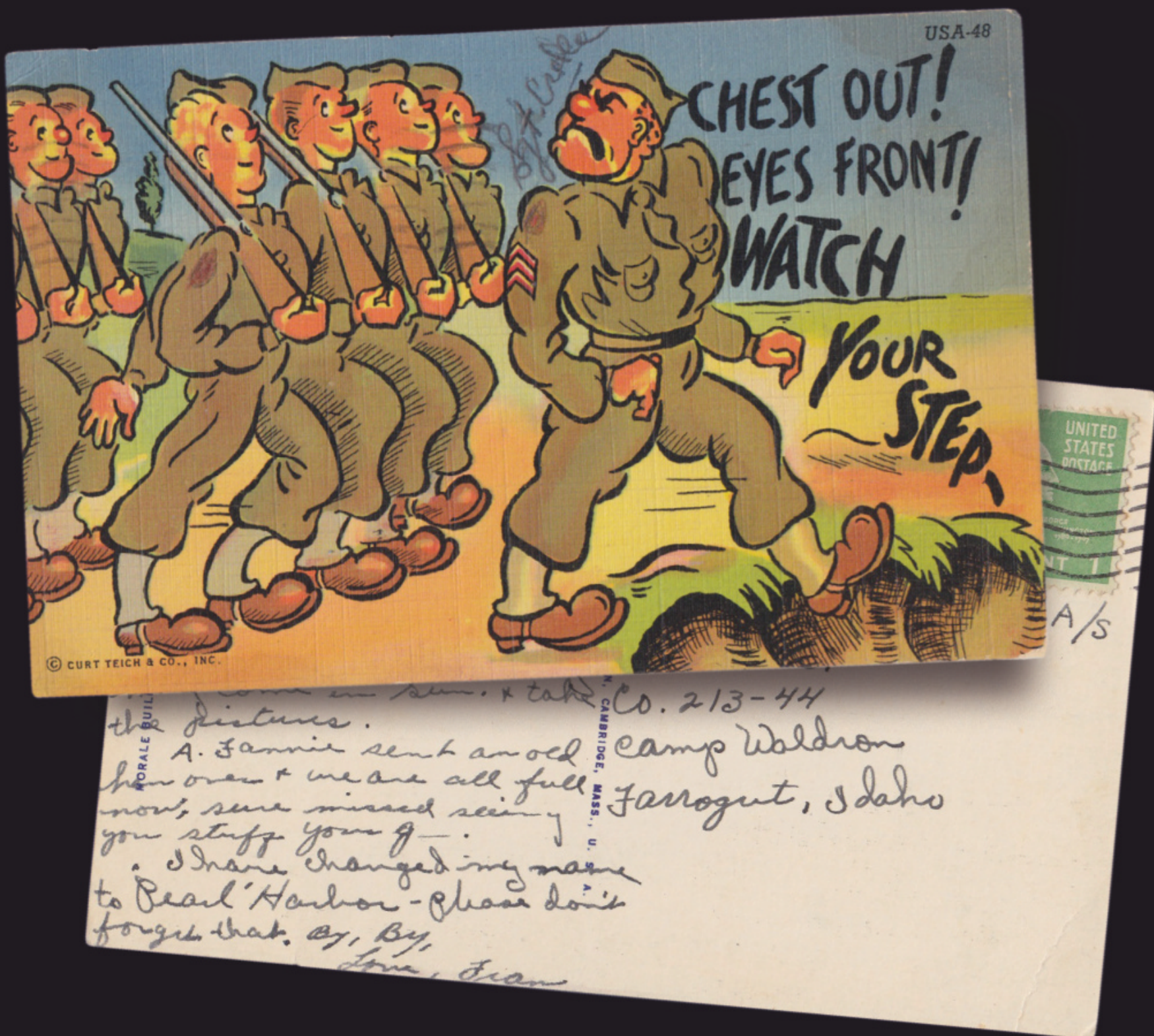
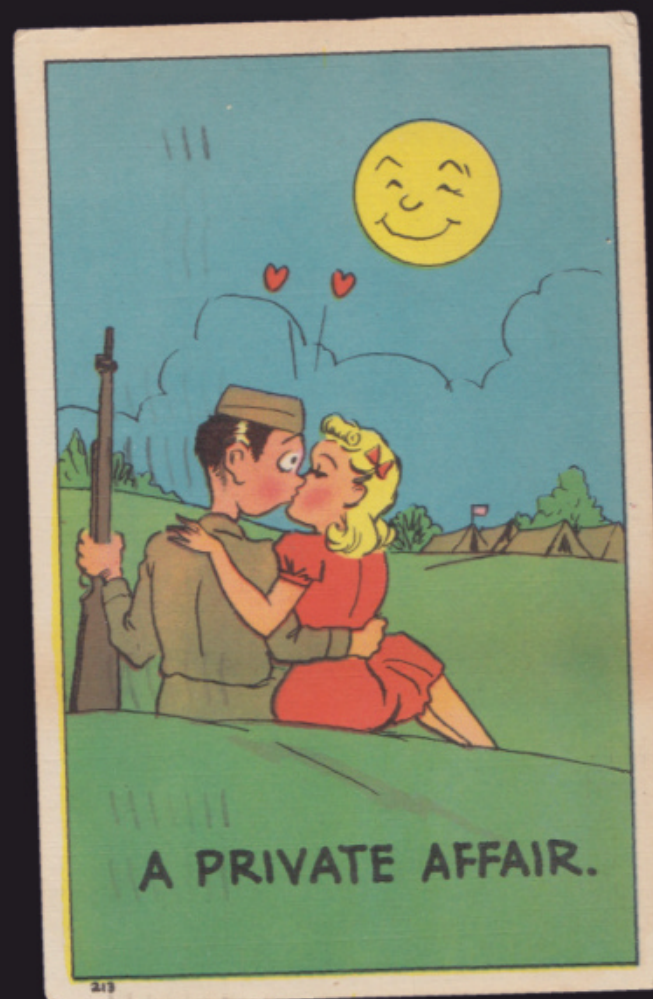
