

244th AERO SQUADRON

MISSION

LINEAGE

244th Aero Squadron

STATIONS

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

Lt H. D. Kroll

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

April 19, 1918, Kelly Field became the possessor of a bouncing new squadron of 250 men, the 244th Aero Squadron, likewise to make a strike for the preservation of Liberty. Humming and buzzing with activity as it was, very little disturbance was caused by the arrival of this new offspring for although Kelly has been, since the time of its inception, a veritable beehive of industry, it has always maintained an air of tranquility. Officially speaking, difficult to disturb.

The Squadron's personnel originated largely with the old 5th, one of the pioneers of the Air Service and until April, '18 at Kelly Field. Furthermore, the 244th personnel embraced every department at Kelly and has continued as generally representative to this day. This cosmopolitan aspect, without doubt unique among all the Field organizations, has given the 244th a distinctly democratic spirit.

The officers of the 244th at the time of its organization were: Commanding Officer, Lieut. H. D. Kroll; Adjutant, Lieut. O. B. Saner; Supply Officer, Lieut. H. P. Turner.

For the first few months very few outside activities were encouraged because of the financial infancy and weakness of the Squadron fund. But on June 30, the 244th burst into the public limelight with a vengeance on the occasion of the first Kelly Field Squadron picnic. The affair, a huge success was staged at Landa's Park, New Braunfels, some thirty-five miles distant, and the trip to and from made in eight huge passenger busses. Leading the procession was the 1st Air Service Band, also of Kelly. Its ambitious and "peppy" strains awoke many a household unfortunate enough to be on the route and they were responsible for the near break-up of several muster

ceremonies at Camp Travis. Few will ever forget the effect the "jazzy" airs produced upon a colored organization standing at attention along the route that morning. It was a hot and dusty journey but the men were amply repaid on arrival with one of the most excellent picnic dinners ever prepared. Following this dinner, swimming and an athletic meet were enjoyed to the full. The crystal-like pool and the attractive park made the visitors forget the war and all its by-products, and when the recall for the return was sounded, hardly a man but what regretted to leave. The return trip was enlivened by a watermelon fight staged on the numerous trucks while in motion. Thus, ended the first "big time" and the 244th then became known as the picnic and recreational outfit.

On July 17th an official order changed the name of the Squadron from the "244th Aero Squadron" to "Kelly Field Squadron H," but so little difference did this make in the maintenance and operation of the organization that, the transition was accomplished almost without the knowledge of the men themselves. However, from that date on, the 244th ceased to be anything but a memory and in its place sprung Squadron H.

The first picnic at Landa's Park had served to whet an appetite for more of a like order and accordingly, another, to even out-do the first, was planned. This one took the form of a week-end picnic and was held August 3rd and 4th. Again the, trip was made by bus and another wonderful time was had, the men leaving New Braunfels with a feeling of regret that their fun should be so short lived.

Several meals, cooked in a field range brought along for the purpose, and rivaling the ones served on the former occasion, were prepared and it was a genuine "blowout" from start to finish. The men rolled into their blankets and slept under the skies and on or under the trucks. The two days were occupied as before boating, bathing and dancing. A special dance was staged in the park the night of the first day in honor of the Squadron's second trip to New Braunfels for a picnic, and scores of girls from town attended, adding to make it an enjoyable affair. The citizens of the town had been treated to a parade and drill when the Squadron arrived

on the morning of the 3rd and as a result it received a rousing send-off from the people when it left late on the evening of the 4th. Programs and menus were again given to the men, and these are still kept, along with those of the first picnic, in memory of two of the best outings ever enjoyed.

Along with other organizations on the Field, the summer of 1918 was given over to the Texas heat and the constant anticipation and hope of overseas assignment. Innumerable rumors of such transfer were born and buried on the same date, and frequently it was definitely assured us that we were headed for either Africa, or Russia, or Prance, or England or the Mexican Border. Although there were scattered cases of officers and men of the Squadron sent overseas, the approach of October and Fall found the unit still in the Lone Star State.

Upon the lifting of quarantine, or on November 11, 1918 the Kaiser celebrated in a fitting manner by signing the armistice. It was on that day that Barracks 33 trembled and was later deserted by its occupants, who went to town and helped show the natives how to fittingly Lieut. REESE celebrate the end of the world's greatest struggle. And henceforth sprung a series of half-holidays and Squadron festivals that in some manner made up for the uncomfortable summer months.

The expressions "good eats" and "Squadron H" have been synonymous, but a rare treat was offered the members on Thanksgiving Day, when a dinner befitting a royal assembly was served in the mess hall. Mess Sergeant Drummond and his industrious assistants prepared this meal for several days and were well rewarded with the unanimous verdict that Hotel nor Home "over here or "over there" served a better dinner. Many ladies were present and from soup to nuts and smokes and candy not one article was missing. Like all others, Squadron H had limitless gratitude to offer on this national holiday, and its celebration was quite appropriate.

