

157th AERO SQUADRON

LINEAGE

Organized Dec 1917

Demobilized Jun 1919

STATIONS

Kelly Field, TX

Selfridge Field, MI, Dec 1917

Garden City, NY, Feb 1918

Port of Embarkation, Hoboken, Feb 1918

AEF, Feb 1918

Mitchel Field, NY

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

type: Service

Service Period: March 15 to August 30, 1918

Locations: Cramlington, Manston, Tadcaster, Waddington

The squadron moved to France on September 8 from Flower Down Camp.

HISTORY of the 157th SQUADRON The personnel of this outfit hails from the four corners of the globe— and Texas. It was selected by that great army general—Red Tape, from the survivors of that sandstorm in Kelly Field in December, 1917. After looking over the collection it had thrown together, R. Tape was evidently discouraged with the outlook, so he passed' the job of making something of it to Lt. Boyd M. Smith, who immediately called for reinforcements and put Joe Moynahan on the job as chief helper. It was a tough job but they succeeded in getting a start in Kelly Field and then when the squadron moved to Mt. Clemens, Michigan, both the "loot" and Joe were considerably helped in their struggles by measles and Adolph Engel, Jr., who was made top kicker at this time. We don't mean to class Engel with the measles, for there is and was no harder worker than he, and he contributed more real hard work to the organization than any other man, before or since.

The extraordinary cooperation, friendliness and good fellowship prevailing in this squadron have alternately been commented and speculated upon, and various explanations are offered. Probably the real reason was that quarantine in Mt. Clemens when we were all "C.B." for five weeks. It was that close association that made us understand each other so thoroly, and it was there that we formed many of our strongest friendships in this man's army. Altho more than half of that original bunch have been transferred to other outfits, the other half has kept the squadron true to the ideals set up there in Michigan, and the character of the present-day organization has been shaped by them.

It was at Mt. Clemens that we acquired Lt. C. D. Conard as Medical Officer and Lt. Cerney as Supply Officer. Altho "Doc." Conard has since gone from us, he is still here in memory, for he was a friend to every man in the outfit. "Doc." was transferred to other duties when we reached England. Lt. Cerney has been continuously on the job now for over a year and to count his friends all one need do is refer to the squadron roster.

February 12, 1918, saw us leave Mt. Clemens for our port of embarkation. It was a happy day, for the boys were anxious to get overseas and into action. We were ten days at Garden City and Mineola and even now the mention of the "barracks" under the grandstand at the Mineola Fair Grounds will send chills up and down the spinal column. It was a "cold, cold winter" and no mistake. These ten days were busy ones. Men were going and coming on short leaves, there were transfers of personnel, both in and out, inspections of every description, drawing clothing and exchanging equipment 'til finally on February 25th the entire squadron embarked on a ship officially designated as "Ship No. 527." It was the White Star liner "Olympic," bound for Liverpool.

The trip across developed very few seasick patients, as we had perfect weather. The Engineers' band gave daily concerts on the deck and the life-boat drills and daily parades on the decks made the time pass quickly. The fifth day out we picked up our convoy of four American destroyers, and they were a welcome sight. There was little fear of submarines after that and the captain, a native of dear old England, after witnessing the actions of the "Yanks" when "subs" were sighted, expressed himself rather forcefully on the subject. The occasion came when the ship's gunners fired on a periscope and the destroyers cruised around and dropped depth bombs.

Several shots were fired and those aboard lined up against the rail and gave vent to their feeling in wild cheers. "They are either very brave or else they are damned fools," was the captain's observation. Maybe he was right on both counts, who knows? Tales vary as to whether there were three submarines or only two encountered on the way over, but it makes little difference. We were fortunate enough to elude them and finally took those "shock absorbers," or life-belts, off when we reached Liverpool, March 5, 1918.

Immediately after debarking we were put aboard one of the funniest sights (outside of a top sergeant being called down by the C. O.) that we'd seen since joining the army. Seeing that we were a strange looking bunch to these English, they took no chances on letting us loose but packed us into these boxes and we were shipped to one of those places made famous in rhyme and prose—a "Rest Camp." They meant that we got part of the work in the States and the "rest" there. We rested our stomachs only. We survived ten days here and were finally rescued by some kind soul among the higher powers and were sent to Waddington, Lincolnshire, for final training. It was a wonderful trip for us, as we were seeing scenery, the style of which we had never before seen except in the movies. There was no stop in London, but for those who did not later obtain leave to this great city it is some satisfaction to be able to say, "Yes, I went thru London while in England, but didn't stay over." Leaves in England were plentiful and many of the boys visited Birmingham, Skegness, Nottingham, Doncaster and other famous English towns and cities.

