

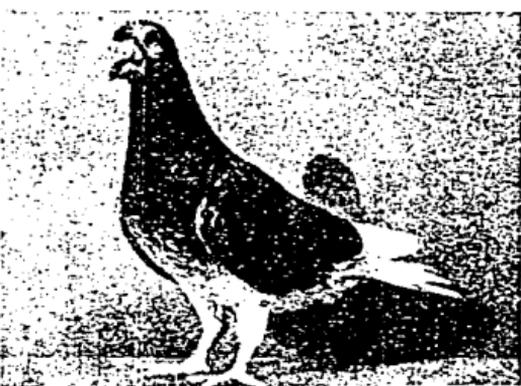
Portrait Of a Pigeon

TECHNICALLY, Kaiser could be called a traitor to the Imperial Crown of Germany. A soldier of fortune, he has served under two flags in two international wars. This may seem surprising when one considers that Kaiser is 29 years old and that his kind has always been regarded as a symbol of peace. But Kaiser carries no olive branch in his bill—he's a Regular Army flier, assigned to the United States Signal Corps, and the oldest pigeon known to history.

Kaiser was hatched in Germany in February, 1917, and was trained as a military homing pigeon for the German Army. The famous bird was captured when Yanks stormed an enemy front-line trench during the Meuse offensive in 1918. He was brought to this country and assigned to the Signal Corps Pigeon Center, Fort Monmouth, N. J., until August, 1942, at which time he was transferred to Camp Crowder, Mo., the Army's pigeon-breeding center.

IN terms of human ages, Kaiser is a cool 140 years old—the normal life span of a pigeon being from 5 to 8 years. Despite his advanced age, Kaiser has continued to father large groups of homing pigeons. He astounded his keepers and pigeon breeders all over the country last year by fathering seven youngsters. The breeders shook their heads and said that because of Kaiser's age his youngsters would be useless as military homing pigeons. They took it all back when one of them, Little Caesar, won a 320-mile race from Dallas to Camp Crowder in competition with some of the best birds in the Army.

There is no logical explanation for the Kaiser's hardiness except for the fact that he lives under ideal conditions at the Crowder lofts. He and the latest of his



Kaiser.

many mates, Lady Belle, live alone in a white loft away from the other loft buildings. The only difference between their loft and those of the other pigeons is that Kaiser and Lady Belle have an electric heater—a small concession to Kaiser's old age.

Although a "member" of the United States Army, Kaiser still wears a seamless aluminum identification band on his left leg, bearing the seal of the German Imperial Crown. This band was placed there by his German keepers when he was a week old, and it cannot be removed unless cut from the leg.

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