

What sells Newspapers?

by Harry Zirkelbach 08-23-2010

The debate goes on in Editorial Rooms about “News”.

This has been shown in all movies and plays,
where the rough and tumble reporter
seeks an “exclusive” that will rock the world,
sell the paper, make the by-line noticed.

Yet, why, when a paper closes,
the survivor(s) gobble the funnies of the loser?

You know the answer. That’s why today, we writers are considering one or another cartoon character who appears in the Denver Post, and the almost unknown writer who created the improbable, seldom aging, hero of these sketches.

So that you’ll be intrigued, the creator/presenter of my cartoon is Mort Walker. On His Sunday there are typically eight drawings, maybe 15 balloons of dialogue.

Which of the two is more important?

Neither, to me; they are supportive in story and humor.

This Strip being considered, has as background two G.I.s of WWII combat.

One was Sad Sack, a Private who could do nothing right, seldom saw the war, but was made to be likable.

The other, solders seeing combat, almost real to the reader, created by a solder, Bill Mauldin. His Willie and Joe, slogged through the misery of the backwater war in Italy, with the 45th Division, through the pages of the Stars and Stripes.

This a delight of the average G.I.,
and dismay of some, Patton,

and approval by others, especially Eisenhower.

The cartoon never had a title, just Mauldin’s name often showing the sergeants, Joe and Willie, in one miserable moment after another.

Our post-war comic strip solder, created by Mort Walker, upgrades Sad Sack slightly, still a Private, forever. Of course it ignores any hint of war.

He’s Beetle Bailey, is given a daily nemesis, drawn as the overweight, abusive, profane, slightly competent, Sergeant Snorkel.

both more buffoon than inspiration.

Neither is a military hero, nor is the General Halftrack, shown completely incompetent. Openly, and oddly, the U.S.Army does not complain, somehow accepting humor in the Strip, even while spoofing Camp Swampy and its military personnel these past 60 years, since introduced in September 1950.

Does the Comic Strips still sell newspapers?

Apparently Management votes a redounding “yes”, for when the Rocky Mountain News ended, the Denver Post absorbed their cartoons. Still, Editors must be dazed when they see readers wend through the Comic Pages without laughing, day after day, while on the editorial page, a good Mike Keefe Cartoon will have the readers routinely offering comments at work and coffee break, and in writing to the Post. Of course some are enraged, others laughing. What’s your belief?

Yes, Mort Walker originated Beetle Bailey, credits as co-conspirators over these years, Brian and Gregg Walker., keeping his ideas as All Family fun.