November 18th saw another change in the unit's name, although not so great this time as before. "Kelly Field Squadron H" became "Kelly Field Flying School Detachment Squadron H," but owing to its lengthy name it has never been adopted by its members. Officialdom knows it as such. But to the personnel it continues simply "Squadron H." "H" firmly planted itself in the social structure of Kelly Field on December 6th, when it shared with its friends one of the most elaborate social and military affairs ever

staged in the district. This time it was a mammoth banquet and dance at the most attractive hotel in town, and originality and individuality, coupled with the untiring efforts of a diligent committee, resulted in a glorious affair. The ball room was elaborately decorated with evergreen and model 'planes, and the tables formed a huge "H," the center of which contained a good sized fountain. A few short and snappy after-dinner talks were followed by a formal dance which lasted until 1 a. m. Again the 1st Air Service Band contributed to the success of the affair with their music, as did also the Travis Quartette. For once the men enjoyed the sensation of being on the streets after 1 a. m., and it was a happy, high-spirited group that returned to Kelly that morning.

Christmas night, although many had taken advantage of furloughs offered over the holidays, another dance was held in the Squadron recreation hall, situated at one end of the mess building. At eleven a supper was served— a supper worthy of a Christmas celebration in every respect. In addition to this

supper, fruits and nuts of all kinds were offered during the evening, the pool table in one end of the recreation hall being loaded with these goodies. The dance proved so delightful that it was continued until the wee small hours of the morning.

The officers and non-commissioned officers of the Squadron from the time of its inception to the present have been: Commanding Officer; Lieut. H. D. Kroll. who has served since the Squadron's organization. Adjutant; Lieut. O. B. Saner, Lieut. L. D. Buhl, Lieut. C. B. Crawford. Supply Officer; Lieut. H. P. Turner. Personnel Officer; Lieut. Jas. C. Bwing. Mess Officer; Lieut. Lewis R. P. Reese. Barracks Officer; Lieut. Clarence J. Wasson. The two last mentioned are flying officers. Sergeant Wm. Paschal officiated as Top-Sergeant until July 20, 1918. Sergeant-Major; Henry B. Moore. Louis D. Steiner, Seth D. Seely. Supply Sergeant; Wheelock P. Chamberlain, Wm. Wolfson. Mess Sergeant; W. J. Aderhold; Wm. A. Drummond. Cooks; Herbert E. Taylor. Leonard Smith, Clark W. Tuttle. Joseph W. Walker. John Miller, Elia Pera.

In the outfit is found much talent. Walter H. Dunham, accompanist of the Kelly Field Glee Club, as well as several other members of that organization were members of the Squadron. Also Joseph S. Cavarretta, pugilist. Cavarretta weighs 128 pounds and has made quite a reputation for himself and his Squadron in the Southern Department.

The Squadron has had a baseball team which, under the admirable pitching of Corporal Curry, won ten games out of fourteen played with other Squadrons on the Field.

"H" has been the first Squadron at Kelly to establish its fraternity pin. All of its members have purchased these attractive Air Service "H" emblems, which will serve to keep alive, in years to come, ties of brotherhood formed in the cactus state.

The reputation of Squadron H has been a most enviable one. Especially in regard to the up-keep and cleanliness of its quarters may this be said, for it has been lightly commended upon the occasion of several inspections by the Sanitary Officer. It has long been known as "The best Squadron on Kelly Field." Handsome curtains and draperies have been hung at every one of the windows in both barracks and mess hall, giving the quarters as much of a home-like appearance as possible. The recreation hall is carpeted, and a piano, Victrola and pool table have been installed. There are also large, comfortable chairs and tables for reading and writing. And, finally, an esprit de corps has always been present, a condition due to the earnest efforts and high qualities of the Sergeant-Major and the Mess and Supply Sergeants.

Summarizing the life of Squadron H at Kelly Field, it is to be noted that few other organizations possess so many members who have thoroughly enjoyed Kelly and Texas in spite of the keen disappointment in not having gone overseas. Life here was by it made tolerable and pleasant. Its men have ever been alive to opportunities of diversion and have been the originators in many instances. Its mess has always been recognized as the best, and its men, through their work and discipline, have helped much to raise Kelly Field efficiency to its present height. And now that the war is over and the majority of its members are returning to their peace-time occupations, along with them go cherished memories of Squadron H. Circle and barracks and Kelly, and of a year or more of happy, wholesome

associations with a squadron of "good, old fellows"—one and all.

Air Force Lineage and Honors

Created: 6 May 2020

Updated:

Sources

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