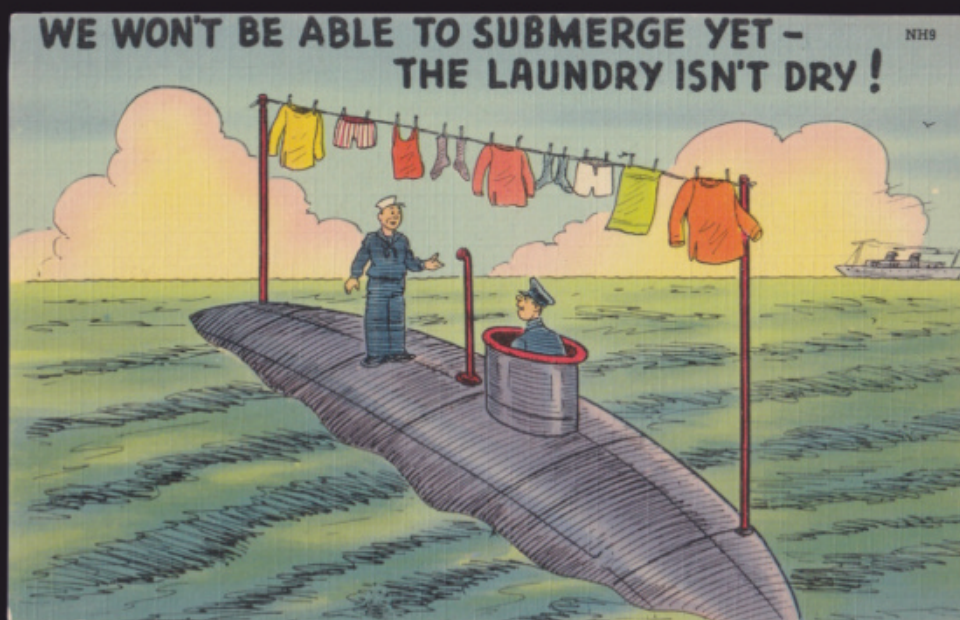
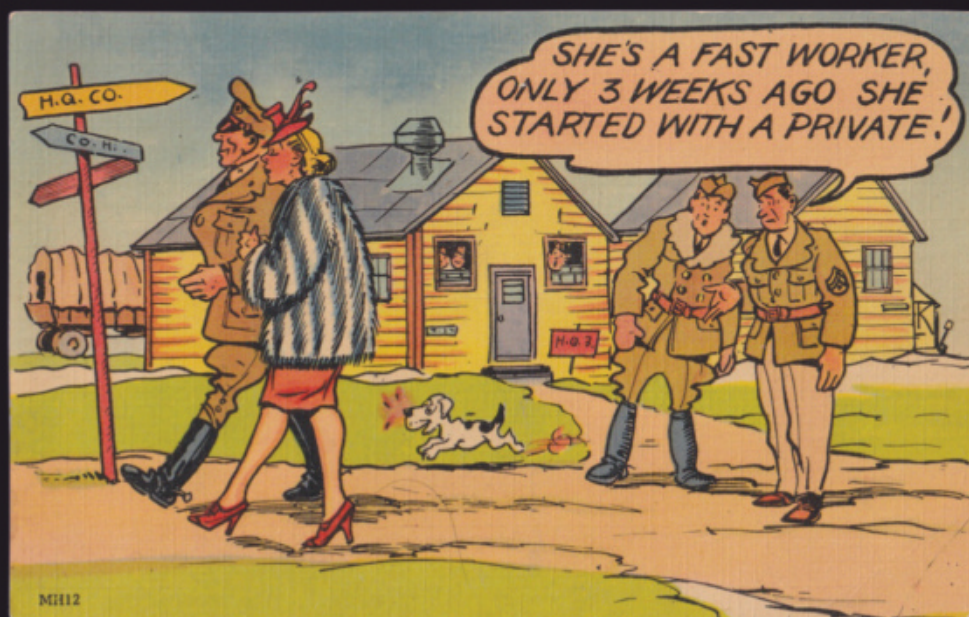


