Jan 8, 18	Jan 22, 18
Johnston, Miles C	2nd Lt. SRCAS	Jan 6, 18	Jan 22, 18
Jones, Kirby	2nd Lt. AS	Jan 6, 18	to date
Love, S. Arthur Jr	2nd Lt. AS	Nov 8, 18	to date
Maloney, John P	2nd Lt. AS	Jan 5, 18	May 16, 18
Manson, Alex R	1st Lt. SRCAS	Jan 8, 18	Jan 14, 18
Marshall, Crag W	2nd Lt. SRCAS	Jan 7, 18	Jan 20, 18
Martin, Albert W	2nd Lt. AS	Nov 5, 18	to date
Miller, Glen R	1st Lt. SRCAS	Dec 18, 17	Mch 1, 18
Ransom, Percy A	2nd Lt. SRCAS	Dec 23, 17	Jan 22, 18
Reno, Clarence G	1st Lt. MRC	Jan 17, 18	May 4, 18
Ricketts, Karl R	1st Lt. SRCAS	Jan 7, 18	Jan 23, 18
Sutton, Roy R	1st Lt. AS	Mch 1, 18	Sep 27, 18
Terrell, William L	1st Lt. SRCAS	Jan 22, 18	Jan 25, 18
Thomas, John	2nd Lt. SRCAS	Jan 22, 18	Feb 20, 18
Washburn, Peyton	1st Lt. SRCAS	Feb 19, 18	Feb 24, 18