Sea Thoughts

(By James R. Spence, RDM3-c USN)

St. Thomas, one of the Virgin Island Group, where we anchored before commencing maneuvers, is one of the most beautiful winter resorts in the West Indies. It is situated only a few miles east of San Juan, Puerto Rico, and attracts hundreds of tourists from the ocean liners which pass this way en route to Panama. Magazines consider it second only to Bermuda as a background for photographing beach fashions.

As we viewed the island from the bay, it was always enhanced by a quality of sparkling technicolor, whether by day or by night. Under the noonday sun, when natives loiter lazily in the shade of the palm trees, resting from work, which they claim they do early in the morning, the green of tropical foliage is the dominant color, trimmed by varieties of blossoming wild flowers. The adobe houses are a creamy tan matching the sands of the beach, and the water is a transparent blue disclosing the seaweed-covered bottom thirty feet deep. There is usually a sailboat or two winging across the bay on windy afternoons, and while our ship was anchored, there were always craft of the dark-skinned natives paddling out to sell bananas or to dive for coins which we would toss over the side to them.

Our first visit to the island was on one of the hottest days I have ever survived. We had to walk up a dusty red-clay road for about a mile before getting any transportation, and at the end of that time our white uniforms, which we had so neatly pressed, were hanging upon us stickily as if we had been in a shower of rain. Then about a hundred of us packed into the back of a canvas-covered Navy truck and suffocated until we reached the main town, Charlotte Amalie.

We found the people to be amazingly advanced for West Indies natives. They were clean and well-dressed. By cleanliness, I mean you could eat in their restaurants with reasonable assurance that you would not be attacked by ptomaine poison as a result. By well-dressed, I mean that their clothes are chosen with some degree of taste. This clothing is mostly American made, but is worn in Spanish combinations of bright red and deep blue which is very becoming to these dark-skinned people. Native beads and ornaments are popularly worn with the imported dress. Incidentally, all children above six years of age wear clothes in public, which is not true of all the islands.

There were perhaps two dozen automobiles in town, of which most were taxi cabs. These were all shining and new, probably out of necessity for giving good service to rich American tourists (partly accounting for new-car scarcity in the States). The taxi drivers are very good guides. They will talk to you in broken English, or if you think you can speak Spanish, they will help you with it. One of these SENORS whom I encountered was bubbling over with joy at the fact that a native baseball team had beaten the New York Yankees, who are in winter training at San Juan.

The streets are always full of peddlers who range in age from tiny children to old women. (Incidentally, these old people seem to dry up in wrinkles with age instead of getting fat as Americans do.) Their wares are beads, bracelets, and shells. Near the market square there are sellers of bananas, cocoanuts, and tropical fruits. The narrow streets are lined on each side with little shops where you may buy trinkets and souvenirs.

At the top of the highest mountain on the island (which isn't too high since the whole of St. Thomas is a mountain risen up from the ocean floor) stands the castle of the pirate Bluebeard. (Yes, it was in this very place that he cut off the heads of his three wives.) Though called a castle, it could be more aptly termed a fortress. Judging from the thickness of the walls and the number of heavy cannon mounts in a circle about the top of the mountain, I would say that it was impossible for an army of eighteenth century proportions to have taken the pirate there. With the handicap of an almost-vertical mountain side which would have to have been climbed in the face of cannon balls, no force could have survived. Bluebeard also found that the harbor surrounded by mountains was protection against storms. St. Thomas became the natural hideout of all sea-going cutthroats and buccaneers.

Our liberties were usually quiet during the day, but as soon as darkness fell on the streets, the town began to growl. There would be the sound of breaking glass in the distance and the thud of drunken bodies being gently propelled through the swinging doors of a drinking parlor. Liquor was cheap because it was tax-free, and was served appetizingly in expensive-looking bars. The sailors considered the place paradise. They drank to each others' health in true Navy tradition until they were very unhealthy.

One night they caught a native pickpocket practicing his innocent profession on one of their buddies. That was all that was needed to ignite the boiling fumes within them; in no time there was a street riot. In the darkness there could be very little seen except the gleam of flying knives and the stars from a right to the nose, but they fought not knowing who or why. I doubt if they really wanted to hurt anyone at all. They were just releasing the submerged fury which was created by months of inhuman discipline—maybe being cursed by officers when they couldn't talk back. (Am I justifying the actions of these men? Not altogether, but their behavior would be different if they were civilians being treated as men instead of slaves. If they were in their home town would they act thus?)

After four days at St. Thomas, we sailed for Culebra, another island nearby, to join the fleet. And it was with a certain reluctance that we sailed. You know, it's not every day that we get a winter vacation in the Virgin Islands!

Most of the critical things in life, which becomes the starting points of human destiny, are little things.—Robert P. Smith.

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CIRCLE No. 2 OF FRIENDSHIP CHURCH, BUNNLEVEL, MEETS

Circle No. 2 of Friendship church, Bunnlevel, met in the home of Mrs. Johnnie Cannaday on March 6.

The meeting was begun by singing "What a Friend We Have in Jesus." The Scripture was read and Mrs. Carl Gregory led in prayer.

During the business session reports were given and Mission Work was discussed and planned. The following program was given:

Topic for the month was "Tithes and Offerings."

In a River Front Mission, by Mrs. Charlie Strickland.

Three Women of Today, by Mrs. Carl Gregory.

We had a very interesting general discussion on "Different Kinds of Religion." By this discussion we feel that we have a better understanding of other religions.

For our closing song the group sang "Every Day With Jesus is Sweeter Than the Day Before."

Closing prayer was by Mrs. Charlie Strickland.

Delicious refreshments were served by the hostess.

Circle reporter.

LAFAYETTE SCHOOL FOURTH PERIOD HONOR ROLL

Third Grade: George Herring, Mary Glenn Johnson, Jimmie Prince.

Fourth Grade: Carolyn Lee, Kay Dell Arnold, Polly Cameron, Amelia Sherman, Beatrice Patrick, Wayne Senter.

Fifth Grade: Sue Hill Andrews, Harold Carroll, Earl Herring, Peggy Lane Johnson, Verlene Mitchell.

Sixth Grade: John Arnold, Shirley Holland.

Seventh Grade: Laverne Wilborn, Evelyn Sherman.

Eighth Grade: Jewell Arnold, Malcolm Mitchell, Foy Smith, Joe Andrews, Kay Johnson, Willa Rollins.

Ninth Grade: Alfred Dula, Ola Kelly Avent.

Tenth Grade: Jean Dula.

Eleventh Grade: Louise Blanchard, Louise Smith, Frances Johnson.

Twelfth Grade: Truman Smith, Mari Arnold, Mantie Lou Cotten.

Mr. Guy Daves is principal of LaFayette school.

CARD OF THANKS

We wish to thank our many friends for the kindness and sympathy shown us during the death of our husband and father, S. G. Davis.

Mrs. S. G. Davis and daughter.

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10:00 A. M.
The John Wellon's property located on the Dunn-Erwin highway—beautiful new 5-room home with dinette, combination tub and shower bath, venetian blinds, also 20 lots, city water, lights and telephone service available. Short distance from the city limits of Dunn. Excellent location. Some of the most desirable lots between Dunn and Erwin. Possession of home on the day of sale.
JOHN WELLONS, Owner.

11:00 A. M.
2 new four room homes with dinette and bath, kitchen sink. Number one hard wood floors throughout. Possession on the day of sale. Located on Elm Street one block of Dunn Grammar School. Also one 4-room home located at the corner of Elm and Bay streets. All of the above homes will be sold on very easy terms.
JOHN WELLONS, Owner.

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