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“Frankly, Mac, this ‘police action’ business is going too damn far!”

Armed Forces Cartoons during the Korean Conflict

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For sixty years, various people have called the Korean Conflict one of America's forgotten wars. The terms by which The United Nations and the United States fought the war were never fully explained to the American people, the goals never clearly defined, nor the backing fully there, as it was for the 'total war' effort of World War II. The soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines still had needs regardless of garrison duty in occupied Japan or fighting in Korea. One area of interest, and an area not frequently explored, is the realm of the military cartoons. Many military historians consider the illustrations of men like World War II artists Bill Mauldin, Dave Breger, and George Baker as the humorous aspect of war. These artists obtained some notoriety after World War II as well. Some illustrators continued these types of cartoons for the troops in the Korean War.

Cartoonists produced their work for armed services publications like *Stars and Stripes* and *Leatherneck*, and their work represented a way to look into the conditions in which the combatants fought in Korea. In this paper, the word "cartoon" will refer to one panel illustrations that convey a story or a joke. While animated short movies also deal with the war--as well as comic books that tell of stories in several pages--the main focus of this paper is the one panel illustration, unless noted. What sorts of ideas did the soldiers discuss? What were the depictions of the enemy, be they Korean civilians, Republic of Korea, North Korean People's Army (North Korea), or Chinese Peoples Volunteer troops? What sorts of depictions did illustrators offer, if any, towards Allies as well?

Many of the illustrations associated with Korea were actual comic books that were produced by Entertaining Comics (EC) under the titles of *Frontline Combat* and *Two Fisted Tales*. But while those comic books gave some insight into the conflict, the comics illustrated by and for the troops in the field were far more telling. The illustrations told of how military commanders conditioned their men to fight against a cunning enemy; what NOT to do while in the military (often in a humorous manner); and what sorts of common issues soldiers had while in theatre. This paper seeks out original publications from military sources, as well as civilian books that sought to tell the Korean War from a public reporter's viewpoint.

Origins of the illustrated comics for the troops

The Second World War was one in which the military as well as American culture raced to support the war effort. Many of the forms of entertainment and information utilized media such as cartoon illustration which developed during World War II or just prior to the start of the conflict. After the war, many of the institutions that created illustrations developed during the conflict were virtually dismantled. However, given the popularity of cartoons--combined with the desire of reading material for occupation troops situated in Japan and Germany--the cartoons continued. Military morale officers recognized that the cartoons were popular, and continued them in publications. For the forces that had to conduct occupation duties in Japan or Germany, the comics produced taught about culture and customs of the country of occupation while also giving the soldiers a form of entertainment. The need to entertain troops through cartoons was continued after World War II and often was applied to the troops in occupied zones. While the books did not tell of combat, they did talk about what one might expect while living in what Americans believed to be strange lands, especially Japan. The stories often took actual experiences of the servicemen and used them as the basis for illustrations or even gags.

One such set of books discussed the adventures of sailors, soldiers and marines in Japan. Entitled *Babysan*, *Babysan's World*, and *When you get back from Japan* (all written by Bill Hume and John Annarino) the books told of how Americans found the world of the Orient an exotic, yet perplexing one of culture, diet, and beautiful women. One book (*When you get back from Japan*) noted that the troops might have a difficult time re-acclimating to America. One cartoon showed how US sailors now

liked the low beds (futons) and the geta (wooden shoes). Another cartoon showed the use of Japanese toilets (benjo), which were a squat kind as opposed to the sitting kind of the western world.¹ Some cartoons referred to the futons and *kotatsus* (charcoal heaters) in homes (for sleeping and warmth, respectively).² Most of the cartoons in the earlier books discussed Americans trying to date Japanese women. Most of the cartoons told of how the cultures differed and how a sailor or soldier might have issues trying to re-acclimate to America after a stint in Asia. As most Americans were unfamiliar with Asia and its people, illustrators often based their descriptions on World War II propaganda. Other cartoonists tried to present Asians in a more humanistic depiction, unlike the previous cartoons.

Texas Ritter and Robert Gadbois produced another set of cartoon books. These books were basically souvenirs of boot camp, regardless of branch of service. Many stories explained the basic issues all new recruits faced, from screaming drill instructors to the infamous medical inspection lines, to qualifying with arms.³ Such souvenirs also explained how the person may have chosen their specific branch of service. In all, the booklets were very similar to all branches but told of how induction into the armed forces was a universal experience for those who went in, regardless of branch of service.

