

The **A** MERICAN **L** EGION *Monthly* December, 1942

YANK: **The Real McCoy**

By **HUDSON HAWLEY**

CARTOONS BY WALLGREN



A true confession by the first and last Stars and Stripeser (the same guy), who says the 1942 version of the Army's own paper is at least one up on the pride of 1918's A.E.F.

THE best thing about *Yank* is that it has no Wallgren—and no Saluting Demon.

The next best is that it has no Pundit Woollcott—but it may be pardoned for that, because Woollcotts come only once or twice in a couple of centuries, like Goethe and Sam Johnson and Ben Franklin. It has been said, and never denied, that Woollcott looks like a composite picture of all three—without the philandering of Goethe (but with the belching and snorting of Old Sam), and the penny-pinching of Ancient Ben, Boston's gift to Philadelphia.

Seriously, *Yank* has still to develop a front-line correspondent of the depth and feeling and warmth and real descriptive power of Alexander the Great. But hell, Aleck had only the dirty muddy old French front to cover. These new guys have twelve! And like the soldiers of Lord Geoffrey Amherst of immortal memory,

“They looked around for more when they were through!”

To a timid soul who had been brought up to think that Ferdinand Foch was a great artisan of victory, and that John J. Pershing (bless his good gray head!) was his beloved disciple, in whom he was well pleased, it was somewhat of a shock to be catapulted into the office of *Yank* in New York City, and find the coverage of a global war going on full blast under the screeching of the still uncondemned El and T'oid Avenue trolley and all the other sounds of that region of New York, from which even the roughest of the old dry-era gangsters now stay away. Your correspondent knew it, for his sins, for full two years, until health and innate sense of decency obliged him to migrate to Radio City, Murray Hill, and other more dulcet regions of the Manhattan metropolis. But those Yanks on *Yank* can take it—between whirlwind overnight plane trips to London, Ulster, China and India, and, oh, if you must have it, from the halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli! (They have one lone gyrene on their staff, and he swore he would give me the nutcracker trick if I didn't insert that plug line!)

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Now, old gentlemen of the graduated class, dear brother Legionnaires, your correspondent, first ed. on and last ed. off the old *Stars and Stripes*, has to make a horrid confession. These new editors, reporters and staff artists are a damn sight brighter, better, and more up-to-date than ever we were in our



"THE STARS & STRIPES" HAD ONLY ONE FRONT TO COVER—"YANK" HAS AT LEAST TWELVE."

prime. They have profited by all our old mistakes, made some gorgeous ones of their own, and profited by them—and have the guts to admit it! Which means that the fighting-writing America of 1942 has actually progressed 24 years over the fighting-writing America of 1918. Which proves that there is progress in a democracy, and in

. . . the Army, the Army,
The democratic Army.

IF ANYONE ever catches me using the adjective "streamlined" to describe the new *Yank*, I hope he will, in the language of the old A. E. F., sock me over the conk with a stocking full of you know what. Yet with their candid cameras, their wireless dispatches, their "cheesecake"—cripes, we had to go out and buy ours in France!—they make the *S. & S.* look like the monthly bulletin of the Dorcas Society or the Epworth League. Would we ever have dared publish one-piece bathing-suited beauty-

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-AND IT AINT GOT NO
'SALUTING DEMON'
NEITHER —



-OR ANYBUDDY, EVEN REMOTELY RESEMBLING,
HIM, OR "OUR SARJINT" WOOLLCOTT-AS YET.

contest winners—a whole half-page of them—with dear old departed Bishop Brent as chaplain of the A. E. F.? Remember the time when, by orders from on high, we had to run Woolcott's immortal story of the captured Kraut colonel with a "son of a—" instead of the far more homely Anglo-Saxon word we wanted to use.

