

106 AIR REFUELING SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

106 Aero Squadron organized 27 Aug 1917

Redesignated 800 Aero Squadron, 1 Feb 1918

Demobilized: A and B flights on 8 May 1919, C flight, 2 Jul 1919

135 Squadron organized, 21 Jan 1922

Redesignated 135 Observation Squadron, 25 Jan 1923

Redesignated 114 Observation Squadron, 1 May 1923

Redesignated 106 Observation Squadron, 16 Jan 1924

800 Aero Squadron reconstituted and consolidated with 106 Observation Squadron, 1936

Ordered to active service, 25 Nov 1940

Redesignated 106 Observation Squadron (Medium), 13 Jan 1942

Redesignated 106 Observation Squadron, 4 Jul 1942

Redesignated 106 Reconnaissance Squadron (Bombardment), 2 Apr 1943

Redesignated 100th Bombardment Squadron (Medium), 9 May 1944

Inactivated, 11 Dec 1945

Redesignated 106 Bombardment Squadron (Light), and allotted to ANG, 24 May 1946

Redesignated 106 Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron (Night Photo), 1 Feb 1951

Redesignated 106 Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, 9 Jan 1952

Redesignated 106 Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron (Photo Jet), 1 May 1957

Redesignated 106 Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron
Redesignated 106 Reconnaissance Squadron, 15 Mar 1992
Redesignated 106 Air Refueling Squadron, Oct 1994

STATIONS

Kelly Field, TX, 27 Aug 1917
St Maixent, France, 2 Jan 1918
Champ de Tir de Souge, France, 28 Feb 1918-Apr 1919 (headquarters and A Flight)
B flight at Camp de Coetquidan, Morbihan, 1 Mar-28 Oct 1918, with detachment thereof at
Camp de Meucon, Morbihan, May-Oct 1918; C flight at Le Valdahon, 2 Mar 1918-May
1919
Mitchel Field, NY: A and B flights, 28 Apr-8 May 1919, C flight, 21 Jun-2 Jul 1919
Birmingham, AL, 21 Jan 1922
Miami Mun Aprt, FL, 14 Dec 1941
Jacksonville, FL, 14 Mar 1942
Savannah, GA, May 1942
Tullahoma, TN, 8 Sep 1942
Morris Field, NC, Nov 1942
Ft Myers, FL, Dec 1942
Morris Field, NC, 2 Feb 1943
Camp Campbell, KY, 3 Apr 1943
Chatham Field, GA 23 Jun-15 Oct 1943
Guadalcanal, 15 Nov 1943 (operated through Russell Islands, Jan 1944)
Sterling Island, 25 Jan 1944 (operated from Hollandia, 6 Aug-14 Sep 1944)
Sansapor, New Guinea, 24 Aug 1944 (operated from Morotai, 22 Feb-22 Mar 1945)
Palawan, 15 Mar-Nov 1945
Camp Stoneman, CA, 9-11 Dec 1945
Birmingham, AL

DEPLOYED STATIONS

March AFB, CA, 8 Jul 1952-1 Dec 1952

ASSIGNMENTS

Unkn, 27 Aug 1917-Feb 1918
Provisional Wing, No 2, Dec 1917
Second Artillery Aerial Observation School, Feb 1918-Apr 1919
B flight with First Artillery Aerial Observation School, 1918, and detachment thereof with
Fourth Artillery Aerial Observation School, 1918
C flight with Fifth Artillery Aerial Observation School, 1918-1919
Alabama NG, 21 Jan 1922 (originally intended as corps air service, served from 1923 as
divisional aviation, with 39th Division to 1924 and thereafter with 31st Division)
Fourth Corps Area, 25 Nov 1940
IV Army Corps, c. Dec 1940
66th Observation (later Reconnaissance) Group, 1 Sep 1941

76th Reconnaissance Group, 20 Jun 1943

Third Air Force, 13 Jul 1943

III Reconnaissance Command, 23 Aug 1943

Thirteenth Air Force, 19 Nov 1943

42nd Bombardment Group, attached in Jan 1944 and assigned 1 Feb-11 Dec 1945

117th Operations Group

WEAPON SYSTEMS

Mission Aircraft

JN-4D

JN-6

PT-1(TW-3)

DH-4

O-17

O-19

O-11

TW-3

BT-1

O-2H

O-38B

O-1A

O-47

O-49, 1941

A-20, 1941

P-39, 1941

P-40, 1941

P-43, 1942

O-46, 1942

L-5

L-6

DB-7

L-4, 1942

B-25, 1943

BC-1

A-26B/C

RB-26C

RF-84F, 1957

RF-84F, 1961

RF-4C, 1971

KC-135R, 1994

P-39D

O-46A

B-25C

B-25D

DB-7B
P-40F
P-40G
O-2H
O-38E
O-47A
O-47B
JN-6H

Support Aircraft

COMMANDERS

Sgt G. H. Jones (formed squadron)

Lt Corson

Lt Harley W. Lake, 23 Sep 1917

Capt Loring Pickering, 22 Oct 1917

1st Lt Lyman S. Baird, 30 Oct 1917

1st Lt Phil A. Henderson *Jan 1918*

1st Lt Robert E. Bowers, 10 Feb 1918

Maj James A. Meissner 21 Jan 22-ao Feb 24

Maj W. V. M. Robertson ao Apr 24-15 May 25

Maj Sumpter Smith 15 May 25-1 Sep 31

Maj Henry L. Badham 1 Sep 31-ao Dec 41

Lt Col Robert S. Grant, #2009

HONORS

Service Streamers

Theater of Operations

Campaign Streamers

Antisubmarine, American Theater

China Defensive

New Guinea

Northern Solomons

Bismarck Archipelago

Western Pacific

Leyte

Luzon

Southern Philippines

China Offensive

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

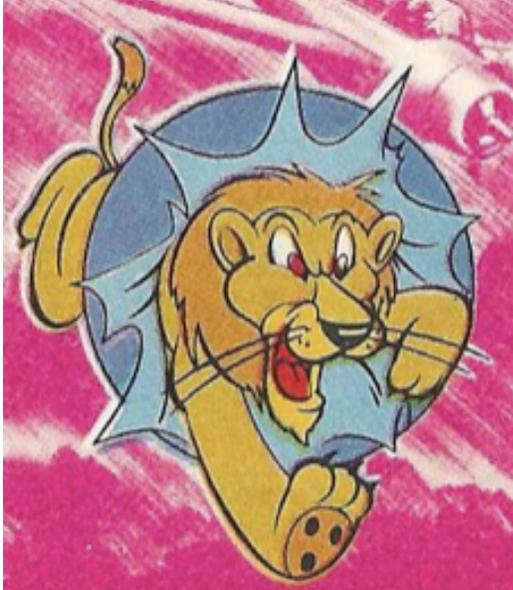
Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citation

Balikpapan, Borneo, 23-30 Jun 1945

Philippine Presidential Unit Citation

EMBLEM



106 Observation Squadron emblem: Following closely the demobilization program inaugurated by the War Department following World War I, the 106th Observation Squadron was organized at Birmingham, Alabama. It was known as the "Escadrille of Alabama" as far back as 1922 and was considered to be foremost among top ranking observation squadrons. Keeping abreast with changes in airplane equipment and tactics, the 106th itself contributed the benefit of research and experimentation to a peace time schedule. When war came to this country late in 1941, it was prepared to meet the exacting requirements of an emergency. At Laurens, South Carolina it received its Walt Disney insignia which symbolized the character of the organization. The ease with which a lion can jump through a paper covered hoop aptly demonstrates the ability of the 106th to break through enemy defenses and claw to shreds any factual opposition or interference.