Regardless of what branch of the armed forces the individual was in, the role of the grunt was universal in its pains as well as its benefits. Cartoon illustrations served the purpose of both entertaining as well as (albeit humorously) informing the recruit of what the services expected. The owner of the book could even rate their favorite and least enjoyable aspects of boot camp. By the time Korea became an active conflict in June of 1950, the need for military personnel was apparent. With the activation of military units to combat, leaders called reservists and new recruits into action. Because many military personnel had prior service experience, they expected certain amenities. The cartoons were a holdover from World War II and allowed members of the military to expand their creative skills while serving. Like Mauldin, some artists went on after World War II to fame and fortune in other venues of media by drawing general cartoons of life, while others came back to what they had drawn about previously, such as the war or Army life. Mauldin was one who had fame prior to Korea, and actually wrote a book concerning adjustment to civilian life after World War II, entitled *Back Home*. His civilian and military notoriety made him a natural to ask to cover the Korean War, albeit for a civilian magazine (Colliers).

Shel Silverstein was another cartoonist who started his career with illustrations of Korea War. He was in the US Army at the end stages of the conflict (1953), and he later compiled his military cartoons and published in his first book, *Take Ten*. He later went on to fame as a creator of children's books like *the Giving Tree* and *Where the Sidewalk Ends*. He also became a country music composer. Many of his cartoons in *Take Ten* were biting. For example, he has one officer hang himself rather than be transferred to Korea.⁴ Several of the other cartoons in the book dealt with military folks who had been placed in the stockade. One cartoon even tried to deal with the concept of loss while in the military, as

¹Bill Hume and John Annarino. *When You Get Back from Japan* (15th ed. Tokyo: Kyota, 1959), 62-63.

² *Ibid.*, 30-35.

³ Ted Ritter and Robert Gadbois. *You've Had it: The Story of Basic Trainin'* (New York: Victoria Publishing, 1950), 28-30.

⁴ Shel Silverstein, *Take Ten* (Tokyo: Pacific Stars and Stripes, 1953), 59.

Silverstein drew one cartoon that showed one Russian soldier lamenting to another that he had received a “Dear Ivan” letter announcing the end of a relationship.⁵

The War as depicted in the cartoons

For many people in the media, in the military, and in the public, the start of hostilities on the Korean peninsula was sudden; it took many people by surprise. Many reporters were not ready for the war and reporting on a fluid front often meant that reporters as well as combatants became aware of some events well after the fact. Other times, war correspondents were caught up in the fighting. Several cartoons alluded to this fact, especially in the Norval Packwood book *Leatherhead in Korea*, discussed below. The cartoonists from *Stars and Stripes* were slow to report on issues until after the breakout from Pusan in August of 1950 and the landing at the port of Inchon on September 15, 1950. Given the fact that the fighting was along a coastal plain and involved landing craft and featured terrain that was reminiscent of the Pacific in World War II, the cartoons played off those stereotypes. However, illustrators made notable changes to their depictions of Asian groups. The Japanese were no longer necessarily buck-toothed nor were the current enemies, be they the Chinese People’s Volunteers (CPV) or the North Korean People’s Army (NKPA).

Perhaps the most common collection of cartoons appeared in *Stars and Stripes*. Since the cartoons served as a way of creating humor for the soldier as well as providing entertainment, the cartoons had to be varied so that it would appeal to the masses in all services. The biggest collection of cartoons from *Stars and Stripes* was compiled into a book entitled *Out of Line*. The book itself used the talents of two dozen artists and represented all branches of service including the newest branch of service, the United States Air Force. Inter-service rivalry was (and still is) an essential part of *esprit de corps*, and illustrators often reflected these rivalries in the cartoons. Marines for instance, often consider themselves far better than the army in combat effectiveness, and the Air Force was originally part of the Army, and their split made them appear as weaker by both the army (only the pilots and their crews saw combat while enlisted men relaxed back on the base). As well, most enlisted men were in the rear, away from the fighting. Given the necessity for close air support, the need of the branches to intermix was vital to the effort. While the jokes abounded, reality was quite different.

The other major book of cartoons that dealt with the military in Korea was *Leatherhead in Korea*, which was produced primarily as a Marine book of cartoons and the history of the war. Staff Sergeant Norval Packwood also worked his creation *Leatherhead* into the Korean conflict. His first work, *Leatherhead: a Story of Marine Corps Boot Camp*, told of the mis-adventures of a new recruit in the traditions of the USMC (United States Marine Corps). The follow-up book *Leatherhead in Korea* was a combination of experiences and history of the Marines in Korea, from the initial call ups, to the landing at Inchon, to the fighting at the Chosin Reservoir.⁶ Packwood also included a section that had basic Korean phrases such as “CHAWM choo-SIP-see-yaw TAHM-ba” (Please give me cigarettes), or “Nah-noon CHAWM tahch-huss-SOOM-nee-dah” (I’m wounded), among other basic phrases.⁷

⁵ Ibid., 16.

