

## 902 AIR REFUELING SQUADRON, HEAVY



### MISSION

#### LINEAGE

602 Bombardment Squadron (Heavy) constituted, 15 Feb 1943

Activated, 1 Mar 1943

Inactivated, 1 Sep 1945

902d Air Refueling Squadron, Heavy constituted, 28 May 1958

Activated, 11 Dec 1958

Inactivated, 31 Dec 1969

602 Bombardment Squadron, Heavy and 902 Air Refueling Squadron, Heavy consolidated, 19

Sep 1985. Consolidated organization designated 902 Air Refueling Squadron, Heavy

Converted to provisional status and redesignated 902 Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron,

5 Feb 2001

#### STATIONS

Ephrata AAB, WA, 1 Mar 1943

Blythe AAFld, CA, 5 Apr 1943

Geiger Field, WA, 1 May 1943

Rapid City AAB, SD, 22 Jun 1943-4 Apr 1944

Nuthampstead, England, 22 Apr 1944-26 May 1945

Drew Field, FL, 3 Jul-1 Sep 1945

Clinton-Sherman AFB, OK, 11 Dec 1958 – 31 Dec 1969

#### ASSIGNMENTS

398 Bombardment Group, 1 Mar 1943-1 Sep 1945

Second Air Force, 11 Dec 1958

4123 Strategic Wing, 1 Mar 1959

70 Bombardment Wing, Heavy, 1 Feb 1963 – 31 Dec 1969

United States Air Forces Europe to activate or inactivate as needed

### **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

B-17, 1943-1945

KC-135

### **COMMANDERS**

#### **HONORS**

##### **Service Streamers**

American Theater

##### **Campaign Streamers**

Air Offensive, Europe

Normandy

Northern France

Rhineland

Ardennes-Alsace

Central Europe

Air Combat, EAME Theater

##### **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

##### **Decorations**

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award

6 Oct 1959 – 15 Jul 1960

15 Apr 1968 – 1 Oct 1968

### **EMBLEM**



602 Bombardment Squadron (Heavy) emblem: GOOFY, proper, wearing a white shirt, green jacket, tie, trousers, and hat, yellow orange shoes, yellow gloves, standing with feet spread apart, hands on hips, and supporting a small black and red aerial bomb on the right shoulder, holding a white clay pipe between the teeth, all behind a shamrock formed by a light green outline; shamrock charged in sinister leaf with stylized white aerial bomb outlined green, (Approved, 6 Mar 1944)

#### **MOTTO**

#### **NICKNAME**

#### **OPERATIONS**

Combat in ETO, 6 May 1944-25 Apr 1945.

1959 KC-135 named Miss Oklahoma, the first 902 AREFS aircraft to land at Clinton Sherman AFB, OK

1965 16 January, A USAF Boeing KC-135A, 57-1442, crashed after an engine failure shortly after take-off from McConnell Air Force Base, Kansas, USA. The fuel laden plane crashed at the intersection of 20th and Piatt in Wichita, Kansas causing a huge fire. 30 were killed, 23 on the ground and the 7 member crew. The aircraft was assigned to the 902d Air Refueling Squadron, 4123d Strategic Wing based at Clinton-Sherman AFB, in Oklahoma, the aircraft had just completed a scheduled Factory Maintenance Visit at the Boeing facility in Wichita

It was the first, and probably only, three-deep refueling ever made, occurring on 31 May 1967 and resulting in the award of the McKay Trophy to the KC-135 crew for the most meritorious flight of the year (presented on 11 July 1968). The KC-135 involved was flown by Major John H. Casteel and his crew E-114 of the 902 Air Refueling Squadron, Clinton-Sherman AFB, Oklahoma.

They flew to the Gulf of Tonkin and were performing their normal mission, refueling two USAF F-104s, when told to contact a Navy ship about a possible emergency.

On contact, the KC-135 verified the emergency and proceeded to a rendezvous with Holly Green Blue and Holly Green White, two Navy A-3, themselves refuelers, from the carrier Hancock. The two F-104s escorted the KC-135 to the rendezvous, receiving refuelings enroute."On rendezvous they found that one A-3 had only three minutes of fuel left, although it had 4,000 pounds which it could transfer, but not use itself.

The KC-135 refueled this aircraft just enough to keep it going and then made a hookup with the second A-3. At this time a TACAN rendezvous was made for two Navy F-8 aircraft from the carrier Bon Homme Richard. One of them had so little fuel left that he could not wait for the tanker, but hooked up directly with the A-3 which was still in the process of taking fuel from the KC-135. This then became a three-deep refueling, KC-135 to A-3 to F-8.

While this was still going on, the first A-3 shared a portion of his meager supply with the second F-8 and while still sharing, again hooked up with the KC-135. Another emergency loomed during this process when a communications station vectored to the rendezvous two Navy F-4s with insufficient fuel to return to their carrier, the Constellation. The KC-135 refueled these, then again refueled the F-104 escort aircraft.

Now, low on fuel himself, Major Casteel elected to land at Da Nang Air Base in South Vietnam, which he did safely with 10,000 pounds of fuel remaining. It was also noteworthy that the KC-135 accomplished this series of refuelings at the low altitude of 5,000 feet due to the inability of Navy aircraft, under these circumstances, to climb to higher altitude. In this single operation, one SAC KC-135 tanker furnished 14 refuelings to eight receivers for a recorded total of almost 50,000 pounds of fuel transferred.

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Air Force Lineage and Honors

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#### Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.  
The Institute of Heraldry. U.S. Army. Fort Belvoir, VA.