The time at Waddington was not wasted by any means, for there was much hard work accomplished. We will always claim, though, that the Huns had something to do with forcing us to eat in the English mess, and the nightmares of canned salmon, rabbit, cheese and jam will haunt us for years to come. It was the darkest period of our service under the Stars and Stripes.

When the squadron arrived in Waddington there were no barracks or tents ready for it and the outfit was split up into four sections for billeting purposes. About forty were given possession of the Village Hall with instructions to go as far as they liked but to be in by twelve o'clock, break no windows and let the village sleep. As far as we know the village is still sleeping, which is a good example of how orders are carried out by the 157th Squadron. Another bunch were stationed at the malt kiln, with orders the same as the Village Hall bunch. The other two sections were stationed in temporary barracks at the aerodrome. These two months were very pleasant ones, as we had no reveille. The only flaw in a pleasant existence was the fact that we were still stranded in the English mess. We couldn't get used to that. And we wanted coffee. It was while we were in billets that Fritz gave us our first real thrill. A Zeppelin penetrated far inland and we were wakened about eleven o'clock one night by the sound of great explosions. The motors of the raider could be heard plainly, but the bombs could be heard plainer still. One bomb was dropped on the flying field, only a few yards from one of the hangars, but fortunately there was no damage done and the only casualties were a few of the more excitable who jumped barbed wire fences, fell into hedges, etc., trying to keep up with the "Zep's" flight.

The principal work at Waddington was the training on all heavy types of British bombing planes, including D. H. 4's, D. H. 6's, D. H. 9's, R. E. 8's, A. W. 's, B. E. 2E's and B. E. 2C's. The Aero training plane was also handled at this field. The 44th Training Squadron, Royal Air Force, to which a section of our outfit was attached, operated three hangars: C flight, in charge of the British; B flight, in charge of the 135th Aero Squadron, A. S., U. S. A., and A flight, in charge of

the 157th Aero Squadron. A prize of five pounds, offered for the most orderly hangar and surrounding grounds, was won by our men. The first squadron paper, the "157th Shrapnel," was first published here in April, 1918. A copy sent to air service headquarters in London was productive of high praise and an order for seventy-five additional copies, which were distributed to various squadrons in training in England and Scotland, with the injunction to "Go thou and do likewise." This paper has appeared continuously at an average of one each month for over a year and has been highly praised by the commanding officer of the air service over here, Maj. Gen. Mason M. Patrick, who wrote a personal letter of congratulation to the squadron and "Shrapnel" staff.

Various shows were given at Y. M. C. A. huts and the baseball team played in several cities in England, where they were cordially received by the British and given a royal welcome on each occasion. It was a great life. Finally, on August 16th, the thing we had often feared happened. We were divided into four sections and sent to different parts of England. The headquarters section stayed at Waddington, Lt. Smith acting as C. O. of the American Detachment, which had representatives from six other squadrons at this time. The other three sections of our squadron proceeded to York, Manston and Cramlington, and for the remainder of the month they worked on Handley-Pages and the lighter British scout planes including Sopwith Pups and Camels. When the headquarters section left Waddington, on August 30th, the other three sections left their respective stations at the same time and late that night, at Camp Flower Down, Winchester, we were finally assembled as a complete squadron once more. It was a happy bunch and just the short separation from the main body made the men realize how much they cared for the squadron as a whole. The esprit de corps developed at Waddington had welded this organization into a perfect machine, each part depending on the next and each part perfect, the whole machine smooth running and oiled by cooperation. At Winchester, Lt. Howland was assigned as M. O., and has been continuously on the job since that time. Inspections and preparations for inspections, mostly the latter, were held at Winchester in preparation for our going overseas. The one memory of that camp will always remain with us—that of the pack inspection which never materialized.

As Shakespeare said: "To be it is to not," or words to that effect. On September 8th the squadron proceeded to Southampton, and that evening embarked for France on board "H. M. S. Londonderry." It is best to pass lightly over this trip, for it was not a pleasant one. It is stated by science that seasickness is the most unpleasant of harmless ailments and we believe it. Contrary to several beliefs and several more fervent prayers, the boat was not sunk in mid-channel and we finally docked at Cherbourg, France, at 3 A. M., September 9th. At Cherbourg we encountered (encountered is good) another of those British "Rest Camps." We were fortunate in only staying here twenty-four hours and then had our first experience with French box cars. It was not until then that we got to thinking of brave old General Sherman and we realized then that he probably knew whereof he spoke. A forty-eight-hour trip with a flat wheel proved it beyond a doubt. But at the new station these troubles were soon forgotten.

