

Castaner Newsletter

BRETHREN SERVICE PROJECT
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Castaner, Puerto Rico

BRETHREN SERVICE COMMISSION
December 1, 1948

IN MEMORIAM

Elzie Ray Holderreed--November 26, 1943

THANKSGIVING SERVICES

Our thoughts and expressions of thankfulness began early Thanksgiving morning, as with Sallman's Head of Christ as inspiration, we were helped in our meditation by music, recordings, piano and violin music, a mixed quartet and a men's duet. No matter where one goes the Lord sees fit to bless.

The Thanksgiving dinner tables were arrayed with candles and flowers gathered in our own backyards. Forty unit members and workers heartily enjoyed the bounteous dinner.

Sunday evening before Thanksgiving Rev. Robert Ebey, our pastor, guided us in thoughts of the real meaning of being thankful. Dr. Burke led an English service Sunday morning. Lifting our heads a sample of the Lord's abundance met our eye in the form of ten different fruits of the tree and the soil, gathered about a white cross, symbolic of Him who gave so much that we might live. Dare we ever forget to be thankful? -- Violet Harris.

DO YOU NOTE PROGRESS?

Is Castaner progressing? No doubt that question runs through the minds of many who have formerly been in the Castaner community. What can we term "progress" in a community? Can we base our answer to that question on population gains, industries begun, schools built, increased earning power, health improvement, church interestedness, physical improvements of utilities--or what? Now it is not my intention to try to answer either of the above questions. That's up to the reader to decide for himself should he care to after reading these several lines devoted to information which may have escaped notice in other publications.

At the polls in the recent elections Castanerites showed almost an Ivory Soap pureness as Populares--as in most other communities there wasn't even enough

opposition to create a good fight over the issue. Of course some credit for that is also due directly to Munoz Marini's plea in all speeches for clean, thoughtful, and common sense political activity. People recognize the rightness of this man in just about all that he says and believes in.

In general the PRRA Central Service Farm seems to go along about as usual. Ordinary workers are getting 15¢ per hour. The coffee crop is good this year. Pickers get 30¢ per almud. A coffee elevator has been installed in the mill so that the beans must not now be carried to the second floor across the ramp. The PRRA carpenter shop, which has been located at the porquerisa for the past several years, is now the center for all of the preparations of building materials for such work as is still being done on the Island. Even concrete slab privy platforms are being made there now. They expect to pour some 700 this year.

The Vanilla Co-op continues as usual. Mr. Santiago Esbri, the administrator, spent several months in the States last year.

Mr. Morena, still PRRA administrator, has taken new interest in base ball. Almost every nice afternoon he can be seen practicing hard ball with other community fellows. The accumulation of weeks through the wet months on the ball field was fearsome, but they have now been cleared off and it looks as though we may see some real ball games here through the coming dry season.

Don Bartolo Ozonas has returned from Spain. La Senora y hijos (except the older ones who will continue to study in Spain) will also return soon -- or perhaps have arrived already.

Mrs. Colom spends some time at the finica and some in Ponce. The sons continue to run the farm, though they had planned to sell it after their father's death. Both Mike and Bill are now married to school teachers.

The Rabanos Second Unit has had a face-lifting recently. The Multitudinous leaks in the roof are now repaired and the building has been painted both inside and out. The vocational aspect of the education program has suffered a set back. Home Economics hasn't been offered since Imogene Hanawalt left, and carpentry has been dropped after Mr. Santana left. The enrollment for industrial arts during the past two years has not been sufficient to warrant the payment of a teacher. The general enrollment has increased each year, there being some five hundred in nine grades this year.

One sees more interest in education in general this year, both on the part of parents and students, due to the recent opening of the Brethren Academy. Many youngsters plan to continue through high school now that there is one in the community.

The Cooperative Store seems to be doing well. Something like an 8% dividend was realized last year. Juan Alemany continues as the manager.

Recently a social club was formed among the teachers (many of whom now stay in the community) and other people of the locality for the purpose of the development of certain social, cultural and economic aspects of the community life. One of the first projects is to buy an amplifying system for use in the local schools and community center.

Several severe cycling accidents (two fatal) have occurred recently near here. Santos Maldonado, whom some of you know (boys camp, etc.) lost a thumb when he collided with a truck. Another died when he crashed head-on with a truck, and a third died as a result of being thrown from the tandem of a motorcycle. (Remember when the only bikes in the community were those owned by CPS men? Few youngsters over twelve don't know how to ride one now.)

One is amazed at the number of cars and trucks on the highway these days. Most of the middle class families have cars and a number of veterans have either trucks, jeeps, or passenger cars. I remember that, during the war years, almost any truck or car that came to Castaner after 6 p.m. was sure to be bringing some emergency case to the hospital.

In spite of high prices many people seem to dress and eat better than they did only two or three years ago. Veterans checks have had plenty to do with it in most cases. Of course hospital workers always step up a few notches shortly after the first pay check or two. Indirectly the hospital is doing a pretty good job in education, social work, and public health just by its mere existence in the community.

Major Barcelo said recently that the work of the projected dam in the Balear area is to be started within a year. Said dam will make a lake reaching from the Salto de Guayo back to the rapids in the river just below Rabones. A tunnel under the mountain will carry the water to the dry area west of Yauco. Perhaps, though I don't know, the water will supply extra electricity too. (Note to Everett Groff. Now you can return to P.R. and get that lake resort started. The government's doing it just as you had planned it.)

