

MICRONESIAN MISSION or TRUSTING HIM in the TRUST TERRITORY

Before me is the unbroken horizon of the vast Pacific. As I look northeast, I remember that 4660 miles across this expanse of ocean lies the City by the Golden Gate with its busy streets, throngs of people, brilliant lights, and clanging cable cars. Over 2000 miles in approximately the same direction is the colorful city of Honolulu and its varied cultures, fragrant pageantry, and swank restaurants--our home for four years. The sights and sounds of American cities seem remote as I sit watching coconut palms waving in the tropical breeze, and hearing only the sound of the surf pounding on the reef and the calls of the bright birds as they flit about. These are the sights and sounds of Micronesia.

The Micronesian Islands. I wrote the words in my notes along with one hundred and fifty other students in a class in General Anthropology. I was attending a Christian college, and like many others in the room, was looking forward to missionary service in a foreign land. The names of India, China, and Japan painted mental pictures of weary pilgrims plodding along hot dusty roads seeking forgiveness, of pagodas and prayer wheels, rice paddies and pagan gods. With the mention of Africa or even the Solomon Islands came recollections of missionaries showing colored slides which I had so enjoyed as a girl, and which had helped to create in my heart a love for missions even in my early years. But the Micronesian Islands--not a stir or impression. I had never heard of a missionary working there, and I am sure that no one else in the room had either. How surprised I would have been then if the Lord had unrolled the plans of my life and revealed to me that in five years I would be on my way to serve the Lord, with my husband, on a

beautiful little green island in the middle of the mighty Pacific Ocean.

Now after eighteen months in this area, Micronesia and Ponape, our particular island, are very real and important to us. Indeed, here is the very center of our life, and interest, and activity for this is the place which the Lord has appointed us to stand in. However, I realize, that to the rest of the world, we are living in a rather obscure and relatively unimportant place. Not long ago a former college roommate, now teaching geography among other things, wrote, "Where are you anyway? I've searched all my maps in vain for Ponape." About the same time our college alumni paper listed us as working on "Ponape, Hawaii." The recent exchange in the Trust Territory administration from the U.S. Navy to the Department of the Interior brought these islands into the news, and I feel, that Christians will be interested in knowing about missionary activity and conditions in the Trust Territory that they may pray intelligently for the work in this area which has recently come under United States jurisdiction.

Micronesia includes the Marshalls, Carolines, and the Marianas. The only island in these groups which is not a part of the Trust Territory is Guam, in the Marianas. However, the name of Guam is better known than most of the islands and helps to identify their location in the Pacific between Hawaii and the Philippines. In all there are over 2000 islands with 50,000 Micronesians. The islanders whose homes are spread across three million square miles of water have many differences in language, dress and customs, but to all outrigger canoes, copra, and coral are familiar objects. — |

The individual islands are of two types--coral and volcanic. The former are low and small with white sandy beaches and the const-

ant murmur of tradewinds through the branches overhead; fitting the typical conception of south sea islands. The latter are larger, slightly cooler, and mountainous. The heavy rainfall on these higher islands produces numerous waterfalls which splash down the verdant hillsides. Tropical fruits including bananas, pineapples, papayas, limes, and mangoes add variety to the staple diet of taro, yam, and breadfruit. Fish are always nearby for the ambitious fishermen or women. Clothing in the rural areas is simple with a length of cloth wrapped skirt-like around the waist being a favorite with both sex and all ages. However, in the center around the American settlement semi-American dress prevails.

The islands have for many years been under the domination of foreign flags. In the early days following their discovery Spain ruled, but in places where Protestant missionaries had already worked they were more respected by the natives than were the Spanish government officials. The Spanish influence is still seen in the Marianas where the majority of the people are Catholics. However, after many uprisings in the Carolines, an embarrassed Spain was happy to sell them to Germany in 1899. After the first World War the islands became Japanese mandates and remained under Japanese control until taken from Japan by United States forces at Kwajalein, (Marshalls), Saipan (Marianas), and Peleliu (Palau, Western Carolines). In 1946 the United Nations places them under United States trusteeship. The U.S. Navy provided the civil administration for the area until July '51 when the Department of the Interior took over.

