

I KNEW KILROY

by GAL TINNEY

ABC Humorous Commentator

IF THERE is anybody more famous than Kilroy, I don't know who he is. His name is on everybody's lips. You find it scribbled on subway walls, Main Street store fronts, on Middletown, Ohio's, municipal water tank, in Rita Hayworth's dressing-room, on a Quonset hut in Iceland, and when the White House was reopened to visitors in early November last, what did President Truman find scribbled near one of the White House's prize paintings? "Kilroy was here."

Visitors to the United States, turbaned Arabs and dignified Englishmen, ask, "Who is this Kilroy?" Italians first believed, wrongly, that he was America's equivalent of the Black Hand. They didn't know, at first, that Kilroy is a threat to nothing, except walls and woodwork.

People looked for him in the Manhattan telephone directory, and found only Eleanor M. Kilroy and the John F. Kilroy Company, brokers. The Kilroy who wrote his name on Hitler's mirror, at Berchtesgaden, couldn't have been an Eleanor, even if she were a Wac. And nobody would believe for a moment that the Kilroy of legend was a Wall Street broker in his private life.

And yet nobody ever saw a picture of Kilroy in the newspapers.

"Does he really exist?" people ask.

It is to make reply to that question that I come forward. I know Kilroy, and however much he has enjoyed his anonymity to date, I feel that it is time his identity was made known. If it would cramp his style, I would hesitate, but knowing Kilroy as I do, I know Kilroy will go on being Kilroy. Nothing could change him.

I KNOW Kilroy; I have lent matches to him; I have eaten with him out of the same mess kit. The first time I met him was at Camp Upton, New York, in September, 1943, just after I had joined the Army. Some of his fellow inductees were nervous. In the new environment of the Army they were fish out of water. They trembled even before rank no higher than PFC.



But Kilroy took the whole thing in his stride. Even when a captain bawled him out for calling him "Mister," Kilroy just grinned. When the pants issued him were two sizes too large and the shirts he drew were two sizes too small, he took considerable more interest in a Superman comic book he found in his barracks.

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THE second time I met Kilroy was in basic training, in Texas. No eager beaver he. Nobody worried him, not even the second lieutenants. He played pitch, he drank beer, he had a heluva time learning his nomenclature, but somehow we all knew that when it came time to work from the foxholes he'd make good.

I guess you would say Kilroy is the spirit of young, unrestrainable American manhood. A hundred or so years ago he cleared the forests. He laughed at danger. He whipped the Indians. In the Southwest he was a cowboy. In the North woods he was a lumberjack.

Strictly speaking, that was Kilroy's grandfather. We were talking about the present Kilroy. Now that the war is over, Kilroy is still around. Some say he's an airplane pilot. Well, he is, and he's a truck driver, too. He's a railway switch-

The Register-Guard

November 17, 1946

EVERETT, Mass., Nov. 16. —(U.P.) —The mystery of World War II's most frequently chalked inscription—"Kilroy was here," apparently has been solved.

Veterans, who have seen that curious phrase on buildings, aircraft fuselages and piers wherever Americans have fought, will be happy to know that Sgt. Francis J. Kilroy, Jr., 21-year-old Everett soldier, was responsible.

Now awaiting a discharge at Davis-Monthan field, Tucson, Ariz., Kilroy informed his parents here that while he was hospitalized early in the war a friend scrawled on a bulletin board at a Florida airbase "Kilroy will be here next week." Airmen carried it overseas and left millions of veterans guessing until now.

TRENTON EVENING TIMES.

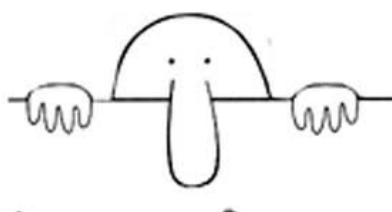
October 1, 1946

Kilroy's Name Girdles Globe

WASHINGTON — AP — The statistic-saving, record-revering Army has the lowdown on 10,000,000 World War II soldiers, but it admitted today that on its most famous member it hasn't a word.

Who is this noted warrior?

Why, Kilroy, of course.



most surprising places, GI's have scrawled the words:

"Kilroy was here."

Who was Kilroy? Whence came he? How spread his name from camp to camp, from division to division, from continent to continent?

An Army major, of the Kilroy research corps, told a reporter there is only one answer to these questions:

"Nobody knows."

One version says it started with a Sergeant Kilroy, in a camp in Kansas. He was marked absent from some detail and his name was posted. Indignantly Kilroy scratched out his name and wrote, "Kilroy was here." Soon everyone was scratching.

Another version had Kilroy in the Air Forces. He was separated from his pal, a fun-loving character.

Wherever this fun-loving Joe went he wrote the words, "Kilroy was here," or suitable variations, just for the joy of it. And soon an eager Army followed this pioneer.

Whatever his origin, Kilroy became a priceless addition to latrine literature. But he also showed up in highly respectable places. Such as in the Statue of Liberty, and the dome of the nation's Capitol.

And what do the real, live Kilroys think of their invisible little namesake?

"We're fed up with him," snorted ex-Sergeant Eugene Kilroy in an interview.

"My three brothers and I were all in service. I was in Greenland, John Joseph was in England, William was in France, and Raymond, in the Navy, was on both sides.

"Man, the stuff we've had to listen to! You can put this down, and you can write it big:

"'Kilroy was there, and he doesn't like it!'"

