

Castañer Newsletter

BRUMBAUGH RECONSTRUCTION UNIT
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NOTE: On page 3 is a special article reprinted here by permission of the WORLDVER PRESS from their issue of May 9, 1947. WORLDVER PRESS is published weekly at Wilton, Connecticut (\$5.00 per year), and is an excellent source of Latin American and other international news, facts and articles from recognized authoritative correspondents and specialists. We commend it to all who take a vital interest in such projects as ours. The author of this article, Clarence Senior is the Director of the Social Science Research Center at the University of Puerto Rico. He is also the author of a pamphlet--"Self-Determination for Puerto Rico"--published by the Post War World Council, in New York City. He is a frequent contributor to WORLDVER PRESS.

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' We have been told so often that we are living in difficult times, per- ' haps the most difficult of all the ages. This may be debatable, but the ' fact still remains that these are times that try men's souls. The conditionsx of the times are not nearly so important, however, as the attitude of us ' who now live and will in the future turn over to our posterity the world ' which we leave. Have we come to the belief that we are helpless creatures ' thrown by a careless creator into a vast domain of trouble and difficulty? x Or, do we still believe that to a great degree we are still the determiners ' of our destiny? If this be true, then each of us, regardless of any burden ' or yoke that rests upon us, is faced with the great responsibility of giving ' our lives in such a way that our posterity shall live in a world not infest- x ed with disease, nor torn with fear and hate and war, nor enslaved by ignor- ' ance, but that they shall rise up a new nation before God, a remnant of ' truth and righteousness. This is our task.

Claude Wolfe,
Director of Castaner Unit

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FAMILY NIGHT

For two weeks before July 19th the Unit members carried invitations through the hills to every PRRA resettlement house. The invitations requested the presence of the entire family of each granjero at a family night, to be held Saturday, July 19th in the Centro Comunal.

This day turned out to be rainy and the ground was very wet, so that the Center Staff considered postponing the big night for a week. However, by 7:30 that evening the crowd began to gather, and the activities began. These activities were quite varied and were suited to all ages. For the little ones there was coloring, and also many games. For the older children and young people there was volleyball. And the adults had a variety of table games which they enjoyed. A pole-sack fight in which two persons straddle a horizontal pole and try to dislodge each other by pounding them with a filled sack, was conducted as a novelty. This was constantly attended by a large and enthusiastic crowd, not to mention the enthusiasm of the participants.

About 8:30 everyone gathered on the steps facing the tennis court, and a program of singing, folk-dancing and skits was presented. After a short bit of group singing the crowd went home in high hopes of having another family night soon. The next family night is now being planned for August 23rd.

CLAUDIA (not by Rose Francken)

The black ambulance rounded the last curve, slid to an amazingly noiseless stop, and chubby Claudia sat up, rubbed her eyes and looked long and hard at the bright yellow house. She certainly had been waiting long enough for this very thing. It had started way down in Quito, Ecuador when her daddy decided to help the Unit out by coming to Castaner as director. Of course, Claudia didn't really care, but she didn't know what a time she would have traveling all around over land and sea.

On March 10th the big journey started and Claudia, all eyes, boarded the shiny plane that took them up over the snow-capped mountains of Ecuador, the jungle lands of Colombia, the thin sliver of land that is called Central America, and down into the wealthy city of Miami. Mothers and daddys sure take a lot of things for granted, and if Claudia's mommy thought that it wouldn't make much difference whether Claudia's deddy went all the way home with them, or whether he flew off in another direction, she was badly mistaken, for little did Claudia know that that last long hug and kiss was a goodbye for a whole month, (at least she didn't realize the extent of a whole month.) Daddy stood on the walk at the big airport and waved to mother and Claudia as long as he could see a tiny face at the window. When the big motors started their roaring and the plane raced down the runway for the takeoff, Claudia looked over the passengers, gave mother a sleepy smile and snuggled down to a slumber that lasted until the great plane landed in northern Ohio, eight and a half hours later. Daddy, in the meantime, was getting reservations for his trip to Puerto Rico which you read about in the April Newsletter.

