

THE ACTIVATION OF THE 1ST EMERGENCY RESCUE SQUADRON

The 1st Emergency Rescue Squadron, consisting of Headquarters, A, B, and C Flights, was activated at Boca Raton field, Florida, effective as of 1st December 1943, with a priority rating of C-1-737, and was issued an authorized strength of forty-six Officers and one hundred and fifty-nine enlisted men.

The organization strength of Officers, enlisted men and equipment was authorized in accordance with T/O and E 1-987, 8 November 1943, with a specified priority for controlled items of equipment.

Appropriate allotments published in Section VI, War Department Circular No 129, 1 June 1943, were to be obligated as necessity demanded.

An Initial Roster was prepared on 2 December 1943, in accordance with Army Regulation 345-900, this all by authority of AG 322 OB-1-AFRPG-M, War Department, Washington, D. C. (25 November 1943) Subj: "Constitution, Assignment and Activation of Certain Emergency Rescue Squadrons." The above was published under paragraphs 1,2,3,4, of General Order No 66, Headquarters, Technical School, Army Air Forces Technical Training Command, Overseas Replacement Depot No 4, Boca Raton Field, Florida, 3 December 1943.

By authority of paragraphs 1,2,3,4, Special Order No 104, Headquarters, Army Air Forces Eastern Technical Training Command, Sedgefield, Greensboro, North Carolina, 8 December 1943, the 1st Emergency Rescue Squadron was designated to be activated at Boca Raton Army Air Field, Florida.

The Initial Roster of the 1st Emergency Rescue Squadron under the date of 2nd December 1943, consisted of Captain MERRICK A GRAY, 0428762, Air Corps Reserve, Commanding and the following enlisted personnel:

S/Sgt Wszolek, Joseph E	AC	AUS	32360805	27 August	1942	747
S/Sgt Wilson, Person M	JrAC	AUS	16085107	20 July	1942	747
S/Sgt Gannon, William F	AC	ERC	20200522	23 Jan	1942	755
Sgt Smith, David L	AC	AUS	35473317	8 Sept	1942	866

The following Officers and enlisted men were transferred from Headquarters, 4th Ferrying Group, Municipal Airport, Memphis, Tennessee, to Boca Raton Field, Florida, on 28 November 1943, by authority vested in Paragraph 5, Special Order 332, that headquarters.

Capt MERRICK A GRAY, 0428762 AC (P)	1st Lt ALLEN B CLEVELAND 0789456 AC (N)
2D Lt BEN R JACKSON 0739792 AC (P)	S/Sgt John M Mehrman, 33183770
S/Sgt Antonio Teixeira, 31092431	Sgt Wilbur S Turner 33124577
Cpl William W Tscherner 39528632	

Lieutenant Colonel WHITEHEAD, Chief of the Emergency Rescue Squadron Branch was directed by the Chief of Air Staff, to assemble, organize and train as efficiently as possible within a limited time, the 1st Emergency Rescue Squadron.

Major Ernest S. HENSLEY, arrived at Boca Raton Field, Florida, 26 November 1943. The complete program provides for the activation of seven such Squadrons, to be distributed throughout the various theaters in which the Air Forces Operate.

The actual activation of the 1st Emergency Rescue Squadron, at Boca Raton Field, Florida, 1 December 1943, initiated the Army Air Forces Emergency Rescue Program, approved by GENERAL ARNOLD.

The second Commanding Officer of the 1st Emergency Rescue Squadron was Lieutenant Colonel ZOLLER who arrived at Boca Raton Field, Florida, on 15 December 1943, and departed 4 January 1944. The first Commanding Officer, being Captain GRAY, who with four enlisted men formed the Initial Cadre.

Lieutenant Colonel LITTLETON J. PARDUE, O-21300, arrived at Boca Raton Field, Florida, 30 December 1943, and assumed the duties of Commanding Officer, 4 January 1944.

