

Bill Mauldin: Willie and Joe

by Jason Wells

In 2014, Bill Mauldin [Figure C1] was commemorated on a 44-cent stamp for his classic cartoons depicting life for infantry men, mostly through the characters “Willie and Joe”. The 44-cent stamp show both Mauldin and “Willie and Joe”.



Figure C1

Born in New Mexico in 1921, Mauldin joined the Army in 1940 and soon created his iconic characters “Willie and Joe” to represent the common G.I., popularly known as dogfaces. The theme of his cartoons were mostly the struggles of the soldiers while gently ribbing the officer class. He did this throughout the war, even though this led to a clash with General Patton. The reason for the clash was because of Patton's insistence that all soldiers be clean-shaven, even in combat. Patton went so far as trying to ban “Stars and Stripes” magazine (the paper that Mauldin worked for) and saying that Mauldin was an “unpatriotic anarchist” and he would “throw his ass in jail”. General Eisenhower (General Patton's superior officer) put the kibosh on that. Ironically, Mauldin respected Patton, but felt he was crazy and thought he was from the Dark Ages but admired the fact that he won and got soldiers out of the foxholes. The G.I.'s adored him. Figure C2 is a FDC depicting his “Willie and Joe” characters.

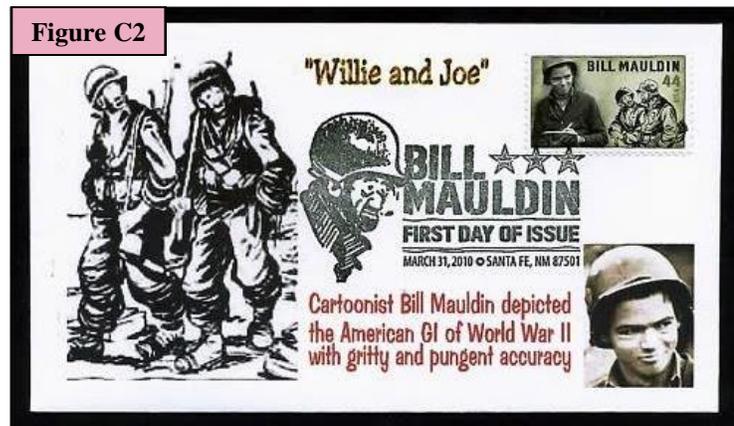


Figure C2

After the war, Mauldin won a Pulitzer Prize for his wartime work as well as a #1 best-seller “Up Front”. Mauldin became a political cartoonist, usually with a bent toward



