

SO LONG, YANK

1942 - 1945

THE big nickel magazine with the red and black cover and the cartoons on the back will soon be gone. Gone from the PXs, gone from the day rooms, gone from the barrack bags, gone from the sacks.

Point-eligible GIs have been leaving the service by the millions. *Yank* magazine gets its honorable discharge this month, too.

No more Sad Sack, no more Zinberg, no more Mail Call, no more learning how to fight a war or how your home-town weathered it, no more dope about how to convert your insurance or how to build a house with the help of the GI Bill.

No more pin-up girls gazing alluringly toward Navy Notes, no more sports articles which were often flat because they had to be angled from an Army point of view, no more humor and gripes to read out loud in the latrine, no more frightfully candid interviews with lucky-to-have-stayed-at-home celebrities.

For want of anything that tells the story better, historians are apt to cull *Yank's* pages in years to come and say, "Here was your war." Most servicemen will agree that the details of their war-crammed servitude and triumphs can be found in the nickel rag that followed them around the world.



THE ARMY WEEKLY



OldMagazineArticles.com

YANK

A Great Magazine is Born

It was in April 1942 that the most famous of all servicemen's publications opened headquarters in New York City. June 1942 saw it join the displays on PX counters. From its inception the worldwide magazine not only recorded and photographed and sketched and commented on history; it made it. Enlisted personnel, fortunate soldier practitioners of fourth estate trades, were selected from various branches of the Army to staff the weekly's editorial, finance, accounting, circulation, subscription, traffic, supply, promotion, and production departments. As *Yank* Commanding Officer Colonel Franklin S. Forsberg explained in a recent issue of *Printer's Ink*, officer functions were "limited to planning, liaison, administration, guidance in a non-control sense, and in general, running interference through the Army or a civilian chain of command when something had to be done."

Timely distribution to ever-more-globally-dispersed readers loomed almost immediately as the toughest nut for *Yank* to crack. Printing in foreign areas seemed to be the best solution. Consequently, in November 1942, the first overseas edition of the magazine was printed in Britain. By the end of the war a total of 17 bureaus had produced 250 million copies of 21 editions which were distributed in 41 foreign countries. Over three million readers in all branches of the service were purchasing the Army Weekly. An average of five other servicemen were estimated to be enjoying each copy. In the front lines, where distribution was difficult and only a limited number could be circulated, copies were passed from soldier to soldier till they literally fell apart. At its zenith, even though subscription activities were always subordinated to single-copy sales, the magazine's subscription list contained 400,000 names.

With technical experts needed for the functioning of each farflung bureau, *Yank* personnel destined for overseas service were assiduously trained in New York. Since the magazine's staff was limited, small teams had to be taught to do production, distribution, and promotion jobs in addition to regular editorial assignments. At the same time, the New York production department itself was assigned a dual function. Besides preparing copy for the domestic printer, it had to supply each overseas bureau with the required matter to put out a complete issue each week. Since a foreign edition's method of production depended upon the kind of equipment unearthed in its area, New York's problems were complicated by the necessity for furnishing positive film, negative film, and mats. In three and one-half years of service, however, *Yank* never missed a local edition.

Like its other functions, *Yank's* distribution activities were under the general direction of the New York office while retaining an essential degree of local flexibility. All known methods of distribution were used by the magazine. It also invented quite a few of its own including parachutes, submarines, tanks, and native runners. A wartime concomitant of literary distribution turned out to be the black market from which, in the late war and the disturbed peace to which it give birth, nothing that could be sold has been immune. In Italy civilian workers were searched one day as they were departing from *Yank's* production plant. 780 copies were discov-

Managing Editor
Joe McCarthy



ered on the persons of various employees. In the clothing of the most enterprising were stuffed 300 copies. Standard price for a copy of *Yank* in the Paris black mart was twenty cents. In China it rose as high as five dollars. The Chinese appreciate good literature.

Honors in Literary World

Yank's editorial content was regarded from the outset by both civilian authorities and GIs to be entertainingly competent, completely modern in technique, and very often outstanding. Perhaps its most celebrated steady feature, oddly enough, was that submitted by its readers, who were probably the most vocal in magazine history in writing to the editor. Many a missile in Mail Call carried the sparkling words of soldiers or officers inspired by a grievance, and imbued their fellow servicemen with sympathetic misery or glee. Questions concerning official matters were brought to *Yank* instead of the Chaplain. War Department answers were requisitioned and printed. The Army Weekly furthermore managed to attract enlisted men already well known in the professional writing fields to its pages. William Saroyan, Irwin Shaw, Walter Bernstein, and Marion Hargrove are outstanding examples. It also propelled new talents into a war-turned spotlight. Ray Duncan, George Baker, Joe McCarthy, Ralph Stein, Merle Miller, Len Zinberg, are individuals who might be mentioned. Many *Yank* writings and cartoons were reproduced in civilian outlets and will doubtless live as long as memories of World War II. "My Old Outfit" by Mack Morriss, and the prize-winning *Yank* short story, "Fifty Missions" by Joseph Dever, recurrently command attention. *Yank's* combat reporting and photography were first-rate. Editorials such as "Impatience And A Blue Suit," printed at the end of the Japanese war, are regarded as suitable journalistic children of topical cosmic events. Observers wait curiously to see whether the familiar by-lined names, some of them already banded together in a projected civilian periodical, will essay the postwar world with as much success as F.P.A., Steve Early, Grantland Rice, and Harold Ross, who graduated from World War I's *Stars and Stripes*.



The Parting Suggestions

Latest discussion-provoking work of *Yank* is the editorial which appeared in its penultimate issue. It is the one for which many of its readers have been waiting for more than three years. As the most widely accredited spokesman for American citizens who have served their country as enlisted soldiers in the late war, Old Red and Black speaks with the voice of millions. It speaks with an understanding which civilians can never achieve of the details of Army life which are never picayune to those who undergo them, regardless of how they may seem to outsiders. It speaks with the realization that it can squawk so only because ours is the military establishment of a democratic nation. It speaks soberly, it speaks respectfully, and it does not mince words.

Here are the valedictory recommendations:

"Let's have more promotions from the ranks. . . . Knock out political appointments of officers. . . . Perhaps there should be no dividing line between commis-

YANK

sioned and noncommissioned—just a promotion ladder going straight on up from private to general. . . .

“Let’s have all promotions—both noncommissioned and commissioned—on a basis of competitive examination without undue attention to seniority. . . .

“Let’s do something about making officers as liable under military law for their errors and faults as GIs already are. . . .

“Let’s do something about keeping distinctions of rank in their proper place. . . . As a first step here, let’s abolish differences in uniform (except for insignia), in messing facilities, in equipment, in quarters. . . .

“There should be no social difference because of rank, because there are no social differences in the human beings involved—except as individuals.”

The editorial concludes: “We on *Yank* believe the Army can benefit by studying these suggestions. We believe that improvement within the Army is just three million times as important as publicity outside the Army. We believe that ours can be as fine an Army as its potentials promise only by hard work from within on the part of every GI and every officer, and by sharp observation from without by every civilian.”

So long, *Yank*.



. . . but Never by 8,000,000 GIs
Courtesy Yank Far East

Maptalk

19 Dec. 1945 * p. 138