

Castaner Newsletter

BRUMBAUGH RECONSTRUCTION UNIT
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Castaner, Puerto Rico

BRETHREN SERVICE COMMISSION
May 1, 1948

AT THE HANGING GARDENS

Under the nuptial arch of fern and lluvia de orquidias vine ("Rain of Orchids"), Edna Frances Eller became the wife of Paul Leroy Snavely. The wedding took place on April 3rd on the front porch and lawn of the Hanging Gardens, as the third of the three new houses is called.

At 1:50 in the afternoon, soft music began, and at two o'clock the wedding march was played. Paul and his best man, Walter Haag, walked to the arch-way and turned to watch Edna and her maid-of-honor, Ruth Idleman, come to meet them. Edna, lovely in her white organdy and lace gown, carried a white rose with orange blossoms on a testament which belonged to her father and mother. Her veil of tulle finger-tip length was held in place with a halo of orange blossoms. Andrew G. Mathis performed the single ring ceremony and pronounced them man and wife amid the whirring of a movie camera and continuous clicks of more than twenty cameras. Ruth Idleman, a former Unit member, now working as college nurse at the Polytechnic Institute at San German, was gowned in aqua marquisette and carried a nosegay of pink roses. Caryl Mathis was the organist, and also sang a solo, "The Lord's Prayer". The users were Everett Myer and Calab Frantz.

The reception was held in the home of Dr. and Mrs. Everett Myer where Thelma Strite and Miriam Myer were in charge. Visiting guests were Mr. and Mrs. Walter Keiser and family of Polytechnic Institute in San German, former Unit member; Alden and Rosa Douglass, of San Juan, also former Unit members; and Mr. Jose B. Barcelo, Mayor of the municipality of Adjuntas.

Mrs. Snavely's going-away outfit was of white eyelet linen with white accessories and a large corsage of pink roses. After an hour's delay, during which time an unexpected amount of car trouble developed, Mr. and Mrs. Snavely left for a week's stay at the McLean Conference Grounds near Bayamon, Puerto Rico.

Edna is the daughter of Rev. C. E. Eller of Salem, Virginia, and Paul is the son of Mr. and Mrs. E. H. Snavely of Waterloo, Iowa.

Shortly after their return to the Project Edna received word that her father was critically ill. This has necessitated their return to the States. They left by plane from San Juan for Roanoke, Virginia on April 29th. We already miss them for their important contributions in the hospital and in the maintenance department. Rev. C. E. Eller visited Castaner Project during the past Christmas season, and each of us cherishes his friendship and his interest in the work of the Project.

To the Church of the Brethren
Assembled in Annual Conference
at Colorado Springs:

Christian greetings to the Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren assembled at Colorado Springs. Although we may not all be present our prayers and aspirations are that the Church of the Brethren may be ready to answer the calling of our Lord as it considers its task of interpreting the teachings of Christ to the world through its total program.

We appreciate the support of the home church in carrying on the work of healing and uplift that we have been able to do in this community. Now that a portion of land has been promised to us we are hopeful for a permanent work. And as the Church develops here we can see our work extending deeper into the spiritual lives of these people. Puerto Rico is a land of great need. The harvest is ready but the laborers are few. We hope and trust that the Puerto Ricans will receive the help and stimulation of the Brethren way of life.

It is a faith-inspiring thought to realize that the love of God is so moving in the hearts of a fellowship of people that they send out the fruits of that love to a hungry and needy world. For this love we are grateful and pray that the same spirit will guide you throughout this conference.

Fraternally,

Castaner Brethren Service Project

RABANOS RELIGION

The Catholic Church in the community has for many months had a new building constructed of concrete blocks, but as yet unfinished. However, this does not prevent them from holding services. Every Sunday they have catechism classes, and they recently had a week of confirmation classes. Fr. Victoriano Santiago of Lares comes on the third Sunday morning of each month to hold mass. He also holds mass in the neighboring church of Bartolo on the first Sunday of each month. The Rabanos Catholic church building is across the Guayo river from our Project near the Paoli home, so is actually in Adjuntas, not Lares. The attendance at their monthly mass is about 30 to 40.

The Pentecostal Church meets every Sunday evening in the PRRA church building on the Project. They also hold a mid-week service in the same place on Tuesday evenings, and have occasional meetings in the homes of the members. They also hold Sunday School each Sunday afternoon in the home of one of the members. Their pastor is Francisco Rios, and their attendance averages about 20, although their membership is between 30 and 40. The Pentecostal group is the only group not supported by funds outside the community, all others being on some sort of missionary basis.

