

377th AIR SERVICE SQUADRON

MISSION

LINEAGE

377th Service Squadron constituted, 12 Sep 1942
Activated, 16 Sep 1942
Redesignated 377th Air Service Squadron, 15 Jul 1944
Inactivated, 5 Feb 1946
Disbanded, 8 Oct 1948

STATIONS

Pendleton Field, OR
Thermal, CA, 17 Mar 1943
San Bernardino AAF, CA, 10 Sep 1943
Camp Anza, CA, 28 Oct 1943
Bombay, India, 26 Dec 1943
Mohanbari, India, 10 Jan 1944

ASSIGNMENTS

68th Service Group
5309th Air Service Area Command

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

The 377th Service Squadron, 68th Service Group was activated 16 September 1942 at Pendleton Field, Oregon.

A cadre of one officer and 14 enlisted men was furnished by the 331st Service Group, Pendleton Field, Oregon, per par. 19 SO 30, Hqs. Pendleton Field, Oregon, dated 30 October 1942. Personnel taken from the Hq. & Hq. Squadron, 95th Service Group, inactivated, under the command of Major Monroe T. Smartt, were the nucleus of the unit. Shortly thereafter, transfer of personnel from technical schools and other units brought the unit up to T/O strength.

For training purposes and practical experience, the majority of the engineering section was placed on DS at Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho from Nov. 1942 until March 1943. Meanwhile the continuous jobs of weeding out personnel unfit for foreign service, and personnel not meeting the training standards of the entire organization was taking place in the headquarters of the unit.

Under the able supervision of Major Monroe T. Smartt, and with the assistance of 1st Sgt. Jerome C. Jacques, S/Sgt. Herrera, Sgt. Mandeville, Sgt. Owens, Cpl. Wheeler, and Pvt. Franze, the unit was soon functioning efficiently. The Technical Supply section under Lt. Mark R. Johnson and W/O Lawrence R. Geleske, and assisted by M/Sgt. Miller, deceased, were training the men in their jobs, and had supplies flowing normally. The engineering section on DS at Gowen Field, Idaho, although consisting mostly of recent graduates of technical schools, were progressing rapidly under the tutelage of T/Sgts. Eldon R. Gardner, Mont T. Killian, Clyde E. McCormick, and Vincent A. Beaver, and were highly commended for their cheerful and cooperative manner in performing repairs and maintenance on aircraft assigned to them. An outstanding amount of ability and conscientiousness was displayed by S/Sgt. Joseph A. Bourgea in the way in which he quickly organized and trained the Transportation Section of the unit.

On December 1, 1942 Major Monroe T. Smartt was relieved of command and transferred to the Hq & Hq Squadron, 68th Service Group, taking up his new duties as executive officer. Capt. Frank J. Tatum assumed command, and shortly thereafter numerous other changes were made in commanding officers, leaving the job of organization mainly on the shoulders of the enlisted men.

On March 14, 1943 under the command of Captain Gerhard A. Borman the organization departed for the Desert Training Center, California, per par. 3, SO 70, Hqs. Pendleton Field, Oregon. During the trip S/Sgt. Thomas H. Hopkins, mess sergeant, outdid himself in the method of preparing and serving meals, consequently the morale of the troops was very high, notwithstanding the inconvenience of a troop train.

Moved to Thermal, CA, on 17 Mar 1943. Moved to San Bernardino AAF, CA, on 10 Sep 1943. Moved to Camp Anza, CA, on 28 Oct 1943. Departed by ship from Los Angeles Port of Embarkation on 10 Nov 1943, and arrived at Bombay, India on 26 Dec 1943, Mohanbari, India on 10 Jan 1944.

The unit arrived in Indio, California the evening of March 19, 1943 remaining on the train until the following morning, when the troops and organizational equipment were unloaded; and then proceeded by truck convoy to Desert Center Army Air Field, a distance of about fifty miles.

At this station, the unit performed its primary mission of servicing planes, and supplying parts for the 74th Recn. Group, being the only service squadron on the field. While stationed there, the Technical Supply section was highly commended for the excellent manner in which the tactical units were serviced. Especially cited by Lt. Col. William F. Kyle, Commanding Officer of the Desert Training Center Air Force Service Command were W/O Lawrence R. Geleske for his part in perfecting the efficient system of Technical Supply for the air force units in the desert training center; and Sgt. Albert E. Pederson for his work as liaison supply man between the San Bernadino Air Depot and the service squadron.