106 Observation Squadron emblems





A shield azure, two lions gambes erased in saltire or. **SIGNIFICANCE** The design of this emblem has its origin in the Coat of Arms of the Birmingham family of England, original founders of that great manufacturing center of the British Islands. Birmingham, Alabama, being named from this English city and the 106 being organized in the city of Birmingham, Alabama, it was thought proper to adopt as an emblem this coat of arms with the permission of the family in question. The only change made in the coat of arms was in the colors, the background and the Lion's paws in this emblem being the color of the Air Service, blue and yellow. (Approved, 28 May 1924)

MOTTO

SUMMO EST OPPORTUNITAS--There is Opportunity at the top

OPERATIONS

The 106 Squadron was organized at Kelly Field South San Antonio, Texas August 26, 1917 by Sergeant G. H. Jones of the 84th Aero Squadron. Sergeant Jones was at that time a candidate for Commission in the aviation section Signal Corps, and has since that time been commissioned a Second Lt.

Approximately one week after the squadron was organized by Sergeant Jones, Lt Carson was placed in command. He was relieved on 23 Sep 1917 and 1LT Harley Lake was made Commanding Officer. The hobby of Lt Lake was inspections. The men, equipped with only the clothes on their backs found it a rather trying proposition to appear in creditable condition at inspections with fatigues and Kitchen Police.

His thoroughness was a displeasure to the squadron cooks none of who had cooked in the army before for they could not understand why it was important to have manicured nails, spotless pans and white uniforms, when those things would surely get dirty again. But in a short time the strict sanitary and disciplinary measures enforced by Lt Lake succeeded in impressing on all

of the men the necessity of cleanliness and military bearing. His scathing comments to some of these new soldiers were rather trying to men only recently in civilian life. Lt Lake was relieved from duty with the squadron about 22 Oct 1917 and Cpt Loring Pickering was made Commanding Officer.

During the short time Cpt Pickering was in command he made friends of all the men in the squadron.

1Lt Lyman S. Baird assumed command of the squadron on 30 Oct 1917. The duties of the squadron at Kelly Field were the regular cantonment duties. Exceptionally long hikes and drills under the merciless sun were given daily, For many of the men who were not used to Texas weather, the experience of hiking through the hot sand was one to be dreaded. Overseas equipment had been issued for several weeks for many rumors that the squadron was to entrain for "somewhere else in America" were to be heard

Finally travel orders came, on 30 Oct 1917, and the squadron entrained at 8.30 PM on that date. Nearly five days were spent in making the trip from Kelly Field to Garden City L.I. N.Y. The trip was very enjoyable as pleasant weather was experienced every day and the men were given opportunistic for taking hikes in nearly every large city enroute.

The squadron arrived at the Aviation Field, Garden City, L.I. N.Y. on the morning of 4 Nov 1917. The squadron was placed in Barracks No.25, an uninviting shelter without doors, windows or heat. Windows and doors were provided two days later but stoves were not to be obtained until the last week in November. Some of the men from Oklahoma, California, Georgia and Florida found the northern climate very severe, but they had by this time learned that no trouble was so bad it could not be doubled so they got out their Red Cross Helmets and Sweaters and fought the cold with knitted wool.

Overseas equipment was immediately made complete and the squadron held in readiness to embark at any time for overseas duty.

The men were allowed to visit New York City on twenty four hour passes and most of them took advantage of the opportunity. Large details were called for by Camp Headquarters and the men were used for digging ditches and other work that would put the camp in better condition. This work in the mud and cold was the cause for many sore throats and had colds. The squadron was quarantined for a short time while analysis were being made of supposed diphtheria cases, but none developed from the 106 squadron.

On Thanksgiving day 1917, the men were given passes to New York so that they might take advantage of the invitations extended for dinners by many New York Families to members of the squadron. On that day our men more treated to the hospitality of "The City without a heart" and many friendships made that day which will endure for years.

On 11 Nov 1917 1Lt Thomas C. Sims was assigned to the squadron and relieved again 16 Nov

2Lts J.F. Moore and B. Wells Jr. were assigned to the squadron on 10 Nov and relieved from duty again on 23 Nov, On 30 Nov 1917 1Lts Robert E. Bowers, Theodore Davis and Loui Lindemann were assigned to the squadron for duty. Lt Bowers was made Adjutant of the Squadron. Lt Davis was made Supply Officer and Lt Lindemann was made squadron mess Officer and assigned to other duties pertaining, to the equipping and drilling of the squadron. On 6 Dec 1917 1Lt Charles Piebes was assigned to the squadron and on 7 Dec, 1Lt Horace Jones was assigned, Both of these officers were pilots, During the first week in December censorship was placed on all squadron mail and rumor had it that at last the squadron was on the eve of its departure for France.

The squadron was one of several organizations composing what was known as "Provisional Wing No. 2, consisting of the 106, 107th, 108th, 109th, and 116th Aero Squadron. Major Robert Bates was in command of Provisional Wing no. 2. The squadrons entrained at Garden City at midnight 7 Dec 1917. The journey to France had begun and everybody was jubilant. We were finally embarked on the "Great Adventure. The medical Detachment accompanying the 106, Aero Squadron was composed of 1Lt George J. Korby, and three Medical enlisted men. Lt Korby was with the squadron from Kelly Field, having been assigned 27 Oct 1917, The men had expected to take a steamer at Hoboken but hour after hour passed and still the rails clicked beneath the speeding train.

When morning came and were passing through the New England States. New London was passes and still we wore going north-ward. The train stopped at Portland, Maine, and the men were marched from the depot to the YMCA building where they were treated to good hot baths. Again the train sped northward through a country glistening white with snow. On the morning of 10 Dec 1917 the squadron arrived at St. Johns, and immediately went aboard the R.M.S. Tunisian, a British Allan Line Steamer used as a Transport for American Troops. On the night of 10 Dec the ship left St. Johns. NB and arrived outside of Halifax N.S. Harbor the next day, On 12 Dec 1917 we steamed past the Day of Funday and what had once been Halifax and anchored in Bedford Basin. Our arrival in Halifax harbor was only five days after the Mont Blanc disaster. Practically the entire city had been destroyed by the explosion. The big blizzard which preceded the storms on that never to be forgotten December had covered the stricken city with a mantle of ice, No houses were left standing except the abutments of several of the reinforced concrete houses. Relief parties were everywhere trying to dig through to the wreckage in their houses in attempts to rescue those victims who might be alive. The offers of the squadrons on board ship to go on shore and aid in the relief work were not considered favorably for the reason that our convoy was subject to leave at any time.

At noon on 14 Dec 1917 we left the confines of Bedfors Basin and slipped quietly away from Halifax. Our ship the RMS Tunisian was joined by the Adriatic, Manchuria, Northland and the ill fated Tuscania. In addition to these troop ships were one ammunition and one oil ship in the convoy. A converted cruiser escorted the convoy. After the ship was well under way the reckless heaving of most of the members of the 106 Aero Squadron should have caused Hoover to throw up his hands in despair. Few of the men in the squadron had ever been on a sea voyage and for three or four days they were little concerned with whether a submarine showed

up or not. Conditions were not improved by the salt fish smell of the galley and the tripe and slum gullion of the mess line. Fire and life boat drills were given at odd hours every day. Each soldier was assigned to a certain boat in charge of an officer.

