

84th AERO SQUADRON

MISSION

LINEAGE

Organized 84th Aero Squadron organized Aug 1917
Demobilized Aug 1919

STATIONS

Kelly Field, TX

ASSIGNMENTS

WEAPON SYSTEMS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

THE 84th Aero Squadron, whose service dates back to the haby days of Kelly Field, has had a long and varied existence. In August, 1917i the squadron, under command of Major John P. Edgerly, was organized and composed mostly of "Doughboy Non Corns" from the Regular Army Infantry School at Brownsville, Texas. The Aviation Section was in its infancy at that time, and one of the big problems

to contend with was the securing of efficient men with sufficient military training and leadership to take care of and train the great influx of recruits arriving at the field daily. The duty of the 84th men was to organize into squadrons a certain number of men with certain classes of training. When a squadron was thus organized, it was then the duty of the "Non Corns" to start (the new men on their military career. Feeding and giving shelter to the new men was a big problem in itself, and many a "Non Com" had to dig and fight to keep his men properly fed.

The field was in quite a state of disorder at that time. Scarcely any system had been devised, and to bring order and discipline out of a state of comparative chaos was quite a job. Men just out of civil life found it hard to buckle down to discipline, but with constant drilling and exercise, they soon found that to be a good soldier one must obey. Keen competition then arose as to who had the best squadron, and the morale of the men was always at high pitch. When taken into consideration that very few commissioned officers were on the field at that time with about 18,000 men. it can readily be seen that the "doughboy Non Corns" of the 84th had a rough time of it.

Lieut. Harvey Buck and Sergeant Harvey Bruhy, who were later killed in an airplane accident, were among the early members of the 84th. Capt. Harry Secord and Lieut. John Brown, old time Sergeants Major of the 84th, are also among those given direct commissions for their faithful work on Kelly Field. Later, when enlisted men were being accepted as candidates for commissions the squadron was turned into a clearing house for future officers on both flying and non-flying status. It was there that the embryo officers were put through their initial course of training to acquaint them with the responsibilities of military life and fit them to become good leaders.

When a prospective officer entered the squadron, he usually had passed both the mental and physical requirements of the Air Service. But that was not all. Unknown to himself, he was always under observation for any physical or psychological defect that might later appear in his make-up. It was indeed a democratic gathering, merchants, bankers, prominent lawyers, politicians and men high in the business world messing and bunking with their less fortunate brothers.

At one time the squadron consisted of six hundred and six men, most of whom were awaiting assignment to flying schools. Records have been kept of every man that went through the squadron, and notations made on his record card. If he was commissioned, it was so noted. If he failed at ground school and was returned to the ranks, that entry was also made on his card. Approximately of a thousand men that received their first training in the 84th Squadron, twenty-five per cent finished their training as flyers, bombers and observers; twenty-five per cent were sent to schools for Ground Officers; five percent were given miscellaneous commissions direct; twenty-five per cent were sent to infantry officers' schools, and twenty per cent to artillery schools. Of the total number of the men sent to schools, approximately two per cent were returned to the ranks for failure in studies.

Later, Major Edgerly was assigned to other duties on the field, and still later sent to France with an Air Service Detachment. Many of the old members of the 84th will remember him for his noble efforts in their behalf. He was a strict disciplinarian but a good soldier, and a good and just "daddy" to the best squadron on the field. It was due to his efforts that the higher officers on the field took an interest in the squadron^ and proud indeed was he who called himself one of the "84th."

When the Second Liberty Loan campaign started, a keen rivalry sprang up between Camp Travis and Kelly Field. Although the Infantry Camp had a larger number of men, Kelly Field leaped far in advance in subscriptions, and to insure a factor of safety so that the Field would stay in the lead, one member of the 84th, Louis A. Ripley, a New York Banker, gave General Ruckman, who was at the Field on Liberty Loan day a check for 130,000.00 worth of bonds.

Such deeds as these, coupled with the general morale of the men, have made Kelly Field famous the world over. Many fliers who learned their first "squads right" in the 84th, have written back from France, telling of their successes over the German lines. Although their training was strict and severe, they will always remember with fondness their early soldier days at Kelly.

In October, 1917, Capt. Loring Pickering was assigned to the Squadron, and under his tutelage several new methods of instruction were added. Lieut. Alexander H. Eraser was the next Squadron Commander. He was assigned in December, 1917, and knowing that the men waiting assignment to school needed a more intense course of training to fit them for their future duties, he devised a new system of training which proved a wonderful success. And it was directly due to Lieut. Eraser's efforts that the squadron justly earned the reputation "Kelly's Crack Squadron."

Lieut. Fraser was a real soldier. He was a graduate of the Virginia Military Institute. When war was declared, he was in business in the city of San Antonio, but was among the first to offer his services for his country. When the Ground School at Kelly Field was first opened in the summer of 1917, Lieut. Fraser was among the first class, and graduated a First Lieutenant. He was very proud of his command, and endeared himself to the heart of every man in the squadron by his noble efforts in their behalf. Later, he was appointed a member of the Administrative Board of the Air Service Mechanics School, and held that office until his untimely death from pneumonia.

In July, 1918, Lieut. Emmons was assigned to duty overseas, and he was succeeded by Lieut. Thomas L. Rouse, a flying officer in charge of the Gosport Stage. This stage of flying was used for making flying instructors out of those men who showed exceptional ability as flyers. In addition to the Gosport Stage, the Squadron took over the work of the Accuracy and Radio Stages.

Lieut. Rouse is one of the pioneer flyers of the service, being a graduate of the 3rd class of cadets who received their training at Kelly Field. Most of the cadets from the early classes were selected to act as instructors to the ones coming in later, and Lieut. Rouse has acted in that capacity in all the stages of flying. He is considered one of the best flyers on the Field, and the originator of some of the present methods of instruction.

Of the Airplane Mechanics of which the squadron is composed, it may be said that under the training of Master Electrician Clyde A. Jones there has developed a class of men who can, if necessary, build an airplane from engine to tail skid.

The administrative work of the squadron under Lieut. Walter W. Barr and Sergeant Major George L. Fox has been carried out in a most able manner. Sergeant First Class Fox enjoys a most unique

reputation of having been "born and bred" in the old 84th. He was assigned to the squadron during the month of December, 1917. within 10 days after arriving at Kelly Field, and has been with the organization since that time.

All that could be accomplished for the comfort and happiness of the men has been done. The squadron has always boasted of the finest mess on the field, and at one time our "boarders" included the Y. M. C. A. workers, K. of C. men. employees of the Post Office, and the Chaplain of Kelly No. 1. A recreation hall has been equipped for the convenience and comfort of the membership. The buff color scheme is carried out in the wall coloring, the rugs, the lighting system, and the furniture in fumed oak blend very harmoniously.

With the coming of demobilization, one of the finest squadrons in the service will go out of existence.

Air Force Order of Battle

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Sources

US Army Order of Battle 1919-1941. Steven E. Clay. Combat Studies Institute Press. US Army Combined Arms Center. Fort Leavenworth, KS. Nd.