TRAINING PROGRAM AT BOCA RATON FIELD, FLORIDA

Originally there were eleven PBY-5 (OA-10) or Catalina Aircraft, requisitioned for the institution of a Training Program, at Boca Raton Field. Three of these were rendered non-servicable due to broken nose wheels and one rendered temporarily non-flyable due to the bending of both propeller props, when an open ocean landing was made on high swells, eighteen miles off the East Coast of Florida, on 17 January 1944. The seven remaining planes were flown daily, as weather permitted. The following Naval Pilots (Lieutenants Senior Grade), ROTHENBERG, DAHL, and CALROW, attached to this organization for instructional purposes, tested the nine first pilots for their ability to make water landings in PBY's.

All of the Co-Pilots, received approximately fifteen hours of flying time in the practice of water landings at Lake Okeechobee, under the direct supervision of the same Naval Pilot Instructors.

A Program of Instrument Flying was ushered in by Lieutenant's SOLANDER, WIENTJES, WINTERS, MARTIN and FAZAKERLY. Each Officer was the recipient of approximately four flying hours of instruction. The Co-Pilots flew with the First Pilots in team flights and were permitted to solo. The First Pilots with their Naval Instructors flew to the Banana River Naval Air Station, there to shoot three hours of night landings on Banana River. 1st Lieutenant DABNEY and 1st Lieutenant DALY, of the British Air Service Rescue School gave technical advise to the 1st Emergency Rescue Squadron Personnel and conducted a series of lectures pertinent to Sea Rescue Activity.

NAVIGATION FLIGHTS CONDUCTED FROM BOCA RATON FIELD, FLORIDA

TO

HARLINGEN, TEXAS, SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS AND NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

Flight "A" - Pilots (GRAY, JARMAN and BILSLAND) left Boca Raton Field, Florida, 26 December 1943, for Harlingen Field, Texas via New Orleans, Louisiana. Flying time approximately ten hours and thirty minutes.

On 27 December 1943 the crews visited Mata Moras, Mexico.

On 28 December 1943, they flew from Harlingen Field, Texas to Shreveport, Louisiana, flying time four hours.

Captain GRAY'S Crew remained overnight at Shreveport, Louisiana, while Lieutenant's JARMAN and BILSLAND with their crews, continued their flight for another hour landing at Selman Field, Louisiana, completing the return trip with the first day and night navigation flight to Boca Raton Field, Florida. Flying time on return journey seven hours and one-half. Total Flying time for round trip, twenty three hours.

Flight "B" - Pilots (MORK, EISMAN and MILBURN) 26 December 1943 flew from Boca Raton Field, Florida, to San Antonio, Texas. Flying time eleven hours. Remained overnight at San Antonio, Texas.

27 December 1943, they flew from San Antonio, Texas to Harlingen Field Texas, there to join Flight "A". Flying time two and one-half hours.

28 December 1943, delayed at Harlingen Field, Texas, in order to repair damaged rudder of Plane No 840, caused by a B-24 which taxied into it.

30 December 1943, returned from Harlingen Field, Texas to Boca Raton Field - flying time nine hours. Total Flying time twenty-two and one half hours.

Flight "C" - Pilots (TURNBULL, BLEIER and BELL) The flight was ordered by Lieutenant Colonel ZOLLER to meet reveille every morning for a week for not making the original take-off scheduled for 0700. This order was later rescinded and the Flight took off for Harlingen Field, Texas at 1130. Radiced instructions from New Orleans informed planes of inclement weather, however, only Plane No 851 received the message. Visibility was poor and the ceiling low. The Flight circled over New Orleans and watched the start of the Sugar Bowl Game, later landing at the Municipal Airport. Because one hundred Octane gasoline was unavailable, at New Orleans, the Flight proceeded to Pensacola, where they remained overnight. Visibility was at that time about one-half mile.

Second Lieutenant BLEIER continued on to Panama City, Florida, where he and his crew remained overnight. 2 January 1944, they took off at 0830 from Pensacola, Florida, and flew to Boca Raton Field. Ship No 851 flew direct, while ships No 840 and 860 flew the airways. Flying time not reported.