On 23 Dec we witnessed the welcome sight of a flotilla of nine destroyers steaming toward us at full speed, they remained with us until we, reached Liverpool harbor. On 23 Dec Private Eric O. Sayre of the 106 Aero Squadron Repair succumbed to a sudden attack of pneumonia despite every medical attention. His body was taken to Liverpool where it was delivered to the Port of Debarkation Medical Authorities.

Food aboard ship was no doubt cooked in an effort to make it seem appetizing, but to no avail. Perhaps that is the reason why a silo of beef mysteriously disappeared from the kitchen and why the atmosphere of the Galley was black with the smell of frying steak on the night of 21 Dec. The conspirators were not easily located as several squadrons were on board, but next morning some of the men who had suffered most from sea sickness during the earlier part of the voyage looked as though they might have had a satisfying meal of fried beef steak the night before.

On the morning of 25 Dec 1917, the Tunisian was met by a pilot outside of Liverpool Harbour and piloted past the numerous transports anchored opposite the docks on the Morsey River. The Giant German Steamship "Vaterland" which had been taken over by the United States Government as a Troop Ship and renamed the "Leviathan" was at the docks. Christmas dinner was eaten on board ship and consisted of tripe, marmalade and tea, an unusual Christmas Dinner for most of the man on the boat. That evening the squadron dined like royalty on Salt Herring. On the morning of the 26 Dec 1917, the squadron debarked on a lighter and landed at the docks. Early in the afternoon of 26 Dec the squadron entrained in the peculiar English Coaches and at 4 PM the train was on its way through the green hill sides via Oxford to Southampton. On 27 Dec, in a blinding snow storm the squadron arrived at Southampton and was marched to the Commons, a combination English-American Rest Camp. On 27 Dec 1917 this squadron with the other squadrons of Provisional, Wing No. 2, embarked on the Side Wheeler Transport Mona's Queen for the trip across the English Channel.

At dawn on 30 Dec 1917, the squadron debarked at le Havre and marched to another rest camp which, was as one of the men said, "was as restless as the other". The men were assigned to small round tents, twelve to a tent. Practice bombing and cannonading was heard in the distance. All of the squadron was excited at this first sound of what they fancied was war. At noon on 1 Jan 1918 the squadron was entrained for St, Maixent (Deuxe Sevres). On this New Year's Day the men were introduced to what they termed the now famous French Pullman Cars, side door style for 40 Hommes, 8 Cheveaux," Snow was nearly a foot thick and it was very cold. Necessity being the mother of invention, several of the men constructed stoves out of Bacon Cans which kept the cars warm to some extent.

After thirty two hours of travel we arrived at St. Maixent, on 2 Jan 1918. There, the squadron was quartered on the third floor of the Presbytero Barracks, Hot coffee was arrived to the men.

The squadron remained in the Air Service Replacement Concentration Barracks at St. Maixent from 2 Jan 1918, to 26 Feb 1918. Provisional Wing No.2 was dissolved at this point and Major Bates was ordered to Paris for duty. On 11 Jan 1918, 1Lt Phil A. Henderson 137th Inf. attached to the Service as an Aerial Observer reported for duty with the 106 Aero Repair Squadron. On 30 Jan 1Lt Lyman S. Baird was relieved from Command and 1Lt Phil A. Henderson named to succeed him. 1Lt Theodore P. Davis was relieved of his duties as squadron Supply Officer and 1Lt Lindemann was appointed to succeed him. Lts Baird and Davis were ordered to proceed to the First Air Depot, Zone of Advance, for duty.

1st Lt Henderson was relieved from duty as Commanding Officer of the squadron 10 Feb 1918 and 1Lt Robert Dowers was made Commanding Officer succeeding him. 1Lt Horace Jones and 1Lt Charles H. Piebes were relieved from duty with the squadron 10 Feb 1918. During the stay of the squadron at St Maixent, 1Lt Gus Kohn and 2LT Robert L. Mahormay, 1Lts H.W. Royal and A. E. Lee were assigned to the squadron and relieved shortly afterwards. During much of the time the squadron was at St. Maixent it was under quarantine because of the measles and mumps. Much time was spent by the squadron at St. Maixent in hikes and close order drill.

It was at this time that the 300th Aero Squadron became known as the best drilled squadron in France. Early in February Maj Bohon came from Headquarters Air Service and interviewed each man in the squadron as to his previous experience as a mechanic. This trade test proved very helpful later in placing the men of the squadron on field work.

On 1 Feb 1918 the 106 Aero Repair Squadron was changed to the 800th Aero Repair Squadron.

On 23 Feb 1918, eighteen enlisted men from other squadrons were transferred into the 800th Aero Repair Squadron and ten men were transferred from the 800th Aero Repair Squadron to other squadrons at that post. These transfers were made with a view of dividing the squadron into three flights, each of which would be able to function as an individual unit in the repair and up-keep of airplanes and airplane motors. On 24 Feb 1918 2LT Cecil W. Mason, 2LT Harold G. Mead and 2LT Earl E. Ives were assigned to the squadron. One of these Officers was to go with each flight as Engineering Officer. On 26 Feb 1918 the division into three flights was completed.

On 27 Feb 1918 Flight "A" entrained for Camp de Souge Base Section No. 2 Bordeaux (Gironde). On the same date Flight "B" entrained for Camp Coetquid an (Guer-Morbihan). Flight "C" entrained for Camp La Valdahon (Doubs).

From this point the history of each flight may be said to be the history of the Aerial Observation School to which it was assigned for duty

An effort had been made to have each of the units as nearly equal in skilled mechanics and other trained personnel as was possible. The Headquarters Flight left for Camp de Souge, there were fifty men and two officers, 1Lt Robert Bowers and 2Lt Cecil W. Mason, Commanding Officer and Engineering Officer respectively. Headquarters Flight reported for duty at the Second Artillery Aerial Observation School on 28 Feb 1918.

On the trip from St Maixent to Bordeaux, the Headquarters Flight rode in style compared with the cars occupied on the trip from Le Havre to St Maixent in January, being loaded into Third Class compartments. The Headquarters Flight was fortunate in having with it three culinary artists of proven ability, so the food, though not fastidious, was plentiful and filling. The engine pulled the train into Bastide Station at Bordeaux deserted it there.

It waited until noon on 28 Feb during which time an American Officer argued with a French Railroad man concerning the possibilities of getting the cars pulled nearer Camp do Souge.

About two o'clock a wheezy locomotive jerked it out of the shed, across the river, and around some mile of track until the flight would have felt more they were near the Spanish border had they not been able to see Bordeaux quite plainly two kilometers away. We stopped for several hours in a freight yard while long conferences were held among the French as to what should be done with the train next.

At dark it was pulled off in another direction, and when the train stopped. The flight was told that trucks were waiting to take them to camp. Then it started to rain as it has rained but seldom, even in the Department Gironde, and the flight arrived soaking wet at Camp do Souge, only to be loaded into other trucks and moved again to the Aviation Field some six kilometers away.

