

# BILL MAULDIN

**S**gt. Bill Mauldin, GI artist who was awarded a Pulitzer prize for his work as a Mediterranean Stars and Stripes cartoonist, is also the author of a new book, "Up Front" (Henry Holt, \$3.00). With the permission of the publisher, and United Features Syndicate, YANK reprints on these pages some writing and cartoons from "Up Front."

By Sgt. BILL MAULDIN



**A**s long as you've got to have an army you've got to have officers, so you might as well make the most of it.

The ideal officer in any army knows his business. He is firm and just. He is saluted and given the respect due a man who knows enough about war to boss soldiers around in it. He is given many privileges, which all officers are happy to accept, and he is required, in return, to give certain things which a few officers choose to ignore. I try to make life as miserable as possible for those few.

An officer is not supposed to sleep until his men are bedded down. He is not supposed to eat until he has arranged for his men to eat. He's like a prizefighter's manager. If he keeps his fighter in shape the fighter will make him successful. I respect those combat officers who feel this responsibility so strongly that many of them are killed fulfilling it.

Since I am an enlisted man, and have served under many officers, I have a great deal of respect for the good ones and a great deal of contempt for the bad ones. A man accepts a commission with his eyes open and, if he does not intend to take responsibilities as well as privileges, he is far lower than the buck private who realizes his own limitations and keeps that rank.

I never worry about hurting the feelings of the good officers when I draw officer cartoons. I build a shoe, and if somebody wants to put it on and loudly announce that it fits, that's his own affair.

A few of them have done it, to the subsequent enjoyment of the guys who read the letters to the editor in the Mail Call section of *Stars and Stripes*. One poor lieutenant—let's call him Smith to be on the safe side—wrote that instead of picking on officers I should stop and consider the stupid antics of enlisted men whom he had observed in his three years' service. Several letters came back—not defending me, but putting the blast on the lieutenant for being foolish enough to call soldiers stupid. I remember one of the letters very well. It began:

"...I pick up the October 23d issue of *Stars and Stripes* and what do I see but a letter from my old pal, Lt. Smith. The last I heard from 'Stinky' Smith, he was studying for his third attempt to make a score of 110 in his General Classification test in order to qualify for OCS. . . . Now, 'Stinky,' when you worked in my poultry house in 1940, picking turkeys for \$14 a week, neither myself nor the other boys regarded you as a mental giant. Quite the contrary. . . ."

This undoubtedly provided the boys in Lt. Smith's outfit with considerable glee.



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*"Beautiful view. Is there one for the enlisted men?"*

A very different and very interesting letter was written by a colonel of artillery. He said:

"... being Regular Army, my father before me, and his father before him, one of the first things I learned at West Point was to respect the enlisted soldier of the United States Army. . . ."

The colonel, for my money, is the perfect officer. He likes the Army, he likes his job, he likes the men under him, and he knows his business. He carries his rank easily because he is capable of earning respect without ramming his eagles down somebody's throat. I will throw the gentleman a salute any time I meet him, and I will look him in the eye while I'm doing it. The Army is his home, and while I am in it he is the host whose rules I must respect. In civilian life, if he comes into my home, I am the host, and it is obvious that he is going to be enough of a gentleman to abide by my rules.

I've thrown a drawing or two at the Regular Army, because too many mess sergeants with 30 years in the army have been made temporary majors and lieutenant colonels, and they are making the most of their moments of glory.

Even after four long years in the Army I still disagree with some of the officer-enlisted men traditions. But I'm not rabid about it. If the men who wrote the rules prefer their own exclusive bathrooms and latrines, that's okay with me. But if the officer is going to have a tent over his latrine in the field, how about one for me? I might not be as important as he is, but I can get just as wet. And keep him out of my latrine when the weather is bad, and his latrine is farther away than mine. If he wishes to eat at his own table, and wants me to wash his dishes because he has weighty problems on his mind and no time for dishwashing, then I understand. But let him keep his hands off my own kitchen's canned orange juice.

Many old-line officers are no doubt shocked at a spirit of passive rebellion which occasionally shows itself in this citizen army. That's the whole answer. It is a citizen army, and it has in its en-



*"Fresh, spirited American troops, flushed with victory, are bringing in thousands of hungry, ragged, battle-weary prisoners . . ."*

*(News item)*



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listed ranks many men who in civil life were not accustomed to being directed to the back door and the servant quarters. To taking orders, yes; but to taking indignities, no.