Yes, times have changed, thank the gods of Master François Rabelais, who is still with us on the Fighting French side, and of rugged old John Masefield, the inimitable poet laureate of England, whose sea chantey might never have made the *S. & S.* (Kipling, it is true, did us a piece to which he gave the title "Justice," and for us alone, but it was so tame he might have recited it to Queen Mary at tea in Buckingham Palace . . .) But, I must say, on reading over the numbers of *Yank* that have come out this past summer and autumn, there is an engaging breath of Hemingway—companion!—and of Faulkner, that was somewhat sadly missing from our old army newspaper of 24 years ago. AND more power to the new one!

We of the old *S. & S.* could have done it, of course. Hell, it was all around us. But the Big Idea was that the old A. E. F. was too lazy to write home, and that once it had read our weekly eight pages—*Yank* turns out twenty-four—it dutifully put them into a Y envelope and sent them home because it was too tired to compose anything beyond, "I am keeping well, hope you are same, ever your loving son."

Which brings me to the astounding conclusion that we oldsters have also grown

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up with our youngsters: That we have finally, both generations of us, realized the truth of old Rudyard Kipling's line that

"Single men in barricks don't grow into plaster saints."

That, after all, seems to be *Yank's* slogan. I would call it *Yank's leitmotiv* except that I will be damned if I will use an enemy language!

TO GET down to the mechanics of *Yank*. In fairly late autumn, be it said to the shame of the old S. & S. staff, they were operating with fewer personnel (the exact number is of course a military secret), and, as far as this correspondent can see, with just as good results (Justices Ross, Woollcoot, Wallgren, Winterich and Baldrige dissenting . . .) *Yank* has for the most part agency-trained—meaning “wire-minded”—personnel on all of our twelve or fourteen fronts, who know what a deadline is, what is hot news and what is mere handout; and after fifteen years in the news agency game this correspondent considers their product just about the best to be had for their public. *Yank's* men in the field have not only the sense of news, but the gift of beguiling and bewitching censors, getting them to nod at times—as did Homer, the first of all war correspondents—and thereby occa-

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sionally pulling off a, er, trollop of a scoop. (Wish I could write like these youngsters!)

And they all of them seem to love the game. At least seven of them have turned down bids to go to Officers' Candidate Schools in order to stick and turn out an army weekly that will smack of the old G. I. That was the spirit of the old S. & S., in whose office a certain lanky Private Ross told a visiting general:

"Oh, Loot Grantland Rice, yeah? Wal, I just sent him up to Nancy under Private Baldrige's convoy to cover this here Saint Mihiel offensive!"

Living in New York is no cinch for the *Yank* staffers who haven't got private incomes. All they get is \$2.75 a day for quarters, nosebag and "liquid coffee ration," and this correspondent is here to say that those handouts of \$65 to \$67 a month, plus \$50 a month's army pay for a buck, come to considerably less than squirrel feed in Central Park. They're not night-clubbing, as some low-lived and unchecking columnists have tried to insinuate. They do their air warden duty like anybody else in the old brindle uniform. And every Monday and Friday forenoon they're down at Fort Jay, putting in a sweaty period at close order and open order drill, by the number. (NOW, after 24 years, your correspondent can reveal that they tried to pull that on us in Paris in 1918, but somebody discovered it might interrupt Capt. Franklin P. Adams, now of "Information, Please," in the middle of a sonnet!

The weekly editorial conference is much like that of the S. & S.—the non-com editor and executive officers, headed by Lieutenant Colonel Egbert White, only veteran of the old S. & S., (whom the Army must have in there) meeting on terms of perfect equality, not saluting (that's where I got out . . .) and none of what the A. E. F. used to call "bushwah." (The *Yanks* have a shorter and uglier Greek word for it. . .) The executive editor, Captain Hartzell Spence, author of two very good best sellers and a veteran of *United Press* rathole watching, is often as not voted down with shouts of glee and tallyho, and smilingly accepts the verdict of the chevroned roughnecks and plain bucks. (By the way, this new Army must be getting sissy, since there are so few jokes in *Yank* about shavetails. Or maybe they have found a way to put salt on them, as we had always hoped to.)