Meanwhile, part of the engineering section was placed on DS with the Hq. Squadron of the group at Thermal Army Air Field, and others were sent to advanced technical schools. Among these, S/Sgt. Richard C. Merrick, Sgt. Ray E. Nelson, Cpl. Vincent A. Koncewicz, and Cpl. Marcus Klein, all of whom attended the hydraulics course at San Bernadino Air Depot, received high praise and a letter of commendation from the Commanding Officer of the depot and the group commander, for their excellence in tests, workmanship, and personal quality.

On April 23, 1943 Captain Gerhard A. Borman was relieved of command, and 2nd Lt. George E. Pennington assigned as commanding officer. In spite of his inexperience as a squadron commander, Lt. Pennington did an excellent job during the time he was in command.

Desert maneuvers were held from the end of June until the middle of July, the majority of the squadron going to Needles, California. During this time planes of the 22nd Recn. Sq. (Bomb), which was the sole air force of the Red Army, were serviced. All sections of the unit were commended highly for their work by Major Herbert A. Bott, Commanding Officer of the 22nd Recn. Sq. W/O Lawrence R. Geleske, who was in charge of the Technical Supply section was especially cited by both Major Bott and Major James R. Case, Commanding Officer of the Desert Training Center Air Force Services Command, who acted as Red Force Air Force Service Commander, for the excellent job done by his section in obtaining parts and anticipating shortages of the Red Air Force.

Major James H. Marsteller was assigned as Commanding Officer of the squadron on August 26, 1943 relieving Lt. George E. Pennington who was appointed adjutant. Shortly thereafter, the unit

was alerted for overseas movement, and numerous administrative and technical inspections were held by higher headquarters to determine the state of training of members of the organization.

After completing approximately six months of desert training, the orders arrived for movement to another station. On September 10, 1943 the organization departed from Desert Training Center Army Air Field by truck convoy to the Troop Training Area, San Bernadino Army Air Field, per par 1, SO 91, Hq. 68th Service Group, arriving there on the same date.

Extensive preparations for overseas movement were conducted at this station, including physical training, inspections, and issuing of new clothing and equipment. The organization was also called upon to help in the movement of property from locations outside the field to warehouses on the field. In spite of the great amount of work involved, the job was completed in a comparatively short time, and the entire group commended for its excellent assistance by Col. Haynie McCormick, Chief of the Supply Division at the depot.

On the morning of October 28, 1943 the organization departed from San Bernadino Air Field enroute by motor convoy to Camp Anza, Arlington, California, per par 1, SO 269, Hq. San Bernadino Army Air Base. Arriving there about two hours later, a physical examination was given to all men before housing in the barracks.

Final arrangements for movement overseas were completed at this camp, as well as additional physical training. During this time and until embarking on one man was lost to the squadron because of physical disabilities.

Due to the vast amount of confidence inspired in the men by Major James H. Marsteller, squadron commander, the morale of the squadron was at its highest since activation, with the result the unit possessed the proper mental attitude for overseas service.

At 0700, November 9, 1943 the organization departed by trucks for the Los Angeles Port of Embarkation and boarded the S.S. Hermitage a few hours later. Final loading of the ship was completed that evening and the ship sailed the next day.

While on board ship, the members of the unit exhibited a willingness to perform whatever jobs were available. A gun crew under the command of W/O Thomas E. Redding and consisting of 48 enlisted men of the squadron stood a regular watch each day during the trip. In addition, other men were working in the ship's laundry, ship's bakery, as plumbers, welders, and in various other jobs employing over half the men in the unit.

On the morning of December 26, 1943, the ship docked at Bombay, India after spending 47 days at sea. The unit debarked on the morning of December 27, 1943, and proceeded by train to an Indian Transient Camp at Deolali, India, arriving there about four hours later.

Three days were spent here resting up and recovering from the effects of the long ocean trip. On the afternoon of December 30, 1943 the unit, once again, departed by train enroute to its permanent station.

Air Force Order of Battle

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Sources

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