

Pigeons Set War Records

The Army's Signal Corps used pigeons for communications from WWI, and into the Korean War; to this end, the Pigeon Service was active at Fort Monmouth until its discontinuance in 1957. In 1943, an article titled "Pigeon Turns in Morning Report" appeared in *The Signal Corps Message*; the byline describes this as "Another Signal Corps First."

The story starts "at 0828 Monday morning two pigeons winged in gracefully and settled on the roof of the Fort Monmouth's pigeon lofts." The message, attached to a Blue Check Cock, was the morning report for Company S of the 803d Signal Training Regiment (STR). The 803d was located 55 miles away, on Detached Service. This represented the first time that an Army pigeon ever turned in a Morning Report. The flight took 78 minutes.

The second pigeon, also a Blue Check Cock, carried a message from Col Walter C. Ellis, CO of the 803d. The message said "Pigeon released from Camp Misery 0730, Ceiling Zero. (Signed) Lt Hull, Lt Furness and Lt Maloney." Camp Misery, the nickname for the isolated outpost located near Mt. Misery was near a former CCC camp (S-52), "where curious deer sometimes buck the chow line and where the Signal Corps pigeon dons the helmet of Mercury."

The real positive point in this exercise was that using pigeons to deliver the Morning Report saved invaluable gas and oil, and motor wear and tear, for the normal 770 miles the daily trip would require each week. To deliver the report by vehicle required that a driver leave the S Company at 0530, seven days a week. Pigeons could be delivered by truck in PG-40 pigeon crates and yield a savings was 350 miles a week; it also saved the associated man-hours for drivers. The Morning Report, was the basis for all Army administrative work, and was required by the regiment daily.

The article states even though the first trip took 78 minutes, the birds could achieve the trip in 40 minutes once familiar with the route. Lt Thomas E. Black, in charge of the pigeon section, also claimed that the pigeons were receiving invaluable training. The 803d STR, as the article states, "put a new twist on an old form of communication"; it goes on to describe the pigeon messenger as "quicker" and a "better bet than a brand new Army truck."