

Castañer Newsletter

BRUMBAUGH RECONSTRUCTION UNIT

Vol. V. No. 7 (#60)

Castaner, Puerto Rico

BRETHREN SERVICE COMMITTEE

May 1, 1947

WE TAKE OUR LEAVE

Our years spent in Puerto Rico, especially in relationship to the Martin G. Brumbaugh Reconstruction Unit, have been an extremely rich experience. It is with a feeling of reluctance, yet with anticipation, that we leave to face our new field of service in the States. We are reluctant to leave because we consider the Castaner work as very significant, and we have been buoyed by the reception which the people and a wide circle of friends in Puerto Rico and the States have given to it. We have enjoyed the physical convenience of this tropical country with its climate, beauty and clean atmosphere. We have appreciated the friends we have in the Unit as well as those about the Island. Then there is so much going on in Puerto Rico of a worthwhile nature with progress being made in spite of great handicaps. The government and private agencies share in this forward program.

There have been the special satisfactions of being Director of this work for four years--knowing intimately more than 200 people who have come and gone in the Units, and being intimately associated with the development of the Friends and Mennonite programs, as well as of the Brethren, here and in the Virgin Islands. It has been a program of work, play, worship, with all of the joy, as well as the sorrow that goes where human beings are gathered together in a common cause. Three men who have lost their lives in connection with the work here are true memorials to those who believe in the brotherhood of man and the eternal striving for peace on earth.

From the peak program of its spread the Martin G. Brumbaugh Reconstruction Unit in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands there remains in the post-war period the Mennonite Project at La Plata and the Castaner Brethren Service Project. In addition there are daughters to this program with the Presbyterian Project at EL Guacio, the Congregational Project at Zaldondo and the Mennonite Mission at Pulguillas. All of these Projects seem destined for a continuous and significant contribution toward the betterment of this Island. In this there is real satisfaction to see this work thus expanded, and finding itself on a long time basis.

The Castaner work seems to be stronger than ever with the recent decision of the Elgin office to carry on indefinitely with greater religious emphasis on behalf of the community. There will be others coming and going in the years that are ahead who, we are sure, will have the same appreciation for the opportunity to have served here and to have made their contribution, however great or small.

We want to express our appreciation, particularly to the members of the Castaner Unit, for their cooperation in work this past year in construction the three permanent houses for staff members and for carrying forward the over-all program with the same goals of accomplishment as existed in the past. It has been gratifying to be here until the conclusion of the Civilian Public Service work and to see the Project launched on a full time post-war program. We shall follow the work with our interest and our prayers, feeling confident that there are yet greater things that will be done than have been done in the past.

--Rufus and Wanda King.

HAROLD ROW VISITS CASTANER

During the period of March 28 to April 9, Harold Row, Associate Secretary of the Commission on Christian Service of the General Brotherhood Board, formerly the Brethren Service Committee, visited Puerto Rico, spending most of his time at Castaner planning for the future work of the Project. Most significant point of his visit was the announcement of the recent action of the General Brotherhood Board to continue the Castaner work for an indefinite period, thus planning for a long term program. Also the future will be planned with greater emphasis on the religious life of the Unit and the community. The Unit concurred in this and has asked that a permanent Religious Life Director be appointed to the Castaner Project to implement this program.

Many other items were cleared with the Unit. The Unit has approved a program of approximately thirty-two continental workers for Castaner and approximately the same number of Puerto Ricans. This will include two resident physicians and a dentist working in close cooperation with the Insular Department of Health in the Castaner General Hospital program and the Public Health Program in surrounding areas. Because of health, family circumstances and terminating periods of service, there will be approximately six vacancies at the Castaner Project for continentals within the next two or three months. These vacancies occur in the nursing staff, the kitchen, and in the community center work. Persons interested in serving the Castaner Project may apply to W. Harold Row, Commission on Christian Service, 22 South State Street, Elgin, Illinois.

While Harold was on the Island he conducted the worship services for two Sundays at Castaner, Palm Sunday, and an Easter Sunrise program for the Unit. He also spoke to the La Plata Mennonite Project and visited the Pulguillas Mission Project, the Baptist Academy and interviewed officials of the Health Department, Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration and the Governor's office.

BRUMBAUGH BOYS' CAMP OF 1947

Plans have been made to hold the Fourth Annual Brumbaugh Boy's Camp in the beautiful hills of El Yunque Recreational Park during the first week of June. The YMCA Camp facilities used in previous years are to be used again this year and are designed to afford the boys of our rural communities a wholesome environment for a full week of fun and character development. Daily chapel programs followed by discussions, work periods, handicrafts, swimming, rest, sports, fishing, hiking, and campfires, with outside speakers featured, fill each day with robust activities and moral development. The Camp Staff is made up of members of the Brumbaugh Reconstruction Unit of Castaner and La Plata.

