

Pigeon Detachment,^{Frank} Here Since 1917, Now^{more-} Shifted To Crowder^{month} SCM 10/15/43

October, the traditional moving month, finds one of Fort Monmouth's oldest units, the Pigeon Breeding and Training Detachment, moving to Camp Crowder, Missouri. Pigeons have been bred and trained on this post since 1917, and many new applications for their use in communication work have been developed here.

The reason why birds are used to carry messages in preference to the products of modern science is usually to maintain radio silence. This was first illustrated in the Dieppe raid when, with all other means unacceptable, two pigeons were released simultaneously with duplicate messages. They covered the distance from the French coast to military headquarters in England, 27 miles, in 32 minutes flat.

Pigeon Service Expands

Since the beginning of hostilities in this war, pigeons have been adopted by almost all branches of the service. Submarines, bombers and paratroops are some of the more recent adapters of this mode of communication.

Lt. Thomas E. Black Sr., OIC of the pigeon detachment here, was recently called upon to furnish pigeons for a bond rally in Newark. The purchaser of each bond was permitted to send one message by carried pigeon, with Fort Monmouth acting as the clearing station. The idea sold more than \$50,000 in bonds.

The birds are handled as carefully as thoroughbred horses, their pedigrees being carefully checked. Descendants of pigeons of World War I are flying in combat zones today. T. Sgt. Thomas A. Czelnick supervises the care and breeding of the birds here. He acts as "Cupid" in the mating of the birds to assure the production of only the purest types. The records of the pigeons are carefully charted and when one goes on "sick call," his record card is marked "duty to hospital."

It is anticipated that some of the homing pigeons may fly back to Fort Monmouth from Camp Crowder before they become "settled" there. The Post Veterinarian has arranged to care for any home-sick birds.

Army Closes Fort Monmouth Pigeon School; Birds Got Too Much Publicity to Suit Officers

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

FORT MONMOUTH, N. J., Dec. 3.—To the mild relief of some Signal Corps officers here, the Army's famous pigeon-training school at Fort Monmouth, which has graduated untold numbers of military-minded birds, has been discontinued at the base and its personnel and students shipped to Florida preparatory to duty overseas, it was learned tonight.

The official explanation was that the pigeon outfit had reached the peak of its training and had therefore been called to active duty. Schooling of pigeons and their handlers will continue at other stations, but no longer at Monmouth. The reason for the consequent relief was summed up in the comment of one officer.

"Nothing wrong with pigeons," he said. "Nothing at all. I like them myself. But maybe people will begin to get the idea now that the Signal Corps wasn't organized just to train pigeons. We do quite a number of other things and have quite a few other ways of communication."

Public relations spokesmen gave the background for the tinge of bitterness. Everybody likes pigeons, they said, and so the newspapers know that everybody will go for stories about pigeons. When the war came, they continued, scores of stories about the feats of pigeon messengers appeared and more scores of stories about the

way the Signal Corps was training them.

All the stories were true, of course, they hastened to add, and pigeons are fine—indeed, very important. But—"the Signal Corps wasn't organized just to train pigeons."

Lately, the spokesmen declared, the Army has been attempting to "play down" the pigeon stories. "Ten years ago people thought that pigeons could do everything but talk," they said. "There were all sorts of ideas about training pigeons. 'Give them carrots to eat so they can see to fly at night.' And so on. These schemes didn't work out, but nevertheless the publicity was all out of proportion. Pigeon training was not a flop, but not as successful as might have been indicated by the papers. The important thing to get across is that pigeons are only a very minor part of the Signal Corps, really."

In New York City pigeon fanciers remained unconcerned. At Lost Battalion Hall, 93-29 Queens Boulevard, Elmhurst, Queens, the National Show Racing Pigeons Association opened its two-day exhibit and the talk among the hobbyists was all of the great showing their pets were making in the war.

At the hall 600 pigeons—all shapes and sizes and most colors—sat around in cages and looked disinterested while fanciers peered at them.

THE NEW YORK TIMES, Dec. 4, 1944