

Dec. 29-1944

Wednesday Morn.

(An account of the visit of three L.C.T. skippers -Navy Ensigns)
to a native village on an island near Nukufetau in the Ellice
Island Group.

One afternoon about 1300 Navy time we requested permission of the Navy Lt. in charge of the Island base to go to a nearby island to visit a native village. We also requested, through an interpreter, permission from the Chief Magistrate to visit this village. The Chief was delighted and sent four natives in his "pow pow" to take us the five mile distance to the island on which the village was located.

The Chief was an old man, quite small, and he had a very pleasant manner. One of the three natives, Frank Satake, could speak fairly good English, so we got along well with him as the interpreter. He had been to school for 5 years to a native teacher under the British rule. The three, one was George, Frank's nephew, -George's father, and a rugged looking native wearing a marine jacket. He had been a sailor on a British ship in the Figis years before. He proved to be a good sailor, and with a stiff tail wind our "pow pow" cut through the water like a destroyer. We made it out to the island in about an hour and a half and anchored a few feet from the shore. The natives insisted on carrying us through the water to the shore-line, so all three of us rode "piggy-back" style on the strong backs of three very fine native physical specimens. One of the Officers with us weighed over 200 pounds but a little native weighing not over 170 carried him with ease.

We waited on the beach, where we were met by droves of little children, while the natives waded back out to the vessel to unload the supplies they had brought out. We gave them some corned beef and some cans of tuna fish as a token of our friendship and our appreciation for the ride to the island.

Ashore on the island and in the village we made a tour of inspection with Frank, whom I have mentioned before, and who was a good looking half-caste native and a very intelligent man. First we saw the Island doctor--a fine looking man who has his own little hospital under a thatched roof, and had the patients on a cot. His chief problem is delivering the many babies--as the sick rate is low. There is no venereal disease or elephantitis, which the natives call "moo-moo".

The Chief's office for the administration of the Island was located in a large well built thatched roof hut with concrete foundation. The area around it was "taboo" to all except on official business. There existed a well organized government--having an assistant, a chief of police, a scribe, etc. They never have any trouble with anyone and the younger generation obeys the elders to the letter. Everyone was well disciplined, talked only in a low conversational tone of voice and the prevailing quiet and peacefulness about the island was noticeable to all of us. We remarked it would be a fine place to send us for a rest cure. There were outside toilet facilities which were kept very clean. In fact the whole village was immaculate in every way due to the efficient police system.

We then moved on to inspect the pig-pen, which covered a large surface, encircled by a two foot fence in which the pigs were kept. There were many very small ones and they were fed mostly cocoanuts after the milk or juice had been removed and consumed by the natives. The pigs looked more like wild ones that had been domesticated, with long thin snouts and rough hair. There were a few chickens running about they seemed to be a mixed breed with a slight trend toward Rhode Island Reds.

The next thing of interest was a large open well from which the women drew their water. Near the well we saw a woman beating some white clothes over a fallen tree, their method of washing--and we had to admit it really made them white--not a sign of the "Tattle-tale gray" anywhere in the village.