⁶ Technically, the Korean name of the area is the Changjin Reservoir. Because the allies used maps produced during Japanese control of the Korean Peninsula, the name is in Japanese— Chosin—and is referred to as such in military publications. For further discussion, see Michael Varhola, *Fire and Ice: The Korean War, 1950-1953* (LaVergne, TN: DeCapo Press, 2000), 71.

⁷ Packwood, 80-81.

Mauldin and his depictions of the war

Bill Mauldin was one of the most celebrated cartoon artists for the American Army in World War II. His depictions of life on the Italian Front won him accolades that included a Pulitzer Prize in 1945 at the age of twenty-three. His occasional fights with officers also helped his reputation with the foot soldier. After the war, Mauldin continued his cartoons of "Willie and Joe." One such book, *Back Home*, showed how Willie and Joe readapted to life in the United States. The book concentrated on Mauldin's verbiage rather than artwork, but the story was a solid one.

Mauldin was asked to cover the Korean War for *Colliers*, and the magazine serialized his reports from January through April of 1952. While the cartoons and story were for the civilian as well as military population, the cartoons were quite similar to his military cartoons for *Stars and Stripes* in Europe. This was not a particular surprise. Italy and Korea are quite similar in many regards: both were peninsula; both had rugged mountains which make combat difficult especially when armor was involved; both had bitter weather conditions which range from heat and humidity in the summer to bitter cold in the winter; and both had a determined enemy that was often dug in. Both occupy an approximate area of latitude with Seoul just south of the 38th parallel, and Rome just north of the 41st parallel.

Mauldin was more judicious in his depictions of all services. Unlike his cartoons in *Stars and Stripes* during World War II that concentrated on US army personnel, his work with *Colliers* allowed him to discuss all of the branches of the military. His cartoons also followed his old units from Italy. The 45th Infantry Division (his original unit in Italy) and the 3rd Infantry Division (which fought alongside the 45th in Italy) were both featured in the cartoons of *Stars and Stripes* which depicted life in Korea. Mauldin had entered Korea in early 1952 when the fighting was in a relatively quiet phase. While he was not a combatant in Korea, he did try to capture the mood of the combatants with his rapier wit and insight while in Korea.

Combat and its depictions in comics

Enemies. One issue that the Allied cartoonists all concentrated on was their depiction of the enemy in some form, be it comic or bestial. The depiction of the enemy as subhuman is an essential part of training the combatant. However, some nuances had to be employed. For example, the World War II depiction of the Japanese with simian-like features was toned down occasionally for the illustrations of the Chinese and the Koreans, especially since both sides had Koreans fighting. Some heavily racist depictions existed, but such was more the exception than the norm. The cartoonists' depictions of the Chinese CPV soldiers were somewhat easier, as they commonly had a padded uniform that was easier to distinguish in artwork. Some artists noted the occasional animosity of the Chinese and North Koreans. One particular cartoon that Mauldin drew concerned the appearance of the North Korean general of the negotiation party at Panmunjom who insisted on preening and posturing, while his Chinese counterpart looked on bemusedly.⁸ Two other cartoons depicted the "enemy" (at times as North Korean, at other times Chinese) engaging in the time honored tradition of "gold-bricking," in this case smoking while leaning against a haystack.⁹ Often the illustrators' depictions of Chinese and North Koreans were intermixed as the units mingled and were not easily distinguished by Americans. An Australian cartoon was about a Russian pilot who crashed his plane; whereupon, his superior in Moscow told him to turn in

⁸ Mauldin, 161.

⁹ Mauldin, 168.

his stripes.¹⁰ This reference underlined the fact that Russians, while technically “advisors,” were participants in the fighting.

The Chinese saw the Americans as a cross between Jewish depictions and the traditional “long nosed barbarian.” Most times the cartoons depicted the allies as cruel and as servants of another master, be it American businessmen making a profit from the war, or even the Japanese whom the Americans were “overseeing.” For example, one book showed cartoons of MacArthur being bombastic to the point of recklessness.¹¹ In others, he had the hubris to risk many of his own men to satisfy his own pride and image. The images were similar to the depictions of Jews in many Soviet and German posters of World War II. The most telling part of a Chinese book of cartoons was that they demonstrated that the US was actually acting on behalf of their Japanese “hosts.” The animosity between the Chinese and Koreans towards the Japanese was not lost on many Asians.

