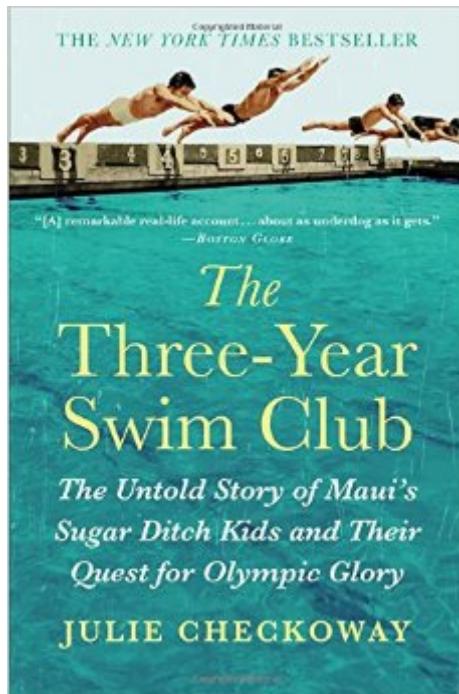


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The Three-Year Swim Club: The Untold Story Of Maui's Sugar Ditch Kids And Their Quest For Olympic Glory



Synopsis

Now in paperback: the New York Times bestselling inspirational story of impoverished children who transformed themselves into world-class swimmers. In 1937, a schoolteacher on the island of Maui challenged a group of poverty-stricken sugar plantation kids to swim upstream against the current of their circumstance. The goal? To become Olympians. They faced seemingly insurmountable obstacles. The children were Japanese-American, were malnourished and barefoot and had no pool; they trained in the filthy irrigation ditches that snaked down from the mountains into the sugarcane fields. Their future was in those same fields, working alongside their parents in virtual slavery, known not by their names but by numbered tags that hung around their necks. Their teacher, Soichi Sakamoto, was an ordinary man whose swimming ability didn't extend much beyond treading water. In spite of everything, including the virulent anti-Japanese sentiment of the late 1930s, in their first year the children outraced Olympic athletes twice their size; in their second year, they were national and international champs, shattering American and world records and making headlines from L.A. to Nazi Germany. In their third year, they'd be declared the greatest swimmers in the world, but they'd also face their greatest obstacle: the dawning of a world war and the cancellation of the Games. Still, on the battlefield, they'd become the 20th century's most celebrated heroes, and in 1948, they'd have one last chance for Olympic glory. They were the Three-Year Swim Club. This is their story.

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Customer Reviews

Destiny is a curious thing. Sometimes itâ™s planted in a childâ™s heart, where itâ™s then pursued and captured single-mindedly. In othersâ™ lives, it remains elusive, uncertain and unknown until a series of events finally reveals it. Imagine that youâ™re living in 1930s Maui. Life is beautiful. Youâ™re enjoying all that the Hawaiian islands have to offer: delightful scenery, ocean breezes, tasty food. If youâ™re a haole (of non-Hawaiian ancestry, or white), youâ™re living the sweet life there. You may even own a sugarcane plantation. Now imagine that youâ™re one of the multitudes of laborers in the sugarcane fields. You may be Japanese-American, Filipino or Chinese, and every day you take your machete into the fields and chop. The workday is backbreaking and exhausting. All the workers live in tiny attached houses in the camp, alongside the cane fields. And every family knows whatâ™s happening with every other family, whether itâ™s no food at the end of the month, arguing spouses, or some other trouble. Poverty is everywhere, and the sweet life is nonexistent. Camp children, though, are plentiful. And like all children, theyâ™re vastly creative. Without much in the way of toys, they make up games from sticks, seed pods and gravel. But their best-loved game is a forbidden --- and terribly dangerous --- one. Sugarcane fields require vast quantities of water to grow even a single pound of sugar. To provide more water for the drier valleys of Maui, plantation owners built ditches to bring water from the wetter mountain regions of the island down to the fields. Then they used more ditches to carry both water and waste from the fields down to gated reservoirs. Some ditches had muddy bottoms, while others were paved with concrete.

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