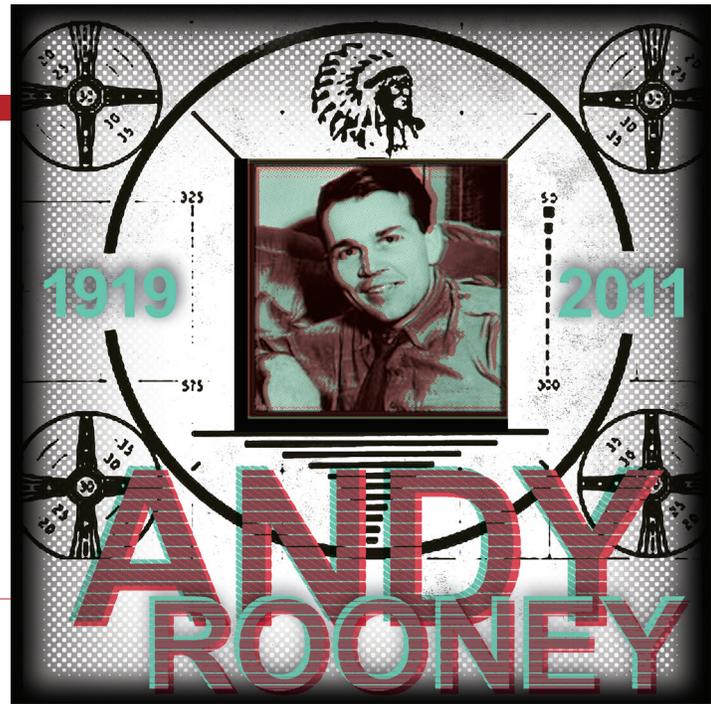


# Straight Talk

– Reporting from the Trenches

Andy Rooney died. I always liked him because he questioned things and people of authority. I saw him on “60 minutes” as a disheveled elderly man who mostly needed to trim his eyebrows and seemed a bit grouchy and even unpleasant. He usually came up with some oddball piece challenging this manufacturer or that one for the size of a cereal box or other marketing ploy. But he always spoke his mind. He was never unwilling to take on powerful leaders, politicians or businesses for their slights on the average, everyday Joe. On television, he walked a mile and more in our shoes, so to speak, and he did it for 33 of his 92 years. He earned his way to have a masterful presence that will continue in memory. I can hear Rooney’s voice telling the television camera right now how it would be impossible for him to have a presence if he were not here. That’s the voice of reason that made him so popular with his audience.

For me, there has always been more to the Rooney story. In a way, he’s even iconic. When I think of Rooney and his mannerisms and words, I think of WWII, the campaigns in the European and Pacific theaters of war. I think of my favorite General in the Army, General Dwight D. Eisenhower and my least favorites, Generals Douglas MacArthur and George Patton. I think of Stars and Stripes, the independent military newspaper overseas. I think of my talks with Bill Mauldin, who created the Pulitzer-winning cartoon series *Willie and Joe* while serving on the staff of the European Stars and Stripes with Rooney. I think of Soldiers yesterday, today and even in the future. And, I think of my dad who passed away years ago. The very first Soldier I ever knew was my father, although he had taken off the uniform long before



I was born. Maybe that explains why I think of the average Soldier down in the trenches fighting when I consider all these things that Rooney triggers in my mind.

So it all gravitates – starts there, really – to the greatest generation that endured war. I have been a military journalist for all but three of my adult years and have come to know many Soldiers over the years. I read my first Stars and Stripes newspaper sitting on a curb in Frankfurt, Germany while on my way to my first job as a battalion journalist in 1979. From that day, I wanted to write for Stripes. It represented a level of professionalism and excellence in journalism that was meaningful to me. I did not know it then, but that attraction connected me to the past and my strong viewpoint on communication today. When I eventually did make it to the Stripes staff in Tokyo in the mid-1980s, I was able to experience just a touch of being a Soldier working the grind of a journalist for a daily newspaper.

The key to understanding the value of Stripes – Mauldin, Rooney, my dad, Eisenhower, MacArthur, Patton and WWII veterans – is to understand the newspaper’s premise. Stripes began as a Union newspaper in the Civil War. Afterwards it stopped printing until World War I. In 1942, Eisenhower brought the newspaper back in Europe with Army Soldiers Mauldin and Rooney a part of the original staff. In 1945, MacArthur started an edition for the Pacific troops. Since then, both editions have published continuously for U.S. peacetime and combat troops serving overseas – to include conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, Bosnia,

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Kosovo, Desert Storm, Iraq, Afghanistan. Throughout, the purpose of Stripes has been to provide unfiltered news to the troops away from their hometown newspapers.

The idea of providing a free press for troops fighting for the freedoms of Americans is a poignant one. Eisenhower seemed to understand this. I remember talking to Mauldin in the early 1980s. He told me that Patton did not really care for his portrayals in drawings of unshaven and disheveled Soldiers in the trenches, but Eisenhower understood the value. Mauldin told me about Patton calling him to his headquarters one day to “chew my ass – he had his view, I had mine and mine had more stars.” Mauldin explained that Patton felt the Army newspaper should carry only the party line story – that the images of Soldiers should be spit-n-polish in order to encourage the fighting troops to emulate the image. Later, I would learn that MacArthur seemed to have the same perspective and even ran the Pacific edition of Stripes with a tighter reign.

But the point goes deeper than viewpoints on what type information a military newspaper should print. What drives to the heart of the Rooney piece is that these talented Soldiers came together while men were fighting and dying to do something journalistic to help the cause. They covered the war. They questioned things, even authority. They knew – as did Eisenhower – that their journalistic work had to be credible, believable to have the meaning with troops. Through this approach, they brought the troops a little touch of home, a smile. Somehow or other, Eisenhower knew this was good. He knew his force would be better for it. It did not weaken discipline, I suspect it strengthened it. Sadly, through my reading about and understanding of both Patton and MacArthur, they seemed to lack this understanding.

I don't know how Rooney would feel about being this icon. He'd probably call me an idiot for writing about him in an Army magazine. He'd say I was over blowing the facts to make him seem like something he was not. But I guess I don't care. Rooney and my dad and Eisenhower and MacArthur and Patton and WWII veterans and the greatest generation each in independent ways represent something fresh as we move forward to face future challenges. While most are gone from this earth, we should remember the straight-talk effect they had on their surroundings.



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**Mike Howard**  
Space Professional,

Please answer as many of the following survey questions as possible and return to LTC J. Dave Price ASAP. Your input could make a difference in Army space.

1. What should be the vision of SMDC/ARSTRAT?
2. What should be the objectives and goals of SMDC/ARSTRAT?
3. What should be the Army Space strategic communications plan or narrative?
4. What should be the vision of the Army Space proponent and FA 40s?
5. What should be the objectives and goals of the Army Space proponent and FA 40s?
6. What should be the strategic communications plan or narrative for Army Space proponent and FA 40s?
7. What is the future of Army Space and or FA 40s?
8. How does the mission of the Army command or FA 40s need to change to get ready for the next 10-15 years in support of joint commands?
9. Other than STO/ACCM, where does the focus of battalion, brigade and Army Space support forces need to be? What kind of mission creep or mission change to you perceive?
10. Any other thoughts? Can I quote you? If not, your answers will remain anonymous.

Please reply to J. Dave Price at [john.price1@us.army.mil](mailto:john.price1@us.army.mil) or [jdp3usa@aol.com](mailto:jdp3usa@aol.com) LTC Price is currently a student at the Army War College at Carlisle, PA

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