

# **403<sup>rd</sup> AIR SERVICE GROUP**

## **MISSION**

## **LINEAGE**

403<sup>rd</sup> Air Service Group

## **STATIONS**

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

## **COMMANDERS**

## **HONORS**

**Service Streamers**

**Campaign Streamers**

**Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

**Decorations**

## **EMBLEM**

## **MOTTO**

## **NICKNAME**

## **OPERATIONS**

It is felt that the Squadron History of the Hq & Base Services Squadron, 403rd Air Service Group, cannot be complete without a compiled breakdown by department and on the job analysis of work being done and results accomplished by the officer and enlisted personnel of the unit.

Due to the perhaps true or untrue belief that everything starts from the Orderly room, both good and bad (considered mostly bad by the majority of individuals), it is appropriate that we start there and wind up heaven knows where, probably the Pacific according to many views.

The Orderly Room is located in Com-Site #2, with a large, beautiful sign denoting unit designation, staring all straight in the face as they travel down that main road. Nothing stood short with the Hq & Base Service Squadron. It is more or less directed by the 'wheel' of the enlisted men of the outfit, that noble individual, 1st Sergeant Condy E. Nichols, a Texan of little repute. He has succeeded in the difficult task of molding the men of the organization to his Commanding Officer's desires without losing friendship. Most of the men call him just plain 'Nick', and have a hard time remembering the official army way of calling him 'Sergeant'. No doubt, if the necessity should arise, he could play the role of the rough, tough 1st Sgt. However, directly under his supervision, comes the Sergeant Major of the outfit, S/Sgt W.J. Reid Jr. 'Bill' is noted for his ability in always finding something to do, keeping on this rolling ball all the time. He is continuously making up new rosters for one reason or another. Reid handles the Administration end and Nichols the men, both doing very well at their respective jobs. Under the watchful eye of S/Sgt Reid we have Pfc Henry W. Hewitt, the duty clerk or jack of all odd jobs. Henry has cultivated the reputation of being one of the better or not so well liked men in the unit. He handles the duty rosters so naturally isn't able to please everyone. He is also in charge of that most wanted item in the ETO-passes, and the requests keep pouring in and keep him well occupied. Naturally the Orderly Room houses the Squadron Commander who is Captain Franklin W. Dawson. The Captain spends very little time in the Orderly Room as his more pressing duties as Service Group Adjutant and Station Administrative Inspector keep him well occupied elsewhere. However, he sticks around enough to insure a smooth flowing unit. However, there is an officer present for duty in our Orderly room. He is our squadron Adjutant. The name is 1st Lt George R. Jones, newly assigned from Old Buckingham, one of the more fortunate outfits leaving for the states. As additional duties, Lt Jones finds himself burdened with the titles of Squadron Mess, Supply and Transportation Officer, Squadron Safety Officer, Personal Affairs Officer, Savings Officer, Voting Officer and Squadron Historical Officer.

Cpl McCarl is the Squadron mail clerk and he is at times both disliked and loved by all of us, depending mostly on the amount of daily mail he had available for distribution. There is nothing as satisfying to an individual as receiving bunches of mail from the so distant states. He has undoubtedly become hardened by this time to the cat calls and remarks because of the lack of mail.

In line with the Squadron Orderly Room comes the Supply Room. That noble establishment is under the direct supervision of 1st Lt Jones and S/Sgt Otto G. Andrews. 'Andy' as the men refer to him is one of the finer supply men on this base. His records are always kept in fine shape and he does a pretty decent job of keeping the men well supplied with their authorized needs. Working alongside Andy is Pfc Jack O'Brien, a fighting Irishman from the Pacific Northwest. Jack is noted for his physical prowess and many 'missions' to the local towns and vicinities on his ever faithful bicycle. There we have a boy with unsurpassed energy, a fine broth of a boy. Rounding out the staff we find Pfc Howard Cleve, a quiet stock red-headed boy who was transferred into the Air Corps after seeing the 'HUN' come a little too close for comfort, while he was serving with the Infantry forces on the continent. Also to be noted at this time is the Squadron Supply Mascot, one each pup called "Spotty," a mixture of every different kind of canine this side of the universe. Spotty is really an all-American poodle. His nationality is

definitely questionable. He supervises the Supply Room through a fat stomach and the friendliest eyes. If all the G.I.s had our friend Spotty's attitude of peaceful contentment, this world would be a much better place to live in. He is everybody's best friend.