It doesn't hurt us. Nearly everybody needs a little humbling from time to time. If the Army maintains these customs to prevent undue fraternization between the ruling class and the working class, on the theory that familiarity breeds contempt, then perhaps the Army is right. But most combat outfits scrap tradition, as they scrap many other things, when they go into battle. No man who depends upon those below him—not only for his success, but for his very life—is going to abuse his men unnecessarily. Not if he has good sense.

An officer can be court-martialed for calling an enlisted man a son of a bitch, but that, coming from some sergeants who have complete mastery of the Army language, can be taken as a small compliment. Also, an officer usually lives a little apart from the boys, so if he says there's to be no gambling, it's easy enough to get a flashlight and hold an exclusive little game under a blanket. But a corporal, bucking for a third stripe, can crawl right in there and turn you in if he loses.

The infantry in combat doesn't worry much about rank. One company I know of had two sets of non-coms for a while. One set led squads and patrols when the outfit was committed. After the company was pulled back to a rest area, this first set lined up to be busted, and an entirely different set—those who had more of an eye for regulations and discipline—took over while the others went out and got tight.

**T**HERE is a class of soldiers, midway between the front and rear—"too far forward to wear ties an' too far back to git shot." In this group there were a few men whose conduct, unfortunately, was taken by many combat men as typical of the entire class. I called these few men "garritroopers," to the subsequent protest of some paratroopers who felt that I had intended a crack at them. I really had not.

The garritroopers are able to look like combat men or like the rear soldiers, depending upon the current fashion trend. When the Infantry was unpublicized and the Air Forces were receiving much attention, the emphasis was on beauty, and in every Army headquarters and midway supply dump you could shave yourselves with the garritrooper's trouser creases and use his shoes for a mirror. He would not wear ordinary GI trousers and shoes, but went in for sunglasses, civilian oxfords, and officers' forest-green clothing.

Some months later the Infantry began to get attention. It didn't take the garritroopers long to switch clothes. They climbed out of the glamor rags and tossed the 20-dollar sunglasses into the gutter. "Be dirty, be rough, be scuffed," they shouted. If they rode to town on a truck, they hung their faces over the side to get a coat of dust. They let their whiskers grow. They ripped holes in their pants and pounded their shoes with rocks. You could get five fancy officers' shirts for one tattered combat jacket.



*"That can't be no combat man. He's lookin' fer a fight."*

Bands of the garritroopers would hound a poor khaki-clad clerk, on his way home after a hard day at the office. They would yell, "Haw! Goddam base-section. Rear-echelon goldbrick."

The average doggie is rather surprised when he enters a town he remembers having taken last month, and finds it full of rough, bearded wild men, who seem to be in the process of taking



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it again, for they are yelling like hell, smashing windows and tossing empty vino bottles at "those damned rear-echelon goldbricks."

**F**RIENDS in war are different in many ways from friends in peacetime. You depend upon friends in war much more.

While men in combat outfits kid each other around, they have a sort of family complex about it. No outsiders may join. Anybody who does a dangerous job in this war has his own particular kind of kidding among his own friends, and sometimes it doesn't sound like kidding. Bomber crews and paratroopers and infantry squads are about the same in that respect.

Combat people are an exclusive set, and if they want to be that way, it is their privilege. They certainly earn it. New men in outfits have to work their way in slowly, but they are eventually accepted. Sometimes they have to change some of their ways of living. An introvert or a recluse is not going to last long in combat without friends, so he learns to come out of his shell. Once he has "arrived" he is pretty proud of his clique, and he in turn is chilly toward outsiders.

That's why, during some of the worst periods in Italy, many guys who had a chance to hang around a town for a few days after being discharged from a hospital where they had recovered from wounds, with nobody the wiser, didn't take advantage of it. They weren't eager to get back up and get in the war, by any means, and many of them did hang around a few days. But those who did hang around didn't feel exactly right about it, and those who went right back did it for a very simple reason—not because they felt that their presence was going to make a lot of difference in the big scheme of the war, and not to uphold the traditions of the umpteenth regiment. A lot of guys don't know the name of their regimental commander. They went back because they knew their companies were very short-handed, and they were sure that if somebody else in their own squad or section were in their own shoes, and the situation were reversed, those friends would come back to make the load lighter.

That kind of friendship and spirit is a lot more genuine and sincere and valuable than all the "war aims" and indoctrination in the world.

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