Other Asian cartoons depicted the allies, especially the Americans, as being little more than large children with expensive toys. This attitude was not new, as the Chinese often told of how they distrusted the “smelly barbarians” as far back as European intervention in China in the 1700s.¹² The Chinese also considered the Westerners as incapable of fighting with any sort of honor or of being able to offer anything worthwhile to Asian culture.

The American cartoonists were just as biased towards their enemies. Illustrators often depicted the Chinese as using the generosity of American aid during World War II (as well as the weaponry supplied to the nationalist Guomingdong) against the Americans later on. One such cartoon in *Leatherhead in Korea* showed two marines looking at dead Chinese volunteers, one of which held a captured weapon, in this case a Thompson submachine gun. The marine noted “lend lease.”¹³ This cartoon was also important because it showed dead enemy soldiers. Most WWII service cartoons did not do this.¹⁴ Cartoonist depicted Koreans not at all, unless it related to civilians.

Allies and their depictions. As with the illustrations of World War II, the cartoons of the Korean War focused on the actions and interactions of the American military men. This is not to say that artists failed to mention the men of other allies, for they were. However, the illustrator’s use of allies was comical rather than being true interactions of units. For instance, one cartoon noted that an American unit had come across a British unit. One American soldier states “I think they’re British. Can you speak any British?”¹⁵ Other cartoons noted the relative rarity of military units from different countries in contact with each other. Steve Jordan illustrated one cartoon that resonated with some sort of cooperation. It

¹⁰ Anonymous, RAAF cartoon, n.d.

¹¹ Guangzhou Shi wen lian mei shu xie hui, *Kang Mei yuan Chao bao jia wei guo man hua ji. Di yi ji.* (Guangzhou: Xin hua shu dian hua nan zong fen dian, 1951).

¹² Rhoads Murphy, *Asia: a cultural History* (6th ed.; New York: Pearson Education publishing, 2009), 247, 506.

¹³ Packwood, 42.

¹⁴ Of all the cartoon books produced by the American armed forces or secondary publishers, the author only has found two cartoons that depicted dead German troops in World War II. Both were featured in Dick Wingert’s *Herbert*.

¹⁵ Various authors, *Out of Line* (Tokyo: Pacific Stars and Stripes), 1952.

featured members of the Royal Marines who had been fighting alongside the American Marines at the Chosin (Changjin) reservoir, both at Hagaru-Ri and at Koto-Ri.¹⁶

There were some cartoons from other contingents. Artists drew one series of cartoons for the entertainment of the Royal Australian Air Force stationed at Kimpo Airfield. Not published in a book, illustrators drew on a wall inside the mess hall. The cartoons noted the similarities of the Korean and Australian pilots, as was noted by the cartoon "I wonder what those Meteor/MIG pilots are doing now?" Another noted that the Australian pilots were often involved with some sort of chicanery against their communist counterparts. As usual, artists depicted the enemy in a bestial manner. Illustrators turned enemy pilots into orangutans or gorillas. The Australians also mentioned the Russians as pilots. An American cartoon from *Stars and Stripes* showed the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) contingent in Korea, which was an instance of an American military cartoon mentioning an ally fighting in Korea. In this case, the plane had an arrow in the center of the identification roundel.¹⁷

Age of soldiers was another concern. Cartoonists made fun of the use of WWII veterans and equipment by troops in Korea. A cartoon in *Stars and Stripes* noted that "it must be another reservist," complete with long white beard who was flying in a World War I era biplane. The ancient reservist had nine MIG kills noted on his plane, which showed his flying prowess.¹⁸ This was a sign that while they may not have new equipment, they were still doing their jobs. Artists drew some cartoons that showed the difference between the WWII vets and the new grunts. Norval Packwood drew several cartoons showing a grizzled old veteran with no teeth who constantly told of life in the old corps.¹⁹ Even Silverstein got into the act. In one of his cartoons, he noted that the soldier drawing supplies from the quartermaster was complaining about the old campaign hat and puttees.²⁰

Battle. One of the conditions by which many troops fought was the human wave attacks launched particularly by the Chinese after November of 1950. The Marines had to defend against many of these attacks at the Changjin reservoir, so it was not surprising that Packwood depicted these sorts of attacks in *Leatherhead in Korea*. One cartoon took up an entire page and noted two Marines fighting against a swarm of troops, until one Marine commented to the other "To Hell with tradition! Let's get out'a here!"²¹

