



# Up Front

*Bill Mauldin , Stephen E. Ambrose (Introduction)*

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The real war," said Walt Whitman, "will never get in the books." During World War II, the truest glimpse most Americans got of the "real war" came through the flashing black lines of twenty-two-year-old infantry sergeant Bill Mauldin. Week after week, Mauldin defied army censors, German artillery, and Patton's pledge to "throw his ass in jail" to deliver his wildly popular cartoon, "Up Front," to the pages of *Stars and Stripes*. "Up Front" featured the wise-cracking Willie and Joe, whose stooped shoulders, mud-soaked uniforms, and pidgin of army slang and slum dialect bore eloquent witness to the world of combat and the men who lived—and died—in it. This taut, lushly illustrated biography—the first of two-time Pulitzer Prize winner Bill Mauldin—is illustrated with more than ninety classic Mauldin cartoons and rare photographs. It traces the improbable career and tumultuous private life of a charismatic genius who rose to fame on his motto: "If it's big, hit it."

## Up Front Details

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Author : Bill Mauldin , Stephen E. Ambrose (Introduction)

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# From Reader Review Up Front for online ebook

## Haydon says

Up Front is a phenomenal book about a man in the WW2 fighting but also writing comics about it too. Bill Mauldin makes the book funny and interesting to read. Bill talks about World War 2 and what is happening and how difficult the war is, but he also tells how the men entertain themselves and how they have fun every now and then. Bill Mauldin also fought in the war he wasn't just a person that draws cartoons that is why his cartoons are so well written because he was in the war.

This is one of the best books I have ever read, if you like to read funny books but also like to learn a little about history then this is the book for you! Bill Mauldin is a great writer and also a great comic writer. Up Front is a great book that I could not put down, I wish the book would never end.

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## Sara says

I loved this novel. Written by a comic artist who went to war, we get his version of the war, from a soldiers point of view and also from the point of view of a comedian. His stories were so... readable. I couldn't put it down. I'm not the type to read a war story but he made it entertaining and interesting. I have recommended this book to everyone I know. It's a great, great novel.

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## Martin says

Came across a copy at a Charity Shop and read it. I think I first read this book when I was 9 or 10. It's as great now as it was then, when I loved Willie and Joe, Mauldin's characters- but I also got to see Bill's work in the Newspaper- he was still a working cartoonist. Along with Herblock(look it up- you'll thank me later) and Pogo, Commando/TheVictor in England, and Tintin, of course, these were the cartoon underpinning of my childhood, free as it was from TV's pernicious influence.

Bill Mauldin was a front row soldier, whose cartooning talent led to a career in WWII as the "Stars and Stripes" house cartoonist. Willie and Joe exchange one liners across North Africa, Sicily, Italy and Southern France, iconic figures from the war as important as Ike and Patton. In fact Patton's hatred of the two unkempt GIs was a bit of a legend. Of course they were actually a key to American morale like Bob Hope and Bing Crosby's tours. Mauldin just follows along the great single frame works of art with a simple patter his love for the "dogfaces"(army enlisted personnel) meant to keep up spirits at home. Clearly it worked at the time, as my copy was a Seventh printing done just after the war although the book first debuted just after Operation Dragoon, the invasion of souther France in 1944

As already mentioned, this is a GREAT books for kids who might want to read a book FROM the war and not just ABOUT the war. For the Gamer/Modeller/Military enthusiast, this is a wonderful chance to get the flavour of the war and emotions it brought out, but only the most inventive will find it a resource to improve Scenarios/Dioramas. This is more about great background , but I feel some bright spark will want to take his discussion of the fate of Cows on the front lines to create a Bolt Action scenario as two sides fight for spoils of war to eat that night! Read this book- you will not regret it -ever.

