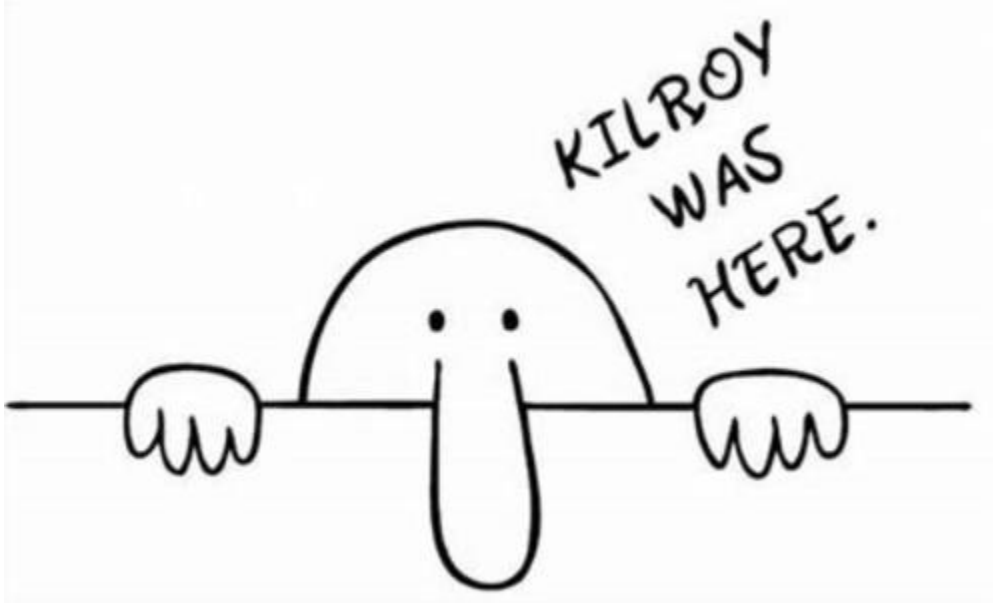


December 14, 2020

Kilroy Was Here

(Pennsylvania Military Museum, T. Gum, Site Admin.)



We all hope to leave our mark, be it tangibly or otherwise. For some however this is taken quite literally in the form of artistic expression and even graffiti. In the instance of completing an inspection of manufactured goods a “mark” must be made somewhere... typically on a clipboard, but for one person, their mark would become stuff of legend.

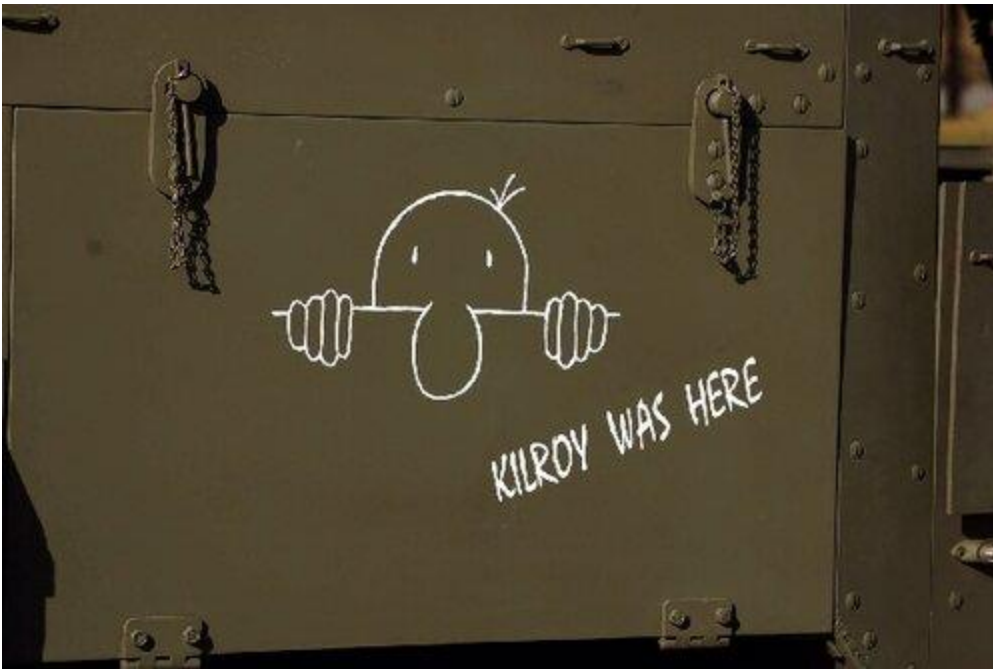
In World War II the military industrial complex was not what we see today. Rather, the war-economy had to be brought to life in a short period of time requiring countless industries to turn their manufacturing over to the war effort. For those in the steel industry, this included armored and non-armored vehicles, planes, ships, pieces & parts, machinery, and even hand tools. One such facility was in Quincy, Massachusetts.