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Now here an old *S. & S-er*, your correspondent, hands the palm to Major Frank Forsberg (business manager) for an idea our own staff—even with Steve Early on it!—never thought of. Once a week the editorial boys, etc., have to get together with the printer, lithographer, circulation, promotion, and all the other guys, and thrash the whole problem out. Of course, in the intimacy of a village like Paris, we in the old days of the *S. & S.* were able to do that informally, at lunch, dinner, or café au rum, and other condiments, either around the old office in the Rue des Italien, the later one in the Rue Taitbout, or the dour stinking old printing plant of the Continental *Dyly Myle* (*Daily Mail* to you), run by the late much-regretted Lord Northcliffe, in the Rue du Sentier, just off the strumpet belt of the Grands Boulevards. So the boys won't be shy, Major Forsberg gets them to type out questions in advance—and then everything is aired on the open floor. "It stinks!" "It's corny!" "Where's my furlough?" are just a few of the expressions heard at these gatherings. Your correspondent's only comment is that which was inscribed on his travel orders, directing him to proceed from Paris, France, to Brest, Finisterre, France, to cover the arrival of Dr. Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States of America—commander-in-chief of the Army and Navy of the United States: "The travel directed is necessary in the military service."

OLD-TIMERS—your boys are in the service, a lot of them. I have spent a lot of time (and remaining gray matter) in trying to find out something about this weekly mag. called *Yank*; and being an old reporter born and bred, I have put some pretty nasty questions to the editors and enlisted personnel, but I must say I always got a frank and free answer except when it ran counter to military necessity. As you wise old coots all know, we of the old *S. & S.* were not permitted to tell you certain things while hostilities were going on. That's what's holding *Yank* back now—but as soon as things got brighter of course we let you in on it; and I am sure that my new-found friends on *Yank* (who remind me so much of my friends on the *S. & S.*)—will do the same thing by your boys.

They have their troubles, of course, just as we of the old *S. & S.* did, in trying to dish the real stuff out on time.

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Where we had our Chaumont, or G. H. Q., they have their Washington, which is a helluva sight worse, and I hope that my distinguished ex-colleague, Lieutenant Colonel John Tracey Winterich, he who used to teach the English language to the students of Brown University and thereafter to the denizens of Springfield, Massachusetts, (through its grand old paper, the *Republican*)—the best managing editor an army newspaper ever had—will bear me out in trying to get a better break of news for *Yank* out of our present G. H. Q. town, which has become the G. H. Q. of the United Nations.

ONE reason, it seems to me, why *Yank* has got off to such a good start is the distance between its main office in New York and G. H. Q. in the District of Columbia. If that be treason, make the most of it; or it may have been canny connivance on behalf of the wise old heads of the Army itself. In the old A. E. F. days when we first started the *S. & S.* at Neufchâteau, in the Vosges Department, back in January, 1918, we soon found that that metropolis of 10,000 souls was altogether too uncomfortably close to nearby Chaumont; and that even general staff officers on other missions had too much opportunity to drop in and kibitz. To say nothing of a lot of accredited civilian war correspondents who, filing for dailies in the U. S. A., simply couldn't tumble to our particularly delicate problem of getting out a weekly but still a newsy one.

So, aside from the better printing and transportation facilities, it was a good thing for our old paper that it moved to Paris.

Another reason making for the unity and cohesion of *Yank's* staff is that it formed its own permanent organization much earlier than we oldsters did.

Although it has men from every arm of the service (including the gyrene mentioned above and a sailor), they have all been grouped into an outfit called Headquarters Detachment, Special Service, War Department, under Detachment Commander Lieutenant Sam Humphus for the administrative, but not editorial end.

It is his special job to attend to all questions of pay, equipment, status of enlisted personnel, etc. Whereas our gang didn't get officially assembled from a lot of separate and widely scattered units until just before we were about

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to sail home in 1919. By that time we were grouped into the First and Second Censor and Press Companies—vulgarly known as the College Men and Printers. (If we'd had such an organization, in our day, we could not only have taken over Woolcott, all of him, from the Medical Corps right at the start, but could have busted him back to a bedpan-passing buck orderly the first time he tried to high-hat us, instead of his keeping all his three-stripe chevrons right through.)

