

825 MEDICAL AIR EVACUATION SQUADRON

MISSION

LINEAGE

825 Medical Air Evacuation Squadron

STATIONS

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

History of 825th MAES Later the 830th MAES Flights 11, 12, 13, and 14

I do not have access to official orders or records therefore this is an unofficial history of the 825th MAES from April 1944 to November 1945 when I was discharged.

After the formation of the 825th MAES in April 1944, we were held at Bowman Field waiting for the southern France invasion. On 30 June 1944 we flew to Charleston, South Carolina for

overseas processing and debarkation. On 2 July we sailed on the hospital ship Chateau Thierry, spending 18 days on the Atlantic, finally stopping at Oran, Algiers where we were supposed to disembark. We stripped our bunks, dressed in class A uniforms including helmets and canteens and waited on deck for orders. When our Doctors returned, no one on shore knew our final destination. As a result we remained on board the ship to its destination Naples, Italy. Here we were quartered in a bombed out school, which turned out to be in the middle of the red light district. We found out at dinner time that we were flying to Casablanca the next day.

Casablanca was the headquarters for our squadron. Two flights were stationed here. One night went to Karachi, India, flying to Abadan, Iran and Cairo, Egypt. One flight went to Cairo, Egypt flying to Tripoli, Libya and Casablanca, French Morocco. The Casablanca based nurses did the Lagens AFB Azores Islands run which was about six hours. We were flying in contract C-54s from Pan American, United and American Air Lines with all civilian crews except the flight nurse and the medical technician. If no one relieved us at Lagens, Azores we went on to Newfoundland or Bermuda. This meant a 16-18 hour flight, so we were allowed to go on to Uncle Sugar Able (U.S.A.) for 48 hours.

The Azores were a delightful place to visit, about 1920 era. Taxis were horse and buggies, women in slacks a real novelty. In Casablanca, we lived in crude small wood houses on Cazes Air Base. The showers (enclosed) were in the living room. We had Italian P.O.W.'s as house boys who chopped the wood for hot water and heat.

In January 1945, my flight moved to Karachi, India. Karachi Air Base was fifteen miles out in the boon docks. Our house was at the end of the base. In back was a Gurka camp, next to it the camel caravan road to Karachi. Being based in Karachi was a different way of living. Our house consisted of living room, small kitchen, three bedrooms and two screened in porches. We rented furniture for the living room. The government furnished cots and dressers. Three servants (tongue in cheek) and gardener were paid for by Uncle Sam. The gardener watered shrubs for several houses and with temperatures that sometimes reached 125 degrees it was a thankless task. We paid for the master bearer, Mohammed who lived in a small house in back. Due to the cast system, we also had Baldy the sweeper who was an "untouchable." They had an Indian kitchen at the end of the house with charcoal stoves. Here they heated the water for our showers. Two buckets for a shower and three buckets for a shower and shampoo. We tried to scrounge coffee, eggs, bread and canned butter so we could fix our own breakfast. The mess hall was in the terminal and so far from our quarters we had to have transportation to go to eat.

Karachi was our introduction to the C-46 also known as the Curtis time bomb. They had gasoline heaters and a few had blown up so the pilots did not like to use them. Our flights left Karachi between midnight and two a.m. so we could reach Abadan, Iran before the heat melted the asphalt runways. The flight to Abadan was 7h to 9 hours depending on winds and weather. Abadan was a crew change and refueling stop. The Red Cross gals fed our patients and entertained them so we could have a short break. The flight nurse and medical technician went on to Cairo. Due to the time change we were always eating breakfast. We were replacing a

flight of sick nurses so we started with a large back log of patients. On arrival in Cairo we returned on the first plane available. These six months, despite the long tiring flights, were very interesting. Because of the political situation we were restricted to certain parts of the city. The shops contained beautiful materials, jewelry and ivory. We could be honorary members of the British Gymkana club and the Boat club. We went there for dinner and Saturday night dances (formal) when in town which wasn't often. I think I remained overnight at every airfield from Casablanca to Karachi because of weather or aircraft mechanical problems. We put patients up in tents, school houses in Algiers, British hospital in Palestine, hospital in Iraq and one at Sharja, Trucial Oman. My roommate and I returned so many times to Cairo with engine failures that the sergeant in charge of passenger manifests would tell the passengers if we were on board they would probably be back. One night we returned to Cairo three times.

Our flight the last summer overseas was spent on the Cairo, Tripoli, and Casablanca run. We were stationed at Payne Field about ten miles from Cairo. Our Quarters were in a long building with an open porch. The rooms were large so we made one area into a sitting room with our rattan furniture we bought in India. Unfortunately there was no privacy as we were on a main street and people walked up and down the porch constantly. Cairo was a fantastic city with so much to see and do. Trips these days were more normal hours. Cairo to Tripoli, Libya was 6 to 7 hours refuel and crew change then Tripoli to Casablanca 6 to 8 hours. Our patients were freed American P.O.W.'s from Japan, Bataan death march, Merrill's marauders. This was a time you felt you earned your money by just being a female. This patient s had been hustled through several hospitals but this was the first time they could really talk to an American female.

Our medical technicians did a wonderful job of supporting us. Our long flights would have been more difficult without them. Unfortunately I was unable to get the names of the technicians in the other flights.

Our squadron covered a distance of six thousand miles from Karachi, India to Lagens, Azores. We had other flights to Dakar, Senegal to pick up Italian soldiers and take them to Naples, Italy. My roommate, Marian Smith was the first American nurse in uniform in Istanbul, Turkey. Alice Johnson was sent TOY to Natal, Brazil flying the Natal to Dakar, Senegal run. In our theater Air Evacuation planes, personnel and patients were considered very special people and everyone worked to take care of them. in fifteen months our squadron flew twelve million miles and we were awarded the Presidential Unit Citation.

Air Force Lineage and Honors

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Sources

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