At St. Maixent, our old C. O., Lt. Smith, received orders to report for flying training and was therefore relieved of command and Lt. Walter F. Cunningham was assigned as commanding officer. Since taking charge Lt. Cunningham has proven that he "wants what he wants when he wants it" and generally gets it, and is always on the lookout to secure the best possible treatment

for his command. At this station we were equipped with rifles and gas masks and when not drilling were on fatigue and there was little time to worry about things that had already happened. We were anxiously looking forward to the order to move to the front, and after a two weeks' stay we received orders to proceed to Chatillon-sur-Seine, our present camp. We anxiously consulted our map, hoping to find Chatillon under fire, but found, to our disappointment, that we were still a hundred miles behind the lines. As this was practically a new camp and not yet fully completed, the squadron was put on construction work and for two months were busily engaged in building hangars, "Y" huts, barracks and such, after which time our mechanics were placed on the flying field for duty in connection with the training of artillery observers. About twenty of the men are in the Motor Transport and the 157th Aero Squadron is playing an important part in the successful operation of this camp.

And so the history of the 157th Aero Squadron, Air Service, U. S. A., is brought down to date. The future is not yet known. The ever-present question foremost in every man's mind is: "When do we go home?" And from the distance there comes an echo to the tune of "Oh Let It Be Soon."

The following officers were assigned to staff: 1st Lt. Harry C. Drayton, A. S., as officer in charge of flying; Capt. Mervyn F. Falk, A. S., engineering officer; 1st Lt. Theodore P. Davis, A. S., supply officer; 1st Lt. Edwin H. Fort, A. S., as photographic officer; 1st Lt. James W. Watts, Jr., A. S., as gunnery and armament officer, and 1st Lt. Howard J. Meyer, A. S., as radio and electrical officer. A headquarters detachment of officers was regularly established, and 1Lt. Frank B. Tidwell, F. A., a graduate observer, was placed temporarily in charge, with an office established for the carrying on of the administrative work in connection with that organization. All student officers were assigned to this, as were the pilots formerly assigned to the 89th Squadron. A post office was established in one end of an empty hut, and 2nd Lt. Leo. G. McKinley, A. S., was placed in charge. Capt. Lester H. Spalding, A. S., reported September 17th, to superintend the new construction work, and the new building project was begun in earnest on September 30th, two days after the arrival of the 157th and 370th Aero Observation Squadrons. 1st Lt. W. F. Cunningham, A. S., and 1st Lt. James Hale, A. S., respectively commanding.

The remaining commissioned personnel of these two squadrons comprised the following officers: 1st Lt. E. J. Rowland, M. C., surgeon; 2nd Lts. Fred T. Cerney, A. S., supply officer; H. E. Bradford, A. S., engineering officer, and Fred C. Gatje, ord.; assigned to the 157th Aero Squadron. 1st Lt. Jeremiah A. Klotz, M. C.; 1st Lt. Jeff D. Gautier, A. S., supply officer; 2nd Lt. George T. Mathewson, A. S., engineering officer, and S. E. Rogers, ord.; armament officers of the 370th Aero Squadrons. These officers were assigned to the various departments of the school for duty, 2nd Lt. Bradford, A. S., taking over the work of transportation officer Lt. Klotz was relieved from duty at this school, October 18th, 1918.

Due to moving forward so rapidly we had out-grown our limited quarters, this was coupled with the fact that the 20th Co., 4th Regt, Motor Mechanics, the 157th and 370th Aero Squadrons were rushed from the reserve to our support in the Z. of A. Maj. Bowen and Lt. Falk then decided that to successfully wage a winning fight our field-of-endeavors should be enlarged immediately. Thanks to the willingness of the last three units to arrive in this sector, the necessary fortifications were erected and the Huns retreated; vive le C. A. S.

THE BATTLE OF ARMISTICE; NOVEMBER 11,

In this battle there was support from 89th Aero and 20th Company, but rather a spontaneous mass attack on the village intrenchments by the entire post. The news came at 9 o'clock and at one minute past nine the attack was launched. It was a hard-fought affair and all day long, far into the night, hostilities were carried to the very heart of the town. Men staggered here and there, wounded temporarily by the overwhelming strength of the enemy, but still carrying on the fight. With a stoutness of heart deserving of better success, they fought on and on, with never a thought of the final reckoning. This battle proved conclusively what hundreds of minor engagements failed to teach the fact that there could be no victory over the alcoholic and diabolical forces of wine, women and more wine. Also, that a negotiated peace was out of the question. Lt. Bradford stated the matter exactly in his famous speech after the battle. He said: "Boys, it's a tough old war but we gotta go on."

Air Force Order of Battle

Created: 23 Nov 2011

Updated:

Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.