James Kilroy was an inspector at the Fore River Shipyard in Quincy. This shipyard produced navy vessels such as the USS, Lawrence, Octopus, Sunfish, Massachusetts, Springfield, Salem, Lexington. During this wartime production, as an inspector he was tasked with inspecting the welds and rivets for quality control. At the completion of each inspection, he would mark the piece and send it forward.

Unfortunately for the work crews, the demand on their time was ever increasing and their respective pay was dependent on how much they completed during one shift. This led to a number of inspector’s erasing each other’s inspection-mark and replacing it with their own.

To combat this, Kilroy devised a solution that made removal of his mark too taxing or all but impossible - through the use of larger marks and varying marking materials.

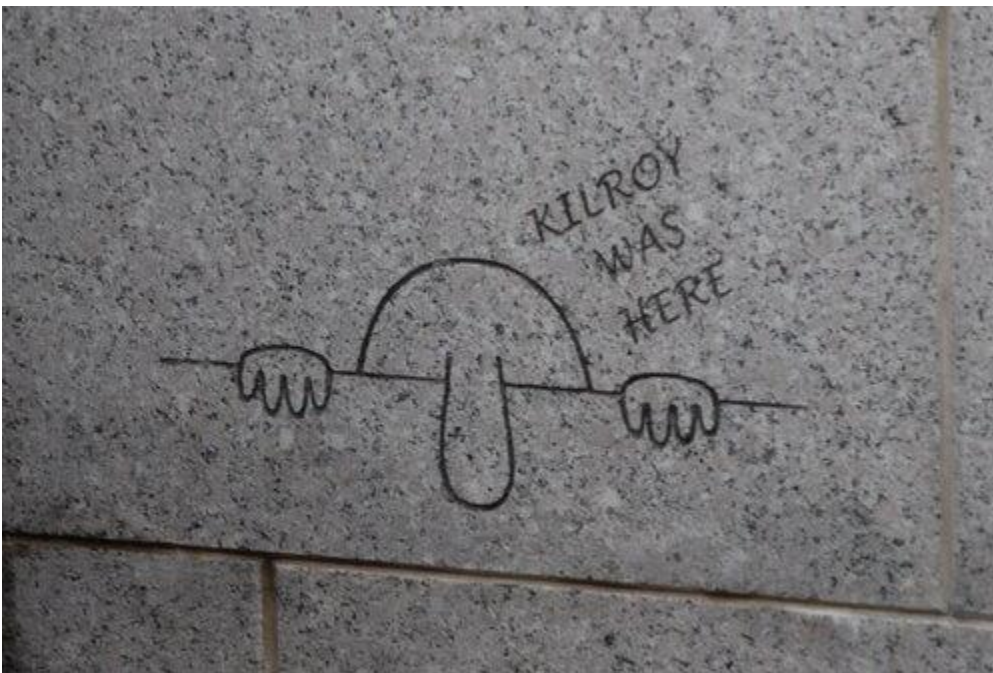
His moniker, pictured above right, became well known in numerous theaters of war and on any number of continents and islands the US Forces were serving. So well-known was this mark, or caricature, that it also became a sign of friendly forces signaling to others that an area was safe, inspected, or US-friendly.



Known simply as KILROY, the drawing reportedly even found its way into places never imagined leading enemy forces to wonder if there was an American spy in their midst.

More recently, KILROY has been found on the Berlin Wall prior to its fall, on tanks and personnel carriers, and on the underside of bunks and bulkheads.

KILROY on the WWII Monument in DC.



The legend of KILROY lives on through use at the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C., as well as on countless wartime treasures and supplies. At the Pennsylvania Military Museum, we even hide them within lectures and presentations!