

Castañer Newsletter

BRUMBAUGH RECONSTRUCTION UNIT

Vol. VII, No. 1 (#72)

Castaner, Puerto Rico

BRETHREN SERVICE COMMISSION

August 1, 1948

BOYS CAMP

The morning of June 4th found some eighteen boys of Castaner and six of the older boys of the project in an excited state of mind, for that was the day that we packed everything we needed into two trucks and started on a three day boy's camp. After many weeks of thinking, planning, etc., Andy Mathis and a couple other boys of the project had planned what they thought would be the best possible camp with the time and means they had. In the three weeks previous to this morning, each of the boys had worked out at least one of the two dollars charged him by cutting the grass and in general cleaning up of the project.

On this particular morning we left at 7:30, heading for Guanica Bay and arriving there at 10:30 after a very pleasant ride. It was there that we met Don Dodd of El Guacio who came as a leader and brought with him three boys from his project. While at Guanica we enjoyed a good swim and a good game of water ball. We left the beach at 11:30 and after about a three mile ride along the coast in the Guanica Insular Forest, we arrived at a house which was loaned to us by the official in charge of the Forest. We set up our beds, and after dinner were on our way again to the Salinas Fortuna, about 10 miles west of Guanica Bay.

Here we met Dr. Ismael Velez of Polytechnic Institute who explained the process by which the salt water is pumped into large vats and the water evaporated by the sun, leaving the salt. From there we went west a few more miles to La Parguera where we boarded a small boat and ventured out into the ocean to a small island about 20 minutes from shore. There the cooks set up a couple of small stoves and started supper while the rest of us went with Dr. Velez on a marine life study, wading knee-deep in water which covered a coral reef to the north of the island. There were many animals which the boys and many of the leaders had never seen before. After about thirty minutes of this we all went back to the island and around to the leeward side for a swim.

After supper we loaded boys and equipment aboard ship and headed east along the coast to Phosoporus Bay. It was there that most of us saw something that very few of us had ever seen before, and that few of us ever expect to see in another place. In this bay which was about one third of a mile long and about one fourth of a mile wide, conditions favor the growth of a small protozoan animal. These animals, in their process of digestion, produce a waste product which is luminous. When the water near these very small animals is moved very rapidly they become very luminous, either because of the increase of food injected, or because the digestive process is hurried up. So at night the water in the wake of the boat became quite luminous with the fish that darted every which way at the sound of the motor. This was a thrilling experience for both campers and leaders.

From the bay we went back to the trucks and then back to our beds at 10:30 after a very full day. The next morning everyone was up at 6:30 for exercises, followed by breakfast. At 8:00 Don Dodd led a short but impressive chapel service. At 9:00, after everything had been packed into the trucks, the boys headed for the beach at Guanica; and the truck with the food and equipment, for Maricao Insular Forest some 3000 feet high in the mountains. After the boys had enjoyed a swim, they too headed for the forest and joined the others who had gone ahead to prepare the meal. After dinner and a short rest, we were again joined by Dr. Velez who took us on a plant study hike that ended in a contest of groups to see which could name the most plants. After this, the boys played a game of softball and then to supper. The highlight of the evening was the campfire with songs and stories. And then to bed in another house which had been loaned to us by the Insular official.

At 6:30 the next morning we were up and out for exercises, after which everyone enjoyed a good breakfast; then to chapel by Don Dodd on the mountain side overlooking the southwest corner of Puerto Rico. The remainder of the morning was taken up by a ball game and packing, because right after dinner we said goodbye with the Indian Farewell and parted again for our homes.

I'm sure that the boys enjoyed the camp and I hope it left with them a little of what we wanted to get across to them. The boys who went from the project here were Andy Mathis, Maurice Click, and Dale Roesch as leaders and Howard Wright, Miguel Arroyo, and Cecil Wickline as cooks.

G. I. SUMMER SCHOOL

For the first time in this community, the Veterans Administration has sponsored an eight-week summer session for those World War II veterans who have been going to school under the Educational Section of the GI Bill of Rights. The classes were held in the Rabanos Second Unit School for five hours each school day afternoon for eighth, ninth and tenth grade veterans. Seventy veterans attended the school--25 in the eighth grade, 20 in the ninth grade, and 25 in the tenth grade. The eighth and ninth grades are taking a 7-month or 28-week course which is a special short course for veterans enabling them to get in the usual 10-month or 40-week course of regular public school in Puerto Rico in enough less time that many of them will be able to get an extra year's credit in school before their government allotments expire. These two grades are studying the special courses of Spanish, English, mathematics, science, with social studies for the ninth grade, and U.S. History for the eighth grade. The tenth grade studies Spanish and English, but took 2-hour courses this summer for a full year of credit in each subject.

