

AN ODE TO CRISSY FIELD

(For the benefit of the San Francisco Bay members of AAHS)

Crissy Field is no more. No longer will the city by the Golden Gate enjoy the distinction of having an Army airport within its boundaries, or the residents thereof be awakened each morning by the sound of Army airplane engines humming over their rooftops.

No longer will the pilots of the 91st Observation Squadron returning from cross-country flights have to hope and pray that they will be able to find the field when they arrive, instead of a nice thick blanket of fog, concealing in its depths several assorted hills, bridge towers, high buildings, etc.

The 91st Observation Squadron, and the 15th Photo Section, occupants of Crissy Field since its inception in 1919, were ordered away from their beloved home in the middle of June, and by the 30th of that month had packed, bag and baggage, families, household lares and penates, even to the Squadron dogs, and had moved over 900 miles to their new station, Fort Lewis, Washington. (Ed: June, 1936)

The move was made by almost every conceivable means of transportation. Freight cars, passenger trains, government motor trucks, commercial motor vans, private cars, motorcycles and airplanes were all used in transporting the personnel and impedimenta of the field. The Squadron boat, with its caretaker, was loaded on a coastwise freight steamer and transported to Seattle, from which place it was run under its own power to Steilacoom, the nearest dock on Puget Sound at which it could be parked. Although we had been prepared for the order to move for a month or more, no decision had been made as to the future home of the 91st, so no packing or crating was done until the final order to move was received. Upon the receipt of this order, all ordinary operations at Crissy Field were discontinued, and everybody was set to work completely stripping the field of movable Air Corps property, crating and boxing it, and loading it onto freight cars, of which a total of eight were fully loaded. The furniture of officers and noncommissioned officers was transported by commercial motor van, this being the most convenient and economical method.

Practically all the personnel of the post evacuated on or before June 27th, the only ones remaining after that date being those with property responsibility in order to turn over the property left behind to the Quartermaster, and to complete the audit of Air Corps Supply.

The Army motor truck convoy departed from Crissy Field at 8:00 a.m., June 27th, and consisted of two Field Servicing Trucks, two photographic trucks, two Federal 2½ ton cargo trucks, one reconnaissance car, three Dodge panel radio trucks, and a number of Dodge 1½ ton cargo trucks. Thirty-three enlisted men traveled with the motor convoy as drivers and relief drivers, accompanied by two officers as Convoy Officers. The convoy arrived at Fort Lewis, Washington, at 6:30 p.m., June 30th, having covered the entire journey in four days of driving. This is believed to be a record for moving an Army motor convoy. All driving was done by daylight, starts usually being made about 7:00 a.m., and halts for the night before 6:30 p.m. The longest day's drive was approximately 300 miles. Only one truck, one of the Field Servicing Trucks, gave any trouble during the entire trip. This vehicle suffered from vapor lock in the fuel line from the pump to the carburetor while driving through

the Sacramento Valley in California on the first day out. The trouble was finally remedied by the ingenuity of the driver, who wrapped the line in asbestos packing, held on by friction tape, and removed the hood of the truck, after which it ran without further difficulty.

It speaks well for the quality and condition of the private automobiles owned by members of the command that, although nine officers and fifty-four enlisted men were authorized to proceed by privately owned automobile, all arrived at Fort Lewis safely, and not one report of mechanical trouble was heard - not even a punctured tire.

The airplanes assigned to the 91st Observation Squadron were all flown to Fort Lewis several days in advance of the final abandonment of Crissy Field, the C-14 Transport airplane making two trips to ferry the advance detail of enlisted men, and the C-14 airplane assigned to Hamilton Field was borrowed for two round trips to aid in ferrying this detail and to return the pilots of the O-25C airplanes to Crissy Field. A total of 25 enlisted men were transported by air.

The 91st Observation Squadron and 15th Photo Section, in their new home, Fort Lewis, are at present very badly handicapped by the lack of technical and administrative buildings. The buildings found here upon arrival were sufficiently large for the Air Corps Detachment of three officers, 35 enlisted men and three airplanes previously stationed here, but are totally inadequate for a full strength Observation squadron and photo section. Even with our few airplanes, half of them must be parked outside the hangar, and all departments have less than half the space required for efficient functioning. It is hoped that in the near future adequate housing will be provided.

Source: Air Corps News Letter, Vol XIX No 15, August 1, 1936.

(Editor's Note: This is just a reminder to those of you who feel that the word SNAFU was a World War II invention. Those of you who were involved in convoys in the service can best appreciate this story. Crissy Field is once again an Army flying field, currently serving as a base for a Light Aviation Unit, but to a far smaller degree than it's glorious days of roaring O-2H's, OA-1's, O-25's, C-14's etc.)

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