

# **6 FERRYING GROUP**

## **MISSION**

## **LINEAGE**

6 Ferrying Group

## **STATIONS**

Long Beach, CA

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

## **COMMANDERS**

Col Andrew B. Cannon

## **HONORS**

**Service Streamers**

**Campaign Streamers**

**Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

**Decorations**

## **EMBLEM**

## **MOTTO**

## **OPERATIONS**



Col Andrew B. Cannon

The history of the Sixth Ferrying Group actually had its beginning before the United States declared war on the transgressor nations of World War II. On 1 August 1941, the Nazi Luftwaffe, Allied resistance valiantly giving way before the sheer power of its furious onslaughts, was raining destruction upon a great portion of Europe-its terrific air-power smashing the continent's defenses. The cry which arose for planes with which to fight back reverberated around the world.

On that day-far from the roar of battle, far from the death, destruction and fire raining from European skies, far from the holocaust of London in flames-almost half way around the world at the peaceful Municipal Airport of Long Beach, California, where the forces of the coming world-wide conflict had not yet struck home an answer to the appeal for planes for the freedom-loving people of Europe was given. An Air Force Lieutenant Colonel and 80 Air Force pilots arrived to begin the ferrying of military aircraft from West Coast production centers to the European theaters.

On June 5, 1941, the Air Corps Ferrying Command had been activated in Washington to begin the ferrying of British Lend-Lease planes to their point of departure from this country. A short time thereafter, the Western Division of the Ferrying Command had been organized with headquarters at Santa Monica, California, and on August 1, 1941, upon arrival of the first permanent commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Baez, Jr., the organization was established at the Long Beach Municipal Airport from which it began the ferrying operations leading to the present world-wide ferrying group. First known as the Western Division of the Ferrying Command, then the California Sector of the Ferrying Command, and later the Sixth Ferrying Group, Ferrying Division, Air Transport Command, the present organization is one of the Army Air Forces' most important ferrying installations supplying United Nations' air forces throughout the world with fighting planes from single-engine trainers to four-engine bombers.

On November 26, 1941, Lieutenant Colonel, now Colonel Ralph E. Spake, in command of the

Central Sector of the Ferrying Division at Kansas City-became commanding officer of the rapidly expanding ferrying organization at Long Beach, succeeding Lieutenant Colonel Baez. A few months later, all commands on the base-the 307th Materiel Squadron, commanded by Major Stephen J. Idzorek, which provided materiel services, and the Air Corps, Facilities, Air Service Command, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Myron A. Sineand other services were consolidated under Colonel Spake.

Command of the organization, which became The Sixth Ferrying Group, Ferrying Division, Air Transport Command, continued under Colonel Spake until August 27, 1943, when Lieutenant Colonel (now Colonel) Andrew B. Cannon, at that time commanding officer of the 21st Ferrying Group, Palm Springs, California, became commanding officer of the Sixth Ferrying Group at Long Beach, Colonel Spake becoming commanding officer of the Western Sector of the Ferrying Division at Salt Lake City. Colonel Cannon, a veteran pilot, had served as pilot, instructor, engineering officer, technical officer, squadron commander, and deputy commanding officer of the Western Division, the California Sector and the Sixth Ferrying Group, having been associated with the organization since its early days.

In the beginning, the Western Division of the Ferrying Command occupied only the airport manager's cottage (now the Public Relations Office) which housed the 307th Materiel Squadron; the airport terminal lounge (now the Post Finance Section) where the young organization's operations, headquarters, personnel, quartermaster, hospital and finance sections and Pilot's Waiting Room were located, and a tented area on the present photographic laboratory site.

For reasons of military security the extent of expansion since that time cannot be revealed, but the Sixth Ferrying Group today is a complete military air base, which, with its headquarters, flight operations and personnel sections, its engineering, quartermaster and maintenance buildings, its barracks, mess halls and commissaries, its excellent hospital facilities and its vast training section, serves the ferry pilot, aircraft mechanic, administrative worker and other contingents engaged in their globe-circling business as home, training school, and headquarters for operations necessary for the ferrying of planes.

Aside from its outstanding operations record, the Sixth Ferrying Group has been distinguished in many other ways. Off its flight lines have flown many of the nation's finest military pilots, through its headquarters have passed many of the most famous military, diplomatic and civilian personages of our times, and on its drill field at formal review have stood many of World War II's combat heroes to receive awards of honor for action against the enemy. The group's athletic teams have been unrivaled in their area, its A. and R. section with its specialized physical training program is regarded by the Ferrying Division as a model, its post exchanges, Non-Commissioned Officers' Club, and enlisted mess halls compare favorably with any military base in the nation and its squadron areas, wherein a great majority of its personnel live, learn and work, are unusual examples of today's modern army.

Not all the post's personnel are pilots, administrative officers and enlisted men. In February

1943, the first contingent of Women's Air Force Service Pilots (at that time known as WAFs) arrived to ferry military planes and some six months later the first members of the U.S. Women's Army Corps, five officers of the WAC, reported to assume ground administrative duties. Not only is the Sixth Group's a colorful history, but Long Beach Army Air Field itself stands on part of aviation's most hallowed ground. On December 10, 1911, the first transcontinental flight-a three-months' trip by Galbraith Perry Rodgers from Sheepshead Bay, Long Island-terminated at Long Beach. In the early days of World War I, ten of the nation's first combat pilots were graduated from an Air Corps Training School established here-with the beach as "the favorite landing field." In 1924. Earl S. Daugherty, a famous World War I pilot, for whom the airport was officially named, assisted in establishing the present airport which now serves as a military base. Above the Pilots' Loft adjacent to the Sixth Ferrying Group's flight line is a legend for all the world to read. It says: "Through these portals pass the finest pilots on earth." That is true and to it might well be added-"To ferry to freedom-loving people the world over the airplanes they need to keep the world free."

---

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE UNIT HISTORIES

Created: 8 Dec 2014

Updated:

Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.  
Unit yearbook. *6th Ferrying Group, Long Beach, CA. 1944*