Here three chauffeurs who were all were on detached service at the school had warm fires ready, and by midnight in the Land of Nod. Being eager to see the field the flight was out early next morning looking into every nook and cranny of the place. In an old wooden hangar were found three ancient airplane that were there when the school was taken over by the Americans. The barracks were of concrete brick construction. All were enthusiastic when the flight learned that they were to be the entire enlisted personnel of the school. After that it was felt that the camp was its own and no work was too hard if it meant adding to its attractiveness or comfort. A program of camp sanitation was instituted at once. Camp sanitation meant everything from furnishing motive power for shovels and wheel-barrows to mixing concrete. The camp was policed from the (entrance to the outlying limits of the flying field. Weeds and underbrush were cut, holes were filled in, ditches were dug, a royal highway was built and soon the camp assumed the appearance characteristics of a well-kept US Army post.

On 13 Mar 1918 all of the officers and men of the 2nd Artillery Aerial Observation School had their first experience in fighting French Forest Fires. At About 5:30 in the afternoon of this unlucky thirteenth a call came from a French farmer who owned the adjoining property, saying that a forest fire had started which threatened to destroy the thick pine woods which comprised a part of his property and bounded the camp on one side. The smoke had been noticed earlier in the afternoon, but the fire did not look serious. A serious project was on hand that afternoon as General Pershing in company with Secretary Baker was making an inspection of Camp de Souge. Every man was polished up to within an inch of his life in anticipation of that important event. But the fire would not wait so every available officer and man, with the

exception of the guard, jumped into old clothes and denims and rushed pell mell across the field to the fire, armed with such primitive weapons as spades, hoes, rakes, sticks, tree branches and sacks. The fire was gaining rapidly in the dry underbrush and the Frenchmen who had been trying to hold it back were exhausted. Every American jumped into the fighting in a manner to convince the most conservative that a mistake had been made in not ordering the "800th" to the front. For two hours they beat and cut and backfired until at last it was under control. It was fortunate that general Pershing and Secretary Baker did not inspect the camp after the flights returned as the inspection neatness had vanished and in its stead was grime and blistered hands and faces.

A canteen was opened, and many extras appeared on the mess table as a result. A need was felt for music. Private Buck Loeschern described as a man who made music where music never grew before, so a piano was rented. It was carefully mounted on a platform, and everyone stood back to make room for the musicians. None came. "Buck" Loeschern said he could not play without music. There was no music. The lack of musicians in the Flight somewhat lessened the entertainment value of the piano, but as Sergeant W.H. Irish says: "It adds to our social prestige."

The flight rendered distinguished services to a widowed French Lady who owns a Chateau a short distance from the camp. A strawstack close to a frame barn caught fire and the fire, spread to the barn. From there the fire leaped to the outhouse and wine storage room, which in turn was under the very eaves of the chateau. The full strength of the flight ran to the scene armed with anti-fire bombs and other modern but useless equipment, sergeants Jenson and Lindler, ably assisted by Sgt Maj Walker, ran great risks in rescuing several racks of very rare old wine from the burning wine room.

Soon the gardens of the chateau presented the appearance of a towns suddenly voted "dry so numerous were the bottles of precious vintage. In the meantime a bucket brigade was organized and drained every well and water hole on the property, The chateau, was saved from destruction. Half an hour and the danger was over, Then the lady insisted that the brave Americans should partake of wine from her plentiful store; she demanded it as a fitting reward for the services rendered. And the camp was very gay that night. But morning found every man carrying out the motto: "Business as Usual", for the wheelbarrows rolled as had boon their wont, and shovels were plied lustily.

From 1 Mar 1918, to 11Sep 1918 the Headquarters Flight of fifty enlisted men performed all specialists duties at the 2nd Artillery Aerial Observation School. Sergeant Klein was named storekeeper. Corporal Bender, who joined the army to escape running his father's light plant in Nebraska, was detailed as camp electrician and put in charge of the electrogon. Corporal Brown was given charge of the Photographic Department. Sergeant Hubert Upton and Pvt. Emmett Smith were made wireless men, while Sergeant Marion Silvius and Pvt. "Buck Loexchorn were given work in the Armory. Other men remaining were organized into crews by the Engineering Officer, Lt Cecil W. Mason, for the repair end upkeep of airplanes and motors on the field.

On the day before the first airplane flight was made on the field Corporal Cass McCormick proved himself to be fit material for a pilot.

To start with, it should be understood that Pvt. Andy Bjorn deserves the blame for the side slip that the borrowed steamroller did at Camp do Souge. The flying field was in need of rolling, while the rock foundation in front of the machine shop needed to be rolled, so the school borrowed a French Steam Roller at Camp do Souge and Corporal McCormick was detailed to run it to camp. He promised to negotiate the six kilometers by noon, and disappeared in the direction of Souge. Noon came on schedule time, but Cass did not. In the afternoon Cass came into camp on foot. It seemed that after much fussing and spluttering the old roller started toward the school, Pvt. Bjorn was with McCormick and having had a bit of experience with the family "flivvor" he offered to guide it while Cass stoked. While Cass' head was bent toward the fire box the hand that ruled the steering gear made a false move, and the right rear wheel of the roller slid off the road into the deep sand. Rescue parties were organized.

LT Bowers managed to have an artillery tractor lend a hand, and the roller again started toward the school, Pvt. Bjorn was fired on the spot. In the meantime, the French Sergeant who had loaned the roller was becoming anxious for its safety, He forbade it to leave camp before the morning, so it was backed up at the entrance to Camp de Souge, where again the earth gave away beneath the rear wheel. The next morning two four wheel drive trucks pulled the roller on the road and the journey was resumed but only after the French Sergeant had detailed a Frenchman to accompany it on the trip. In the afternoon, for the third time, it slid off the road into a ditch, inside camp limits.

Cass named it every uncomplimentary thing in his wide vocabulary, but after it had been rescued and set in front of the machine shop for needed repairs some wag in the Flight dubbed it the Emma M in furtherance of a plan the pilots had adopted of naming their plane for their best girls. It is rumored that Cass considered this an ill omen and stopped correspondence with Emma M shortly afterwards.

On Monday 18 Mar 1918 the first airplane for use at the school arrived at St. Medard Station, five miles away. This was a Sopwith 1-A-2 with a Le Rhone motor. On 19 Mar two more Sopwiths arrived, and the plane came on 22 Mar. The fifth and sixth Sopwiths were received on 24 Mar and 31 Mar, respectively. Three more which were received several weeks later completed the quota of airplanes furnished the school for its work at that time. Two French mechanics reported from the factory to assemble the planes and on the morning of 8 Apr 1918 the assembling of all airplanes on hand was completed. The six planes were lined up in front of the hangars, and the crews assigned to each plane were kept busy cleaning up the wings, fuselage and motor, and familiarizing themselves with the Sopwith.

Six Mechanics reported the first week in April as instructors for the Headquarters Flight. In three weeks they reported that the men of the 800th, were able to handle any repair and do all the work required to keep an airplane in first class flying condition." The men of the Headquarters Flight who reported for duty on 28 Feb were mechanics with excellent training,

but none of them had experience in airplane upkeep. They entered their work with enthusiasm and in a short time their conscientious and painstaking work was rewarded with the expressed confidence of the pilots, and the favorable comments of several inspecting officers. LT Mason proved equal to the many problems that confront an Engineering Officer when a new field is started.

His crew organization was excellent. A close watch was kept on every man, and each man was placed in the class of work for which he was best fitted. The shops were opened with few tools other than those made by the squadron blacksmith, yet the work done was the very best. There have been few accidents at this school, and none have been serious. The Headquarters Flight feels that the comparative freedom of the field from accidents is due in a large measure to the high mechanical ability and painstaking work of the men of the flight.