During that month at home in Ashland, Ohio, Claudia had such a time warding off grandmothers and grandfathers, aunts and uncles. It was only toward the end of her stay that Claudia began to feel at home in this strange new country where everybody talked like mother and daddy. The most exciting experience of her whole stay occurred when she and mother were snow-bound for two whole days.

One day Claudia's mother took her to the Cleveland airport and told her that daddy was to come in on a big plane in a few hours. Of course Claudia could not understand why daddy hadn't come with them in the first place, but at least it was going to be exciting, seeing him again after so long. Little "blue eyes" was the first to see him; and for a full minute she smiled her best smile for daddy. Then with all her baby enthusiasm, she laughed, "Dada".

Not many days later Claudia again stepped aboard a plane with mother and daddy, and headed south for the tropical isle of Puerto Rico. By this time these veterans of flying should have felt at home in the air, but the plane kept bumping into all the cloud mountains, and Claudia, held by daddy, because mother was too busy with her own paper bag, felt the urge to review what she had for dinner. Her father supplied the bag which Claudia refused, and the next few minutes no one wants to remember.

By the time Miami was in sight it was one in the morning; but daddy found a room. Of course Claudia was not sleepy any longer, and while daddy and mother prevailed upon the powers above for deep sleep, Claudia sat up in bed and whistled. Whistled is exactly what I mean, for Claudia has been whistling since she was nine months old, and with a year's practice anybody ought to be able to keep two adults awake by whistling.

At San Juan Claudia, mother and daddy climbed into the black ambulance and prepared themselves for the long, tiresome, twisting, rolling, aching ride home to Castaner. The siren was the first indication of their arrival here in camp, and all these who heard it immediately ran to welcome the group. It was then that we found Claudia wondering over a beautiful yellow house with sleek red tile floors. To a little girl who was hot and tired and sleepy, all this could wait until tomorrow; for she was, after all, going to be here tomorrow, and the next tomorrow and. . well, a long time.

PUERTO RICAN CONSUMER BEATS MONOPOLY

U. S. Congress Endorses Government "Yardstick" Store

By Clarence Senior
Worldover Press Correspondent

San Juan, Puerto Rico.--The people of Puerto Rico have just challenged the powerful importers' monopoly--and won. For years, this poverty-stricken island, like other areas which import a large share of their staples, has paid through the nose to a handful of merchants.

This group not only fixes high prices, but practices "conveying": it tells a retailer who wants beans, for example, that he must buy a certain quantity of wax candles or whatever else the seller is overstocked with. The monopoly was first challenged during the war when bulk purchasing was successfully tried. OPA also helped cut down the abuses of the system, until it was abolished and prices shot up.

For his defense, the consumer had one weak reed, a single store operated for less than a year by the Government's Agricultural Development Company. It had been set up as a "yardstick" both for prices and merchandising methods, which generally are antiquated here. But one retail outlet for a population of 2,000,000 was too much of a threat to business interests, who tried court action and public pressure to eliminate it.

In March they secured a ruling that the PRACO (Puerto Rican Agriculture Co.) could not import goods, thus cutting the store's effectiveness. Attempts to change the law and legalize imports were met by an attempt to kill the store. Commercial and industrial groups declared a one-day general strike, closed their stores and plants, appealed to the Republicans in Washington, and organized their employees to protest the bill that had set up the PRACO store as a yardstick. They had the wholehearted support of the principal daily newspapers.

Consumers -- and Congress

The consumers then organized in behalf of the store. Women's groups, cooperative unions and many small merchants formed an organization to counter the propaganda of the importer group, which claimed to speak for all the merchants of Puerto Rico. A public hearing was attended by thousands, at least 90% of whom favored the bill. The merchants' meeting was picketed by the consumer group, which issued handbills comparing price rises in the U.S. and Puerto Rico.

The Puerto Rico Senate passed the bill with only two dissenting votes. The House response was similar. Representative Fred L. Crawford (R., Mich.), generally considered the farthest right of the U. S. House members charged with supervising insular affairs, expressed his approval of the "yardstick" concept. The importer group in Puerto Rico is now threatening a tax strike if the bill is put into effect.

Local groups throughout the island have already repudiated this defiance of legislative action.

