

67 BASIC FLYING TRAINING WING

MISSION

LINEAGE

67 Basic Flying Training Wing

STATIONS

Sheppard AAF, TX

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

In 1943, the Technical School was reorganized as the number of students in glider mechanic and maintenance training began to overshadow the Crew Chief courses. Within the Technical School the Airplane

Mechanics School and Glider Mechanics School were renamed the Airplane Department and Glider Department in response to changing demographics. The number of aircraft mechanics required by the Army Air Forces began to decline--during the first six months of 1943, there were 12,186 airplane mechanics graduates compared to only 8,724 in the last half of the year--until 29 March 1944 when the Technical Training School was closed. Unlike the 1950s and 1960s, when Army conscripts were required to serve only two years, in World War II all persons drafted were to serve for the duration of the war.

During the first six months of 1943 there was a shift away from an emphasis on technical and academic training toward operational and on-the-line preparation for combat activities. This alteration was especially felt in the new Glider Department, which initiated two new advanced courses: a glider maintenance specialist course in September 1943 and a glider maintenance course one month later. The purpose of the glider maintenance course, for which only outstanding graduates of the glider mechanic course were eligible, was to train 30-man crews for assignment to mobile glider repair units. The glider maintenance course, with its stress on the care and maintenance of gliders, was a preparatory class for future glider pilots.

On 6 September 1943, the Central Flying Command at Randolph Field, Texas, directed Sheppard Field to establish an Army Air Forces Glider Classification School for training glider pilots. The increased emphasis on gliders in the Technical School was partially a response to glider flight training. Between September and December 1942, the Glider Department at Sheppard had under it six separate schools teaching subjects associated with glider mechanics: the Glider Mechanics School, the Glider Maintenance School (indoctrination course for glider pilots), the Glider Maintenance Specialist School, the Airplane Woodworkers Specialist School, the Dope and Fabric Specialist School, and the Construction Carpenters School. With the Glider Department and the Army Air Force Glider Classification School, Sheppard Field was now home to two of the three schools that glider student pilots were expected to go through. The third school, at the South Plains Army Air Base (now Reese Air Force Base) in Lubbock, Texas, taught advanced glider pilot training. It was here that glider flight officers from Sheppard went to complete their training.

On 9 October 1943, the 67th Basic Flying Training Squadron arrived at Sheppard from Goodfellow Field, San Angelo, Texas. The mission of the squadron was to provide flying operations for the Glider Classification School. The establishment of a glider program at Sheppard marked a first for the field, which now had a flying mission.

Although no flying took place until early 1944, by the end of the year the Classification School had 90 officers and 167 enlisted personnel assigned to it. In addition to 48 hours of ground training, 20 hours of military training, plus an added 24 hours of physical training, students enrolled in the Glider Flying Classification course received 40 hours of primary flying training in a Taylor-manufactured L-2M airplane, nicknamed the Grasshopper because of its ability to fly from one bush to the next. Glider pilot trainers also used the aircraft as a light utility transport for the Army. Subsequently, the school obtained BT -13 base flight light trainers.

Relations between the 67 BFTW--redesignated the 2544th Army Air Force Base Unit on 1 May 1944--and the field left a lot to be desired. As a tenant organization of the Flying Training Command, it was, according to its unit historian, "not wanted on this Field; the less the Field had to do with its problems, the better the Field liked it." While the unit's ability to use the installation's vehicles and crash and emergency equipment for its maintenance was a positive development, it took a "directive from higher headquarters to get it approved." The oversight by staff agencies proved to be a dubious blessing. For example, the Judge Advocate's Department acted according to policies that were "ill suited" to the needs of a flying training

unit, an observation that also applied to other staff agencies as well. The gist of the problem, they concluded, was "that a Basic Training Center and a Flying Training School can hardly be operated smoothly on the same field under the same policies; their needs are too different." This generalization would later be proved wrong when Sheppard hosted helicopter and pilot training during the 1960s as well as the current Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training (ENJJPT).

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORIES

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Sources

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

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