Next we come to the personnel of the squadron assigned to duties with the Bombardment Group Headquarters, Enlisted Personnel section. Topping the list we see S/Sgt Albert Bury, chief pay roll clerk. That boy is noted for his ready knowledge of all existing pay regulations. He can be called a walking 'figure'head. Working alongside Al is S/Sgt Irving R. Shaw, a boy from back in the woods of Saginaw, Michigan, and equal in ability to the best. "Trapper" as he is nicknamed, is doing a fine job in his capacity of assistant pay roll chief and his industrious attitude shines like a beacon light. The Bomb Group can thank their lucky stars in being blessed with two such able men from our squadron. S/Sgt Cowan handles the Classification of all enlisted men on this field. This man is a fairly new arrival from the land beyond, U.S.A., but very adept in his work. Sgt Gilreath is working in the S-4 Section as a liaison man between the unit supply rooms and Station S-4. From all indications he appears to be on the ball, having a full background of Supply routine which he picked up while at 3rd Air Force Headquarters, back in the U.S.A. He is another of the newly arrived that this station can welcome with open arms. From all reports it didn't take him very long to master the supply routine in the ETO.

Cpl Sleipness is the file clerk in unit personnel. 'Slep' is the biggest pass hound in the outfit but his files are always in good shape, which is all that anybody can ask for. Over in the Public Relations Office we have a regular staff of men assigned with Sgt Robert H. "Wheel" Hankinson in charge. 'Bamma' as he is nicknamed served 16 long months in the Pacific Theater with the Air Transport Command and is now the Enlisted Man in charge of the awards and decorations writeups. Along with Hank are Pfc Lischiner and Sgt George Poulos. Both these men are also new additions to the squadron, having only recently arrived from the states. George the Greek has been very fortunate in that he has been able to have quite a few meetings with his younger brother, a 1st Lt flying officer in another B-24 Bombardment Group stationed nearby. "Grunt and Groan" Lischiner has made himself known to all with his continuous flow of lament. Those two boys have also accredited themselves in that department.

It is easily apparent that the Bombardment Group would definitely have to close shop and reorganize if the 403rd suddenly pulled out with those assigned personnel. It can easily be seen that some of the key men of base headquarters are members of our noble squadron.

Along the same trend of thought related to the Administration end, comes the men of our unit now present for duty in the new organized Service Group Headquarters located in the 'Tech Site'. T/Sgt Rolla Martin is the chief 'wheel' in his duties as Sgt Major of this Group. S/Sgt Jimmy Wallace is second in command taking care of the lighter work and S/Sgt John Kobylarz follows on their heels in the duties of being the clerk typist of the setup. Pfc Melvin Mogford is the Message Center Chief, what there is of it, with Cpl Lobel Shift as his assistant. This office is one of the neatest in appearance and one of the smoothest running. These few men are doing a fine job there and all have had quite a bit of experience along their respective lines.

Then comes the Inspection Staff, two different types-Technical and Administrative. Their offices are located in the "Drying Rooms" area and house the following personnel from this unit: M/Sgts Andrekotitch and Davis are the two big dealers in the airplane inspection racket with Sgt Thompson, Cpl Shine and Pfc Winkler handling the reports and files in addition to the regular clerking routines. Our two inspectors are noted throughout the division for really shaking an airplane down during an inspection. From all indications, the U.S.A. may never see Sgt Thompson again, as the boy has turned 'limey' on us and for good cause. The young gentleman has a lovely wife and child here in England and intends to settle down in this country at termination of hostilities. One country's loss is another one's gain. Cpl Shine, with his ever-ready smile, has made himself one of the squadron favorites.