Figure C4

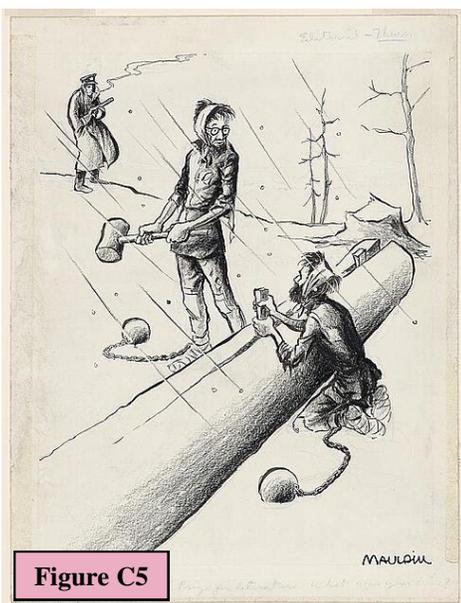


Figure C5

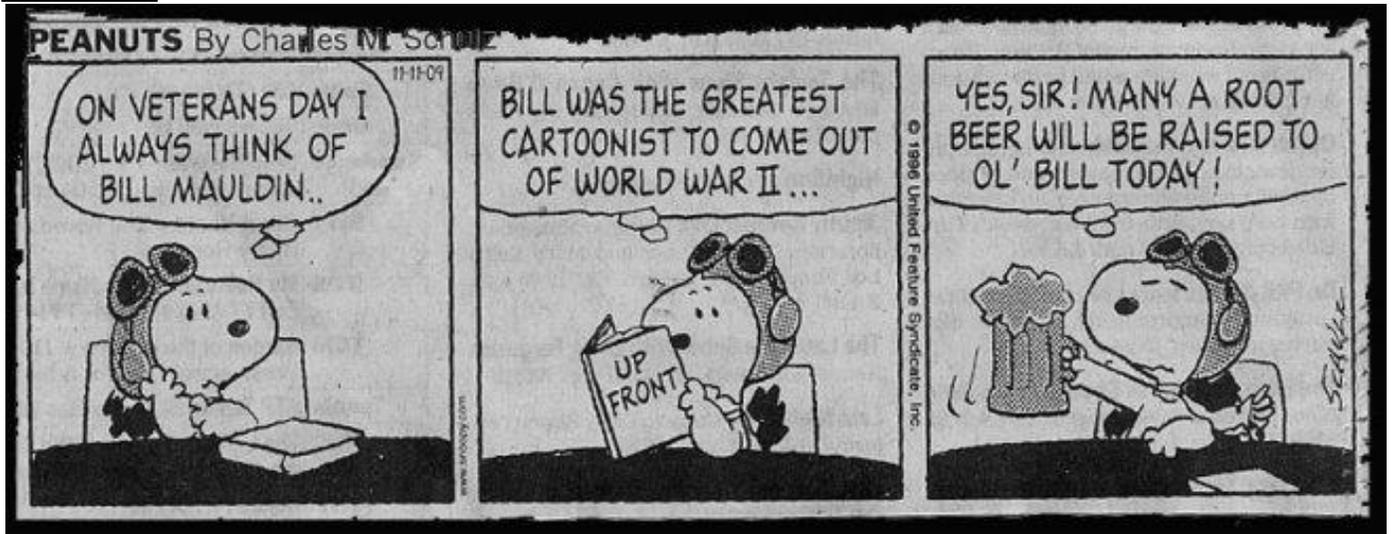


Figure C3

“Willie”, made the cover of Time magazine [Figure C3] and again in 1961 Mauldin himself made the cover of Time magazine. His most famous post war political cartoon came in 1963 after the Kennedy assassination. Shown as Figure C4.

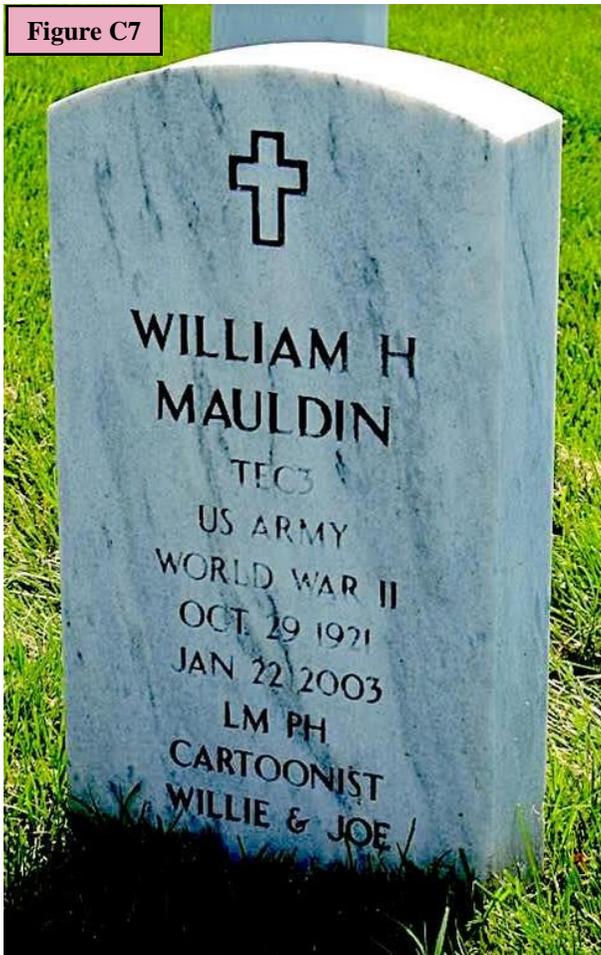
He won a second Pulitzer Prize in 1959 for the cartoon depicting Russian Boris Pasternak. Shown as **Figure C5**. The caption reads “I won the Nobel Prize for literature. What was your crime?”

Figure C6



In his later years he worked for the Chicago Sun-Times. He was also featured in many “Peanuts” cartoons as a war-time buddy of Snoopy **[Figure C6]**.

Figure C7



In his last days in 2001, word got out that he was alone at an assisted living facility, he was showered with thousands of letters from former WWII G.I.'s. He died in 2002 and was buried at Arlington National Cemetery **[Figure C7]**.

[Editor’s note: Few have risen to the level that Mauldin achieved – with his service he used a pen and paper to make things real. That is an extraordinary accomplishment. As a young reader many times I can remember seeing this reference in the *Peanuts* cartoon – it was only in later life I came to understand the meaning. Rest in peace sir.]

Additional material provided by Robert Sazama.