WORLD WAR II COMEDY
PROF. IAN ABRAMS
READING #3

HUMORISTS IN UNIFORM

GEORGE BAKER & BILL MAULDIN
The two most pervasive cartoon images of the American serviceman during the Second World War were both created by, unsurprisingly, American servicemen.

Sgt. George Baker created Sad Sack (a shortened form of a more colorful military term of disparagement). Private Sack was the ultimate hapless loser in uniform, always at the mercy of fate, superior officers, his fellow soldiers, and occasionally even the enemy. Sad Sack was a "mute" comic, telling its stories in sequences of action without dialogue. After the war, Sad Sack lived on in modified form into the 1980's as a comic book character.
SNACK

MESS HALL

SGT. GEORGE BAKER
SEX HYGIENE
THE BULLETIN BOARD

NOTICE
ALL MEN WILL FALL OUT AT 4:00 THIS MORNING AND PROCEED TO CROSS THE DELAWARE.

BY ORDER OF
General George Washington
DEC 26TH 1776

SGT. GEORGE BAKER
REAR GUARD

MOVIE STAR IN PERSON

BEST DRESSED SOLDIER TO BE SELECTED AS HONOR GUARD

SGT. GEORGE BAKER
OFFICERS ONLY

[Cartoon images showing various scenes related to officers and enlisted men, with signs indicating different areas such as the bar, officers only, enlisted men only, and ritzy food.]
PISTOL PRACTICE

[Cartoon illustrations of people shooting guns, with the word 'BANG' in each panel, and a note by Sgt. George Baker]
THE PROPOSITION

[Cartoon panels showing various interactions between characters, illustrating a story or comic.

Sgt. George Baker]
DEPLORABLE CONDITIONS
THE VICTOR

[Series of cartoon images showing soldiers and prisoners, with one soldier standing at a gate labeled "P.W. Stockade" and holding a sign reading "To be shipped to the U.S.A." signed by SGT. GEORGE BAKER]
OBJECTIVE

PARIS 250 KM
PARIS 200 KM
PARIS 150 KM
PARIS 100 KM
PARIS 50 KM

PARIS
PIE D'ORLEANS

OFF LIMITS TO AMERICAN TROOPS

Sgt. George Baker
PLANS

1. U.S.A.
2. Discharge
3. Do not disturb
4. Marriage
5. Travel orders
6. Pvt. sad sack
7. Will be shipped to the Pacific

Sgt. George Baker
Bill Mauldin was barely 20 when, as a soldier with the 45th Infantry Division, he started drawing cartoons of American "dogfaces." He eventually settled on two characters, Willie and Joe, GIs in the European Theater— weary, filthy, unshaven, but always coping with the Army and combat.

Mauldin won a Pulitzer Prize in 1945, at age 23, and another one for political cartooning in 1959.

Unlike Baker's Sad Sack, Mauldin's single-panel cartoons had dialogue in the form of captions, but his most famous image is silent: a modern Cavalry officer putting his faithful steed out of its misery.
"... forever, Amen. Hit the dirt."

"Just gimme a coupla aspirin. I already got a Purple Heart."
"I feel like a fugitive from th' law of averages."

"I can't git no lower, Willie. Me buttons is in th' way."
"That can't be no combat man. He's lookin' fer a fight."

"This is Fragrant Flower Advance. Gimme yer goddam number."
"Don't startle 'im, Joe. It's almost full."

"Try to say sumpin' funny, Joe."
"Don't hurry for me, son. I like to see young men take an interest in their work."

"Th' hell this ain't th' most important hole in th' world. I'm in it."
"My son. Five days old. Good-lookin' kid, ain't he?"

"Oh, I likes officers. They makes me want to live till the war's over."
"I need a couple guys what don't owe me no money for a little routine patrol."

"Able Fox Five to Able Fox. I got a target but ya gotta be patient."
"Th' krauts ain't followin' ya so good on 'Lili Marlene' tonight, Joe. Ya think maybe somethin' happened to their tenor?"

"My, sir—what an enthusiastic welcome!"
"Nonsense. S-2 reported that machine gun silenced hours ago. Stop wiggling your fingers at me."
THE END