Third, by some hook or crook in wangling a perfectly good commercial loan *Yank* started off with \$25,000 in the sock as against our measly 25,000 francs (then about \$5,000) from the A. E. F. General Staff. The result is that they're putting out a swell weekly for five cents a copy—the *S. & S.* was 50 centimes, or a dime in those days—and offering a grand trial subscription rate of 75 cents for six months. However, old-timer, in case you actually should have that much to spare right now, hold up: "Subscriptions can be entered for service men only." So that lets you out.

BY ONE of the more facetious acts of Congress, *Yank* can't accept any advertising. Its ancient predecessor did. That, to all of you in business, must seem a good deal of pfui, and might even seem to detract from its sense of reality as a weekly newspaper. But the gallant lads make up for it by filling every page with so much grand prose, pictures, cartoons and occasionally verse that it isn't until you've read all of a number from cover to cover that you realize there are no commercials. As a matter of fact, the *S. & S.* never made much on its advertising, such as it was—largely because of the exasperating habit of its makeup editors of throwing it out bodily whenever a big story from the front was breaking. War does funny things to "front office" mentality. It should.

THERE'S one feature of the not-so-new army paper upon which the editors are extremely loath to open up, and with reason. That's on the load of fan-mail they get after every issue. They don't mind pointing with honest pride when they get a boost, and will even hasten into print with any gripe at *Yank* itself. And of course, company clerks, M. P.'s and mess sergeants are always fair game—have been since Julius Caesar's time. But—and it's a

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big but—they can't let out any blast which might "give aid and comfort to the enemy."

They can't, necessarily, give circulation to latrine rumors. When they get too many of these all along one line, they simply send a man down to Washington and demand—yes, demand!—the facts with which to smear them in an official statement. And, to date, they have got action. In fact, as I see it, that's one of the main functions of an army paper—to give the men who are doing the fighting all the truth that can safely be told, and to put them on guard against insidious reports that might conceivably break down morale, either in the field or at home. That rule goes for all civilian publications, as well.

You see, in our old show, the Krauts didn't have any Goebbels, and the Japs and Italians were on our side. But today, with short-wave radio, faster air communication, and all the rest, one "Indignant Subscriber" item, no matter how local in character, how easily rectified on the spot, could be turned into real poison gas by the Little Doctor and his Tokyo and Rome stooges.

Not that many of our people would fall for it—they have too much sense—but there are still a few neutrals left in the world whom we might need in a pinch. . . . And what couldn't the Little Doctor do by twisting a perfectly innocent home camp or advance post gripe and shooting it out over the air to all of the countries of Central and South America?

IN OUR old war, when things began humming from Cantigny through Château-Thierry, Soissons, St. Mihiel and the Argonne, there wasn't any room in our old paper for such-like gripes. But after the Armistice, what didn't we print in the line of good clean dirt—how "the Division on our left was never up on time," what the Y didn't gyp us out of, and why in hell wasn't our outfit the first to go home? You remember all that.

All of you veterans have been hashing it over at post smokers for the last—let me see, how many years—and consarn you and bless you, you probably always will. But I ask you, if we had printed that stuff while hostilities were on, with France smack up against neutral Switzerland, and then only a jump into Germany (and the Kraut had damn smart agents in Switzerland, as I have since learned well . . .) what might not have happened, even with

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the then crude means of counter-propaganda, to some of our best comrades, and to our Allies?

So *Yank*, which is fighting a global war, is quite right in holding out on that fan mail, even from an innocent, best-wishing, bald-headed old-timer. But I do hope to see it all, or most of it, in the not too distant future—just to compare it with yours, you old guard-house lawyers!

And to that particular end, to hasten that happy day, the only thing to do is to get behind *Yank's* gang and push them toward a sweeping victory on all fronts, an armistice with teeth in it, and by God, a peace that will last!

To sum up: it's a swell big young paper, just as good as ours! And I hope to see its new main office in—Paris!—with branches in Berlin and Tokyo.

The AMERICAN LEGION Magazine