

## Pigeons Carry a Different Message

In April of this year, we commemorate the 66<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the 32nd President of the United States. President Roosevelt suffered from the dread disease – Polio. His efforts as related to the March of Dimes played in large part in the elimination of the disease. But you ask – pigeons, what has this to do with pigeons. Read on.

The 1947 March of Dimes Campaign at Fort Monmouth had the Commanding General, BG Jerry V. Matejka as the Honorary Chairman, and MAJ C. N. Chamberlain, the Chief Information Officer as the chairman of the drive at Fort Monmouth. Three news articles being published in the Signal Corps Message and Messenger (10 and 17 January 1947) illustrate the Drive's importance.

Polio had reached epidemic levels in 1946. Explanations of how the Drive operated, what it did, and what it supported were included in the articles. The slogan was "A Barrel of Dough for Polio." The March of Dimes, according to its Website (<http://www.marchofdimes.com>) was established initially to fight Polio by President Franklin Roosevelt, who himself suffered from Polio, to assist the polio patient aid program and to fund research for vaccines. The vaccines were effective and Polio has virtually ended in the United States; the focus of the March of Dimes has since shifted to its current mission - "To improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, infant mortality, and premature birth."

Fort Monmouth had two roles in the 1947 Campaign. First was a very active onsite campaign that included a large committee that would advertise with posters and present a movie all to seek donations. The movie aired at various locations, and at the Post Theater.

In its other role, the Signal Corps had the distinction of officially opening the 1947 March of Dimes Campaign. The opening ceremony was held at Rockefeller Plaza, at 1300 hours, on 15 January 1947. It included the release of 48 Signal Corps Pigeons, one for each State, being released by the 1947 Poster Child, Nancy Drury.

The article in the 17 January 1947 newspaper included a photograph of Ms. Drury, pictured with pigeon cages that were holding War Hero pigeons Blacky Halligan, Yank, Dr. Letterman, and G.I. Joe,