# MORALE BY MAIL

In war, a little humor can go a long way





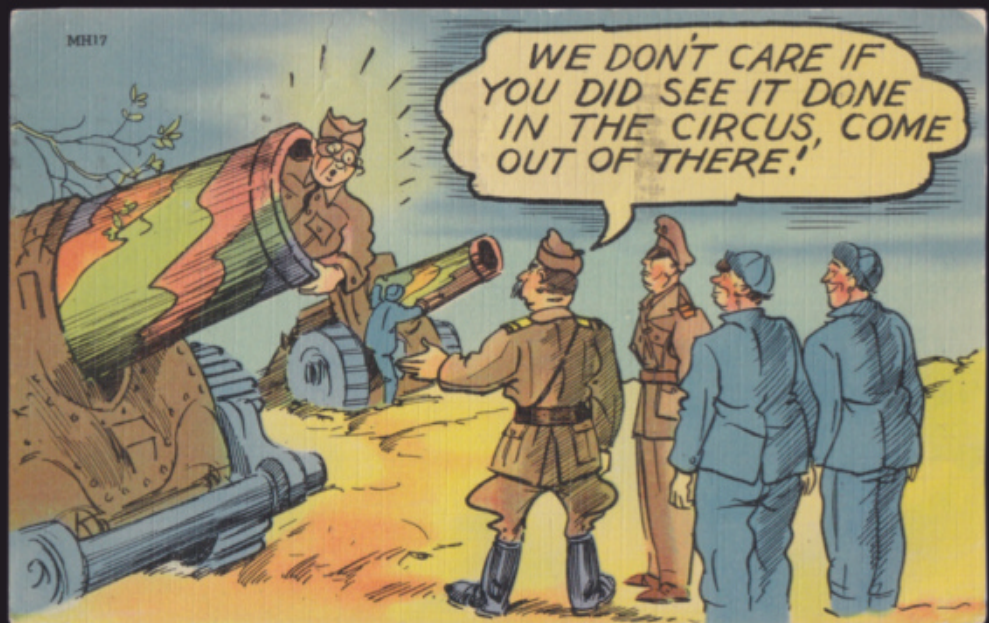


The most devastating war ever to afflict the world isn't often associated with humor, but judging from the postcard collection reader James Woodall—a retired U.S. Army colonel from Texas—shared with us, perhaps it should be. Today found at flea markets and antique shops, the illustrated cards were once sold at drugstores and on newsstands; for just a penny or less, they helped members of the armed forces