Boys selected from the Castaner, La Plata and Zalduondo Projects who have shown interest in club work and general character improvement will be given the opportunity to share the camp experiences. Boys of the ages of 12 to 16 will be taken, with the capacity of the camp limited to sixty boys. The camp fee is \$4.00 per boy. However, only a few boys will be able to pay the full price. We try to keep the Camp on a self-subsistence basis and it is not included in the budgets of the Projects. Therefore we are grateful for donations for camp scholarships due to the fact that we attempt to select campers on an interest basis rather than on individual ability to pay the fee. The price, even though relatively low, is prohibitive to many deserving yet very poor boys, for it equals the major portion of the weekly wage of most farm laborers.

WORKSHOP FOR HOSPITAL DIETITIANS

An Institute for Dietitians was held by the University of Puerto Rico in cooperation with the Puerto Rican Dietetics Association. The University provided the meeting place and a specialist in hospital dietetics as well as members from the Staff of their Department of Home Economics. The Institute was held from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. daily, Monday through Friday, from April 7th to May 2nd. Ruth Idleman of our nursing staff attended for the week of April 21st to 25th.

The program was planned to emphasize administrative aspects of dietitians work, but the clinical, nutritional and educational phases were also included. In each session provision was made for questions and discussion. Demonstrations included the Puerto Rican method of meat cutting, preparation and use of salads in hospital diets, cooking and serving vegetables for attractiveness and palatability. Displays of native fruits and vegetables were shown along with tabulations of the nutritive values of each. Also material concerning the different varieties, season, and localities each is produced in were presented.

Some of the lectures at the Institute were discussions on: The Hospital Diet-- What can be done to improve it, Vegetables in the hospital dietary, Diet in the treatment of allergy, Liver diseases and the role of nutrition in its etiology and treatment.

FIVE-COURSE FAREWELL

"You'll have to walk for your dinner tonight", began the announcement in the dining hall at noon, April 16th, "and you are all invited to the Helfrick home for the first course. From there on, well, just follow the crowd."

At 5:30 p.m. everyone walked over to the Helfrick home (the middle one of the three new houses) for the first course of the "Progressive Dinner" feting Rufus and Wanda King before they left the Island on Friday, April 18th to begin alumni and promotional work at Bridgewater College in Bridgewater, Virginia. (See page 1.) The fruit cocktail at the Helfricks was good,--but on with the meal.

So, down the road, over the footbridge, and up the cobble stone road to the small house of the Wolfs and the Reeves on the hill. Appetites were good, and so was the corn chowder, but there was more. Back down the cobble stone road on the hill, across the footbridge and past the Helfrick home to the Burke home. Only course number three and such tasty salads--four different kinds,--and good.

"Did someone say there was more?" The main course consisting of meat and potatoes and fixin's were consumed at the next stop, the dining hall. The pace had slackened and no one referred to the word "appetite" by now. The last, but not least course was served at Kings' own home. Fourteen different kinds of pie were arrayed on the table awaiting those who were yet able to eat. The entire meal was plentiful and tasty, and we are sure that Rufus and Wanda, as well as the rest of us, enjoyed the evening's activities.

However, neither this little festivity nor our words can truly convey our deep appreciation, not only for your administrative guidance, but also for your friendship in which each of us has shared. Rufus and Wanda, we wish for you a large measure of achievement and happiness in your new field of collegiate endeavor.

WE VISIT A SUGAR CENTRAL

On Sunday, April 21st, some of the Unit members, both Continental and Puerto Rican, took the day off to visit the second largest sugar central (refinery) in the world (the largest sugar mill is located somewhere in Cuba). This refinery, the Guanica Central, is located near Guanica Bay on the southern coast of the Island west of Ponce, near the spot where the U. S. Marines landed in 1898.

The visitors were conducted through the Central by two guides--one for those visitors speaking English, and the other for the Spanish-speaking visitors.

The cane comes from the fields in railroad cars. At the Central, chains are run between planks on the car floor, and hooked to a huge crane. The entire carload of cane is then lifted onto a huge balance where the carload is weighed. This operation takes only a few seconds per car-load. Then the cane is dropped into a hopper and it falls into a coarse chopper that cuts the stalks into lengths convenient for "assembly line" handling. The cane, now on a moving belt, goes to rotary crushers cylinders which both crush and cut the cane. While going through these crushers the cane is sprayed with water to extract as much of the sugar as possible. This sugarwater solution falls into a canal and the pulp goes to the furnaces of the Central's own electric power plant.

The juice is mixed with lime for clarification, and is boiled and filtered many times. The last boiling produces a syrupy mass with a high percentage of sugar crystals present. This syrup goes to the centrifuge where the sugar is extracted and the crystals are retained by a fine screen. These crystals are top grade crude sugar. The syrup is returned through the boiling tanks and the centrifuge four times to extract more and more sugar, each extraction producing a lower grade of sugar. The last reject syrup is commercial molasses from which rum and industrial alcohol is made. While the Guanica Central makes no rum, most centrals in Puerto Rico do (because of a sugar combine agreement which allows Cuban sugar to be refined into table sugar because of the low cost of production there, and leaves Puerto Rico only with rum as its principal outlet for its sugar crop because it costs much more to produce sugar here). A smaller central near our Project (Pellejas) turns its entire sugar production into rum, which will amount to \$1,000,000 in tax revenue alone from this one central.

