

467TH AERO SQUADRON.

(Formerly 55th Aero Squadron)

Comprising 150 new recruits who had just arrived from Fort Slocum, N.Y., the 55th Aero Squadron was organized at Kelly Field, Tex., on August 8th, 1917, with provisional officers in charge. There were no trade tests and the personnel included mechanics, carpenters, clerks, professional men and others from all walks of life.

The first month was spent in drilling and learning the rudiments of Army practice. On August 25th, 1917, the designation of the unit was changed to the 467th Aero Squadron and, with seven others, it was designated as a Construction Squadron. An immediate re-organization took place to complete the personnel according to the announced table of organization and many transfers were in course of completion when the squadron was ordered to move to Mineola, N.Y. This move was made on September 16th, under command of 1st Lieut. Arthur W. Betts. Capt. Gustav G. Baetcke relieved Lieut. Betts on September 24th and remained the squadron's Commanding Officer until the end of the war.

The few weeks spent at Mineola were signalized by rapid preparations for overseas service. The squadron was given a complete equipment of carpenters, plumbers, electricians and machinists' tools for 150 men.

On October 13th, the unit sailed on the Cunard liner Pannonia being among the first American forces to go across the ocean. Liverpool was reached October 29th, after an extremely rough trip. A two day stay at the rest camp at Borden preceded travel to France. Leaving from Southampton, and debarking at LeHavre, the squadron arrived at its destination at Issoudun, France, November 4th, 1917.

In spite of four sleepless nights, the squadron was forced to march with full pack from the station to the camp, about 16 kilometers. The camp was just beginning and a few squadrons which had been there only a short time had constructed just enough barracks for

themselves. October, 1917, was<sup>a</sup>/very wet month. The squadron took up quarters in a canvas hangar with straw on the damp ground for beds. About six weeks later it moved into barracks, which it had constructed.

Upon arrival at Issoudun, the 467th Squadron started upon its working career. Construction Officers arrived from the United States toward the end of November and oversaw the work of building barracks, power plants, machine shops, electrical installations, hangars and buildings of all kinds. 1st Lieut. Godfrey K. Downer, and 1st Lieut. Frederick E. Schilling took charge of building construction, 1st Lieut. Ben H. Krey of electrical construction and 1st Lieut. William E. Birmingham of road construction.

During the winter the squadron was busily engaged in the various kinds of work called for. Its personnel showed a shortage of carpenters and for a time men of all other vocations were impressed into service as carpenters.

On May 13th, 1918, the squadron, at this time the last of the eight original construction units at Issoudun, was ordered to St. Jean-de-Monts (Vendee), on the Atlantic coast. The squadron left Issoudun with most of the personnel it had had during its stay there. Lieut. Schilling was transferred to the 2nd Aero Production Center to supervise construction there, being later promoted to Captain. 2nd Lieut. Earl D. Keefer joined the squadron as Construction Supply Officer. Shortly after arriving at the new station, 1st Lieut. Walter E. Powers was assigned as squadron Adjutant.

When the unit arrived at St. Jean-de-Monts on May 16th, 1918, to begin what was to be known as the Aerial Gunnery School, there was nothing to be seen but sand dunes, farm lands and ocean shore. Here the men pitched tents and the Officers took quarters in an old stone farm house nearby.

Construction was started immediately upon the various barracks and hangars with very much the same kind of work as was done at Issoudun. The manual labor was different for there were long stretches of sand dunes to be levelled. A new feature of the work also was that

instead of putting up the "Bessoneau" canvas airplane hangars, steel structures with corrugated iron sheathing were to be erected. With the assistance of other units which arrived later, the Aerial Gunnery School with its large field and numerous buildings was completed by October. Although not as extensive as the Third Aviation Instruction Center, it was a big enterprise.

On October 30th, 1918, the unit was ordered to Le Trecey (Haute Marne). A few days were spent enroute at St. Aignan (Loire et Cher) for gas training. The destination was reached November 6th, and the squadron was there at the field known as the 2nd Air Depot, Zone of Advance, when the armistice was signed, November 11th.

Lieut. Downer left the squadron before leaving St. Jean.

Although it never reached the front, the men of the 467th Aero S quadron are proud the record of the organization which covered a long period of faithful service.

(Prepared by Lieut. George W. Sutton, Jr., Tank Corps, U.S.A., Dec. 7, '18, from S quadron history furnished by Capt. Gustav. G. Baetcke, A.S. Commanding.)

ROSTER OF OFFICERS  
467TH AERO SQUADRON  
FROM ORGANIZATION.

Captain Gustave G. Baetke, A.S.  
1st Lieut. Ben H. Krey, S.C.  
1st Lieut. Wm. E. Birmingham, S.C.  
1st Lieut. Earl D. Keefer, A.S.  
1st Lieut. Walter E. Powers, A.S.  
1st Lieut. Arthur W. Betts, A.S.  
1st Lieut. Russell S. Dean, A.S.  
1st Lieut. John G. George, A.S.  
1st Lieut. Frederick E. Schilling, A.S.  
1st Lieut. Godfrey K. Downer, S.C.  
1st Lieut. H. W. Seaman, A.S.