

GI STAMPS

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WASHINGTON—Little smiles of satisfaction wreathed the faces of certain high-ranking brass in the Pentagon last Sept. 28, the day the new postage stamp honoring the Army of the United States was issued. But 24 hours later the smiles had changed to embarrassed frowns. The WD had pulled a boner.

The Army stamp—one of a new 1945 series celebrating the four armed services and the merchant marine—was a handsome job done in special-delivery size and in a color vaguely reminiscent of OD. Pictured were elements of the 28th (Pennsylvania) Division, marching through the Arc de Triomphe in newly liberated Paris. Overhead flew six Army bombers in formation.

There was the rub: the bombers were B-29s, a type of plane never used in the ETO. Furthermore, the formation was so low it was practically buzzing the Arc.

When this little error was noted by the philatelic editors of the nation's newspapers, most of them blamed the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, which makes the stamps. They remembered that an overenthusiastic Bureau artist had added a flowerpot to Whistler's "Portrait of My Mother" in the 1934 Mother's Day stamp, and figured that the same fellow was just up to his old tricks.

But according to Col. Harold F. Ambrose, who represented the WD in its dealings with the Post Office, the finished stamp is identical with the proof okayed by the office of the Chief of Staff.

The story going the rounds of the Pentagon's polished latrines explains the error this way: The Paris photograph had been chosen by Gen. Marshall himself, from the many great pictures taken during the war, as a proper tribute to the Infantryman's major contribution to victory in Europe. But at the last minute, AAF bigwigs insisted that the design be altered so the Air Force would receive credit for its share in VE. An "appropriate" photo was hastily selected and superimposed on the one showing the Arc de Triomphe and the doughfoots. Result: hash.

The error puts the stamp in the collector's-item category of the 1937 Army series value showing Robert E. Lee with only two stars on his collar, which almost caused another Civil War because he was entitled to three and the South properly resented the accidental demotion.

Apart from its one mistake, the 1945 Army stamp has drawn only favorable comments. One approving voice noted: "The scene is not Rome or Berlin or Tokyo. It is Paris. Not conquerors but liberators march beneath the triumphal arch. They are soldiers—but citizen soldiers. They are part of the magnificent people's army who fought a people's war. This stamp honors the lowliest GI."

Public approval was registered equally emphatically on the first day of sale, when the Post Office scooped in \$76,322.76 by selling 2,544,092 stamps and cancelling 392,300 covers. (A cover is usually simply an envelope bearing the new stamp and a postmark indicating that it was mailed on the first day of issue.)

Army philatelists thought they'd set an all-time record with that first-day sale, but the official verdict reads: "Close, but no cigar." Post Office champion is the Marine Corps' Iwo Jima stamp, first to be issued in the armed services series. These were its July 11 first-day totals: 2,731,482 stamps sold, 400,729 covers cancelled, total revenue \$81,944.46.

It was Sen. Joseph C. O'Mahoney of Wyoming who hit on the idea of an armed services series of stamps when he spotted the Mt. Suribachi flag-raising picture, taken by Joseph Rosenthal of the Associated Press, and realized that it was a natural for a postage design. The senator, a former First Assistant Postmaster General, introduced a resolution "authorizing and directing" the Post Office to issue a series of stamps, one for each service, honoring their "memorable victories in the cause of human freedom." This was unanimously approved on June 4.

Five weeks later, virtually the mechanical minimum for producing a stamp, the Iwo Jima job was rolling off Bureau of Engraving presses (which also print dollar bills and war bonds). That began the armed-services series, with Army, Navy and Coast Guard numbers following as fast as the PO could handle them. Slated for February is a merchant marine stamp.

All four of the armed-services stamps in the 1945 group pay tribute primarily to the enlisted men, in contrast to the 1936-37 Army and Navy stamps honoring generals and admirals.

The Army stamp shows two combat teams of the 28th Division, described by Gen. Marshall as on parade. "The order for the parade," he says, "was carried out through Paris—one combat team marching down one side of the Champs Elysee and the other team down the other side of the Avenue. Both were in full battle array and were being deployed to the front just northeast of Paris. I do not recall that a parade of this kind ever occurred before in the history of warfare." The front ranks are GIs of the 112th Infantry. According to Capt. Paschal A. Linguiti of Philadelphia, Pa., who spotted his own face on the stamp, "we started fighting soon after that day, and practically all the GIs in the front of the picture were killed."

Like the Army stamp, the Iwo Jima design pictured real people: five enlisted marines and a Navy corpsman (combat medic). Some of the men in the Iwo Jima group, like some of those pictured on the Army stamp, are dead.

Selection of the Navy design was the responsibility of Capt. Edward Steichen, director of Navy combat photography. After sifting through hundreds of action scenes and shots of the fleet, Capt. Steichen picked a photograph to honor "the just plain sailors who won the war." From a huge picture of boots in summer uniforms, training at the Corpus Christi, Tex., Naval Air Station, the captain cut out the Navy stamp group.

You'll have a tough time recognizing yourself or your kid brother, though. The Navy, which had heard about an 1886 Act of Congress that says you cannot picture any living person on a stamp, had the faces retouched. This action followed earlier precedents—like the 1932 Arbor Day stamp (showing a boy and girl, children of the Director of the Bureau of Engraving, planting a tree) and the three-cent Olympic stamp of the same year (showing Charlie Paddock crouched in a sprinter's starting position). Both altered so the models could not be recognized.

The Army and Marine stamps, on the other hand, show unretouched living persons. They follow the alternative theory, of which the best-known example is the 1944 Special Delivery stamp, that a living individual may be used as

SERVICEMEN collectors are also showing great interest in the recent President Roosevelt memorial series, a group of four stamps honoring the late Commander-in-Chief.

The three values thus far issued carry the same portrait of the President in an oval, superimposed on an engraving of some place that played a significant role in his life. The one-cent stamp shows Hyde Park, the two-cent Warm Springs, and the three-cent Washington. No design has yet been selected for the five-cent stamp, due on Jan. 30, the President's birthday, but it will recall his role in international affairs.

The Roosevelt memorial series was handled with particular loving-kindness at the Post Office Department; which always regarded Mr. Roosevelt as the Post Office's President. The nation's best-known collector, he took an active interest in the work of the department, personally approving or disapproving every projected stamp and frequently altering designs.

Stamps in the armed-services and Roosevelt memorial series have initial printings of from 30 to 50 million, after which the plates are stored at the Bureau of Engraving. Each of the nation's 42,000 post offices keeps a running check on sales of an issue. When the available stock nears exhaustion, the Postmaster General decides whether popular demand warrants a second printing. An issue may be printed any number of times, but once taken off sale, it is never reprinted.

Among the post offices reporting on sales are MacArthur, W. Va., established in Raleigh County on April 15, 1942, and Nimitz, 18 miles to the southeast in Summers County, created as part of the big "welcome home" demonstrations for the admiral on Sept. 10. Although only about a dozen families live in this little truck-farming community, the Nimitz post office handled 25,620 letters on its first day of existence. Stamp collectors, eager to get covers, accounted for the flood.

Similarly, post offices at towns named Roosevelt in nine different states did a rushing first-day business every time a different value in the FDR series went on sale.

In the first days after the Navy item was issued, postmasters and stamp editors noted one curious development. A large percentage of letter-writers were pasting the stamp on upside down, with the heavy blue band (which belongs at the bottom) on the top. The design is off-balance, and many people instinctively paste the stamp on upside down so it won't capsize.