Tuesday 9 Apr 1918, HQ Flight and Second Artillery Observation School. On this date the first aeroplane flights were made at this school. 1LT John A. Young with his Chief Mechanic John F. Jones as passenger, took the air at 10:35 a.m. for a fifteen minute flight. The flight was the occasion for rejoicing by everybody on the field. LT Young made a second flight at 10:59 with Cpt Oscar L. Gruhmas his passenger. 1LTs Pitts and Mitchell also made flights that day.

In Sep 1918 ten Curtiss JN-4s were received from the Canadian Flying School at Vendome. These Curtiss machines are reputed to be the only ones in France. On 9 Nov 1918, ten Liberty Motored D.H.4 airplanes arrived at the field from Romarantin. Their arrival made the three types of airplanes which have been used at the Second Artillery Observation school.

On every flying day at the school adequate planes have been ready for the work in hand. Aerial adjustments of artillery fire were made for the brigades field artillery training at Camp de Souge. From two to eight reglages have been made in one day with the limited equipment on hand. In addition to reglage missions. Infantry Liaison, Photographic, Smoke-bomb and Reconnaissance missions have been performed by each class of observers that were trained at the Second A.A.O.S.

The Headquarters flight points with pride to the Officer-Observers who have received training at this school in planes kept aloft by our mechanics. Most of them saw service at the front in the most critical moments of the war. Some of them have given their lives for our country. Some of them have won distinguished Service Crosses. We feel a justifiable pride in having assisted in the training of such men, and in the fact that 14 brigades of Field, Artillery were given their training in aerial adjustments of artillery fire from our planes.

Flight B of the squadron reported for duty at this school on 30 Oct 1918, and was consolidated with the Headquarters Flight. A celebration of no mean proportions was held in honor of the occasion. All that remained to be done to make our happiness complete is to have Flight "C " roll into camp some fine day and fill the empty bunks we have waiting for them.

On the evening of 27 Feb 1918, the second flight of the 800th Aero Squadron slung packs, and

clamored into the tiny little coaches which were to convoy them to their destination. The flight was composed of fifty enlisted men under command of LT Lindemann, and Engineering Officer 2LT Earl N. Ives. The first stop was at Niort. The day following a stop was made at La Rochelle. Here the population turned out to greet the dashing young aviators. The boys returned the compliment by giving a practical demonstration of how enter can change a travel stained Yankee into a comparative Beau Brummal in four minutes. After the ablutions the payroll was signed and the coffee and hard tack ration was handed out.

The small boy population of La Rochelle gorged itself on hard tack and cigarettes handed out by the men of the flight. It was at this place that Sergeant Prince made friends with a Toothless Old Peasant Woman who was down to see herself whether the American Soldiers were war paint and feathers. The following morning found the flight at Messac where a jam factory was discovered in operation a short distance from the station. Sgt "Slim" McKeown the squadron "food Hound" raided the sweet shop and brought away many jam tins and several hearts belonging to the fairer sex. In fact Flight "B" proved itself a champion unit of fire side athletes on the trip from St. Maixent to Coetquidan. On 1 Mar 1918 the little Brittany village of Guer was reached, The flight all unloaded in a cold rain and waded ankle deep in mud under full packs up the hills to Coetquidan.

A rest was anticipated here but the flight marched a few kilometers further to the Flying Field and at last found themselves inside wooden barracks that possessed a bacon can stove, The camp proper has been one of the Largest artillery camps in France since the time of Napoleon Third and had been recently turned over to the United States government. A small detachment of men was already garrisoned at the camp. They had been trained in Paris and sent to the First Artillery Aerial Observation School for duty as Aeroplane mechanics, The coming of the flight brought joy to the camp as this detachment had long since become expert in the use of pick, shovel and wheel barrow.

The men were put on construction work at once. When the Sergeant in charge of the field was asked by members of the flight what aeroplane they would be assigned to, they were told that they would be given their pick, and sure enough they were, Each man wore out about two picks and two shovels before the construction work was completed.

Six ancient Farman planes had recently arrived at the camp by rail from Chatearoux and had been assembled by the detachment trained in Paris. Up to this time the flight had no training on any kind of aeroplane work. It had an unusually large number of skilled mechanics, and their experience in working on automobile motors proved very in taking over the work on airplanes.

Several of the pilots were kind enough to take the men most eager for a flight up to lofty heights in the "Farms." Men who soared aloft in these "Gallopings Geese" now break out in cold perspiration at the mere thought of another such ride. In the course of a few days we lost our reverence for the planes and began, our work in earnest trying to put them in the safest possible condition. The Engineering Officer, Lieut. Ives selected twelve men for a trip to Paris for first hand instruction in motors and planes. These men were given a course of instruction at

the Renault, Ioraine, Dietrich, Farman and Bregust motor factories. The French mechanics proved very willing to assist and explain whenever possible, An opportunity was held at Paris to examine the Liberty Motor. It was handled with loving care as was one of the first to arrive in France. While this detachment was in Paris the Germans fired their first shot into Paris.

Broken for the machine shop which in a short time was fully equipped with a complete line of machine tools and accessories, but the engine to run the shop was lacking and could not be located until a number of weeks later it was found at the balloon school. The whirr of pulleys and slap of bolts was music to the ears of the machinists. With the turn of the first pulley, work came in a steady stream and pick and shovel were forgotten.

This machine shop took care of the balloon school work, the Artillery Camp Work, and the airplane and transportation work for the Aviation Camp. It is needless to be said to the credit of this shop that a complaint was never made of work done. Cpt W. H. Saunders 7th. F.A. was Commanding Officer of the camp until his departure for the front when Lt Reed succeeded him. 1LT Harold Wilder replaced Lieut. Reed shortly afterwards as Commanding Officer.

About this time the Mascot craze hit camp and each squad had its pet sounds were heard at night around the camp that night well have been mistaken as coming from the cages of "Ringling-Brothers" or "Barnum and Bailey" The camp boasted eleven dogs of sundry color and dispositions, three goats with and without horns, one Magpie named "Mac", four ground hogs, two fox, four ducks, five chickens, a hoot owl, two rabbits and weasel. Most of these mascots met most untimely hands, for the weasel ate the magpie, half of the dogs died from drinking the camp water and the other half died from the effects of Creoline baths given them for the French Itch.

One goat lost its life at the hands of sergeant Kilpatrick and an automatic, the other two lost their lives one afternoon after had eaten a lower aeroplane wing for supper, These two goats were last seen headed into the officers mesa flanked by brown gravy and green peas. The French Chef prepared the meat as veal and the officers ate it after having turned it back previously because it was goat meat. Lt Fouchard, the School Supply Officer, who owned Nannie before her untimely demise said it was like eating a friend to eat the poor goat, but he was around for seconds just the same. The two fox were sold to the Balloon School at a profit that goes to show that all profiteers are not out of the army yet. The owl eloped with an owl from another neighborhood, while the rabbit went to the flesh pot when rations were low. The chickens made off mysteriously just about the time the Colored Infantry pulled out for the front. The ground hogs were lost in the shuffle. Here today; gone tomorrow : C'est la Guerre!

About seven brigades were trained at the First Artillery Aerial Observation School in the use of aerial adjustment of artillery fire, by planes maintained and sent up for work by the members of flight B 800th Squadron. In spite of handicap under which work was carried on all reglages, photographic missions, reconnaissance etc. were carried out on schedule time. This was due in no small way to the constant effort and painstaking care of the mechanics in both the repair shop and crews that cared for the aeroplanes. The pilots who came to the school have always

spoken of the work done by the mechanics as the most conscientious work that had ever been done on their planes.