Under the same roof come S/Sgt G.E. Nelson and Cpl David Pickman of the Administrative Inspectors Office. This section is completely run by members of our squadron in that the Chief Inspector, the only other party concerned, is none other than Captain Dawson himself, our commanding officer. Sgt Nelson sees to the inspections and Cpl Pickman handles all the other various details. Not much can be said about these two strange individuals in that they are also in charge of drawing up this squadron history, and any opinions expressed would be strictly biased. They have a reputation though of being pretty thorough, some call it 'Chicken', on their round of inspections.

The outfit has one man in the Station Photo Lab, namely one Pfc Okseniak. "Yash" as he is better known to his friends is noted also for his nightly visits to Kings Lynn and the pubs located thereat. He is, we believe, the strongest supporter of "Mild and Bitters". His excuse strangely enough is that he is trying to connect to the utmost the Anglo-American Relationship policies.

In the station Theater we have as a projectionist Cpl Goldberg who is the man responsible for the showing of all our nightly films. When the screen keeps jumping, it is strong evidence of what this individual was doing the night before.

Our unit even furnishes men for the Air Sea Rescue and Group Equipment Sections on the field. Sgt Gilbert Bambauer is the big deal clerk in Group Equipment and Air Sea Rescue and is doing a bang up job. Sgt Howard Chambers is the big mogul of the Dinghy Shop. He is in complete charge of seeing to it that all our planes are provided with up to date, 100% workable life raft equipment. Working alongside him is that very able man from Idaho called "Old Pop" Carey. Pop is an ex-logger and plenty big and rough. Completing the files of personnel involved in that section is little Eddie Woodby who boasts of 74 days hospital time within the past year. In his condition, it is felt by all who know him that he should be forwarded to the states for an early return to civvy street, but, then again he is still of some help to the boys. 'Woodby' is one of those rare combinations found in the Army, being a hard worker unable to work hard.

Also under the jurisdiction of the 403rd comes the ever-present fire department. These boys have it fairly soft most of the time but whenever there is a plane crash or fire they sure do earn their pay. They also earn their medals as proven the time a B-24, loaded with 500 pound bombs, caught fire and had to be hurriedly extinguished. Chief N.C.O. of the section is S/Sgt

Minor with Sgt Turner as Base Crew leader. The following department is also composed of the following personnel: Sgt 'Tiny' Smith, Sgt Leo Wand, Cpls Avery, Hewitt, Santora, Saville, Kleckner, Colucci, Holevoet, Back, Riehl, Clifford and Sanske, with Pfc Kurkle finishing up the roster there. The boys also man the crash truck when needed. Suffice to say, they are doing their job well.

One of the most important sections of the new 403rd is the Motor Pool and its staff. All the men of the old 10th Station Complement Squadron and one or two others were automatically transferred with the 10th to the new 403rd Hq & Base Services Section. The Transportation Officer himself is also a member of our organization.

The man who makes the wheels turn, in charge of the other enlisted men, is S/Sgt John D. Halloran. "Jack" is Truckmaster for the outfit and oversees the unit. He is always in there battling and pitching, I said pitching, for his boys up in the pool. Sgt Delbert Bridgeman is assistant truckmaster of this interesting setup. He is also the lubrication chief for the whole pool. His assistant is Pfc D. Jones who hails from spacious Texas where he picked up his grease monkey techniques.

One of the more distinguished characters of the motor pool is Cpl Herman of our unit. He has been assigned the task of motor pool inspector and has really set himself up in business. He is doing an excellent job of servicing over 110 vehicles a day as they pass thru his "Super Service Station" set up. Herman gives the job his closest diligence and when the Station Tech Inspectors catch something wrong he gets highly 'browned off'. Herman has pride in his work and always does the best possible under extenuating circumstances.

The only inside man of the whole works is Cpl Hughes who is the Preventative Maintenance System clerk. He is envied by all during the long dismal months of bad weather.

Another thriving concern is looked after by Cpl Robert Johanson who is the chief painter (and bottle washer?) for the motor pool. He paints all the vehicles on the station and is noted for some of the fancy work he has done with a spray gun. He actually makes that gun of his talk. He keeps the vehicles well coated with paint and proper lettering.