SEARCH MISSION FOR THE CREW OF A B-18 - 15 JANUARY 1944

Flights "A" and "C" participated. Atlantic waters were patrolled in a parallel search to a point 405 nautical miles southeast of Boca Raton and East of Nassau. The only ship discovered was a B-25 which had crashed on a beach, but was obviously abandoned. The plane bore a British Insignia and had evidently crashed a month prior to this search. Because of frontal weather the flight was unable to return to Boca Raton and acting on orders received by radio from Major HENSLEY, remained overnight at the Air Transport Command Field, in Nassau. Accrued flying time seven hours and forty-five minutes.

The populace of Nassau was extremely hospitable as was attested by crew members who found that Canadian Club Liquor and "coke" were available at the exorbitant price of ten cents per drink!

16 January 1944 - Search was continued at 1000 EWT. Waters Southeast of Nassau were patrolled for eighty nautical miles. A parallel search of the assigned area was completed and the flights returned to Boca Raton Field, Florida on a reciprocal course parallel to the search pattern flown the previous day. Flying time three hours and twenty minutes.

It will be noted that the area covered by our planes was retraced by a number of B-24's from the Radar School at Boca Raton Field, Florida, but neither the B-18, nor its survivors were located.

SEARCH MISSION FOR B-18 - 2 FEBRUARY 1944

Flights "B" and "C" participated. The lost B-18, had been previously located by the Navy but the crew had not been rescued. The area to be searched was estimated to lie two-hundred miles Northeast of Nassau. An extended formation of six ships was employed. Lieutenant Colonel PARDUE, flying in the lead ship, commanded the search. The mission was unproductive. Flying time eight hours and twenty two minutes.

SEARCH FOR ONE B-17 - OFF TAMPA BAY, FLORIDA

5 February 1944 - Pilots (BILSLAND, JACKSON and TURNBULL) Take-off 1750 Boca Raton Field, Florida, landed at Drew Field, Tampa, Florida 2100, where the planes remained overnight pending search. Three planes participated in the mission which extended over a period of five days, from 1850, 6 February 1944 to 1720, 10 February 1944. The planes departed on 10 February 1944 at 1810 for Boca Raton Field, Florida and landed at 1950 that day. The accrued flying time is thus recorded:

2nd Lt BILSLAND	35 Hours
2nd Lt JACKSON	18 Hours
1st Lt TURNBULL	21 Hours

The Bomber for which the search was conducted was not located.

NIGHT FLIGHTS

The only night flight conducted was on 25 January 1944. Pilots, EISMAN, MILBURN and MORK participated. The entire course was flown by instruments, with an aerial itinerary to Miami, Key West, Tortugas, St Petersburg and Morrison Field, with return to Boca Raton, Florida. Flying time six hours.

MISSION NO 13 - GUNNERY PRACTICE

Mission No 13, Gunnery Practice was carried out on January 13th and 14th, 1944, sixty miles out at sea. Each enlisted member of the crew was required to fire two-hundred rounds of fifty caliber Machine gun ammunition, each officer was allotted one-hundred rounds. The PBV's flew in wide circles and the gunners fired from an altitude of five-hundred feet at rocks below.

In general the training program consisted of making numerous water landings at Lake Okeechobee, Instrument Flying, Night Searches, Sea Rescue Work, Navigation Fuel Testing, Navigation Interception and Code Training.