Much of Guanica's crude sugar is shipped out of Puerto Rico, to be refined in the United States, but some is refined here for the Island's use. The refining is done in a plant adjacent to the main part of the Central. This process includes whitening with the use of charcoal.

The Guanica Central is fully equipped for all of its operations, having not only the refining plant mentioned above, and a large warehouse with literally mountains of sugar, but also its own lime quarry from which they derive the lime for the first processing of the cane juice, lime kilns, a water purifying plant, and an electric power plant, which is fueled by the waste of the crushed cane.

The season for harvesting of sugar cane is generally from mid-February through July or August. Many centrals receive their cane by railway flat cars, but others by truck and even by ox-cart to some extent. Our group visited the Guanica Central near the peak of the cane season.

EASTER SUNRISE SERVICE

Early in the morning of April 6th a group from the Unit symbolized some of the significance of Easter by meeting on a nearby hilltop for a sunrise worship service. Andy Mathis directed the worship service, and the program included flute and trumpet instrumental music by Josephine Anderson and Royce Burke, prayers, group singing, poetry selections by Howard Long and meditational readings on the Easter story by Harold Row.

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PERSONNEL NEWS FOR MARCH AND APRIL:--Walter Keiser, construction foreman for the three new houses for doctors, and a garage, left Puerto Rico on March 5th for his home in Lakeville, Indiana to resume his contracting business. Before leaving he took a brief trip around the Island. Claude Wolfe arrived on March 12th to spend a month with Rufus King before assuming his new task with us as Director, then departed on April 10th for a vacation in the States (see last month's Newsletter). Kathryn Hertzler, R. N., left Puerto Rico on the advice of her physician to go to the home of her brother in East Petersburg, Pennsylvania. Beth Roop accompanied her on the trip, leaving on March 12th, and returning with her brother, Roger Roop, who then visited our Project and some of Puerto Rico from March 17th to 31st. Paul Snavely received his CPS discharge on March 29th as CPS officially ended. Ruth Idleman attended a Workshop for hospital dietitians at the University of Puerto Rico in Rio Piedras from April 21st to 25th (see page 3). Dr. Homer Burke attended a Conference for Public Health doctors at the School of Tropical Medicine from April 23rd to 25th. Due to the impending departure of Byron and Velma Shearer, the following shifts in personnel have been made: Nicholas Martinez has been employed to replace Byron in the maintenance department, and Alys Haag has changed from Superintendent of Nurses to Public Health Nurse, replacing Velma; and Ruth Idleman is replacing Alys as Superintendent of Nurses.

At the last Unit meeting, new Religious Life and Education Committees were elected. The new Religious Life Committee is Martha Bachman, chairman; Lois Click, Alys Haag, Dr. Francis Helfrick, and Cecil Wickline--replacing the former committee of Dr. Francis Helfrick as chairman, Mrs. Marguerite Burke, Edna Eller, Walter Haag and Andrew Mathis. The new Education Committee is Maurice Click as chairman, Dr. Francis Helfrick, Charlotte Wright, Howard Wolf and Edna Eller--replacing the former committee of Cecil Wickline as chairman, Dr. Francis Helfrick, Charlotte Wright, Thomas Mathews, Beth Roop, and Andrew Mathis.

CASTANER VISITORS DURING MARCH: Mr. and Mrs. William Ludlow of the City Zoning Section of the Insular Planning Board; Mr. and Mrs. Shumm, also of the City Zoning Section of the Planning Board; Dr. and Mrs. Clarence Senior, head of the Social Science Research Center of the University of Puerto Rico in Rio Piedras; Miss Polly Boyden of Truro, Massachusetts; Mr. and Mrs. Fred E. Wale of the Caribbean Section of the Julius Rosenwald Foundation of Chicago, Illinois; Raquel Torres of Robinson School in Santurce; Pascual and Felix Riera of Ponce; and W. Harold Row, Associate Executive Secretary of the Commission on Christian Service of the General Brotherhood Board in Elgin, Illinois (see page 2).

CASTANER VISITORS DURING APRIL: Rev. Harry E. Zech, and family, United Brethren Missionary for the Ponce district in Puerto Rico--speaking at our Vesper Service on April 20th; Dr. and Mrs. Smith of Ryder Memorial Hospital in Humacao, Puerto Rico; Mrs. De Jusus of the Puerto Rico Public Welfare Bureau; and Miss Margaret Weinig of the Settlement House for Puerto Ricans in New York City.