The Episcopal Church meets every other Sunday morning in the PRRA church building on the Project. Father Lauro Bauza of Bartolo is the rector. He holds services every Sunday in the Bartolo church, and also alternates Sundays between the Castaner church and the church at Mirasol, between Lares and Bartolo--the site of a former clinic conducted by the Project. Father Bauza is the only resident minister who has had seminary training. The church's membership is between 30 and 40, and the attendance averages about 20. The Church has land for a building site but as yet has not been able to construct the building it plans to have.

The Baptist Church formerly met on Sunday afternoons in the PRRA church building on the Project, but have completed the construction of their own church building on their site on the Lares side of the bridge between our Project and the Llinas finca. They held their dedication service on Saturday evening, April 10th. Ramon Gonzales is their local lay leader, and their pastor is Rev. David Rodriguez of Adjuntas. Now, in their own building, they have services each Sunday afternoon, with a Sunday School of three classes, totalling about 50 pupils, and a church service with about 60 in attendance, although the membership is about 45. Jaime Alvarez, one of our hospital orderlies, and Elena Torres, one of our nurse-aides, are both active in the work of the Baptist Church. Elena teaches the primary Sunday school class. The Baptist Church also has a prayer service on Sunday evenings at 7:00, and a Bible study group for teachers on Tuesday evenings. They also have a preaching service on Thursday evenings.

The Church of the Brethren organized a church here on February 25th of this year, and now holds Sunday School each Sunday having three classes for different age groups, and conducting a preaching service in the PRRA church building on the Project every other Sunday, alternating with the Episcopal church services. See page 8 of the March Newsletter concerning the organization of the church. In the article however, the office of Music Director was omitted. Caryl Mathis is the Music Director. Recently at a Unit meeting it was decided that the Vesper services of each Sunday evening would also be sponsored by the Church rather than the Unit. This removes the necessity for a Unit Religious Life Committee, so a new one was not elected. The Church has 20 charter members from the Unit personnel, and the church attendance includes several people of the community, which number is slowly increasing. The worship services have been conducted in Spanish, but all, except two, of the preaching services have been in English, which makes a considerable handicap. However, it is expected that some guest speakers will preach in Spanish, and the Church hopes soon to have a full time Religious Life Director who can conduct services in Spanish. Every Thursday evening the Brethren also hold a prayer meeting in the PRRA church.

DE DIEGO DAY

April 16th is another holiday that is strictly Puerto Rican. It commemorates the birthday of Jose de Diego (1867-1918), who, under United States rule, was one of Puerto Rico's greatest political figures, as well as being a poet, newspaperman, and an orator of grand eloquence. From 1908-1917 he was the President of the Chamber of Delegates, and the following year was President of the House of Representatives. His poetical works marked the end of one epoch of Puerto Rican literature and the beginning of the modern poetry. His earlier work shows the influence of romanticism, while his later works are more in the spirit of modern poetry. It is a credit to Puerto Rico that many of its political leaders have also been literary men, and also a credit that the people honor not only their politicians but also their poets.

CALDERON CAMERA CLUB

On February 26, 1948 the camera fans (that is practically everyone) met and organized what is now known officially as the Calderon Camera Club--so named because of the mountain which is so prominent in our view and which appears in so many of our pictures. The group meets the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month, and so far, has had five meetings. Eighteen persons are members, although three have now gone to the States. The purpose is to share information, see each other's pictures, and pool our orders for equipment and supplies.

Current world and national events make the following statement, formulated three years ago, so applicable today that it is well to repeat

A DECLARATION OF FAITH

With faith in mankind and in the democratic and Christian tradition from which this nation has drawn its enduring values, we affirm our belief in certain guiding principles during these years of doubt and near despair.

We believe in the human spirit.

We believe in the idea of progress toward a saner, richer civilization than the world has yet known.

We believe that this progress can come only through the acceptance of the basic truth that society exists for the benefit of mankind, and therefore, that every agency of society, including the State, exists to protect and to foster the development of the individual personality.

We believe, in turn, that individual man finds fullest satisfaction and development only in the willing service of mankind.

These are democratic principles. They are the principles which once made our nation the hope of a humanity bound by old despotisms and by conscription of body and mind in unthinking bondage to the State. In the service of these principles we believe the nation must turn from the cynicism and the fear now threatening us with a return to bondage.

We cannot accept the conscription our forefathers rejected. Guided rather by our old traditions we must seek the end of conscription in all nations, the eventual abolition of all national armies, and the final acceptance of international order as opposed to the continued strife of ungoverned nationalism.

Specifically, we oppose peacetime military conscription because:

It destroys initiative.

