

Who's the Real Kilroy

Here's a bit of history for you!

KILROY WAS HERE

Who the heck was KILROY??

In 1946 the American Transit Association, through its radio program "Speak to America," sponsored a nationwide contest to find the real Kilroy, offering a prize of a trolley car to the person who could prove himself to be the genuine article.

Almost 40 men stepped forward to make that claim, but only James Kilroy from Halifax, Mass. Had evidence of his identity.

Kilroy, a 46-year-old shipyard worker during the war, worked as a checker at the Fore River Shipyard in Quincy. His job was to check on the number of rivets completed. Riveters, on piecework, got paid by the rivet.

Kilroy would count a block of rivets and put a check mark in semi-waxed lumber chalk, so the rivets wouldn't be counted twice. When Kilroy went off duty, the riveters would erase the mark.

Later, an off-shift inspector would come through and count the rivets a second time, resulting in double pay for the riveters.

One day Kilroy's foreman, upset about all the wages being paid to riveters, asked him to investigate. He then realized what had been going on.

The tight spaces he had to crawl into checking the rivets, didn't lend themselves to lugging around a paint can and brush, so Kilroy decided to use a stick with the waxy chalk. He continued to put his checkmark on each job he inspected, but added KILROY WAS HERE in king-sized letters next to the check, and eventually added the sketch of the chap with the long nose peering over the fence and that became part of the Kilroy message. Once he did that, the riveters stopped trying to wipe away his marks.

Ordinarily the rivets and chalk marks would have been covered up with paint. With war on, however, ships were leaving the Quincy Yard so fast that there wasn't time to paint them.

As a result, Kilroy's inspection

"trademark" was seen by thousands of servicemen who boarded the troopships the yard produced. His message apparently rang a bell with the servicemen because they picked it up and spread it all over Europe and the South Pacific. Before the war's end, "Kilroy" had been here, there, and everywhere on the long haul to Berlin and Tokyo.

To troops outbound in those ships, however, he was a complete mystery; all they knew for sure was that some jerk named Kilroy had "been there first." As a joke, U.S. servicemen began placing the graffiti wherever they landed, claiming it was already there when they arrived.

Kilroy became the U.S. super-GI who had always "already been" wherever GI's went. It became a challenge to place the logo in the most unlikely places imaginable (It is said to be atop Mt. Everest, the Statue of Liberty, the underside of the Arch De Triumphe, and even scrawled in the dust on the moon.)

As the war went on, the legend grew. Underwater demolition teams routinely sneaked ashore on Japanese-held islands in the Pacific to map the terrain for the coming invasions by U.S. troops (and thus, presumably, were the first GI's there). On one occasion, however, they reported seeing enemy troops painting over the Kilroy logo!

In 1945, an outhouse was built for the exclusive use of Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill at the Potsdam conference.

The first person inside was Stalin, who emerged and asked his aide (in Russian), "Who is Kilroy?"

To help prove his authenticity in 1946, James Kilroy brought along officials from the shipyard and some of the riveters. He won the trolley car, which he gave to his nine children as a Christmas gift and set up as a playhouse in the Kilroy front yard in Halifax, Massachusetts.

Our thanks to Ray Benfield, 204 Worthland Court, Winston-Salem, 27103-6255 who sent this to us.

Plant Reunion Set

Beaunit/Burlington Statesville Plant employees will have a reunion Saturday, June 7, at 3 p.m. at the Boxcar Grille, Taylorsville Hwy. Statesville. RSVP to 704-878-0837, 704-872-3569, 704-883-7519 or 704-872-0554.



PAT ABELL, PHYSICAL THERAPIST, led members of the Statesville Woman's Club in exercise at the April 3 meeting. In other business, club members collected cell phones, eyeglasses and paper products for My Sister's House; and provided refreshments for the regional Battle of Books. Upcoming events included the annual geranium sale on April 26 and a yard sale May 31 to benefit Springs Academy.

Kay Receives Bronze Achievement Medal



CADET MAJOR PHILIP KAY at left receives the Veterans of Foreign Wars Bronze Achievement Medal from Statesville Post 2031 Post Commander Jimmy Aldridge and Past Post Commander Cathy Williams.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars Bronze Achievement Medal for Outstanding Achievements and Exceptional Leadership Ability was presented to JROTC Cadet Major Philip Kay, who attends Statesville Iredell High School.

The presentation was made by the

Statesville VFW Post 2031 Post Commander, Jimmy Aldridge of Statesville and Past Post Commander and Past President of The Ladies Auxiliary to the VFW, Cathy Williams, of Mooresville. The VFW Post 2031 presents these medals to one Cadet from four local high schools.



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