Prior to coming to Boca Raton Field, Florida, the following Pilots had been accredited, by the Navy Department, with accumulated Flying Time as tabulated:

BLEIER	70 hours	JARMAN	98 hours 5 minutes
BILSLAND	68 hours 35 minutes	MILBURN	79 hours
EISMAN	68 hours 5 minutes	BELL	100 hours
GRAY	None	TURNBULL	82 hours 5 minutes
JACKSON	64 hours 15 minutes	WALKER	60 hours

The total hours of Training in PBV-5 Aircraft, at Boca Raton Field, Florida is recorded by Flights and Crews as shown below:

HEADQUARTERS AND OPERATIONS OFFICERS

PARDUE, LITTLETON J	Commanding O	34	00
WELLS, ROBERT M	Operations O	28	20
WALTON, WALLACE G	Flight "C"	69	25
RUCKMAN, THOMAS M	Flight "B"	27	25
GRAY, MERRICK A	Flight "A"	119	50

FLIGHT "A"

JACKSON, BEN R	Pilot	134	35
WALKER, JAMES F	Cc-Pilot	54	50
CLEVELAND, ALLEN B	Navigator	114	40
MEHRMAN, JOHN F	Crew Chief	148	15
TEIXEIRA, ANTONIO A	Engineer	160	25
TURNER, WILBUR S	Radar Operator	66	00
DENT, MARVIN	Radio Operator	120	50

FLIGHT "A"

NAME	DUTY	HOURS	MINUTES
BILSLAND, LEONARD M	Pilot	160	25
LASHER, ROBERT F	Co-Pilot	156	15
MELVIN, ROBERT P	Navigator	156	05
WILSON, PERSON M	Crew Chief	182	50
WSZOLEK, JOSEPH E	Engineer	178	15
SMITH, DAVID L	Radar Operator	140	25
GANNON, WILLIAM F	Radio Operator	177	50
TURNBULL, JOHN F	Pilot	107	50
BURNS, ONA W	Co-Pilot	108	40
LYLE, VERNON J	Navigator	79	50
ASEBURY, PAUL	Crew Chief	103	30
GILL, SAMUEL A	Engineer	127	20
BOLLES, GERALD R	Radar Operator	96	10
STAHL, HAROLD A	Radio Operator	130	20

FLIGHT "B"

MILBURN, WALTER B JR	Pilot	122	10
BUSBY, MURREL	Co-Pilot	107	20
HAYNIE, OTHO J	Navigator	72	05
COX, ALLEN B	Crew Chief	136	10
CLAXTON, WESLEY A	Engineer	115	45
HENDRIX, LOUIS I	Radar Operator	95	45
BOLS, HAROLD A	Radio Operator	75	45
EISMAN, CHARLES F	Pilot	128	15
MILLARD, CHARLES D	Co-Pilot	107	10
WITT, JAMES H	Navigator	139	25
WHITE, GEITHER F	Crew Chief	142	25
UTLEY, BILLY H	Engineer	117	20
O'BRIEN, JOHN J	Radar Operator	104	40
WORTZ, GORDON H	Radio Operator	168	00
MORK, JOHN H	Pilot	130	15
MURPHY, JOSEPH D	Co-Pilot	106	40
COLNON, REDMOND W	Navigator	92	35
BIRARD, LOUIS	Crew Chief	127	10
BROWN, DAN C	Engineer	136	35
RHODES, ELMER C	Radar Operator	112	05
PETTLE, KENNETH E	Radio Operator	15	40

FLIGHT "C"

JARMAN, THEREL C	Pilot	136	25
MINGLE, CARL O	Co-Pilot	120	55
WELLING, WILLIAM B JR	Navigator	126	50
TRINCA, FRANK J	Crew Chief	175	45
ENGLISH, DANIEL A	Engineer	194	10
SCHOTT, JOHN F	Radio Operator	150	50
DILL, CHARLES A	Radar Operator	126	50

FLIGHT "C"

BLEIER, EDWARD W	Pilot	87	50
MURRAY, THOMAS F	Copilot	86	35
LONSDALE, JOHN K	Navigator	89	35
DILLARD, JACK D	Crew Chief	115	05
◊ WHITTAMORE, CHARLES T	Engineer	95	00
MC DONALD, WILLIAM E	Radar Operator	95	20
FEINSINGER, JACK	Radio Operator	20	00
BELL, ROBERT B	Pilot	111	40
NONNENMACHER, WALTER	Co Pilot	94	50
CUMMINS, CHARLES O	Navigator	96	00
SCHOENBERGER, CHARLES	Crew Chief	163	10
DE RIDDER, GEORGE R	Engineer	18	45
KEIZER, WILLIAM B	Radar Operator	61	30
HAAPANEN, ALLEN T	Radio Operator	165	55

SUMMARY

Several events stand out vividly in the minds of everyone assigned to the Squadron. Principally due to repetition. Clothing, flying equipment and records were checked, rechecked and double-checked with almost daily regularity.

