

4 PURSUIT GROUP

MISSION

LINEAGE

4 Pursuit Group

STATIONS

ASSIGNMENTS

WEAPON SYSTEMS

COMMANDERS

Maj Chas. J. Biddle

Maj M. F. Davis

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

On October 26, 1918, Capt. Chas. J. Biddle, and his sergeant-major drove up to Gengoult Field and took command of the Post and notified the 141st and 25th Pursuit Squadrons that the Fourth Pursuit Group Headquarters was on the job. The mentioned outfits were already at home in their nifty concrete barracks.

The Commanding Officer had hardly gotten through congratulating his old pal, Cpt Hobey Baker for bringing down the Group's first Fokker on October 28 when he himself was congratulated on becoming a major in recognition of his position as C.O. of the Fourth Pursuit Group.

Halloween night the 6th Air Park blew in and at once assumed its duties in addition to transporting the officers on " business trips " around the Second Army area, supplying the Group with a part of the articles they requisitioned, turning out cabinet work from supply boxes, rigging up a machine-engine-blacksmith shop for the production of souvenirs (on the side), and heating bath water in the air-cooled refrigerator spoken of as the Group Bath House.

The stove and furniture problem was solved by trips to the villages recently abandoned by the retreating Huns who tried to shell the Packards as they were making away with the loot. There were no casualties but there should have been, according to the yarns that were spun.

On November 5, 1918, the Group's patrol encountered a lone Halberstadt returning from a propaganda mission. All five of them attacked and the poor enemy plane endeavored to escape in the unequal battle by turning over on its back and dropping a thousand meters when it straightened out and headed for its own lines. But Lt. Richard D. Shelby had dived and was hot on its tail pouring a stream of machine gun bullets into it at close range. It crashed to earth and, though our planes circled the wreck at fifty meters, neither pilot nor observer was seen to get out. The next day some of our pilots were not available for war flying. They were out scouring the country in quest of confirmation from dough-boys and artillerymen who had witnessed the thrilling exploit.

When Battle Orders No. 1 and No. 2, Air Service Second Army, came out November 9 and November 10 respectively the Fourth Pursuit Group had every pilot and plane on the alert before daybreak ready to carry out the orders to render all possible aid in the advance and be especially watchful for ground movements of the enemy. As luck would have it a ground haze prevented much activity and the pilots of the Group had to be content with a forced landing and the excitement of possibilities if the skies should clear.

The morning of November 11 patrols were ordered to keep behind their own lines and not to seek combat with the enemy. Then came the end. After that the souvenir business and seeing the front on wood details diverted our attention from the overworked topic of a speedy homecoming.

The Commanding Officer was the first to pull his strings and get his "overseas orders". Shortly afterward the 17th and 148th Squadrons gave us the hee-haw as they started out homeward bound. We did the same to them whenever we passed them building roads at Colombey for the next six weeks but they got the last laugh finally.

Major M. F. Davis succeeded Major Biddle in command of the Group and continued the liberal policy of his predecessor in making life as pleasant as possible for us "homeseekers." All we wanted was passes to Nancy.

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE UNIT HISTORIES

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Sources

US Army Order of Battle 1919-1941. Steven E. Clay. Combat Studies Institute Press. US Army Combined Arms Center.
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