

HEADQUARTERS, 464th Aero Squadron,
Air Service Spares Depot, A.P.O. 917, A. E. F.,
November 24th, 1918.

HISTORICAL REPORT On 464th AERO SQUADRON:

The 464th Aero Squadron was originally the 52nd Aero Provisional Squadron, organized at Kelly Field, Texas, on August 7th, 1917. On August 25th, 1917, it changed to the 52nd Aero Construction Squadron. Members were recruited at Columbus Barracks, Ohio, and Ford Logan, Colorado. First Commanding Officer was Major M. F. Davis, superseded September 1st by Major John A. Reynolds, superseded September 6th, 1917, by Capt. Julian C. Smith.

Duties at Kelly Field consisted entirely of close-order drill. The sudden accumulation of the mess fund, from Post Exchange and ration savings, offered extreme temptation and the most pleasant recollection of Kelly Field is of the mess. This probably accounts for the fact that the first man on the sick report was Cook William R. Bratton. The first promotions, on August 25th, 1917, consisted of six sergeants, nineteen corporals and six cooks.

September 17th, 1917, Squadron moved to Mineola, Long Island, arriving September 21st, 1917. This camp was known as Camp Mills #2.

Lieut. Clifford T. Smith was assigned as medical officer before leaving Kelly Field, Texas. Lieut. Edgar R. Thiess was assigned on September 24th, 1917. Lieut. Junius C. Rochester was assigned on October 8th, 1917. Capt. Smith superseded by Capt. John G. Rankin, October 11th, 1917.

At Mineola there was considerable uncertainty as to further movements although it was definitely understood that the squadron was preparing to sail to France. Squadron and Officers were quartered in tents and except for final brushing up on drilling, nothing of permanent nature could be accomplished. Triple typhoid inoculations had been secured at Kelly Field and hence considerable stress was laid on this matter before embarkation. Final examinations were conducted frequently and strict enforcement of this order prevented the sailing of Lieut. Thiess, who had not completed his inoculations. Accordingly the squadron left with but two Officers. One day before sailing, Lieut. Rochester was detached for command of 5th Detachment Aviation Cadets, sailing on same ship with the squadron.

The 464th Aero Squadron was among the first 60,000 United States troops to sail, and embarkation was made from Pier 54, New York City, on the morning of October 13th, 1917, on the Gunard Steamer Pannonia. The Steamer Pannonia was destined to be the stage of one of the first real acts of the war. This vessel was practically the May-flower of the Air Service. The entire passenger list of this ship, which was acting as a government transport, consisted of eight construction Squadrons and the 5th Detachment of the Aviation Cadets. As far as we have been able to ascertain, these were the first construction squadrons to arrive in France. The only other Air Service units having sailed previous to this voyage were a few Service Squadrons and Detachments of Aviation Cadets. The voyage of the Pannonia was, for the training of recruits in the privations and hardships of war, as suitable a measure as could have been enacted. Mutton, prune-pudding and life preservers remain to this date a clear but not altogether pleasant recollection. The voyage was a rough one, and with 1500 troops, baggage and equipment crowded on a vessel of less than 9,000 tons, the opportunities for comfort were decidedly limited. The submarine menace was constantly present and lights were extinguished at night. Aside from numerous impromptu drills and rumors of ships sunk all around us we experienced no difficulty in crossing the Atlantic with a convoy of 15 ships. We sighted the northern coast of Ireland on October 27th, 1917, and first dropped anchor in the Harbor of Loch Willie. We proceeded that evening to Belfast, Ireland, thence to Liverpool, England, disembarking there on October 29th, 1917. An all night ride delivered us at Borden, England, in a rest camp, considerably disheveled and with the appearance of having been abandoned for a considerable period of time. Our first personal experience of the war occurred at this place--

a zeppelin raid occurred over London and the scare reached camp about midnight. After a general scattering of the troops, recall informed us that the raid had been repelled.

Departure for Southampton, England, occurred the morning of November 1st, 1917. Sailed across the English Channel that evening, arriving in La Harve, France, November 2nd, 1917. Remained one day in this British rest camp, whence we proceeded to Issoudun, France. Sunday morning, November 4th, 1917, brought us in sight of our first military post in France. Here we experienced our first fatigue on French soil. There were approximately 12 canvas hangars and two barracks erected at the time of our arrival. To our eight construction squadrons arriving at this time can be given the credit for laying out and constructing this camp, which is now the largest aviation instruction field in France. The first enemy encountered was the mud. This stubborn combatant has been given considerable publicity since the arrival of the Americans in France and we believe that construction squadrons at this post did more to popularize this factor than any organizations since that time. The squadron had little opportunity to work as a unit since the variety of work and number of troops prohibited construction by squadrons as units. However, the work for which it received special credit was the erection of a steel water tower 157 ft. in height and a machine shop approximately 436 ft. in length, having a clear span of 66 ft., being the largest single building on the field. This squadron also erected two large Y.M.C.A. Huts here. The only strictly American barracks which we have seen were at this post, two of which were built by this squadron. Quarantine was the popular sport of Issoudun, there being approximately two weeks of liberty in five months sojourning there. This can, of course, be contributed to the precautions taken upon the arrival of the first American troops, which have later proven to be justified.