These educational activities are of special interest to the Unit and the community because of the establishment of a high school by the Castaner Brethren Service Project. After the new high school has been in operation for one semester it may apply for recognition for full accreditation by the Department of Education of the Insular Government. Thus, all credits given will receive full value in other high schools, or for college entrance requirements. Further, when the unit's high school receives this accreditation after one semester, those eligible veterans will be permitted to attend. So, it is possible that 20 or more tenth grade veterans may enroll in the Unit's high school one semester from now. Next autumn, when all of the present eighth and ninth grade veterans will have graduated, a large share of these 70 veterans may enroll. Since these veterans average about 5 years older than the non-veteran high school students of the community, it can be readily seen how great the need is for the high school in this community where so many of the children are unable to

continue their education past the ninth grade. The nearest high school is in Adjuntas or in Lares and this would require them to travel back and forth every day, which is too expensive, or to find boarding arrangements in these towns, which is too often impossible.

Of special interest to many is the fact that many of these veterans are known by former unit members. Last May's valedictorian in the veteran's graduating ninth grade class was Ernesto Diaz, who worked for the Castaner Project until he was drafted into the Army.

VISITORS

Project visitors for the month of June were Mr. and Mrs. Alden Douglas, Mr. E. W. Ranck and Mr. and Mrs. Harold Laskey. In the early part of July, Mr. Ben Bushong, Executive Secretary of the Heifer Project Committee, spent several days with us on his return trip from South America.

Sunday, July 18, Walter (former unit member) and Mrs. Keiser and three children of San German spent the day here. Arriving at noon the same day, a number of El Guacio workers were our guests. They included Rev. and Mrs. Don Dodd and four children, Miss Betty Clark and Mr. Paul Bensen, and Miss Hope Nason who is a Presbyterian Social Worker stationed at Mayaguez. In the afternoon Mr. and Mrs. Orm Greene from the Yuquiyu Project (formerly called Zalduondo) came in for a short stay and to spend the night with us. Mr. Greene very kindly lead us in our Sunday evening vesper service.

We are glad to welcome guests and the latch string is always out to any who can pay us a visit.

PERSONNEL

Andy and Caryl Mathis departed on June 17 after completing a two-year service period. Andy has been active in religious work and has been in charge of the Community Center Activities for the past year. Caryl has filled a number of positions during her service, but recently was the hospital secretary. Also, on the 26th of June, Maurice and Lois Click left after their term of service had expired. For over two years Maurice had been unit treasurer and buyer, and for over a year Lois had been in Girls Club Work in the Community Center. Accompanying them, of course, was Ana Louisa, who had joined the unit less than two months ago. Their chairs are vacant, and we are desperately in need of someone to fill them.

Dr. and Mrs. Homer L. Burke, Lynn and Jeneba, spent the month of June in the States, attending Annual Conference in Colorado Springs, and the Rally at Camp Mack. They report a good trip, a fine Conference and possibilities of securing several badly needed new workers. They returned June 30, but Lynn remained with several of his uncles on a farm in northern Indiana for an extra month of vacation.

July 1 Dr. Everett Myer terminated his service with the Unit. He was in his second term of service when he felt the call to go to Adjuntas to become the doctor of the new Municiple Hospital there. At first they were unable to locate a house and have been living here. They now have one which they hope will be ready by the middle of August. The hospital building in Adjuntas is completed, but is still lacking some equipment, so the patients who need hospitalization still come to Castaner to be cared for by Dr. Myer.

On July 15 Thelma Strite terminated a year of service as head cook of the Unit, and returned to the States where she plans to enter Manchester College after she and Don Sollenberger, another former unit member, have said their "I do's." We extend our best wishes to them.

Caleb Frantz returned on July 31 for the third year as a teacher in La Segunda Unidad de Rabanos.

We are eagerly awaiting the arrival of our party of new workers on August 6. This group is to consist of Rev. and Mrs. Robert Ebey and daughters, Mary and Alice, Miss Violet Harris, R.N., Mr. John Kidwell and Lynn Burke who is returning from his vacation. Rev. Ebey comes to us as our religious life director. Three days later a deputation of W. Harold Row and Hylton Harman is scheduled to arrive.

UNIT NEWS ITEMS

Miss Irmina Velez has been conducting Spanish classes for interested unit members the months of June and July. They met three nights a week for 1-2 hour classes.

Our Castaner Unit is finally in the process of moving. The Walter Haags and Dean Rohrers moved into the Llinas casa grande, so that the former doctor's house can become the P.R.R.A. guest house.

The footing of the school house is to be started August 2, and the opening date for school (tenth grade only) is announced for August 23. Walter Haag will be the acting principal until such time as someone else can be secured.