Mission work in this part of the world began in the year 1852 when a little band of two American and two Hawaiian missionaries landed on Kusaie, Eastern Carolines. They were sent out by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. During the ^{more than} ~~almost~~ 100 years of mission work, the islands have been served by

American, German, and Japanese missionaries.

At present the work is under the ABCFM in the Carolines and the Marshalls. A Baptist group have missionaries in the Marianas. The missionaries on the field today are few and far between. The islands farthest west are the Palaus, in the Western Carolines. Stationed here are Mr. and Mrs. Wilhelm Fey, German missionaries sent out seventeen years ago by the Libenzell Mission and supported jointly by that group and the American Board. Over a thousand miles of ocean roll between this outpost and the more centrally situated Truk station. Located on different islands within the same lagoon, are Mr. Wilhelm Kaercher and family, and Miss Anna Dederer. Dr. Harold Hanlin, former Navy chaplain who felt called to mission work while in service in this area is also to be on Truk following his present furlough. A few hours by plane or a few days by ship bring us to the last station in the Carolines, Ponape. Chet Terpstra, his family, and Miss Lela Morgan comprise the mission personnel here. To the northeast are the Marshalls where Miss Eleanor Wilson of Park Street Church, Boston, is assisted by Mr. and Mrs. Loren Miller.

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/ 2 The work of the missionary in this part of the Vineyard is varied and runs ^{his} the occupational gamut from planing lumber and mixing cement, to designing and overseeing the work on new mission buildings, as well as the "white collar" professions of school teacher and minister. (Mission schools conducted throughout Micronesia range in level from elementary to the proposed "seminary" scheduled to open on Ponape next year.) Churches are numerous and it is the missionaries' task to ^{advise} supervise them and provide refresher courses for native pastors. Each missionary is also responsible for the churches and people located on the outside islands within his area.

For the most part these are low coral islands off the regular path of commerce, and are touched by ships about four times a year.

Unfortunately the missionary is usually only able to visit these spots once or twice a year to minister to the peoples' needs.

And what are the needs of these brown skinned half-touched-half-untouched-by-civilization natives? Of course, our foremost interest is in their spiritual needs. When the missionaries arrived on Kusaie, they carried a letter from King Kamehameha of Hawaii encouraging the natives to become Christians. Here, as in many parts of the world, when a chief received the missionaries or became a Christian, large groups of his subjects followed his example; some with real conviction but others apparently with a lack of true conversion. Perhaps because of this, much of the church life has become form with emphasis placed on order of worship rather than condition of heart. On the part of many who profess faith there are numerous temptations and discouraging failures. Therefore, the pressing need is for evangelism in the churches, as well as the schools, Sunday Schools, the very homes and hearts of the people.

These simple folk have known many transitions as they have passed from hand to hand among nations. Today they are once again being molded by an outside influence. Americanization is beginning to be evidenced. In the early days, Americans meant missionaries bringing the message of salvation. The two are not synonymous today. American movies with their Western thrillers and sordid love life are reflected in the "bang-bang" play of youngsters and the attempts at ballroom dancing on the part of their older brothers and sisters.

The Navy's withdrawal from the Trust Territory opened a number of good paying jobs to civilians. We regret that we did not do something to encourage Christian laymen to make applica-

Many of the positions, from the new High Commissioner to ordinary workers, are now filled by Mormons. When the next contracts are signed, how strengthened would be our missionary work in these islands, if they were signed by earnest evangelical Christians.

And so the work of Christ is carried on in this obscure portion of His vineyard; hundreds of little islands sprinkled across the Pacific; to many unimportant, unknown, but exceedingly beautiful and inhabited by precious souls seeking the truth. We covet your prayers.

One hundred years ago the Light of Christianity broke on these dark shores. We trust that soon the Light will break forth in greater splendor as the people grasp more fully the truths of His Word. May we labor on, backed by prayer until He comes and we can all say, "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof." Psalm 97:1.