The consumers and small merchants have made two advances during the fight. The powers of PRACO were broadened so that it will be able to act as an importer and thus serve the small merchants who have been at the mercy of the monopoly. The consumers have had a taste of what they can do for themselves when organized. They have formed a permanent group, partly to push the creation of consumer cooperatives under a recently enacted liberal cooperative law. (Worldover Press.) Reprinted by permission.

DEMOCRACY GIVES NEW HOPE TO PEOPLE

For more than three months now the Consumers Cooperative has been in operation at Rabanos. Less than a year ago a group of men of this community began to promote the movement. Many said it would be impossible to raise the necessary capital of about \$3000; others of the land owners and of the one-time aristocracy said that it was impossible for the people to run their own business, that they would always have to depend upon the cultured and educated people. Yet, in this culture which still has strong traces of paternalism, feudalism and lassism abounding in it, there arose the realization that if the people continued to depend upon the few to solve their problems for them, they would never reap any benefits. The idea of solving the consumer problem themselves took fire. Three months ago when the cooperative opened its grocery store the 80 member families had contributed \$1300 in shares of \$5.00 each, and were able to borrow an additional \$1000 from people in the community. Those persons who, six months before, were most vociferous in predicting failure, were now silent, and watched with interest and with a little less doubt than before.

Then the other stores in the community started a price war. The cooperative leaders said that they would not follow suit, that they were not intending to fight but to serve. The co-op members continued to buy their rice at the co-op store for 14¢ a pound while the other stores sold rice at 13¢ a pound. Each day the sales of the cooperative continue to increase. The people were behind their movement. The price war failed, to the gain of the people as a whole, and to the competitors' loss.

There are a number of definite benefits which the co-op has offered to the community. First, it has eliminated the black market which has existed in the past. Second, it offers a larger variety of consumer goods to the community. In the past the small stores had the practice of handling a small amount of goods with little or no variety at a high margin of profit. This cost the public here much more than necessary, and prevented a good choice of products. Third, it has eliminated credit buying. This has enabled the co-op to sell at more stable prices than other stores for it has to make no allowance for bad debts. It has been customary in Puerto Rico for most of the people to buy on credit, paying on pay days. The merchant had to allow for bad credit, and the people were always in debt to the storekeeper. Fourth, the co-op has offered better nutrition to the community by encouraging the consumer to buy products containing high food value and vitamins. An example is the co-op's selling of vitamized rice as well as polished rice. Fifth, the cooperative has instilled a sense of price and responsibility in the people of the community, for this is their store and their organization. It is teaching them to be more democratic and worthwhile citizens.

Along with the Consumers Cooperative there is being organized a Credit Cooperative. This is equally as important for it offers the people an economic and efficient system of saving which coordinates with the idea of no credit being offered in the co-op store. It will offer loans at a low rate of interest. This is new here, for in Puerto Rico most rates of interest are exorbitant and unreasonable, so that most people, once they borrow have had to remain in constant debt. So, within a year, the people of Castaner

have taken one great step in building a better community for themselves--a step which no one else could take for them.

As a postscript a short summary of their first quarterly report is presented. 80 member families, with a capital of \$2370, the co-op store had a total sales of \$15,136, netting a gain of \$1264, over $8\frac{1}{4}\%$ of their sales value. In addition they have installed a pastry box, a set of scales and a refrigerator, the total value of their equipment being \$644.

LA CORONACION

Three weeks before May 24th the people of the Castaner community began voting for their favorite candidates for the May Queen. Each vote cost one cent, and the money is to be used for activities sponsored by the Centro Comunal, such as the boys' and girls' clubs, the center's library, and boys' camp. On May 21st the voting was closed at 9:00 p.m. The newly-elected Queen was Eulogia Bonilla, one of the Hospital nurse aids. Now the seven girls, the Queen and her court of six princesses, had to prepare long dresses, choose partners and practice before Saturday, May 24th. This was only four days, and they were packed full of hurry and scurry and mainly worry. But at 8:00 p.m. on Saturday evening everything was ready.

