

WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY
Tule Lake Center

Community Analysis Section
December 24, 1945

Ronald Hitomi's hero is Bill Mauldin, the cartoonist and Chronicler of World War II. When I showed Ronnie Mauldin's Up Front, I found that he knew it, and had lived with it, from cover to cover. He wants to become a cartoonist too, and I think he should.

I added Ronnie to my staff for the brief period of one month on half-time. I wanted more insight into the High School age Nisei some of whom at the time were being expatriated by parents, though most unwillingly, to Japan.

Between a few assignments, Ronnie made this Sketch Book which sensitively and humorously catches the Nisei reaction to center life. It is a cartoonist's analysis, in the best sense of the words, of aspects of center life.

From the "boiler room general" discussing rumors and the war at the bottom of the first page (underneath the men playing Japanese "checkers") to the High School girl "goin' steady" in her boy friend's athletic sweater at the High School, the typical preoccupations of age or generation groups are stressed. The Nisei's sensitivity to size and stature is seen in the cute "rugged" girl whose costume was a center fad, on the same page, or in "Hazard of Mess Hall Regimentation" and the "Sporting" Series at the end.

When we came to title the series, "Born Free and Equal" seemed a pungent comment on the Nisei high school basket-ball player in addition to the idea interwoven of "slim" versus "shorty".

Communal eating in messhalls called for like irony. "Inspiration" on the page before meant simply that the Center Paper, the Newell Star, was pretty much an "administration paper" written by Administration and "put out by" a center staff. The Sansei or 3rd. generation needed no such subtitles: they obviously had time, over three years of it, to get into mischief,--when not digging for shells in the sandy lake-bottoms on which Tule is built, or playing tops and marbles, catching butterflies (under crowded conditions of 13,000 in one square mile of fenced-in area), or engaging in such manly pastimes as "boxing" or "airplanes".

The Nisei preoccupation with dancing in the center where dances were a rarity is also stressed. But only a Tulean would understand our calling "Jitterbug" by the word "Taiso", which is Japanese for a style of wartime physical exercise of the "setting-up" variety, said to have been common in wartime Japan. "Slow Movement" on the page before is a comment on the center's lack of privacy for youth whose favorite "romantic dance" was done at a snail's pace if bold enough, and if "Crashers" did not intervene at the social function.

The woman flower-arranger and the lady with a rumor beside her may be assumed to have found some liberation, in camp life, from years of unremitting toil. Not so, the young wife below them.

At any rate, Ronnie has brought the people out, with gentle irony, and showed them more humanly than columns of press comment on Tule Lake. Ronnie is in Sacramento. I still say he should become a cartoonist. His stencil-cutter, since he relocated soon after doing the Sketch Book, was Isami Nakamura.

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