

THE FRONTIER

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Welcome, Ben Kuroki

The York Republican a weekly newspaper, soon will be in the hands of Ben Kuroki, 32, a Japanese-American originally from Hershey, near North Platte. Ben becomes the first Nisei to edit and publish a newspaper in the state.

Ben's first issue will be in the mail on June 8—but little of the work will be his own. A handful of Nebraska weekly newspaper people have been at work in York producing a special edition—sort of send-off for Ben. It will appear on that date. Meanwhile, Ben is winding up his schooling at the University of Nebraska where next month he will graduate from the school of journalism.

Behind Ben Kuroki is an amazing war record and a heart-breaking story of problems posed by racial prejudice by people who didn't understand.

He was born at Hershey, son of a potato farmer. Day after Pearl Harbor he and his brother drove 150 miles to enlist. He was the object of bitter attacks by fellow Americans because he was of Japanese ancestry. He pleaded to get overseas with the air force, he begged to be taught how to handle the .50-calibre machine guns on a big B-24 Liberator bomber, he practically stowed away in order to get into the fight in 1942 from a bomber base in England.

He was immediately accepted by a handful of fellow warriors but was continually shoved around by some of the others because his skin was yellow, his eyes slanted and his short, black hair bristled.

Ben Kuroki fought the Hitler and Mussolini war machines in the skies over Northwest Europe, over North Africa, in the Middle East and in the Balkans. He volunteered for the famous low-level attack on the Ploesti oil fields in Romania, August 1, 1943, and was aboard 1 of 2 planes in his flight of 9 that returned safely.

The nightmarish dream of Ploesti stands as one of the epic battles of all time in American history. From Ploesti the Axis powers were drawing one-third of their oil supplies.

During his career Ben was forced down over Spanish Morocco and interned. He tried to escape for he imagined dire happenings because of his color. He was captured by native guards, flown to Madrid, Spain, in a Junkers 88 (German aircraft). Our state department arranged for his safe return to England.

Already a veteran of 25 missions, Ben was supposed to quit flying and fighting because he had far exceeded what medical authorities thought any man could stand at that stage of the war, when fighter protection was not yet developed. He flew 5 more missions for his brother, who couldn't get overseas.

Kuroki returned to the U. S. a highly-decorated hero. But the stay was short. He arranged with Gen. George C. Marshall to go to the Pacific theater to fulfill his avowed plan to fight to the finish—to bomb Tokyo. There had been a War Department instruction to prevent all Japanese-American military personnel from going into combat in the Pacific. Thus, Ben became the first Nisei to fly and fight against his ancestors.

Finally, war ended, he returned to the states with a total of 58 bombing missions to his credit. He was acclaimed as a war hero and besieged by autograph hunters.

Ben spoke on the New York Herald-Tribune forum in 1945 with General Marshall and Gen. Jonathan Wainright. He also appeared on the Town Hall of the Air and his story was published in Readers' Digest. A book, "Boy from Nebraska," was published by Harper Bros. Ben was in demand for personal appearances, telling in his shy, Nebraska way the story of his war against the Axis and his problems with people who couldn't understand that even though he was of Japanese ancestry he was an American.

Ben married a girl from Pocatello, Ida., and went to the University of Nebraska "where I belonged." He originally planned to go to the college of agriculture, at the last minute switched to journalism.

The Frontier has a personal interest in Ben Kuroki. The Frontier's editor and Ben went overseas together and we know a little about what Ben went through. During his training at the university, Ben, now the father of two little girls, has made a number of trips to O'Neill and recently, while angling for a newspaper and a place to locate, made a series of 3-day stops at our plant with a view toward learning some of the practical aspects of publishing a weekly newspaper.

It is needless for us to say that we think York is very fortunate in having Ben Kuroki become a citizen of that community. We congratulate Ben, we welcome him into the Nebraska newspaper fraternity, and we wish him God-speed.

O'Neill's decorative Christmas lights are whipping merrily in the breeze. It might be that someone plans to illuminate them on the Fourth of July.

Lest We Forget



PrairieLand Talk —

Grand Army Veterans Stirred Patriotic Blood on Memorial Day

By ROMAINE SAUNDERS

LINCOLN — May 30 the flag floats again.

In the beginning, Memorial Day had military significance. The blue clad men with the Grand Army badge formed in ranks with the color bearer in the lead, marched to the old opera house between Third and Second streets on Douglas in O'Neill and a program designed to stir our patriotic blood was rendered by home talent, climaxed by the moving eloquence of Jim Whitehead, Col. Towle, Comrade Slocumb or some other local orator.

There was the march to the cemeteries to lay a tribute at the grave of a fallen comrade. Year by year the ranks of the Grand Army yielded to the drumbeat of eternity and now that group, Comrades Slattery, Mack, Skirving, Pfunder, Roscoe, Lowe and the others are all gone.

Memorial day retains much of the military significance with another generation of soldiers taking over. Yet more and more the day has become the touchstone of family devotions when life's deepest emotions respond to the call to offer our tribute to the memory of our dead. A poet offered a tribute to fallen soldiers when he wrote:

On fame's eternal camping ground
Their silent tents are spread,
And glory marks in solemn round
The bivouac of the dead.

To those now hid from our sight
Up on the hill let us devote
A feeble tribute:

On earth's last camping ground
The graves of friends are spread,
And angels mark in silence round
The bivouac of our dead.

On November 5, 1905, the last onslaught before election of that year. The Frontier carried a story under a page-wide heading in 48-point condensed gothic which read: "Taxshirking Nabobs Owe County Sum Equal to

One-third of Entire Individual Tax of Holt County."