Five smashes at the school were due in nearly every case to the narrow limits of the flying field. Lt Fouschard had the first accident with 1Lt Joe G. Estell, Jr. as his pilot 1LT Norman Fallot had the second accident. The only casualty in an accident at the Field was that of 1Lt James A. O'Daniel, infantry Observer who was killed in a Caudron machine with Lt Sam L. Mathews as pilot. The machine went into a vrille and failed to come out. The pilot was very slight injured.

In May 1918 a new Artillery Aerial Observation School, known as the Fourth Artillery Aerial Observation School was started at Meucon about 46 miles west of Coetquidan. 1Lt Norman E. Fallot was sent to Meucon with seven men to start the school, having with him Supply Sergeant John F. Jones, who was also acting as First Sergeant, Sergeant Major and Field Chief. Reveille with a company front of seven men was held whenever the Acting Top Sergeant could get his charges out of their hunks. This he usually accomplished by threatening to make them go without breakfast. An average of 25 enlisted men were taken from Coetquidan for the work at Meucon, exchanges of personnel being made from time to time. An average of eight planes were used at Meucon and 18 planes at Coetquidan.

The school at Meucon was supplied with aeroplanes from Coetquidan. In a short time the new school was doing its schedule of work and everything was running smoothly. Classes of observers reported and were trained and in addition to our drills in the morning before breakfast we gave up some of our leisure hours on more than one occasion to act as "Advancing Infantry" in order to give the observers an opportunity to observe infantry liaison with flares and panel signals before they left for the front.

In July the "Spanish Flu" hit our midst and in three days only five men were left in the men's barracks. At that time little was known of this disease but the Medical Officers handled it well and in a short time all of the men had recovered and work at the camp was resumed.

The French mission detailed a French Officer to the school as an instructor. Lt Bachelier planned and put into operation all of the Artillery Aerial Observation Schools. Lt Burnier was permanent French Instructor for observation and he was favorably known for his able lectures on stereoptican views. Lt Burnier was later succeeded by Lt Schevanne also of the French Army who remained at the school until the signing of the armistice by Germany.

In the month of July several Caudron Airplanes were added to the flying equipment of the school, replacing the Farmans which we found there upon reporting for duty. Our joy at the arrival of the formation of Caudrons which were being delivered to the school was marred by the death of 1Lt James A. O'Daniel who lost his life 27 Jul 1918 as a result of a vrille. The following day we attended our first military funeral. As we stood beside the open grave with planes circling overhead and heard the last note of "Taps" die away, many of us were brought to sober realization that life is uncertain in the Air Service, whether the pilot be on duty at a squadron at the front or further back in the training area.

The death of Lt O'Daniel coming suddenly as it did was a blow to every man and officer at the post. It was at the First Artillery Aerial Observation School that the Caudron G-3 was proved to be as well adapted to artillery roglage work as to the training of student pilots. They were strong enough for aerobatics, and in spite of contrary orders, we were treated to many thrills by various pilots who had ferried the planes from Tours to our School. On 1 Oct 1918 Flight "C" of the 351st Aero Squadron reported to relieve our flight. After several weeks of training on our planes, we turned the schools at Meucon and Coetquidan over to them with many words of caution about the mulish chemistry of each aeroplane.

On 9 Oct 1Lt Louis E. Lindemann who had been Commanding Officer most of the time since the Squadron had been separated into flights in February was transferred from our organization to the 351st Aero Squadron as Commanding Officer with station at Meucon. 2Lt Theodor H. Mittendorf replaced Lt Lindemann as Commanding Officer of the Flight and accompanied us to Bordeaux. We were issued rifles, gas masks, and tin hats for the trip and marched away with the 351st. Our only regret in leaving the camp was in leaving our Commanding Officer, Lt Lindemann behind. We entrained and made the journey to Bordeaux without incident. Trucks were waiting for us when we reached Bordeaux at 3 o'clock in the morning and a short ride through the night brought us to the Camp at the Second Artillery Observation School where we wore again among friends.

On 25 Oct, they tendered us a fare-well banquet in the Lecture Hall, On 28 Oct, we slung our packs and boarded the French Train for Bordeaux to rejoin the Headquarters Flight at the Second Artillery Aerial Observation School.

Early in 1919, Maj James A. Meissner, a World War I flying ace and former member of Eddie Rickenbacker's famous "Hat-in-the-Ring" squadron, organized some ten to twelve ex-aviators from the recent war. This club was dubbed the Birmingham Flying Club, and the Birmingham Escadrille. Its primary aim being the promotion of aviation in the City of Birmingham and the State of Alabama. Work began immediately to induce the Federal Government to recognize the unit as a National Guard flying squadron. After months of ceaseless work, word was received that the dream was to become a reality. On 21 Jan 1922, the organization was federally recognized as the 135th Observation Squadron, Alabama National Guard. Twenty-six officers and one hundred twenty enlisted men assigned to the squadron began developing the tract of land that was to be used for the air base.

Before the end of July 1922, seven JN-4Ds and necessary support equipment were on hand, and the squadron was functioning as a flying unit under the direction of Maj Meissner. It was during this month that the 135th Observation Squadron went to Maxwell Field, Montgomery, Alabama, for their first annual encampment.

On 1 Jan 1923, the unit designation was changed to the 114th Observation Squadron, Alabama National Guard, on orders from Air Service Headquarters, United States Army, Washington, D.C., the 114th continued flying the JN-4D on observation missions from Roberts Field.

Emergency operations while under state control included support of mine rescue work at Carbon Hill, Ala, Nov 1923

The squadron conducted annual summer training at Maxwell Field, AL, in 1923.

On 1 Jan 1924, the designation was changed from the 114th Observation Squadron to the 106 Observation Squadron, Alabama National Guard.

The squadron, or elements thereof, called up to perform the following state duties: transportation of men and equipment for mine rescue operations at Carbon Hill, AL, in Nov 1923; support for air mail test trials in 1924-29.

The Alabama National Guard surveyed and flew the first airmail routes in the State of Alabama in 1928.

The squadron flew flood relief efforts in southern Alabama 16-30 March 1929; aerial surveys and hurricane relief efforts in south Alabama 21-24 Mar 1932. Conducted summer training at Maxwell Field, AL, and Camp McClellan, AL.

Efforts to secure more modern facilities for the organization finally had results when the construction of hangars and buildings at Birmingham Municipal Airport was funded by the government works project in 1935.

Two-plane detachments were sent some years to fly spotter missions during the summer training of the 252nd and 263rd Coast Artillery Regiments at Fort Moultrie, SC, and with the 114th and 178th Field Artillery Regiments at Camp Knox, KY, in 1936.

In 1938, with construction completed, the unit moved into its present quarters at the Birmingham Municipal Airport. The existing hangar was constructed to accommodate and support thirteen O-47s.

25 Nov 1940: Called to active duty and placed under the command of the Fourth Corps Area. Initially remaining at Fort Sumpter Smith in Birmingham, the 106 OS had one BC-1A, one O-38B and nine O-47A/Bs on 31 Dec 1940. Key personnel were transferred from the unit to form the 65th and 69th Observation Groups.

12 Dec 1941, five days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the unit was moved to Miami, FL to perform anti-submarine patrol. Later state-side base assignments included Jacksonville, FL; Savannah, GA; Tullahoma, TN; Charlotte, NC; Fort Myers, FL; Clarksville, TN; and Camp Campbell, KY.