November 15th, 1917, there reported for duty with the squadron, 1st Lieutenants Lewis W. Kunze, William W. Shuster, Frederick Bowne, C. J. Pankow and Leonard Work. January 15th, 1918, Capt. John G. Rankin was detached for service with the First Aero Pursuit Group. 1st Lieut. Junius C. Rochester assumed command. February 9th, 1918, 2nd Lieut. Warner Moore, Jr., was assigned to the squadron. 2nd Lieut. Keefer was assigned to the squadron on January 30th, 1918. 1st Lieut. Warren L. Pierson was assigned to the squadron on February 22nd, 1918. 1st Lieut. George Barger was assigned to the squadron on March 20th, 1918.

March 20th, 1918, the squadron proceeded to Romorantin, France, taking station 8 miles from that French village, at what is now known as Air Service Production Center No. 2. Squadron here received its best opportunity to work as an organization. It erected two Y.M.C.A. Huts of approximately 13,000 square ft. floor area each, also two warehouses with structural steel frames, corrugated iron siding and roofing--dimensions of each building being approximately 66 x 154 ft. The completion of one building consumed approximately 400 man hours for which the squadron was complimented by the Post Commander and the Construction Officials.

Officer personnel had been materially changed, due to various assignments of Special Duty and Detached Service. At the time of leaving Romorantin the officers were 1st Lieut. Junius C. Rochester, 1st Lieut. George Barger, 1st Lieut. Edwin D. Longan and 2nd Lieut. Warner Moore, Jr. The squadron had become well organized and the construction work had been under practically the entire supervision of Master Signal Electrician John Ralph Wood.

Non-commissioned officers of highest grade were as follows:

MASTER SIGNAL ELECTRICIANS:

Clyde M. Strosnider
John R. Wood

SERGEANTS, FIRST CLASS:

James U. Sockman
John W. Kelly
Albert W. Meyer
Wyman N. Snyder
Weldon P. Branch
Thomas J. Vasey, Jr.

Henry M. Kibler
Harry L. Wilkins
O. Hugh Van Natta

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Squadron left Air Service Production Center No. 2 on April 29th, 1918, arriving at American Aviation Acceptance Park #1, Orly, Seine, May 30th, 1918. Building of steel hangars, barracks, roads, electrical power plant and warehouses consumed a busy four months at this post. Our non-commissioned officers were in charge of many important details. The squadron's best record on the field was made in the erection of four steelhangars, dimensions of each being 60 x 100 ft., with structural steel frames, corrugated iron siding and roofing, time consumed being approximately 41 hours. Frequent visits from Bosche aviators interrupted sleep at Orly, but did not effect a day's work. Air raids were almost a nightly occurrence during the months of June, July and August.

Squadron left A.A.A.Park #1, October 8th, 1918, arriving at Chatenay-sur-Seine, Department of Seine at Marne, same date. The new post was officially known as Air Service Spares Depot. Construction work at this post consisted mostly of warehouse construction. Difficulty of securing material prevented any particularly fast construction record being secured. Squadron was located at this camp on November 11th, 1918, the date of the signing of the Armistice. While at this post, 1st Lieut. Brice H. Long and 2nd Lieut. James F. Haldeman were assigned to the squadron for duty.

Other activities in which the squadron has displayed particular interest have been football, baseball, track and musical entertainment. The squadron football team has maintained an enviable record. Gomer D. Jones has brought credit to the squadron as a bass soloist. Ralph L. Stewart has carried off honors in track, baseball and football teams. Charles W. Marvin received first medal in 145-lb. class of boxing. Wyman N. Snyder and William G. Baum have held leads in musical organizations at every station. Thomas R. Wilcox, having been previously a theological student, has acted in the capacity of Chaplian.

The most distinguished honor coming to members of this squadron has been received by John R. Wood, commissioned as 2nd Lieutenant, Air Service, October 26th, 1918, later assigned to squadron for duty. Similar honor came to Weldon P. Branch who left the squadron for flying training, November 2nd, 1918.

Lieut. Warren Lee Pierson transferred to Artillery on April 11th, 1918. 1st Lieut. Frederick R. Speed relieved from duty with Squadron on March 30th, 1918, and assigned to Acceptance Division, Air Service, Paris, promoted to Captain. 1st Lieut. Leonard Work was assigned as officer in charge of Telephone and Radio Construction Division, Air Service, promoted to Captain. 2nd Lieut. Warner Moore, Jr., was assigned to duty at Tours, France, for flying instruction. 1st Lieut. William W. Shuster was assigned to Commanding Officer of 400th Aero Squadron. 1st Lieut. Edwin D. Longan was assigned to command of 658th Aero Squadron.

Squadron's largest entertainment and social activity was at American Aviation Acceptance Park No. 1, when it celebrated the anniversary of its organization on August 7th, 1918. The date of signing of the Armistice found the squadron in the Advanced Section, Services of Supply, being the nearest location it had attained-- a distance of approximately 70 kilometers from the front lines.

There have been no casualties. Thirty-eight men have been transferred out of the squadron for special duty. Squadron strength at date of Armistice was 112 enlisted men. Officers were as follows:

1st Lieut. Junius C. Rochester
1st Lieut. Edwin D. Longan
2nd Lieut. John R. Wood

The squadron adopted a French War Orphan during the month of November, 1918, agreeing to support and educate him until he became of age.

JUNIUS C. ROCHESTER,
1st Lieut., Air Service,
Commanding.