Another cartoon noted that the enemy (presumed to be North Korean, given the other cartoons which noted the fighting in Seoul), was willing to use any staging area, even if it was a cultural one like a Buddhist temple. A Marine stated "No use messing up such a nice temple for a few enemy...Don't shoot 'till we get them away from the pretty part."²² Perhaps one of the grimmest cartoons was the one in which Packwood depicted two Marines talking and inquiring about the location of the flamethrower in their section. Against the wall were the outlines of two North Korean soldiers. While the result was obvious,

¹⁶ Jordan, *Korean War Sketches*, 19-20.

¹⁷ Various authors, *Out of line*, 79.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁹ Packwood, *passim*.

²⁰ These were both standard parts of kits from WWI. See Silverstein's *Take Ten*, 7.

²¹ Packwood, 36-37.

²² *Ibid.*, 24-25.

the act itself was not shown.²³ Perhaps that was too much for a humorous comment. The cartoon was very similar to a five-page story line drawn in *Frontline Combat* comic book from Entertaining Comics, entitled "Corpse on the Imjin." In that story, the writer and artist placed the reader into the story line ("You're holding the knife...") and at the end "you feel ashamed."²⁴

Weather conditions. One of the most common observations/complaints of any soldier was the weather. Given the extreme conditions in Korea, the weather often played a significant part in the cartoons. For instance, *Stars and Stripes* had two cartoons that specifically mentioned the meteorological services. One noted that the weather officer was predicting snow and was pushing a general on skis, even though there was no snow on the ground. The weather officer had predicted snow, as that was what the general obviously wanted.²⁵ Another cartoon showed a weather officer wearing a turban, calling himself Sgt. Swami, for his prediction skills.

Mud was another significant weather condition that plagued the troops. Mud could clog weapons and was a factor in mobility as well as morale. Many of the cartoons featured in the books noted mud in some form or another. Mauldin noted that the physical conditions of Korea were quite similar to Italy during allied operations in World War II and that soldiers made many of the same complaints. Other cartoons noted that soldiers had to sleep in tents that were damp due to the mud in which they were pitched. Mauldin was quick to note that the two experiences were different for the troops. Officers often inspected for trench foot in Korea (which could adversely affect fighting strength) while in Italy it was not taken as seriously, so jokes about wet socks were more the norm.

Perhaps nothing was noted more than the weather, specifically the cold. All of the cartoon compilations noted that troops had to face bone-chilling cold and winds that did not allow for fires for warmth or for cooking. A Packwood cartoon showed a Marine officer calling in a napalm strike. At the end of the cartoon panel, the reader was shown that the napalm strike was against a building, not for a concentration of the enemy, but to ignite the house so that Marines could get warm in the bitter cold.²⁶

Cartoonists created many illustrations that referred to the abysmal conditions during the conflict, especially in the first winter of the war. The cartoons told of how soldiers might try to heat up coffee or c-rations but even after having the tin can cook for several minutes the top was frozen, the bottom burnt. Perhaps the soldier might be able to get a few bites out of the center, which were relatively warm. Even the coffee was cold or was depicted as never being hot enough to warm the person drinking it.²⁷

Rivalries and universal complaints. The cartoons often commented on inter-service rivalries, especially when men of other branches called the stature of the Marines into question. In turn, the Marines expressed much displeasure with Army General Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Commander of Allied Powers in the Pacific. One Packwood cartoon in *Leatherhead in Korea* showed MacArthur posturing while a vicious fight involving Marines went on around him. The caption noted that the Marines

²³ Ibid., 24.

²⁴ Harvey Kurzman. "Corpse of the Imjin," *Frontline Combat* 25 (Jan/Feb. 1952). Reprint in *Two-Fisted Tales: The EC Archives*, vol. 2 (2) (Timonium, MD: Gemstone Publishing, 2007), 63-68.

²⁵ Various authors, *Out of Line*, 36

²⁶ Packwood, 48-49.

