



The Terpstras  
Trust Territory of the Pacific  
Ponape District  
Eastern Caroline Islands  
September 4, 1951

Dear Friends:

As the outboard motor on the little boat in which I am sitting putts along steadily, I realize that the trip I am taking today would be a lovely outing for most of you - something you might have to travel hundreds of miles to an ocean resort to be able to participate in; but to us it has become just another part of our life and work. The day is hot and bright, in spite of rather heavy clouds scattered in the blue sky. The sea is a glassy calm and this makes writing possible. As I lift my eyes from the paper, I have a full view of our Jochaz Rock, a Ponapean landmark very similar to the much more publicized Hawaiian Diamond Head. Jochaz is greener than its more famous counterpart but a brief glance at it is like a momentary visit to Honolulu. To my right are little coconut-studded islands with the rolling surf breaking on the outer reef just a bit behind them. The view to the left is of Ponape with its bays fringed by native houses, its low hills covered by heavy foliage, an occasional shower falling from low lying clouds in one of the valleys, and the mountains with here and there a waterfall breaking over the cliffs. Those of you from Michigan would be quite impressed with Ponape's mountains, but being from Oregon I still find it difficult to call anything less than Mt. Hood anything more than a hill. A moment ago a school of small fish popped up and glided across the water away from our boat.

We must make this run quite often, as we have our home and school out in the "country" at Oa while the port, stores, Post Office and doctor are located near the harbor settlement called Kolonia. Sometimes the trip is a bit more exciting than it will be today, as in windy weather (of which we have a great deal) the seas are high and the going is rough. I shall never forget the day we went into Kolonia two weeks after my father's death in hopes of receiving a letter with details concerning his passing. The seas were high and we hit a rain squall. Both of the boys were with us, and to maintain our balance I braced a foot on either side of the boat and held them tight. I tried to comfort Michael's tears and fears by telling him that in the States people paid money to obtain the same effect on a roller coaster, and we tried saying "whoa" each time we hit the waves. Merrill had a cold and with the motion of the boat became sick at his stomach several times. But we had a safe trip and the letter was awaiting us. We do thank God for His presence with us at all times. Often I remember the prayers of our many friends at home and they are a source of strength as I realize that nothing can enter our experience without His permission.

This week the children and I have been staying in Kolonia with Miss Morgan, as Chet is away on a field-trip to Kusaie. However, I have some mimeograph work in Oa which must be done before he returns and so some of our school boys are taking me out. There are five of them - three who were students at our Christian Training school in Oa last year, and two from the elementary mission school in Kolonia. As I see the boys, I am reminded that school starts again soon. Opening day has been set for October first. Our plan is to have the students stay with us from then until March of '53, when we are scheduled to have a furlough. By keeping them right through we will be able to graduate our first class at the end of our first term. We ask your prayers that each one may have a vital experience in their life which will enable them to leave school and go back to their communities with zeal as witnesses for Christ.



Just now as I look toward shore, I see our church at U. This Sunday it will be a busy place as it will be the host for the Christian Endeavor organizations of four of our churches. The other six churches will meet in Jokaz-pa for this tri-annual event. These are interesting affairs but not nearly as large as the biannual meetings which are held in Kolonia. At some of these services the attendance reaches 1600. You should see the town! People live in every nook and cranny - in the saw mill, on store porches, between buildings, and we even saw one group who had taken over a large unused Navy "reefer" for their weekend hotel. On Ponape the Christian Endeavor is not just a young people's group. You may stay in until you die. It is composed of those most interested in the church and therefore the more consecrated Christians. Our theme for this weekend's meetings is taken from II Cor. 5:17: "Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." We certainly long to see more transformation in the lives of many of those who have faith but have not yet grasped the deeper things of Christ.

This summer if July and August can be called such in a land of perpetual warmth, we have had a time of blessing at Oa. For a total of seven weeks, schools (or conferences as you might call them) were held for the different church leaders - Christian Endeavor officers, deacons, native pastors and their wives, and Sunday School teachers. We were especially happy to have the time with the Sunday School teachers. Classes were given covering the content of their coming lessons, as well as methods of teaching, and use of visual aids. The closing session was a camp for some of the Sunday School pupils. By actual count, we had 450 children plus teachers, some parents, and babies. Probably 600 stayed on the land at that time. For most of the sessions with the children we divided into three groups. Lola, Chot and I each took one and our complaint certainly wasn't lack of students. The classes, games, and contests were all something new for them and it appeared that "a good time was had by all."

In our last letter Chot asked you to pray for the work of evangelism. We have begun to see the answer to this petition. The work of the Sunday Schools is being strengthened and attendance is increasing. New members have been added to each of the churches and many have come forward for repentance. I was interested in a remark which a native preacher made at church in Kolonia this past Sunday. This was his observation: "In Japanese time the gospel came into our churches and our prayer houses. Today in American times the gospel is coming into our homes and hearts." He mentioned "homes" I am sure he was making reference to the visitation work which has been done by the native ministers. Chot, sensing the need of more work with the individual rather than with the congregation as a whole, worked out a plan of rotating the six ministers from district to district, each spending a month in a different locality. They have worked faithfully at this for four months, holding services in all the homes and talking over the spiritual needs of the families.

A very definite evidence of the gospel entering the "hearts" of people was seen in the life of Karlos, a minister's son and himself a former preacher. In the past, women and drink were the temptation which had caused him to fall. Many had talked to him but to no avail. Then a few months ago the Holy Spirit convicted him of his sin. With a real burden on his heart, he started to read Pilgrim's Progress in the Marshallese language. As he read he traveled with Pilgrim, and when his burden rolled away at the cross, Karlos' did too. He has since been a "new creature" in Christ. The desire for drink has been replaced by a great thirst for the Word. His testimony is that although he tried to teach others before, he had never understood for himself.



And now an additional prayer request. When the Navy left this area and the work was taken over by the Interior, a number of jobs were opened to civilians. Now many of these positions, from the new High Commissioner to ordinary workers, are filled by Mormons. Contracts for work in the Trust Territory will be available from time to time. Perhaps some of you will make work in this area a matter of prayerful consideration. Even in secular work, you could be used to strengthen our missionary efforts.

We have been on the water now for about an hour and a half. I have just caught sight of a patch of our new aluminum roof shining in the sun. Now it is hidden by the numerous coconut trees which flourish on the mission land. Oh is as beautiful a spot as I hope to inhabit before I reach my heavenly home. If you were here you could climb the hill with me to the house, and after sending one of the boys out to pick up a few lemons from under one of the trees we could have a refreshing glass of lemonade together.

In His service,

*Chet and Marge Torpstra*

P.S. We wish to thank again all of you who responded to our last letter by sending packages. The ship which arrived in August brought many of them, and if yours arrived then you have received a note from us by this time. If your packages did not make that ship, they are not expected here until the next scheduled ship near the end of October.

Also will you please note our change of address. If you go to the Post Office and your local branch does not know anything about us I will say that air mail letters are the regular 6¢ and have been coming regularly every week since July, but all other mail waits for the ships. We are in zone 8 to all of you.

The Torpstras are missionaries of the Micronesia Mission of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. They are stationed on Ponape in the Caroline Islands and are engaged in evangelistic and educational work.

This letter was distributed by the Missions Council, 14 Beacon Street, Boston 8, Massachusetts. Notification of change of address should also mention the Torpstras' name.