While at Camp Campbell, KY, the unit was redesignated the 106 Reconnaissance Squadron (Bomb) and was assigned to the 76th Reconnaissance Group. In Jun of 1943, the unit was

returned to Savannah, Georgia and equipped with North American B-25s for overseas movement. Reporting to Camp Stoneman, CA, on 20 Oct 1943, the unit served in the northern Solomons, Southern Philippines, Bismarck Archipelago, and New Guinea prior to being returned to the continental United States for release from active duty on 11 Dec 1945. The unit had, in the meantime, been assigned to the 13th Air Force and redesignated the 100th Bombardment Squadron (Medium). Serving as part of the 42nd Bombardment Group, the 100th established a brilliant war record and was presented a Presidential Unit Citation for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy.

Following World War II the unit returned to Fort Sumpter Smith Air National Guard Base, Birmingham, AL and to reserve status. The post war unit was reorganized under the leadership of Colonel John M. Donalson who had flown the lead C-47 in the Normandy Invasion. On 25 Nov 1946, flying B-26s, the unit was redesignated the 106 Bomb Squadron (Light). The 106 was assigned to the 117th Fighter Group.

The 106 Tac Recon Squadron was ordered to active duty 1 Apr 1951 for a period of twenty-one months because of the Korean War. The Squadron spent most of the twenty-one month call-up at Shaw AFB, SC.

The 106 Tac Recon Squadron was rebased and reorganized under the command of the 117th Tactical Reconnaissance Group on 18 Dec 1952. The first jets arrived in Birmingham in 1957 when the official unit designation was changed to 106 Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron (Photo-Jet). The T-33 was the workhorse for the basic checkout program before stepping into the RF-84F.

While stationed at Birmingham, the unit received one F-51H maintenance trainer, 44-64273. It was used from 28 Jul 1952 through 31 Oct 1952.

1 Jan 1953: Returned to state control at Birmingham MAP as part of the 117th TRG.

1 Oct 1961: Called to active duty as part of the Berlin Crisis call-up.

Nov 1961: Transferred to Dreux AB France, and assigned to the 7117 TRW.

RF-84F 53-7610 - Crash landed, hydraulic failure/weather, on Chaumont AB, France, 12 DEC 1961, no fatalities.

RF-84Fs were flown from Birmingham, AL, to Dreux AB, France by 106 TRS pilots. Then deployed to Chaumont AB for all operations. Aircraft returned to CONUS during July 1962 by 106 TRS pilots.

The 117th Tactical Recon Wing and the 106 Tac Recon Squadron were recalled to active duty in October 1961 during the Berlin Crisis. The deployment was dubbed "Operation Stairstep". The 106 TRS Deployed twenty RF-84s from Birmingham, AL, to Dreux, France. This deployment

consisted of five days of island hopping from McGuire Air Force Base to Argentina, Newfoundland; to Lajes, Azores; to Moran, Spain and then to Dreux. This was the first time Air National Guard RF-84s had flown the Atlantic. In addition to the 20 RF-84s the unit was also tasked to deploy two T-33s and one C-47 in separate moves to Dreux. The T-Birds joined ten others from "Stair-Step" units at Langley AFB, Virginia and flew one flight a day from there. The route took them to Loring AFB, Maine to Goose Bay, Labrador to Sandestrom, Greenland to Keflavik, Iceland to Preswick, Scotland and finally to Dreux. The C-47 was equipped with several extra fuel tanks and flew from Langley AB, to Goose Bay, to Lajes to Dreux. That trip took 29 hours and forty minutes flying time. After assembling the assigned personnel at Dreux, it was learned that flying operations would be from Chaumont Air Base, France. The newly named 7117th Wing headquarters remained at Dreux and the 106 Squadron moved to Chaumont. The units were relieved from active duty in Aug 1962.

While this movement proved the responsiveness of Air National Guard forces and was accomplished without incident, it pointed out the need for an Air National Guard air refueling capability. The goal was set: The 106 Tac Recon Squadron would develop and demonstrate the capability to deploy non-stop from the continental United States to Europe. The first training mission aimed at this goal was Exercise "Poncho". The 106 deployed ten RF-84s from Birmingham, Alabama, non-stop to Puerto Rico with air-to-air refueling utilizing KC-97 for the deployment and KC-135 for the redeployment. This was the FIRST time that an Air Guard unit had deployed with the requirements for air-to-air refueling over water. This exercise was a complete success and served as a "warm up" for the second phase which would require much more exact planning and coordination.

20 Aug 1962: Relieved of active duty and returned to state control at the Birmingham MAP (Sumpter Smith ANGB).

The second mission was Exercise "Minuteman Alpha". The 106 discovered that the Alaskan Air Command was in need of photographic coverage on many outstanding targets. It was determined that this would afford an excellent opportunity with a two-fold purpose; first, to demonstrate the non-stop deployment capability of the squadron utilizing a distance of 3500 miles, and second, to assist the Alaskan Air Command by completing as many photographic sorties as feasible against outstanding targets. The squadron deployed twelve RF-84s non-stop from Birmingham to Anchorage, Alaska utilizing Air Guard KC-97s. This was the first time an Air Guard jet unit had flown a non-stop mission of this duration. Flying time for the deployment from Birmingham to Anchorage was 8 hours and 27 minutes.

In Aug 1964, twelve Birmingham based RF-84Fs streaked into the sky for a non-stop transatlantic flight. The flight proved that the 106 TRS was ready to be deployed to foreign countries within a matter of hours, in the event of a crisis. The 3400-mile deployment to Europe required three air refuelings. Within forty-five minutes after landing the jets were refueled, checked, loaded with film, and were standing on alert with pilots in the cockpits ready for reconnaissance missions. On 20 Aug, twelve jets were heading for home after flying more than 10,000 miles in a little over a week. The jets required four air refuelings on the return trip. The

twelve jets landed in Birmingham 21 Aug 1964, completing the history making Operation "Ready-Go".

Another sizeable exercise in which the 106 TRS participated was Operation Clove Hitch III. In April 1967, the Alabama Air National Guard deployed four RF-84s and 93 pilots, intelligence, photo processors, interpreters, and maintenance personnel to Ramey Air Force Base, Puerto Rico. The Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, and other Air Guard Units participated in the mock invasion of the islands.

In Jun 1968, the 106 participate in an exercise called Operation Brim Fire which consisted of high-speed low-level attacks on the Army's Hawk Missile System to defend a position such as an airfield against an enemy attack.

During the unit's summer encampment of 1968, the 106 TRS photographed more than 600 targets in the north while participating in Guard Strike II. This was an Army and Air National Guard exercise involving 88,000 men in 36 states.

The 106 TRS participated in an operation during the summer of 1970 to determine if reconnaissance aircraft could detect oil pollution in the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean. The results showed the aircraft could not only spot oil spills, but with special film and techniques, could determine where they originated.

The Birmingham based unit provided four RF-4Cs along with aircrews and support troops and equipment, to supply the aerial photo intelligence information needed by the Army ground forces participating in this annual winter exercise held at Eielson AFB. In addition, the men of the 106 TRS flew missions for the Alaskan Air Command over virtually the entire state of Alaska, from Anchorage to the North Slope, and from Nome to Juneau.