Along with Johanson comes Pfc Leo Labunski, the Motor Pool carpenter. Leo has put countless doors on command cars and jeeps. He is an industrious worker and strives to do super work all the time. Leo is another of our gallant Americans who has taken upon his broad shoulders a native girl, being married to a local lassie of Kings Lynn.

Cpl Albert Sanders is the supply boy of the Motor Pool. He is in charge of getting all 2d echelon supplies. "Al" is doing a pretty fair job of 'scrounging' in order to keep em rolling.

The three boys who really keep the trucks moving though are Cpl Blase Vogel the chief mechanic, T/Sgt Smith, the wheel in charge of the 6,000 mile inspections and S/Sgt Ken Cassady the 1,000 mile inspector. Vogel has the well-earned reputation of being the best mechanic

around these parts. Smith and Cassady came to us from the Tank and Infantry Corps respectively, as replacements. They both hold the Purple Heart decoration. Cassady recently attended the tire and tube school up at Manchester. He actually worked and studied in classrooms to learn the finer art of maintaining tires and tubes.

The two most noted drivers, or jockeys as they are so often referred to, are Cpl Conor and Pfc Poor. They are charged with driving and nursing the English Bus (civilians) from camp to East Dereham, back to camp and thence to North Pickenham and Kings Lynn. After a pretty difficult time, the boys finally grasped the art of nursing this old bus around. Back in 1900 this was a fairly new model bus. These boys seem to have developed into nervous wrecks after their numerous runs through these treacherous English roads.

Easy to see that if all the above-mentioned stalwarts were to pick up their stakes and depart the Motor Pool would practically fold up like a blown out inner tube.

One of the strictly 'limey' sections of the outfit is called the RAF Equipment Section. This is where the Lend Lease etc for the station is handled. Our two boys there are Sgt Ed White and Sgt Anderson. Both these gentlemen are old ETO men hovering around the three year mark of service in this theater.

Along with this activity is the Transit Billeting Quarters under the supervision of Sgt Curtis Ruth and Pfc Luebke. It is their task to house all transits arriving at this station, and many a night finds them hustling around dishing out bedding to the new arrivals. These boys are envied though for their private beautiful sleeping accommodations, which they have fixed up to look like one's own comfortable room back home.

Another man of the Hq & Base Services Squadron is Colonel Johnson's Orderly. Colonel Johnson as we all know is our commanding Officer. Pvt Howard Pfleuger, a 'Purple Heart' man from the Infantry Corps had the honor of being assigned to the Colonel.

The Station Post Exchange is another pie in which the 403rd Headquarters Squadron has its noble finger in. Cpl Charles McEver and Pfc Frank Christian are our representatives there. 'Chas' and Frank really earn their 50% additional bonus pay. They are two of the most sought after personnel on the field due to their close contact with the already famous "Zippo" lighters and other such hard-to-get items. Charlie vows that if he ever hears the name 'Camels' or 'Luckies' on civvy street he will haul off and maim the offender. It seems that these two very difficult brands of cigarettes are the most wanted by enlisted men of this base. It's rough in the ETO.

We now come upon those not to be envied gentlemen on duty with Station utilities. This section is strictly 100% squadron function supervised by Captain Karl E. Jackson. His men all swear by him and rate him as the 'best damn officer' on this post. Coming from those who usually find themselves doing the nastiest details on this base is indeed a very fine and high rated compliment.

The N.C.O. in charge of the whole shindig is T/Sgt Marty Kapchuk, a very able-minded and capable individual.

Out of Station Utilities are the electricians of the section who are usually on duty with the Station Engineer, Clerk of the Works. M/Sgt Vickers heads the array with T/Sgt Niemeier, S/Sgt Pasioneck, Cpl Chincola, Pfc (ex-Infantry) Horelik and Pfc Zimmerman as his assistant.

There are four forgotten men whose grimy job entitles them to a little recognition at this writing. They are Pfc Pantek, Pfc Berowitz, Pfc Lindgren and Pvt Payne, men of no rank but stout hearts and stomachs. It is their unholy task to see to it that all the grease traps on the base are properly cleaned and maintained daily. Surprisingly, the gripes of these boys are nil.

