

Trust Territory of the Pacific  
Ponape, Eastern Caroline Islands  
Begun--November 27, 1959

Dear Friends,

With the sounds of a tropical island night filling the air, I will try to jot a few lines before blowing out the lamp and calling it a day. Our wind, so blustery of late, has departed and the stillness makes the drone of the surf unusually loud. The contented chirping of the crickets is constant; several sea birds have squawked by overhead; and an unwelcome mosquito has just buzzed by. All is quiet on the home front with Michael and Marsh asleep and Chet and Merrill in Kolonia.

Today has been more of a holiday than any since our return. Yesterday was Thanksgiving but with the exception of an appropriate theme at morning chapel, it was a routine day with the usual toil. We seldom celebrate American holidays in a traditional fashion but the boys did consider last night's meat loaf supper quite special. With the store ten miles away by water, we usually spread the hamburger out over spaghetti for longer lasting flavor!

The big day on Ponape started today when the students' breakfast bell rang at 6 A.M. instead of the usual 7. An hour later all but 8 of the 84 students were aboard the mission boats, and with most of the staff, were on their way to Kolonia for the special services held there each November. I decided to "stay with the stuff" and contribute my prayers rather than my presence, to the success of the weekend's endeavors. We are always encouraged by the large attendance and spiritual benefit of this annual event when people from all of our twelve churches come together.

The unusual quietness of the day afforded opportunity for private Thanksgiving meditations; my pew a rock at the base of a coconut tree; my view, the unbroken horizon of the mighty Pacific beyond the variegated blue lagoon with its brilliant white fringe of breakers crashing on the outer reef. "For the beauty of the earth" might have been the anthem. How rich we are in creation's beauties here on our point of land right on the edge of nowhere! To merely contemplate the vastness of the ocean is to stretch the soul.

Continued January 1, 1960

Alas, the blessings of tropical beauty were overcome by the bane of tropical weariness and the task begun was not completed. The above line from that first effort are included to show that our intentions, as is so often the case, were better than our deeds. Christmas greetings brought requests for a general letter which are an incentive to get this on its way. Though most of you didn't hear from us at the holiday season, we trust that each of us felt its inspiration and are returning to the regular routine like the shepherds "glorifying and praising God."

Looking back over the year begun in Edinburgh and ended here at Oa we see many reasons for "praising God for blessings past". We didn't enjoy the cold weather but warm indeed are our memories of furlough days; real schools for the boys, Chet's opportunity for study, the experience of ordinary family life, and the wonderful bonus of a two week quick trip through seven countries on the continent of Europe, just to mention a few. To you who prayed for Chet's undertaking we would report that the Lord abundantly answered making it possible to meet what his advisor had considered a nearly impossible deadline, by ~~submitting~~ <sup>submitting</sup> the word received in Portland that his thesis had been accepted and his degree (Ph.D.) conferred on July 15th.

For "journeying mercies" we are again grateful. The many thousands of miles by land, by sea, and by air were traversed with pleasure, without

wishap. Now again within the confines of our tiny island, often for several weeks not even leaving the mission land, our minds hop from place to place around the world to spots made meaningful by furlough travel.

One of the last steps en route back was for ten days in Honolulu. To feel again the Christian "aloha" of our friends there was a most heart warming experience. Some who came to Sunday school the first day we opened in Kaimuki are now active adults in the church. On the flight to Guam we read a letter from another "first Sunday" boy. Although it made one feel a bit old to read of his summer missionary work in Mexico, it made those first rather hard years in Hawaii seem so well spent. Although there have been times during these past fifteen years when we have forgotten "the joy that" is "set before" us, we are glad for the privilege which has been ours in serving the One who came to bring peace to the hearts of men and purpose to their lives.

One of the most moving experiences since our return was the sight of an estimated 2 to 3 thousand children packed into our Kolonia church last August for the annual Sunday School Rally Day. For nearly four hours we sat facing them, so bright in their Sunday best, the girls gay with ribbons and artificial flowers. (I counted 3 ornamental pieces on more than one head.) As we watched their eager faces, noted their good behavior, heard the well prepared songs and pieces, I forced back tears that entire morning so humbling was the sight of such potential in young lives while fearing that we have inadequate leadership to guide them in the years ahead. Chet's thesis study added meaning to the occasion as we recalled the fathers of the missionary awakening who declared that the "isles would hear His name and rejoice." As the children of a people who had never heard His name in that day sang His praises, it was thrilling to be a part of the prophecy fulfilled.

When not overwhelmed by the multiplicity of duties, we are grateful for the challenge of our work. The two schools got off with a flourish this fall, the flourish being a measles epidemic. In charge of the students' health and welfare, I learned after a few weeks of running back and forth to the dorm trying to bring down fevers (some of which were over 105), what a blessing it is to have the students all in good health. We are even more concerned for their spiritual growth and will especially appreciate your remembering the twenty young men who will graduate from the Pastors'-Teachers' Training School this June. They are going field work in the churches each weekend making a contribution especially in the youth work.

While Chet is involved in the task of training future leaders for the church of Micronesia, my most pressing duty is trying to prepare our three boys for their futures. We are pleased with Michael's progress in the eighth grade but Merrill's sixth grade is a struggle. If we didn't admire his ability to enjoy life so thoroughly, we would be more distressed by his unconcern for scholastic pursuits. A big question is how long the boys should be kept on the field. Several possible solutions to the problem all seem hard at the moment but we know that there is a perfect way.

Lest we forget to be thankful for all blessings we will close by saying how much we are enjoying our animals again. With no TV, telephone, radio, or newspaper they fill many gaps. Mike is chief goat and pig herd boy, Chet is number one with the chickens, Marshall delights in them all, Merrill is looking for a dog, and I have at least ten cats with always more on the way!

With Christian love,