Even the Medical Department got its share of good-natured banter, for the examination of dog tags, forms 79, 81 and 206, was a continuous source of comment. Those requiring "shots" for the completion of their immunization records were hunted unrelentingly and were administered their dose of vaccine wherever found. Even the sanctuary of the planes was invaded.

It is doubtful that any Squadron within the continental limits of the United States was more adequately prepared and tailor made, to fit Army Regulations, than was the 1st Emergency Rescue Squadron.

Much valuable information was gleaned from the lectures delivered on subjects relative to Jungle, Ocean and Desert Survival.

A discussion on camouflage was most instructive. It is interesting to note in this connection, that Private First Class Giza, Flight "B", and Sergeant Dill, Flight "C", have had previous experience in painting and drawing respectively, which training should contribute favorably to camouflage procedures within the Squadron.

Another highlight in our stay at Boca Raton Field, was a three-day bivouac, conducted along strictly "GI" lines. Difficulties experienced are not to be frowned upon or taken lightly, for we will shortly have an opportunity to practice what we have learned.

On 7 February 1944, the Officers and enlisted personnel ran an infiltration course at Boca Raton Field. The total length of which was approximately five-thousand feet. The time required to cover the same was set at a minimum of forty-five minutes. The obstacles encountered were underbrush, scrub trees, mesh barbed wire entanglements and an abundance of loose Florida sand. The barbed wire obstructions were located at the beginning and the end of the course. Concealed snipers in camouflaged jungle suits took "pot shots" at the supposed enemy from their tree and ground hiding places. The course was pock-marked with "fox holes" and roped off areas, containing charges, were exploded. Men in machine gun nests fired blanks at the dodging runners. All were made to cross a moat over a taut rope by the Sloth method, ie by hand and foot progress with the body suspended. When the Squadron finished it was dirty from grime and sweat. That evening the number treated in the Dispensary was testimony to the vigorous work-out it had had.

On 11 February 1944, the Officers and enlisted men played an Official Game of touch football to a scoreless tie, exemplifying the fine spirit which exists between Officers and enlisted men in this Organization. The game was played according to rules with regulation periods, time-outs and halves. Everyone had a good time and it can be truthfully said that no one went away feeling disagreeable or unhappy.

DESTINATION UNKNOWN

At 0815, Friday, 18 February 1944, Officers and enlisted men were assembled along the tracks in the warehouse are awaiting departure, while the troop train switched cars. The train was made up of a baggage car, an Officer's Pullman, two troop carrier cars, two enlisted men's Pullmans and a Kitchen car. The train chugged out of the field, at 1055, to the accompaniment of music played by a "GI" Band, which was Colonel COPE'S farwell contribution. Major COUNSELMAN acted as deputy host. The feeling of nostalgia which should have been present was lacking, for the men, who for seventy-eight days had been impatiently straining at the leash, were at last on the move. Anything was preferable to frenzied inactivity.

The train cooks excelled themselves in preparing and serving meals, which, both tickled the palate and satisfied the appetite. The compass pointed in a Northerly direction of travel but could otherwise give us no clue to our destination.

Speculation waxed hot and bets were placed on staging areas known to range the Eastern Seaboard from Savannah to Boston. Those complaining of need for sleep were amply gratified. Aside from playing cards there was little else to do. Arival at Richmond, Virginia, precipitated further discussions; but when another engine hooked onto the rear of the train and started East, the mystery was solved. We were headed for Newport News or somewhere in the immediate vicinity. Such it proved to be.