The "taxshirking" were supposed to be in the camp opposing Republican candidates, but as they were all elected, The Frontier editors felt they had done something. Indeed the paper had a lot to do with winning elections.

Recently a young woman plunged to her death from a seventh story window in a Pennsylvania city in sight of many people in the street below. She felt she had neither a husband nor faith in eternal verities. Anyone in that crowd on the street would have gone the limit to save that young woman from the death leap. It was too late.

Had they known an hour earlier that there was a young woman in that upper room who felt she had betrayed some kindly soul would have brought to her a smile and a word of cheer, there would then have been no bruised and broken body at their feet.

Editor Cal Stewart's name has been in the daily papers the past week.

Not in the police court news. One story covered the activities of Sigma Delta Chi, national journalism fraternity into which Mr. Stewart was taken as a member.

The next story finds him heading a group of Nebraska editors who will contribute to a special edition of The York Republican when Ben Kuroki, of Japanese ancestry, takes over the publication of the York paper after graduation at the University of Nebraska in June. Kuroki is the first of his race to enter the publishing field in Nebraska.

This is more than a friendly gesture on the part of Editor Stewart and his friends; it is a substantial token of a cordial welcome to newspaper circles in Nebraska of an American-Japanese who showed his loyalty to our institutions by military service in Europe and the Pacific during the late world war.

"Omaha and Kansas City are quarreling about which is really the beefsteak center of the country. They are claiming credit that should go elsewhere. The best steaks in the world are manufactured in Cuming, Stanton, Madison, Wayne and Pierce counties, and there is where the juice and the tenderness is put in them. Omaha and Kansas City merely cut them up and put them on the market. What have they to brag about?" Taken from the Norfolk Daily News.

The beefsteak is made in the grasslands of Holt, Wheeler, Garfield, Rock, Brown, and adjoining Cherry counties. The Norfolk "corn belt clod hoppers" come up to the O'Neill and Atkinson livestock markets to get the "steaks" and take them down there to manufacture the suet in which to cook 'em.

PrairieLand lies calm under the glow of paradise this mid-May morning. The changing moods of nature bring smiles and tears as we strut across the stage and do our stuff during the allotted years of life. A week ago death and desolation swept through the land when out of nowhere roared overwhelming floods, taking a toll of human and animal life, exacting tribute from land and the works of man. There was spontaneous rush to lend a helping hand.

Now, a week later the visitation of that day is forgotten — forgotten all but the horror haunted homes into which disaster fell.

Today nature summons us to the thrilling scene of her green and floral plumage adorning the landscape, reaching to the horizon. Out of the blue canopy above the celestial orb of day shines unclouded on the enchanting scene and the prairie-land dweller feels that he has a goodly heritage.

What is watershed? What are "well informed circles"? What is the foreign policy? What did Mr. Truman mean when he winked at reporters before starting on the "non-political" trip? What is a flat accusation flatly denied? What is meant by what happens rests with the gods? What is a runnerup? What is a workable program? Is a sound board made of plank or thin air? Some of the hackneyed phrases that have been worked over time and now should be laid away.

Recounting the story of the government officials, from president to cabinet officials and administrators of one thing and another touring the country at taxpayers' expense on political trips, one contributor to the daily grist of comment on public affairs concludes that "This is the kind of thing we get when we place in office men who are essentially professional and sometimes cheap ward politicians."

The farms and equipment of the country are valued at 43 billion dollars, while life insurance policies could be cashed in at 44 billion. Let's see—the national debt is up in the hundreds of billions.

The liberty bell reminds us again of our national heritage and from its rent throat comes the all to invest in more liberty bonds. As long as the crack in liberty is confined to the old bell we are safe.

Taxes are absorbing the earnings of 61 working days. Maybe another day will have to be added now to pay the junket trips to make the "nonpolitical" speeches.

The speaker got the information right on old world soil. Behind the iron curtain, if you do not belong to the communist movement, you are up against it to get something to eat. There are stores where you can buy at prices 5 times higher than the communists pay. This is draining the resources of people opposed to their country surrendering to the reds and they are suffering hunger and privation.

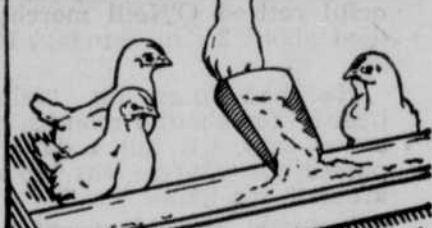
A reminder of the days of Tom Dennison and "Fainting Bertha" comes out of Omaha in this year of grace 1950. A federal grand jury has laid indictments at the threshold of the members of a gamble boodle bunch plucking the feathers from the tender pinions of the innocent around Omaha and Council Bluffs. Missouri river towns from Sioux City to Kansas City have had a lifelong battle with the elements that make up the depraved underworld.

Public notables who have ghost writers do their heavy thinking may hark back to ancient time for a precedent for that ticklish job of preparing speeches, but probably not as to financial reward. In the year 354 B. C. Isocrates, a Greek engaged in that business, wrote a speech for Nicholas, king of Cyprus, for which he was paid 20 talents, equal to \$14,000.

Word comes out of the state old age assistance office that life's span has been lengthened through the ministry of medical science. And here we thought it was in spite of doctors, lawyers, politicians and salad mixers.

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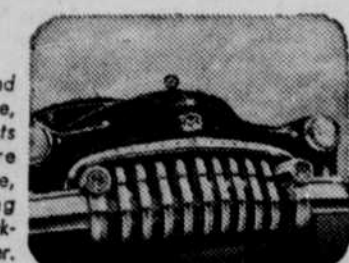
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