The real character and considered by your correspondent to be a 'Wheel' is his own right is Sgt Chester Catulli, the one and only clerk and all-around father-confessor to the boys. His records are always in the best of shape which speak well for the upright gentleman.

In the storeroom of the section, handling all the various tools and equipment we see Pfc Mills busily engaged in cleaning and polishing everything in sight.

Bringing up the balance of the men in the Utility Department is the crew itself under T/Sgt Kapchuk's supervision. These are the men responsible for all the cement work on the field with reference to all the roads and runways. The sweeping and cleaning of all the runways are also in their hands, a job in itself. They are the boys who go around beautifying our field. It is to them that our humble thanks go on these cold wintry nights for the stoves which they installed in all the buildings and rooms on the base. At present they are busily engaged in setting up the site for the erection of the Station memorial, which will remain here long after we depart, in honor of those of our Group who died for their country. The roster of this one big happy family of jack of all trades is as follows: M/Sgt Hollister, recently arrived from that land beyond (U.S.A.), Sgts Throckmorton and Goly-ex-Infantry combat men, Sgt Rossi, Cpl South-the lover of the nectar of the Gods in the bunch, Cpl Maguire-the traveler (he has already seen most of Europe in pre-war days as an Engineer), Pfc Arnold-who ably handles the little grunting and moaning that is so familiar in every bunch of healthy soldiers, Pfc Damm, Pfc Miller and Pfc Ralph.

Next on our tour of visits is that most important installation known as "Flying Control" where again we notice that all the Enlisted Men on duty there are furnished by our squadron. This place seems to be a beehive of activity a full 24 hours a day.

The section chief is Sgt Stanford, who also heads the clearance clerks consisting of Sgt McNew and Pfc 'Bugs' Holder. The last named cutie, recently arrived from the states, can easily bend one's ears with tales of his beautiful beloved that he left behind in the hills of North Carolina.

In the Control Tower itself we have our dit da happy ready men in Sgt Swan, Cpl Irving, Cpl F. Brooks and Cpl Hand and also our Control Clerks S/Sgt Grant, Sgt Enlow, Sgt Blum, Sgt Worden and Cpl Sammie Tate. Cpl Tate is one of the best liked and better known men in the unit. He is always ready to lend a helping hand. However he has been a very mild and quite a quiet sort of person since the time he was hauled up on the carpet for shooting flares. Under the existing circumstances it was hard to blame Sammy for his actions as it was VE night and Sammie was already well under way towards celebrating.

All by their lonesome out in the "Caravan" are the Air Field Controllers namely Cpl Garcia, Pfc Bittar, Pfc Sortle and Pfc Climes. These men have taken the rigid course of study and successfully completed same in a school here in England to enable them to occupy such a trustworthy position. One one occasion Pfc Tom Bittar was noted to run into the middle of the runway jumping up and down and waving his arms to prevent a ship from landing as the one ahead of him had crashed. The pilot saw him just in time to prevent landing and tore off for the blue of the sky. It seemed that the pilot refused to notice the red flares coming from the Control Caravan and Tom prevented the pilot from landing. It would have been TS if the pilot had landed.

The balance of the men assigned to this section are on continuous duty outside, rain or shine. They serve as Alert Crews for Transit Air Craft and also service the Flare Paths. Reading from left to right we find S/Sgt Solonka (called Salamoi), Sgt Wheeler, Cpl Evans, Cpl Greenberg, Cpl Rifkin, Cpl Morris, Pfc Brooks, Pfc Preacher Petty, Pfc Robinson, Pfc Schlosser, and Pfc Williams. Butch Rifkin and Salamoi are the two lovers of the bunch giving the gals in the local vicinities quite a run for their money. All of these men have been doing a darn good job of keeping the men in the air from a flying control standpoint and deserve merit for doing a tough job in excellent fashion. In fact they are a rugged bunch of individuals.

