

4 FERRYING GROUP

MISSION

LINEAGE

4 Ferrying Group

STATIONS

Memphis, TN

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

Col Eugene Stevens

Col Carlyle Nelson

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

Fourth Ferrying Group matured from the seed planted Jan. 3, 1942, when the Nashville Sector of the Air Corps Ferrying Command was activated. Ten months passed before the first GI's arrived to set up a Ferrying Group in Memphis. Meanwhile the nucleus squadrons were being activated in Nashville: Eighth Ferrying Squadron (March 24), Headquarters Squadron (May 28) and 346th Air Base Squadron (May 28), and the 59th Ferrying Squadron (Oct. 15). From Morrison Field, Fla.,

came the 26th Ferrying Squadron (August 3) with a host of officers who were to contribute much to the Fourth Group. The 26th had been activated July 8, 1942.

The move to Memphis began Nov. 3, 1942, when the 346th Air Base Squadron was transferred to Municipal Airport there. A morass of mud and muck and acres of dry, dead cotton stalks awaited the newcomers. First officers to arrive were Major Louis Rosen (then a lieutenant and commander of the detachment), Captain Thomas West and Captain Orville O. McMahon, also lieutenants then. Members of the Guard Squadron (activated July 29, 1942) were among the first to come to Memphis, too, but the squadron as a whole remained at Berry Field until Feb. 6, 1943.

Barracks for the guards and the men of 346th were quickly built followed by a gym and theater. First movie shown on the Post was "Springtime in the Rockies" ... on a decidedly freezing day, Dec. 20, 1942. Colonel Eugene Stevens, Commanding Officer of the Fourth Ferrying Group, came to Memphis when the Group was officially transferred there, Dec. 9, 1942.

The medical and veterinary detachment was activated Jan. 21, 1943, and the Base Hospital (authorized for 150 beds) accepted its first patient Feb. 16 the same year. Four days earlier the Red Cross canteen was formally opened, Mayor Chandler of Memphis making the presentation and Colonel Stevens accepting for the Post. The Post library was opened April 28.

In a three-way transfer of Commanding Officers, Colonel Stevens went to the Seventh Group, Great Falls, Mont., and Colonel Carlisle L. Nelson came to Memphis from the Third Group, Romulus, Mich. Ten thousand Memphians crowded the Memphis links to watch Bing Crosby, Byron Nelson and Ed Dudley play a golf match for the benefit of the Post, May 23, 1943-largest such gallery in Memphis history.

With completion of three large hangars, Group Headquarters were moved to Hangar No.2, early in June 1943. The Fourth's "family" was growing rapidly: 866th Signal Service Detachment (May 21), and three new ferrying squadrons were added-92nd and 93rd (June 1), and 305th (June 28). A magazine of original articles, stories, poetry and cartoons, "The Ferry Wheel," published its first issue June 1.

To accommodate the ever-increasing personnel, new barracks were built, and so rely needed buildings completed: The Chapel (June 27) and Recreation Hall (June 30), Service Club (July 2) and Officers' Club (July 9).

Roads were resurfaced, cutting down much of the omnipresent dust. The telephone exchange was completed in July. Non-Coms opened their new club Aug. 6, and an outdoor dancing pavilion was "christened" Aug. 13.

Lieutenant Colonel Earl D. Johnson, Deputy Commander under Colonel Stevens and Colonel Nelson, was named to succeed Colonel Nelson, Aug. 2, 1942, and in September Major Eugene Fletcher was named his Deputy Commander. During September, the Post underwent its first full-scale maneuvers. Face-lifting of the Main Gate and the BOO began Nov. 15 and was completed

by the end of Jan. 1944. Similar renovation and redecoration made a " Bamboo Room " for the Service Club during January. December 5, 1943, Colonel Johnson officially opened the Post's branch of the First National Bank of Memphis. Dec. 23, Post civilians held a highly successful party for the benefit of enlisted men of the Fourth Group, who in turn were guests of the Command Club (composed of prominent Memphis women) the night before at a Christmas party that packed the gym to the bulging point.

To represent the enlisted men, an EM Welfare Council was established; at its first meeting, Dec. 26, Master Sergeant Robert Weadick was chosen president. In an Orientation play that same week, Major Louis Rosen convulsed audiences of officers and enlisted men alike by playing an inspection-hating buck private.

In the last week of 1943, a considerable number of men were sent to Birmingham, Ala., to set up a modification Control Office. Other branches of the Fourth Group had been established at Rochester and Little Rock (both Dec. 1), Evansville and Savannah. Jan. 1, 1944, the 70th Sub-Depot was placed under the jurisdiction of the Fourth Group.

In a realignment of executive positions, Lieutenant Colonel Harold M. Jones was made Deputy Commander, Jan. 18, succeeding Major Fletcher. Next week, in compliance with AAF regulations, all four echelons of aircraft engineering and maintenance were placed in a unified Group Engineering under Major Harry P. Carmean. Feb. 4, 1944, a new consolidated bakery opened, matching the service and savings previously effected by a consolidated butcher shop and consolidated mess system. In a campaign ending Feb. 15, the Post easily surpassed its quotas of bond purchases, set at \$75,000 in cash sale, and 200 additional class-B allotments.

The many buildings, the paved roads, landscaped squadron areas, and above all, bustling ramps bespeak the tremendous progress made by the Fourth Ferrying Group since it came to Memphis 15 months ago. But enlisted men and officers alike take greater pride in their ever-increasing role in the total war effort, statistics of which cannot yet be fully revealed.

They seize eagerly upon such figures of solid achievement as Lieutenant Colonel Harold M. Jones, acting Commanding Officer, told at a recent orientation program: The Fourth Ferrying Group's had the lowest fatality rate in the entire Ferrying Division, and this Group made twice as many foreign deliveries as any other during 1943.

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Sources

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

Unit yearbook. *4th Ferrying Group (554th AAF Base Unit) Memphis, Tennessee*. Army and Navy Publishing Company of Louisiana, Baton Rouge, LA. 1943.