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## **Miles Watson says**

This is an excellent little book written by the premier American cartoonist of WW2, Sgt. Bill Mauldin. It's a combination of selections from his famous "Willie & Joe" cartoon strip, and text commentary about both the strips and his experiences as a working cartoonist during the later period of the war, after he had stopped being an infantryman and become a full-time cartoonist for the 45th Infantry Division newspaper and later, "Stars & Stripes." It's an easy read (took me two days), yet makes a strong and vivid impression. Mauldin was a competent writer who understood what life was like for what we'd call "grunts" today, and he wasn't shy about communicating ugly and unromantic truths, at a time when America preferred to think of its soldiery as knights in shining armor.

Willie and Joe were Mauldin's everyman creations, meant to represent all U.S. infantrymen everywhere. And they did. They were dirty, disgusting, tired, profane, cynical, sarcastic, miserable, guys who looked 20 years older than they were, and just wanted to make it out of the meatgrinder alive. Their comic strips are not only marvelous snapshots of the mentality of the G.I.'s during the war, but also, at times, incredibly subversive. There is a great deal of sarcasm and bitterness toward officers, the military police, civilians, foreigners, the Air Force, generals, stupid Army policies, you name it. It's actually a testament to the principles of democracy that a lot of these strips were even printed, and I'd bet any amount of money most of them haven't dated. Take a "dogface" from 1944 and a "grunt" from 2018 and aside from the equipment, I doubt much has changed. Which is why Mauldin is as relevant today as he was then.

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## **Mary Catelli says**

This is a semi-humorous work about the war.

The cartoons are indeed funny, sometimes with an edge, but the text of the work is about the army life in World War II. Ranges all over. How the men in the army didn't hate the Germans until they got there, and never got passion the Europeans did -- though there were some who did (he cites an exiled German), and some who just loved the fighting (whose peacetime occupations were swamp hunter and mafia bodyguard). Dugouts and barns (especially the hay). How to tell how a town was taken. Mules used for transportation of supplies. The problems with the front. Drinking, and why handing out a ration would be much better. Interactions with civilians, down to the guy pacing in front of the medic's station just like in a maternity ward. Scrounging. Officer/men interactions, and non-coms. And much more.

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## **Adrian says**

This is one of my favorite books. Bill Mauldin was a cartoonist with the 45th Division News and later Stars and Stripes. But the book is more than background of his Willie and Joe cartoons but a real observation of men in a desperate situation including terrifying combat but also the sheer drudgery and pettiness of the

army. Outstanding book.

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## **SheriC (PM) says**

This is a fascinating collection of Bill Mauldin's cartoons, drawn while serving as an infantryman, then later as part of the press corps for the US Army in Europe during WWII. The cartoons are accompanied by the personal stories and recollections behind their inspiration and creation. These cartoons wouldn't have made much sense to me, otherwise, having never served in the military or had family who served during WWII. He tells his stories with humor and empathy, but does not pull punches in describing the infantryman's experience on the front lines of the war – fear and hunger and exhaustion and foxholes and trench foot and screaming meemie bombs and butterfly bombs and potato mashers. But he also speaks of courage and camaraderie and duty and brotherhood, the sort of commitment that keeps the men together and fighting their common enemy. And in this book, the common enemy is the German soldier, and Mauldin is explicit in describing the GI's point of view.

Full review with quotes and examples of the cartoons on my Booklikes blog.

Hardcover edition, loaned to me by my father, who served during Korea. I read this for **The 16 Tasks of the Festive Season**: Square 3 November 11th. *Book themes for Veterans Day/Armistice Day: Read a book involving veterans of any war, books about WWI or WWII (fiction or non-fiction). –OR– Read a book with poppies on the cover.*

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## **Paul says**

Just one of the many books I read during my sophomore year in high school INSTEAD of reading either the Odyssey or the Iliad.

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## **Mandie says**

Brilliant, honest and simply written. Bill Maudlin's respect for those he fought with is portrayed in his own unforgettable way.

