

In episodes of the Superman series following this, Superman appears in Yokohama and demolishes the Japanese army (*Superman in the Eleventh Hour*, 1942), and cleans up the German Nazis (*Superman and the Jungle Drums*, 1943). At any rate, he gets around a lot. But after Famous Productions moved under Paramount's control, the quality steadily dropped. One of Fleisher's other big stars, Popeye, gets his licks in on the Japanese Navy in *You're a Sap, Mr. Jap* (1942). The rival Disney also produced a wartime series showing Donald Duck fighting for his country. In this manner, even the world of American animation was sucked into the War.

— Komatsuzawa Hajime

#### Private Snafu: Censored

U.S.A. Created by: Theodor "Dr. Seuss" Geisel, Voice: Mel Blanc, Animation: Warner Brothers, Production: Army Pictorial Services, Signal Corps, U.S. War Department, Print: 35mm, sd., English, b&w, 5 min., circa 1943.

SNAFU: "Situation Normal, All Fouled Up."

That's the basic theme and tone of Warner Brothers' animation series featuring the mishaps of Private Snafu. Each delightful episode contains a moral aimed at teaching soldiers important lessons for life at the front. In *Censored*, Private Snafu is shipped out to Bingo Bango Island in the South Pacific. His attempts to tell his girlfriend, Sally Lou, his destination are frustrated at every step by the military censors. When he finally gets through, word spreads quickly to the Japanese who destroy him in animated chaos, until next week when Snafu meets up with Anopheles Annie or some other enemy.

*Private Snafu* was a regular feature of the *Army-Navy Screen Magazine*, a newsreel produced by Leonard Spigelgass specifically for American troops. Each bi-weekly newsreel kept soldiers in touch with international events, as well as the homefront. The filmmakers attempted to be responsive to their audiences' desires, and would regularly answer soldiers' requests. For example, if some homesick soldier wrote in and asked to see his tiny hometown, the crew would pack up their cameras and shoot street scenes there. Responding to letters from steamy Southeast Asia, they

showed a Chicago blizzard. *Private Snafu* was also designed to please. He was created by Dr. Seuss, and his voice contains shades of Mel Blanc's other characters, like Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, and Porky Pig.

This was not, however, the stuff of children. This particular episode depicts Snafu's unlikely girlfriend as a (tastefully) topless, buxom brunette. The descriptions of the Japanese enemy were more typical. Like many cartoon caricatures, Snafu's Japanese are modeled after Tōjō. Special attention is given



Fig. 13. No rubber no good time for American boys — Philippines.

to their different eyes. They are likened to insects with their ant farm-like tunneling under the ground (who minds smashing a bug?). However, the most prominent feature of this caricature is the mouth. Films from the war period constantly refer to The Grin, which was a convenient sign of their supposed insincerity. Though the buck-teeth stereotype predates the war, it was a convenient hook for the Japanese's "treacherousness" as exemplified by Pearl Harbor. For example, *Life's* 15 December 1941 report on Pearl Harbor describes Ambassador Nomura Saburō and Envoy Kurusu Kichisaburō's last minute visit to Secretary of State Cordell Hull, who flings sharp words "into the teeth of the two Japanese, who for once did not smile." When the Japanese soldier in *Censored* overhears a phone conversation about the troop movement to Bingo Bango Island, he rushes across the room to a radio to inform Tokyo. With the fluid magic of animation, his buck teeth actually detach and fly to the microphone ahead of the rest of his body.

This is more than a simple distortion of physical features. The constant evocation of The Grin suggested to Americans that the Japanese were by nature dangerously duplicitous. The sometimes dopey buck teeth also fed a Western sense of racial superiority, and it was also compatible with comparisons of Japanese to vermin. The blatant racism of The Grin is recognized and condemned today, however, the image of Japanese' "duplicity" runs deeper. It's a wartime stereotype that Americans regularly reproduce in today's so-called "Trade War."

— Abé Mark Nornes

Princess Iron Fan  
(*Saiyūki*)

China Executive Producer: Zhiang Shan-ku, Editing: Wang Jin-yi, Photography: Liu Guang-xing, Chen Zheng-fa, Zhou Jia-pand, Shi Feng-gi, Sun Tioa-xia, Script: Wan Gan-bai, Sound: Liu En-ze, Music: Lu Zhong-pen, Stills: Wan Lai-ming, Wan Kuchan, Production: China Joint Film Company, Distribution: China Film Co. (Chuka Den'ei), Print: 16mm, sd., Japanese, 90 min. (extant print: 70 min.), 1941.

Story: First, the title: "Originally, the *Hsi Yu Chi* was wholesome, enjoyable literature, but it has come to generally be seen as a thriller or mystery. Working on this film, we tried to remove ourselves from the mystery and show that what protected Priest San Cang's party at Mount Huo Yan was like the difficulties in life — if people work together, they can overcome troubles."

The story starts with Priest San Cang's party, who, during their arduous journey to India to get the revered scriptures of Buddhism, have arrived at the raging fire mountain, Mount Inferno. The villagers tell them that the mountain is surrounded for hundreds of miles by a sea of flame, and that the only way to put out the flames is to use the large Banana Fan kept by Princess Iron Fan, who lives in the Banana Cave. Sung Wu-kong goes on a reconnaissance flight but is chased about by fireballs. Princess Iron Fan, her son having been killed in the past by Sung Wu-kong, comes out and gives chase to Sung. Zhu Ba-jie steals the chariot belonging to Princess Iron Fan's husband, takes his form, and tricks his way into the Banana Cave. Princess Iron Fan, not realizing the imposter, welcomes her husband home.