At that time the music began, and each girl slowly walked from the rear of the center hall with her partner to the stage, lining up on either side of the Queen's throne which was decorated with gardenias and ferns. Then the Queen approached the throne, preceded by two little girls dressed in long white dresses, one girl carrying the crown, and the other carrying the scepter. The Queen was crowned by the First Lady, after which she ascended from the throne, and the royalty danced the first dance, after which the rest of the crowd joined in.

FAREWELL TO VICKY

The evening meal on Monday, May 12th was a special affair at Castaner. Due to the approaching departure of Miss Victorina Riera on the 15th, we had a small program of quiz games and other entertainments in connection with the meal. There were some choruses written to be sung especially for the evening, spelling the name Vicky. The decorations were also lovely. From the center table, on which there was a May Pole banked in gardenias, there extended streamers of various colors over the rafters and down to the other tables.

Vicky has been working with us as a graduate nurse for the past year. She plans to go to the States about May 29th. Her home is in Ponce, and we're hoping she returns some day.

CIVILIZATION HITS CASTANER

R-r-r-r-ring. "Hello, is Dr. Burke there?" is the familiar sound at the Burke home nowadays. Yes, the project has taken another step forward with the installation of the telephones in the Hospital and the Burke Home.

Heretofore it was necessary for someone to walk the quarter of a mile to call the doctor. At night this was a rather unpleasant task, but through the thoughtfulness of some of our friends in the States, telephones which were no longer of value there are now saving us many steps here each day. Occasionally Mrs. Burke finds it handy to call the hospital and remind her husband to bring the groceries home.

The problem of what to use for a telephone line was solved when we were told that an Army Surplus Store in Ponce had some used telephone wire. With the purchase of the wire it was only a short time until we had the line strung up through the banana patch to the Burke home.

It is hoped that some day we may have enough phones to put one in each of the doctors' houses, the director's house and the office, as well, and have a good old-fashioned party line.

"Number please." "Sorry, the line is busy".

WEDDING BELLS IN YAHUECAS

In the quiet setting of the bride's home in nearby Yahuecas, Ana Torres and John Jahn (see Personnel on last page) were married Wednesday afternoon, July 2nd. Rev. Milton Davila, minister of the Baptist Church in Adjuntas, performed the ceremony in his unique and appreciated manner. Completing the wedding party were George Furse, old-time Castaner comrade of John, and Phyllis Anderson, who is studying nursing with Ana in Hollywood, California and accompanied Ana on her trip home this summer.

With but a few of the closer friends of the family present, the wedding was quite typical of those of Protestant families here on the Island.

During the reception Stan Harbison of the El Guacio Project, who also attended with his wife, Jean, busied himself with the picture-taking responsibilities as long as Ana and John would permit before they finally managed to depart for their honeymoon in El Yunque.

Even with their own car, and away from Castaner, the bride and groom found that no unit wedding is free from the plotting minds of los Rabanos. Due to 'unavoidable' car trouble here at Castaner, Ana waiting in Yahuecas, thought she was being stood up.

NO MORE HUNCHBACK

It's new, it's white, it's shiny. Guess what. You can't? Well, here's more information. It's got all sorts of gadgets, assumes all sorts of positions and is high enough. That last bit of information would give almost anyone at Castaner the answer because the surgery nurse and doctors have been running around stoop-shouldered after spending a morning operating. So now you know.

The Unit purchased a new operating room table recently, and it is certainly appreciated. Its advantages over the old one include head and knee break sections, hand restrainers, air cushion, foot brace and other advantages. All types of examinations and operations are facilitated by its ability to assume all positions from sitting to lying down, and from inside out to right side up. Also it is as high as an operating table should be.

FOURTH BOYS' CAMP--1947

As the climax to our boys' club work, we journeyed again to El Yunque for the Fourth Annual Brumbaugh Boys' Camp, held from May 30th to June 5th. Twenty-four boys and five leaders, with supplies, made the 120 mile trip from here to El Yunque by truck, arriving at camp in a beating rain. By the time the boys from the La Plata Project had arrived, the river was in flood stage. This dampened the boys' spirits

for several days as far as fishing and swimming were concerned. However, with 47 campers and a good group of leaders, interest and enthusiasm were never lacking through the entire camp time--in spite of our wet handicap. (It insisted on raining most of the week).

