

# PS MAGAZINE: 50 YEARS OF PM



## Sgt. "HALF-MAST" *Question Dept.*



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Half-Mast and Connie,  
from an early issue  
of ARMY MOTORS

This issue of PS marks our 50th anniversary as the Army's preventive maintenance monthly magazine. PS hit the field in June 1951 to help our troops take better care of their equipment. Today in June 2001, PS still gives soldiers the best maintenance information available.

The concept of PS actually began in World War II with *Army Motors*, the Army's first maintenance magazine. It was in *Army Motors* that PS' two most prominent characters, MSG Half-Mast and Connie Rodd, first appeared.

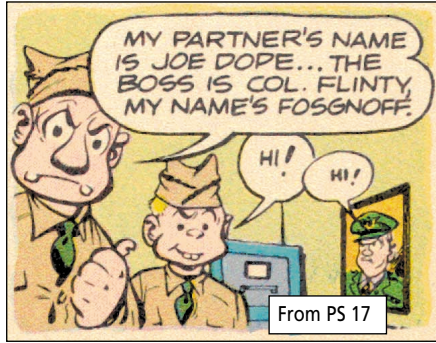
As the Korean War heated up, the Army needed a way to get maintenance information to soldiers quickly and in an easily-understood form. So the Army turned to Will Eisner, an artist famous for his work on the *Spirit* comic strip—and one of the artists for *Army Motors*—to design PS.

Half-Mast from PS 67  
and Connie from PS 53



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Eisner's creation was very similar to the one you're reading now. As a "post-script" to official Army publications, PS still tries to catch soldiers' attention with a mixture of comic book characters, vivid graphics and color, gags, talking equipment, and informal writing. It still sends its message as clearly as possible, emphasizing pictures over words.



From PS 17

As many retired Army maintainers can tell you, Connie and Bonnie were presented as pinups for many years. Their scanty outfits were designed to lure male readers to the maintenance stories.

The Army decided in the 1950s that it didn't want soldiers portrayed as incompetent, so Fosgnoff and Dope were both gone by 1957. After complaints of sexism from inside and outside the Army in the early 1970s, Connie and Bonnie were transformed from pinups to modestly dressed, intelligent maintenance experts.

Other characters who have come and gone over the years include Sergeant Bull Dozer (who specialized in construction equipment) and SFC Macon Sparks (who was the PS commo expert).

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But, as our society and our Army have changed over these 50 years, so has PS.

In the early days, Half-Mast and Connie were assisted by Privates Fosgnoff and Joe Dope, two Beetle Bailey-type soldiers who were constantly screwing up. As the number of African-Americans in the Army increased, an African-American woman, Bonnie, was added to the PS staff in 1970.



Connie, Bonnie and Percy the skunk, from PS 264

Macon Sparks, from PS 375

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PS strives for complete accuracy so that soldiers know they can depend on the magazine's info. Most of the material in PS comes from writers' frequent visits to field units, where they talk with soldiers who actually operate and work on the equipment. All articles are reviewed twice by the AMC commodity command responsible for the equipment—once when written and again when words and pictures have been combined. The whole review process normally takes about 4 months.

From the beginning, PS has been written and edited by Army civilians and its art drawn by contractors. Norman Colton was the first editor from 1951-1953, followed for a short while by Jacob Hay.

James Kidd served as PS' editor for almost 30 years from 1954-82 and trained the editors who followed him: Donald Hubbard, James Boblenz, and now Jerome Hill.

Will Eisner drew most of the magazine's art for its first 20 years and then one of his assistants, Murphy Anderson (who also worked on the *Superman*, *Batman*, and *Flash* comic books), did it for the next 10. Others who labored as PS' artists include Chuck Kramer, Alfredo Alcala, Dan Speigle, Steve High, Jeff Jonas, Diane Backes, Augie Scotto, Scott Madsen, and Vic Scarpelli. PS' newest artist, Joe Kubert, drew the *Sergeant Rock* comic book series for many years.

The PS home office was initially located at Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD. In 1955, it was moved to Raritan Arsenal, NJ, with subsequent moves to Ft Knox, KY, in 1962, Lexington, KY, in 1973 and to its current home at Redstone Arsenal, AL, in 1993.

What does the future hold for PS? The only sure thing is that as long as PS exists it will continue to provide soldiers the best, most up-to-date maintenance information available.

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