The Baptist church is a going concern with a nice looking building on the Lares bank of the Guayo just by the Puente Sifonte. The Catholic chapel on a hill overlooking the ball field and Paoli's house is not finished but is being used every third week.

Father Bauza and congregation are rebuilding their chapel in Bartolo. The area for the Episcopal Church in Castaner has been fenced off, but no building has appeared yet. The Padre is driving a new Jeep station wagon.

Other building, outside of the Brethren project, is about nil in Castaner. However, since the war many new houses have appeared along the highways and byways. In the country most are built of pine shipped in from the States, but Cemento Ponce is also widely used, but this more particularly in town where requirements are more strictly endorsed and more permanence is desired.

Plenty of activity in Castaner and Puerto Rico in general. Do you note progress too? -- Caleb Frantz

WOMEN'S HAND WORK

The women's industry has moved to one of the downstairs rooms of the Llinas Casa Grande. At present 15 women are working. We have several new designs, flamboyant tree, man carrying fish on a pole, little boy on grass cart, large ship and palm trees with ship.

Now we are also making bun warmers, pillowcases monogrammed, men's hankies, colored nainsook women's hankies, head scarves, men's ties and a large variety of dresser scarves and vanity sets.

Price lists are available to anyone who is interested. Write for one today.
--Mary Kaye Rohrer

ADJUNTAS HOSPITAL

The Municipal Hospital of Adjuntas is still the beautiful building that it was in July except for some mud playfully thrown on the pretty exterior by neighbor boys. A few items of equipment have been installed, such as: electric dish washer, water heater and storage tank, ironing board, dental chair, and water fountain. A provisional cess pool has been constructed to serve until the new city sewage disposal system is completed.

So far there is no water or electricity available. There are no beds, no surgery or examining tables, no nursing equipment, no supplies. The out-patient "Beneficencia" service is still limited to what can be done in an 8 x 12 room in the old clinic building. In this small space, Dr. Myer and three helpers see 50 to 80 patients in a four-hour clinic. All hospital cases must be sent to Castaner Hospital or to Arecibo District Hospital.

Many say that in an election year, nothing more can be expected, but now that elections are over and the Popular Party is continuing in power, a few months should make hospital services available to the city of Adjuntas (population 26,000) for the first time in its history. -- Everett B. Myer, M.D.

MOVING NOTES

The first building of the Brethren Academy was completed so that the classes began convening there on November second. About one third of the hospital building is erected, and they are ready to pour the cement floor in the other two thirds next week.

The shop is ready to move into. The ground has been broken for the 120 ft. apartment building. -- Marguerite Burke

MYER'S HOUSEWARMING

The unit has officially settled the Myers in Adjuntas. On December 20 we all went to the housewarming. Maybe I shouldn't say the unit because many of our friends including the Santiagos, Maldonados, Morenos, Riveras, and Bauzas were there with us, besides the new friends of the Myer's from Adjuntas. Our Puerto Rican friends sort of embarrassed us by being on time, while we arrived late; just a matter of a couple of hours. It was a very nice Puerto Rican fiesta with music by a trio of banjo, moraccos and accordian. The Lechones (barbecued pigs) were up in the garage being roasted over charcoal, while we got acquainted with cokes and chinas (oranges). In a short time the lechon was served with boiled platonos (cooking bananas), potato salad and Puerto Rican bread. Then came arroz con pollo (rice with chicken), a liver dish and a sausage dish. Of course we were all full by this time but the Puerto Rican white cheese and guava paste looked too delicious along with tinta (black coffee) and coffee con leche (with milk). A social hour was enjoyed by playing games and visiting, then we journeyed back to Castaner. -- Norma Roesch

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On November 2 a Halloween Party was given for unit members and Puerto Rican workers. The Casa Grande living room was appropriately decorated with pumpkins, witches, black cats and a skeleton. Nearly everyone was masked.

Those chosen best masked were the Haags, Walter, Alys and baby Sharon, who came as a family of ghosts and Carmen Troche who was dressed as a Popular Party member. Honorable mention went to Dale Roesch who had himself sewn into a morgue sheet and was carried in on a stretcher.

On Saturday evening, November 13th, Dale and Norma Roesch and Chester and Lila Peckover who are now living in the second house, descended on Casa Grande about seven-thirty and hurried a surprised and dazed group of people to a come-as-you-are party, being given as a housewarming. Similar trips were made to the Ebeys, the Burkes and to Llinas.

The featured entertainment of the evening was a scavenger hunt which sent the members of two teams all over Castaner, looking for such things as a plum frond and a blossom from a tulip tree. Later, yarns were swapped while refreshments were served.

We left feeling we had done a good job of warming the house.-- Lois Neiderheiser

VISITORS

Dr. Charles Gwynne, professor of Geology from Ames State College, Ames, Iowa, with his wife, visited the unit on November 7. He is serving this term as visiting professor at the Agricultural College at Mayaguez. They were so much interested in the project that they made it a point to return the second time on the 20th with some fruit trees to be planted in the newly acquired Brethren Service Farm.

Dr. Myers has been out to the unit several times during the month. On Sunday, the 14th, the family were with him and they had dinner with the Ebey family.

Carmen Flores who has been working in West Milton, Ohio, for the past year and a half is back at Castaner for several months visiting with her family. She has announced her engagement and approaching marriage to Lucian Hood of Dayton, Ohio.

-- Marguerite Burke