Some of the highlights of camp were: a hike up to the top of El Yunque, the highest mountain on the eastern end of the Island; a swim down at the ocean where the coconuts happened to be plentiful at that time; and our Sunday morning chapel service on the top of a nearby mountain overlooking some of Puerto Rico's beautiful shore line.

Boys' Camp is the year's highlight in the lives of these Puerto Rican boys, and we hope to see it continue and grow throughout all the years to come.

FIELD DAY

Brightly painted posters were up over the Castaner community announcing the coming Field Day for everyone in the community on Saturday, May 10th. The boys who were working to earn their money for Boys' Camp, took this opportunity to make chocolate fudge and orange pop to sell throughout the day. There was no lack of refreshments.

Beginning at 10:00 in the morning were the throwing events for the boys and men of the community. The throws included soft-ball, baseball, and basketball. After this there were high jumps, and pole vaults. Then each tried his skill and strength with shot put. Races were entered into enthusiastically. They included the 50-yard dash, 75 yard dash and 220 yard dash. A first place ribbon was awarded to the winner of each event.

During the afternoon there were events for the girls. These included the softball throw and the 50 yard dash. First, second and third place ribbons were awarded for each of these events in various age groups. Humor was present in the form of novelty, races, such as the three-legged race and the sack race.

PERSONNEL NEWS FOR MAY, JUNE AND JULY.--During the past quarter of a year since the last Newsletter was published there have been many arrivals and departures. Claude and June Wolfe arrived on June 3rd. with their daughter Claudia (see page 2). Claude is now our Director, and June works with the women's industry and the community center program. John Jahn, a former member of the Unit, and now a medical student at Columbia University, has rejoined us for the summer months, and is helping with the medical-social work and in the lab. He will return in the fall for his second year of Medical study. Ana Torres of Yahuecas and Phyllis Anderson, both student nurses at the Presbyterian School of Nursing in Hollywood, California arrived on June 19th; and volunteered a great deal of their time working in the hospital and the OPD. On July 2nd John Jahn and Ana were married in Yahuecas (see Page 6), and on July 19th Ana and Phyllis returned to their final year of nurse's training in Hollywood. The latest arrivals are Fern Kring of Walkerton, Indiana and Thelma Strite of Hagerstown, Maryland who arrived on July 17th. Fern completed her three years of nurse's training at St. Joseph's Hospital in Mishawaka, Indiana on July 2nd. Besides arrivals from the States we have had three other newcomers from other parts of Puerto Rico. Iris Rodriguez (R.N., St. Luke's Memorial Hospital in Ponce) arrived on June 6th to serve as nurse on our Project for the Fondo del Seguro (Insular Government Health Insurance Bureau) replacing Tom Mathews who left the Unit on June 12th to attend the summer session at Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio. Virgenmina Bobe returned to us after finishing her nursing training at Presbyterian Hospital in Santurce on July 8th. Adolfo Ramos came to us as secretary of the public health clinic here, from his home in Camuy, near Arecibo.

Heading the list of departures were Byron and Velma Shearer who returned to West Milton, Ohio. Leaving with them was Carmen Flores, one of our nurse aids, who is now working in a hospital at Troy, Ohio. On June 7th Bruce and Margie Reeves left for her home in West Palm Beach, Florida for a visit, then continued on to Sunnyside, Washington. At this same time Howard Long also left for his home in Baltimore, and will enter Juniata College, Huntingdon, Pennsylvania this autumn. Caleb Frantz, who teaches in the ninth grade of the Second Unit School at Rabanos, and lives with the Unit here, left also on that date for a visit home (his first in four years), and took with him Gilberto Claudio who is entering Machester College, North Manchester, Indiana this fall, and Cesar Claudio who is entering Bridgewater College, Bridgewater, Virginia. Josephine Anderson left for her home in Nashville, Tennessee on June 30th. Other travelers included Dr. and Mrs. Homer Burke and Dr. Burke's mother, and Edna Eller and Donald Sollenberger, all of whom attended Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren at Orlando, Florida from June 11-15. About June 20th, Manuel Quiles, our laundry helper for four years, left for Chicago to work in the laundry at Bethany Hospital.