It dulls the conscience by forcing the individual to accept unquestioningly the orders of others.

It encourages resort to force rather than resort to reason.

It threatens the democratic state with the establishment of a military bloc.

It is a denial of faith in international organization in favor of cynical reliance upon armed national might.

Democracy cannot live indefinitely in a world of recurrent wars and preparation for wars. Unless we turn away from universal conscription and huge armaments, we shall be dooming democracy to eventual extinction. Now is the moment for the nation, with its heritage of individual liberty, to rededicate itself to the democratic way of life and to declare its faith in the possibilities of a United World!

Castaner, Puerto Rico
May 22, 1945.

The members of the Castaner Project of the
Martin G. Brumbaugh Reconstruction Unit.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE:-- At the latest Unit meeting it was decided, due to the decrease of personnel to reduce this committee to three members. Those selected for six months were: Walter Haag, chairman; Norma Roesch, secretary; Dr. Everett Myer, in charge of Spanish classes.

FOR THE BOOK SHELF

DEMOCRACY AND EMPIRE IN THE CARIBBEAN, by Paul Blanshard, Macmillan, \$5.00. The author, as State Department official assigned to the Caribbean from 1942-1946 and as consultant to the U. S. section of the Caribbean Commission, visited practically every tiny dot of earth in the region. Over 9 million people live in Cuba, Haiti and the Dominican Republic, but these island republics are only briefly discussed. The chief concern is with the 6 million under colonial status, ruled, in order of importance by Great Britain, United States, France and the Netherlands. The U. S. colonies are Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and the Panama Canal Zone, which contain over two of the six million colonial people. Reviews of this book may be found in The United Nations World, Vol. II, No. 1, February 1948, page 64; in The Christian Century, October 29, 1947, page 1302; and in Survey Graphic, April 1948, page 223.

THE UNITED STATES AND THE CARIBBEAN, By Dexter Perkins. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, \$3.00. This volume in The American Foreign Policy Library in a sense supplements the material in the above book. For one thing Mr. Perkins deals exclusively with the parts of the Caribbean purposely avoided by Mr. Blanshard -- the independent republics, Cuba, Haiti, Santo Domingo, and including also Panama and the Central American republics, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. He writes with sympathy and with knowledge of the situation, but he softens the facts about many conditions known to exist in these countries. However, he is properly stern about the unsavory U. S. intervention in Haiti, Santo Domingo and Nicaragua through the early 1920's. He speaks of the Big Stick policy and the Good Neighbor Policy. The Caribbean may be as important to the United States as the Mediterranean is to Europe. A review of this book may be found in the same page and copy as the other review in The United Nations World.

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CLOSING OF THE HOSTEL:--The Unit's hostel at the Eleanor Roosevelt Housing Project in Hato Rey near San Juan was closed on March 31st, as the PRRA which owned the building needed it for the St. Just community where a school is being provided. St. Just was the site of our first hostel. For other information concerning the hostel in the past see the Newsletters of September 1947, page 3 and October, 1947, page 2.

PERSONNEL NEWS FOR APRIL:--Fern Kring journeyed to San Juan April 5th to 9th to take the Puerto Rico State Board Exams for Nurses. On April 3rd Paul Snavely married Edna Eller (see page 1), and they returned by plane to the States on April 29th.

CASTANER VISITORS FOR MARCH:--Alberto Lebron and Roberto Carrasquillo, traffic and sales representatives for Eastern Air Lines in San Juan; Mr. E. W. Ranck of the Federal Land Bank in San Juan; Mr. and Mrs. Titus Schrock (he is a brother of Mrs. Burke) of New Paris, Indiana; Orville and Lois Sherman (friends of Luke and Martha Bachman) of Goshen, Indiana; Miss Edna Luz Rios of the Social Work Department of the University of Puerto Rico; Miss Dorcas Bermudez and Miss Ana Blanco of San Juan, friends who attended the wedding of Alden Douglass and Rosa Claudio; Rev. and Mrs. Harry Zech and two sons, missionary of the United Brethren Church in Ponce; and Mr. Israel Bracer of Ponce, member of the staff of the Puerto Rico Evangelical, Protestant Spanish-language magazine of the Island; Pablo Vasquez of Caguas, and Ann Shafer of El Guacío Project.

CASTANER VISITORS FOR APRIL:--Ruth Idleman, student and college nurse at Polytechnic Institute; Linda Rymar, also of Polytechnic; Rev. and Mrs. Don Dods and family of El Guacío Project; Jean Alexander, also of El Guacío; and Pablo Vasquez.