²⁷ Ibid, 43.

still held enmity towards the general, even though the Marine simply says “Excuse me, *sir*.”²⁸ While rank must be respected, the tone in which one might say “sir” could convey a lack of respect. The Army took its swipes at the Air Force, which had become a separate branch of the Armed Forces in 1947. Several of the *Out of Line* cartoons lambasted the role of the Air Force and its sometimes slovenly main character, an airman named Thurlow. They often depicted Thurlow as unfit for his supposed job of retrofitting jets with propellers, or as slacking off while other soldiers went past. In fact, the Thurlow character was the one that noted Korea as the police action in the title of this essay.²⁹

Regardless of branch, armed forces personnel often took aim at other forms of authority. Like World War II cartoons from *Stars and Stripes* and *Yank*, Military Police (MPs) often depicted for their heavy handedness in immediately declaring an area off limits. Packwood and many of the other cartoonists in *Stars and stripes* illustrated that situation as well as the seemingly young age of the MPs. Even Mauldin stated that MPs were often wary of anyone who might upset the conditions that they strove to maintain.

Cartoonists made references to the (then) modern media. The Marines in Packwood’s book often referred to Marilyn Monroe in posters, as well as Marilyn Maxwell in reference. Others noted that their particular tent was ON LIMITS for Monroe. Other cartoons referred to Lana Turner and various other entertainers and the soldiers’ desire to meet these famous movie stars. For the Marines, John Wayne was the other major Hollywood entertainer who figured heavily in the cartoons. They loved Wayne, primarily because of his famed performance as Sergeant Striker in the 1949 movie *The Sands of Iwo Jima*.

Equipment. As with any major conflict, illustrators often highlighted the men’s use of new tools of war, especially if the tools were necessary for the war effort. The cartoon artwork from Korea was no exception. During the conflict, illustrators often focused on the use of helicopters, as was the ubiquitous jeep. Air Force cartoonists depicted the use of jet planes. Two of Packwood’s cartoons noted that the commanders used helicopters for the evacuation of wounded and for the re-supply of troops in the field. But, senior officers also used them to conduct surprise inspections of troops in the field. This sort of grousing against officers was nothing new, and, for these cartoons, it was simply the updating the old joke with new technology.³⁰ The helicopter also was used in a Rube Goldberg-esque sort of new secret weapon to fight the communists through guile and trickery. It actually involved a bicycle driven helicopter with a cold water sprinkler, which would be used on communists, freezing them in the Korean air. After the enemy was instantly frozen into a block of ice, allied soldiers grabbed them with hooks and towed them back to base. Another contraption involved a truck equipped with hot rice and pictures of beautiful Chinese women which would lure Chinese soldiers to dive into the picture where they would be knocked out. Again the idea of not taking the enemy as a serious combatant was common but was also a dangerous way of thought.³¹ Finally, Mauldin noted the use of flak jackets in his book for *Colliers*. While

²⁸ Packwood, 16.

²⁹ Various authors, *Out of Line*, 2.

³⁰ Packwood, 70, 72.

³¹ Various authors, *Out of Line*, 72-73.

many troops had not been issued such equipment, Mauldin noted that a Marine acquired one, which allowed him to take a few extra risks while taking pictures.³²

The references to alcohol were often shown in Korean cartoons, as they were in World War II. One cartoon depicted a soldier with two canisters strapped to his suspenders. On closer inspection, the readers saw that the “canisters” were actually beer cans.³³ Other cartoons showed the home-made stills that some men built so that the troops could have alcohol. Some illustrators showed the use of bottles of booze as a temptation/booby trap for North Korean or Chinese troops to spring on Allied troops, or the like.³⁴ Perhaps the most fanciful of the lot was a cartoon that showed soldiers drinking from an ad hoc still made from the wreckage of an Army water truck.³⁵

What can be learned?

The cartoons drawn for and read by Allied troops were not much different than their World War II counterparts. The conflicts used similar weapons; the timeframe was relatively close (1940s and 1950s); and the situations similar. The cartoons still tried to make light of the conditions by which soldiers fought, especially those that were the most debilitating. Where the cartoons seemed to deviate from World War II cartoons were their illustrations of the enemy (at least from an Allied perspective), as well as the depictions of the dead enemy. It was not graphic in any aspect, but the drawing of the dead was more pronounced.

The cartoons offered a different perspective of the war--in that the reader (military) wanted to make light of a potentially serious or deadly situation. The universal gripes of the soldier concerning the age-old vices of gambling and drinking; the desire for women; and the complaints about why they were fighting the war (often while complaining about the terrain) came through. Regardless, the soldier-produced cartoons often gave the combatants something to laugh about while many miles from home. In that way, cartoonists helped the soldiers remain sane in an insane war.

³² Mauldin, 133.

³³ Various authors, *Out of Line*, 39

³⁴ Packwood, 26.

³⁵ Various authors, *Out of Line*, 53.

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