and their loved ones “stay in touch by ignoring the horrors of war,” says Thomas Garnhart, author of *Comic Postcards of World War II*. Companies like Tichnor Brothers and Curt Teich produced mass quantities of war-themed humor cards, from niche offerings for single infantry divisions to series for military branches like the Women's Army Corps. Their appeal, though, seems universal—and judging from how they can make us laugh, timeless too.

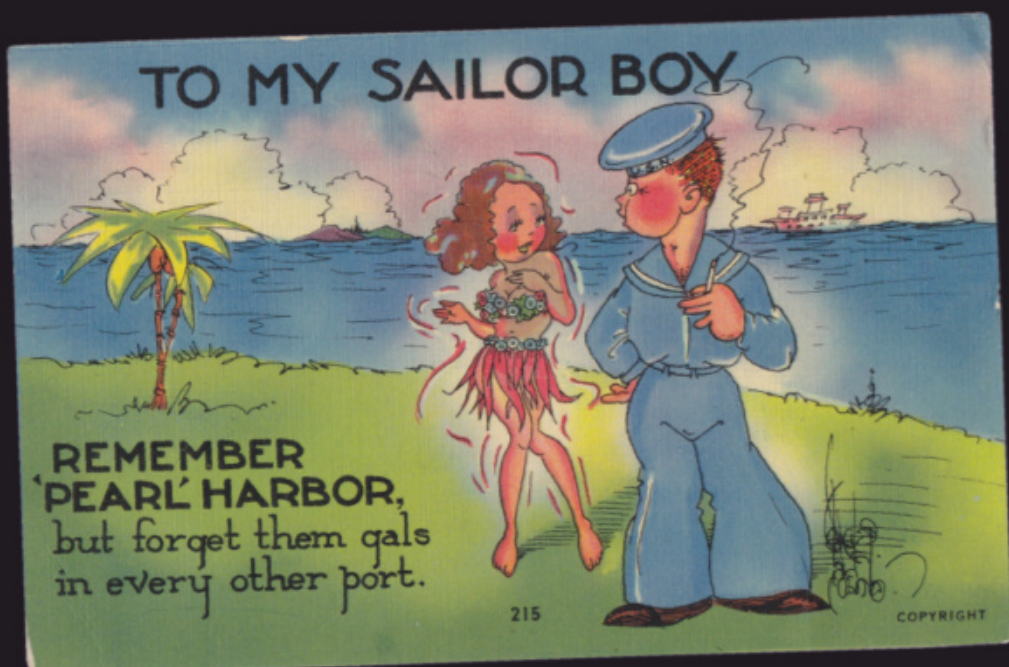
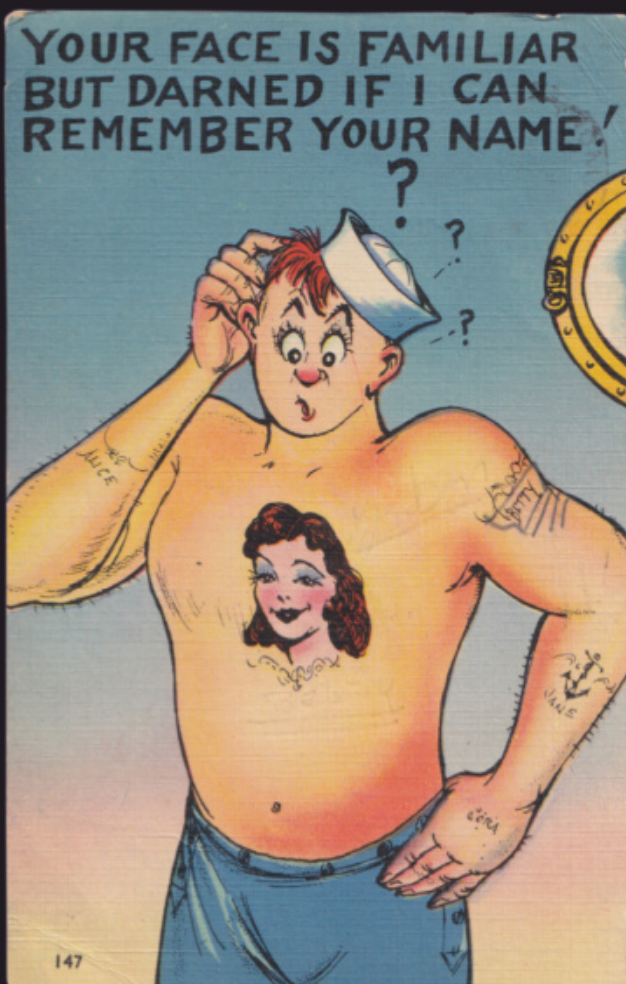
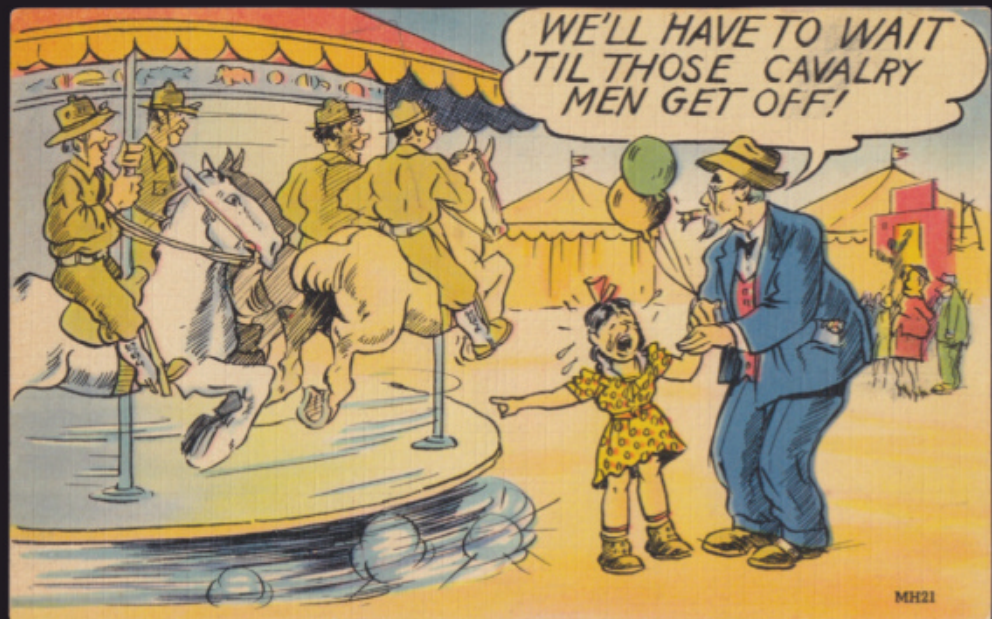


# MORALE BY MAIL



The postcards express recurring themes: they laugh at the travails of superior officers, focus on romantic opportunities for draftees, and ignore deadly combat hazards in favor of trivial concerns like seasickness. The depiction of soldiers as children, like the bare-bottomed fellow at top left, is common as well—for the simple reason that “to their parents, that’s exactly who they were,” Garnhart says. “This was important social commentary since most draftees were young.”





Some of Woodall's postcards bear messages from servicemen; common sentiments include pleas for letters from home and reassurances that the sender is fine. Others contain travel observations, shameless requests for baked goods, and references to potential paramours. One wry card mailed by a civilian—a sister to her brother—takes a cue from the front illustration (bottom right) in its signature: "I have changed my name to 'Pearl' Harbor—please don't forget that."