In Oct 1975, the pilots and weapons system operator of the 106 took part in a special training exercise with Army Airborne Forces and other Tactical Air Forces. Called "Brave Shield XIII." It was a United States Readiness Command exercise conducted at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida. The 106's mission was to provide the kinds of intelligence information needed to assist the complete gamut of reconnaissance operations including the collecting, reporting, interpretation, and dissemination of intelligence information and imagery.

While equipped with RF-4Cs, the 106 TRS first deployed overseas in Mar 1976 when it sent aircraft, crews and support personnel to Ramstein AB, Germany. The exercise dubbed "Operation Coronet Sprint" started on 16 Mar 1976, when two Air Force C-141s left Birmingham with 100 officers and airmen and support equipment.

The wing and 106 TRS members were involved in four separate exercises during 1978, Operation Gallant Eagle, Exercise Photo Finish, Operation Jack Frost, and Operation Sombrero. Operation Gallant Eagle involved the deployment of the Weapons Systems Security Flight to Eglin AFB, FL and the 106 Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron flew photo reconnaissance

missions from Birmingham Municipal Airport. Operation Gallant Eagle was a Joint Chiefs of Staff Command and Control exercise. The large scale exercise provided a simulated combat environment for the training, planning, preparation and execution of joint combat operations in a lightly forested terrain. The exercise also tested the flying skills of tactical air forces operating in non-permissive environment. Exercise Photo Finish is a National Guard Bureau sponsored photo competition with all tactical reconnaissance units from all services being invited. The competition spans three to four days of highly competitive flying and intelligence reporting. Awards include best overall unit, best crew, best intelligence reporting, and best maintenance.

In 1979, the 106 TRS participated in four major training exercises. The exercises were Rapid Recce, Photo Finish II, Jack Frost '79, and Bold Eagle '80. All of these exercises were completed successfully and earned the 106 TRS much praise. Exercise Photo Finish II was from 20 Oct through 27 Oct. The exercise tested both day and night capabilities. Two full days and two nights were utilized to determine the winners. Members of the 117th Recce Tech Squadron also deployed to process and assist in grading the photo missions. One hundred and seventy-three members of the 117th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing and 106 TRS spent two weeks in January at Elmendorf AFB, AK while participating in Operation Jack Frost '79. The exercise required six RF-4Cs and was a Joint Chiefs of Staff exercise to test readiness of forces in an arctic environment. Various Alabama Guard units including the 117th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, 106 Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, the 226th Combat Communications Group from Gadsden, and the 232nd Combat Communications Squadron from Montgomery, were deployed to Eglin Air Force Base, Florida during October, 1979, to participate in Operation Bold Eagle '80. The exercise was designed to provide a simulated combat environment to evaluate active duty and guard commanders, staff, and forces in joint tactics, techniques and procedures.

The 106 and supporting units of the 117th participated in three major exercises during the year. The Birmingham Air National Guardsmen deployed to Nellis AFB, NV to participate in Red Flag 81, to Goose Bay, Labrador, Canada for Amalgam Brave 81-1, and to Gulfport, MS for Photo Finish '81. Sixty members of the 117th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing and the 106 TRS deployed to Goose Bay, Labrador, Canada for operation Amalgam Brave 81-1. The six day exercise provided the Birmingham Air Guard members with adverse weather conditions to test the Aerospace Warning and Control System in tracking low level, high speed targets for interceptors. The Birmingham based RF-4C were used as target vehicles in the operation. It also gave the 106 aircrews a chance to practice evasive maneuvers and tactics. The 117th was host to the Photo Finish '81 reconnaissance competition at Gulfport, MS. There were nine military units in the competition.

1987: Became the first ANG unit equipped with the KS-127 Long-Range Oblique Photography (LOROP) system.

At the start of Operation Desert Shield in Aug 1990, three years after becoming the first ANG unit to be equipped with the KS-127A LOROP (Long-Range Oblique Photography) system, the 106 TRS deployed six LOROP-equipped aircraft and personnel to the United Arab Emirates on a voluntary basis. Later relocating to Bahrain, the Alabama volunteers were relieved in the Gulf in

Dec 1990 but left their aircraft (minus one lost with its crew in a crash on 8 Oct 1990) in the theater to be flown and maintained by Nevada Guardsmen during Operation Desert Storm.

24 Aug 1990: Volunteers deployed to Bahrain's Sheikh Isa AB with six LOROP-equipped RF-4Cs and attached to the 35 TFW (Provisional) as part of Operation Desert Shield.

RF-4C 64-1044 of the 106 TRS at NAS Fallon, NV, during Photo Derby '84. Maj Barry K. Henderson and LTC Stephen Schramm were killed when this RF-4C in Saudi Arabia on 8 Oct 1990.

18 Dec 1990: Volunteers relieved by activated personnel from the Nevada ANG. RF-4Cs left in Bahrain to be flown by crews from the 192nd TRS.

In Nov of 1995, the unit deployed to Pisa, Italy, in support of Operation "Deny Flight" over Bosnia. The unit next deployed to RAF Croughton, United Kingdom, in 1999 in support of Operation Noble Anvil over Kosovo.

As part of Operation Noble Eagle, the 117th ARW was called to active duty and deployed to MacDill AFB, FL.

Returning from Europe and finishing his engineering degree at Cornell University, Major James Meissner found employment with Tennessee Coal & Iron in Birmingham, Alabama. In late 1919, Major Meissner and Henry Badham created the Birmingham Flying Club. Nicknamed the "Birmingham Escadrille", after the famed American volunteer Lafayette Escadrille, it would be home to 11 American aces of World War I. The Birmingham Escadrille was comprised of about a dozen World War I aviators and aimed, among other things, to promote aviation in Birmingham and the State of Alabama. Major Meissner, however, immediately began promoting federal recognition of the Birmingham Flying Club as part of the Alabama National Guard. Partnering with Colonel Hartley A. Moon, the Adjutant General of Alabama, and using his fame as a World War I ace to overcome public opinion that did not, at the time, look favorably upon the National Guard, Meissner and Moon successfully convinced the War Department to establish the seventh air unit of the National Guard in the United States. On 21 January 1922, the Birmingham Flying Club was organized as the 135th Observation Squadron, Alabama National Guard, with seven Curtiss JN-4Ds, or "Jennys" and an authorized manning of 26 officers and 120 enlisted men under the command of Major Meissner.

Within the first two years of existence, the 135th Observation Squadron changed names twice: first to the 114th Observation Squadron and again, on 1 January 1924, to the 106 Observation Squadron. The early years were challenging. Land was donated for what would become Roberts Field. Steel was salvaged from old wartime hangars to build new hangars. Birmingham citizens donated money to defray construction expenses. Squadron members even returned their pay to the squadron to defray costs and supplied much of the labor themselves. In the first few years of operation, while constructing the facilities at Roberts Field, the Squadron participated in mine rescue work, began a program of providing aerial photographs of points of industrial and historical interest throughout Alabama, and provided the first Air Mail service in the State of Alabama.

By 1929, the Squadron had transitioned from Major Meissner to W.V.M. Robertson, Jr., and then to Lt. Col. Sumpter Smith. Under the command of Lt. Col. Smith in 1929, the Squadron rendered its "greatest service to the State of Alabama" when the entire Squadron was ordered to active duty for flood relief in south Alabama. Twenty-

five officers and 100 men participated for 14 days and nights, flying a total of approximately 300 hours dropping food and medicine to marooned families. The airdrop of supplies was among the first of its kind in aviation history.

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