



Rockwell Kent, left, famous American artist who visited Camp Barkeley recently, Pvt. Sam Smith, center, muralist, and Pvt. Bill Mauldin, cartoonist for the Camp Barkeley News, climbed the scaffold in the Service Club to examine Smith's mural more closely. "He scaled up that ladder like a youngster," Smith said of Kent.

Our Frustrated Cartoonist Chats With That Unfrustrated Artist, Rockwell Kent

By BILL MAULDIN

Somebody has the idea artists and cartoonists are of the same family. I don't agree. Either cartoonists are frustrated artists, or artists are frustrated cartoonists.

Anyway, when Rockwell Kent blew into Camp Berkeley, Editor Robinson said, "Go interview the guy. He'll understand you." I went.

Kent Rides a Peep

By the time I got to Mr. Kent, he had already been given the standard public relations welcome to Army camps. He had ridden in a peep. He had no comment. Most people who ride in peeps for the first time have no comment afterward. But it is expected of celebrities to ride in peeps.

It makes the Public Relations office or the peep driver or somebody happy. And Mr. Kent is the sort of man who wouldn't make anybody unhappy for the world. I found him in a very pleasant, if disheveled state.

I've never interviewed anybody before, and explained that at the outset. And I started off wrong. The night before he had delivered a lecture in Abilene, and was introduced by a lady, who, among other things, said Mr. Kent reminded her of a fresh spring full of sweet water. This seemed to put him in a good mood last night, so I thought it would be the right way to start interviewing him.

No Old Spring

"Welcome to Camp Berkeley in general and the 45th Division in particular, Mr. Rockwell Kent," said I. "You make me feel like I had discovered a fresh spring full of sweet water in this otherwise sordid atmosphere." He stared at me over his Coca Cola for a moment.

"Go away," he said.

"But Mr. Kent, I've got to interview you. My boss said so."

"All right then. Interview me. But don't compare me to any damned old spring. I'm a perfectly ordinary fellow who happens to be able to draw pic-

tures. I make a pretty fair living at it, but that doesn't make me any sweet spring full of water or anything else."

I could see that springs were a touchy subject with Mr. Kent, so I asked him about art and national defense.

"In the first place," said Mr. Kent, "I think we should stop this 'national defense' idea. And 'war effort.' The phrase should be 'VICTORY Effort.' Now shall I tell you about my ideas on art and victory efforts? All right. First I think art has been allowed to take a back seat in our new national scheme.

El Soapo Reigns

"I have been making a pretty thorough tour of the United States. Do I see our plentiful advertising space filled with victory effort stuff? No. I see billboards, signs, magazines, newspapers—everything that uses art—filled with El Soapo, Krunchie Krisps, Stingo Razor Blades, and the latest methods of birth control.

"And as I tour the highways, looking at thousands upon thousands of billboards emblazoned with this stuff, maybe once each day I see a rather anemic looking Minute Man, about two feet high and a hundred yards off, saying 'Buy Defense Bonds!'"

"In Russia, Germany, Japan, and all the other countries really active in this war," he went on, "You don't see El Soapo. Instead every sign, every wall—every inch of space seen by people—is covered with propaganda. Some of it lampoons the enemy, and some of it inspires its soldiers. Some of it is crude, but it is propaganda of the most powerful kind. You can't escape it.

"Those who have followed Germany through Europe, Japan through the Far East, and Russia in her magnificent battle against the Hun, can't miss the point. All this is impossible without an inspired people. And what way would be more effective to awaken a people whose very lives are influenced by advertising, than to use that advertising for Victory?"

Smith's Stuff Okay

"I think it is the duty of every artist in this country to dedicate his efforts toward that end. And it is the duty of the advertisers to furnish the space for their posters, paintings, and drawings. I want to see every billboard, magazine and newspaper covered with the victory effort in the most powerful way any idea can be presented—by pictures. It can be done. And with ceaseless effort, it will be done."

By this time we were looking at Sam Smith's huge mural in the service club. Kent shinned up the scaffold like an old hand, and inspected Sam's efforts with a critical eye. He liked it. He wants Sam to send him a photograph of the finished product.

"Tell me," said he to Smith, "do you have Generals in your hair? I remember painting a big mural in the Washington post office, and I had senators in my hair all the time. But I developed a system. It worked on senators, and I don't see why it shouldn't work on Generals and Colonels.

Kent Paints People

"When you wash your brushes, instead of removing the moisture on a rag, flip it off. You can develop a fine flipping technique, with constant practice. Within two days after I worked this out, senators on my scaffold were as scarce as mountain climbers in Venice."

Suddenly Mr. Kent looked at his watch, and remembered he had a plane to catch. But he wanted to do one more thing. He had ridden in a peep and now he wanted to ride in a jeep.

I called Johnny Fitch in G-4, and got a stray jeep. Mr. Kent got his ride. He inspected a tent, and watched the 189th Field Artillery standing retreat.

"Y'know," he said, "this is my first visit to an army camp. I feel a lot better about the war now."

Which summed a lot of things up in a few words.

Swell fella.