

History of the 117th Air Refueling Wing



On 21 January 1922, the United States War Department recognized the Birmingham Flying Club, nicknamed the "Escadrille's, as the 7th federally recognized flying squadron. "Maj. James A. Meissner, a World War I ace who had flown with Capt. Eddie Rickenbacker, led the effort to form the unit and served as its first commander." The flying squadron was re-designated the 106th Observation Squadron on 16 January 1924.*

The mission and aircraft changed several times over the 90 year history of the flying squadron. In WWII the observation mission expanded to include fighters and bombers. Following WWII the squadron was re-organized into the 117th Fighter Group, which quickly grew into the 117th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing. In 1994, it was re-designated the 117th Air Refueling Wing when the KC-135 tanker mission came to Birmingham.

* <http://www.ang.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-080404-037.pdf>

Lineage of Aircraft*

1918— 1-A-2

1922-1933— JN-4, JN-6, DH-4, TW-3, PT-1, BT-1, O-2, O-11, and O-17

1933-1941— O-38

1938-1942— O-47

1941-1942— O-49, A-20, and P-40

1942— P-39, P-43, O-46, L-3, and L-4

1943-1945— B-25

1946-1957— B/RB-26

1957-1971— RF-84

1971-1994— RF-4

1994-Present— KC-135

* "Lineage and Honors History of the 106 Air Refueling Squadron (ANG)" by SSgt Matthew Scales

"That a man shall serve his country in time of war is noble, brave and patriotic; but that a man shall properly prepare himself in time of peace to serve in war is all of these things and more. It is noble with nobility which is real, not ideal. It is brave with a bravery which assumes in time of unemotional peace many burdens, among them that of bearing the lack of appreciation of those who do not consider military preparation or training necessary"

135th Observation Squadron Letterhead