Also under the functions of the 403 comes the M.P.'s of the station. They are the boys that keep law and order on the ball around the place. Most of the men are fairly well liked by the rest of the members of the station. About their only trouble is enforcing the rules laid down by the big "wheels" and consequently some of them when enforcing these rules make an enemy here and there but nothing of any serious value. It is felt by all that the boys of Lt Willis the Provost Marshal are pretty fair and only write us up on things that of a major matter. Of course they can do a pretty good job of ass chewing if necessary. The guard house section has really had it easy they haven't had a prisoner for at least a month now. On VE night there were a couple of boys run in for shooting flares but the decision of the wheels was to let them go so they were gipped out of some men that way. The M.P.'s are also in charge of the trash dump and many other activities around the station concerning police and police. Their motto is If it moves check it.

After reading this it is easy to understand and see just how important the Service Group men of the station are. In fact if the men of the 403 headquarters were to be pulled out of work suddenly the field would practically fold up awaiting some new help.

Now comes the narrative part of the history for the past month. It can be stated that this past month has been really the most history-making month in all time. At least it seems that way to us. As the month opened all the personnel of the outfit were making wagers and sitting on pins and needles awaiting the end of the war. That is, the declaration of VE day in Europe. We all waited tensely and lost many a good pound sweating it out. Strangely enough when the actual proclamation itself arrived on the 8th of May most of the fellows shrugged their shoulders and then waited for news as to what in the hell would happen to us and when would we go to the Pacific. Most of the men did not celebrate the end of the war as all they saw and could think was that as far as a Yank was concerned the war was not over and that we would go fight our own war in the Pacific.

It should be noted that the weather for the month of May over here was really lousy. One minute it would be sunny and the next either raining, snowing, or definitely blustery. It was cold and hot all in the course of one week.

During the course of the month there were three outstanding highlights that stand out above everything else. First came the end of the war then the so called Trolley missions and finally the orders to start packing for shipment. These orders came at a good time because most of the men in the outfit and all over the field for that matter were definitely getting severe cases of soralitis or in other words highly browned off at everything in general. Among other things the fact that training programs were already in effect and the men were drilling and marching almost daily in some instances. Twice a week or two hours a week were the instructions received. However all training etc ceased immediately and the men in every department commenced getting ready to ship. No one knew where but we all believe to the good old USA and a 30 day furlough and thence to the Pacific.

After the end of hostilities with Germany the personnel of the field saw the movie published by the War Department named Two Down and One to Go. After seeing this movie there was little doubt left in the minds of the men as to the future in store for them. About the only future left was spelt in the word Pacific. Even the high pointers with over a hundred points under the Adjusted Service Rating system.

This adjusted service rating scores system caused most of the men in the 304 to become very highly browned off at the War Department in general in that they were not entitled to the bronze battle participation awards and the fact that the Bombardment Squadron personnel working side by side with them and also working in sections under them received this awards and the five points each award gave them towards discharge. In fact it stinks to most of them. Men that have been overseas almost three years are bested in points by some Bombardment Squadron individuals that only have two years in with his bronze battle participation stars to his ETO ribbon. However all the men feel that this condition will be remedied but only hope soon enough to do some good.

About the most exciting thing that happened during the month was the Trolley Mission taking ground personnel over the bombed areas of Germany and the other previously occupied countries. This was very interesting and almost all the men of the outfit went to see the damage first hand that had been inflicted on the enemy. Every single one of the men that were more fortunate and able to get the necessary time off for a day to take this mission were very happy and pleased with the results. Even the English and Continental weather was pleasant making the trip that much more enjoyable. They were able to view the cities and towns along the Rhine River and also in the Low Countries. Viewing firsthand the devastation and destruction that war brings. It is also understandable now to many of the ground personnel just how completely the enemy was defeated both by air power and the ground troops.

In closing now it might be said hopefully that the next month's installation to the unit history will be completed in the states at which time the movement will be described and the packing etc and other methods employed to take at the fastest and easiest way a two-year installation from one country and put it in another one.

403rd Air Service Group was activated, consisting of three (3) squadrons: 403rd HQ & Base Services Sq, 829th Air Engineering Sq and the 653rd Air Materiel Sq.

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