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## **Joe Krakovsky says**

You don't need to be a history buff to understand the cartoons in this WWII classic, but sometimes it helps. One example is the two Americans hiding behind the bush as a German walks by with a bottle of booze. The one American says, "Don't startle 'I'm, Joe. It's almost full." In another cartoon a heartbroken soldier in a cavalry unit is about to shoot his broken down jeep with his pistol 'to put it out of it's misery' as if it were his trusty horse. If one understands the versatility of that little motor vehicle that was used in so many ways such as hauling mail and chow to the front and the wounded back one could see the attachment the American soldier had for the jeep in WWII. But not to worry, the author explains the story behind each of his cartoons

which sometimes even makes it funnier.

One must understand the reason behind these little moral boosting jabs at not only the lowly infantryman,(who is always portrayed as dirty, hungry, and tired) but also the high ranking officers as well (who are always clean, well fed, and apparently far from danger). Bill Mauldin saw these men first hand, and heard their stories. He was not glamorizing war but in a way showing them how important they were for the cause they all believed in. Sharing their chow in muddy foxholes, he knew what their life was like and what their grips were. To Bill they were the unsung heroes who were vital to winning the war. They didn't receive the glamor of some others such as the pilots with their 'crushed' caps (from earphones, and thus signifying their veteran status). This is exemplified in the cartoon where the dirty, old, low ranking infantryman is greeted by the clean, teenage-looking bomber pilot officer who exclaims, "Uncle Willie!" Bill Mauldin did for the American combat infantryman what Dilbert's creator did for the lowly office worker hunkering down inside his cubicle.

At times he even made fun of the typical German soldier. In one scene a captured German infantryman is standing at attention as the American officer is interrogating him. Joe says to Willie, "Tell them prisoners to ack sloppier in front of th' lootenant. He might start getting ideas."

Bill Mauldin said that a real infantryman who has seen combat is a pacifist at heart. And he should know.

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## **Thomas says**

I've got a first edition of this book owned by my Grandfather, dated 1945. Due to his age he was not in the military during World War II. But his next door neighbor was ten or so years younger than he and had been a U.S. Army infantry sergeant in the European Theater from the invasion of North Africa until the war ended. So it was him I associated with Mauldin's drawings.

When I was a kid the book fascinated me, mostly because it reprinted the cartoons Mauldin had drawn for *Stars and Stripes*, the Army's official news publication distributed to its soldiers in the field.

The drawings were for and about the front-line soldiers, usually wry depictions of the war as they experienced it. Consequently some of the cartoons seemed like in-jokes - I could see where the humor was headed but it still went over my head. But something about Mauldin's depictions of the "dogfaces" captivated me - and reminded me of my Grandfather's neighbor. I knew he had been involved in serious front-line combat in several campaigns. He had a million stories about the war, but they were usually incidental to the fighting itself, and usually funny. And he told them with the same kind of resigned, wise-ass humor that characterized many of Mauldin's drawings.

I didn't actually read the body text until I was a teenager. It is interesting reading about the soldier's attitudes and experiences, but Mauldin's real talent was in the drawings.

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### **P.J. Sullivan says**

As a cartoonist, I know how hard it is to draw a good cartoon. Bill Mauldin drew these gems while following an army in the thick of World War II. An amazing feat! His Willie and Joe are classic stereotypes. He presents their plight as it was, muddy, grimy, unglamorous. His own living conditions were probably not much better.

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### **Sue says**

A wonderful collection of cartoons capturing the drudgery, gallows humor, and absurdity of the typical GI.

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### **Jane Davis says**

I got my paper back Bantam Book in 1953. I covered it with contact plastic which is now sticky and yellow. The pages are yellow and fragile but it is 260 pages of great stuff. The name and the area of the war may change but somethings do not change for a GI. Bill Mauldin sat in his foxhole or where ever and made us all laugh.

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### **MisterFweem says**

Review is here:

<https://misterfweem.blogspot.com/2018...>

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