

The Pastor called us to dinner and we had tuna fish (which we had brought out with us), hot pancakes which resembled our corn fritters without the corn. They were delicious, very rich; and when we had eaten four they still placed a stack of them on the table for us. We drank hot tea with them and there was plenty of sugar if we cared for it.

The greatest treat was yet to come in having the unique privilege of viewing their ceremonial "Seva-seva" dance held in the meeting house. It was given for their soldiers (British Colonial Labor Battalions) which had ridden over from our home base in order to visit their relatives before returning with us today for their duty. Although these soldiers usually wear shorts, they were now in the bright "lava-lava" with beautiful crowns of flowers on their heads, all dressed ready for the great "seva-seva". The women came in bright dresses worn below their knees, and put grass skirts on top of their dresses when they danced. The whole population of the island turned out and after they were seated on their grass mats the dance began. The seating arrangement was--the chief and his officials in the center on one side, we (the three Ensigns of the Navy) on the other, first seated on a bench, (but later we slipped to the floor with them). Then the chorus girls (seven in the foreground; they put on grass skirts every time they danced) and at the other side the soldiers--with a space in the center much like a night club might have,--then with the spectators mostly children all around the outside. The procedure lasted from 8:30 P. M. to 4:30 A. M.. It was something like this: First the natives with the chorus girls would begin one of their chant songs--with four or five men and women beating on a large box covered with mats. I would think their hands would have been blistered after eight hours pounding. The girls and any one else who felt like it, would rise up and begin swaying back and forth, making rhythmic motions with their hands (all of which told a story,) and singing all the time. Near the climax of the song the chief of Police would blow a whistle which was a signal to increase the tempo and crescendo until it seemed that the whole "folly" was whirling around. When they had worked themselves up into a frenzy, they would stop suddenly with a shout and usually drop to the floor exhausted. Then they rested while the soldiers along with a few of the older men would answer them with a song accompanied with a ukelele or guitar.

Frank interpreted some of the songs as "hoping the Americans would keep their enemies out of the Pacific," and others about the history of their people and island. Between several numbers the old men especially the Chief and his council would arise and give lengthy speeches with everyone exclaiming their approval with loud "Awai-Awai!"--meaning "That's good" or something like in our revival meetings with their occasional outburst of "Amen-Amen". At times I had to pinch myself to make certain I was actually in this spectacle and not just dreaming or seeing it all in some Dorothy Lamour South Sea Island picture. I can't describe in words the chanting songs but they were exhilarating to the highest point possible and even the other Ensigns found ourselves shouting out with an occasional "Awai!" or even "Le-le" meaning very good.

At intervals the natives would bring us coconuts, opened at the top, of which we drank the sweet juice. I know I had three or four and learned to enjoy them. They ate sun-dried raw fish with their juice, but we passed that up. About 2 A. M. one of the women came to us and placed brightly polished shell necklaces around our necks and gave each of us a small two-colored grass door mat. We thanked them as best we could and found that the Pastor's wife was again responsible as she was the chairman of the entertainment and visitors committee which presented these gifts. As proof of the point, I made previously of their high regard for authority--when we asked Frank about the gifts he said the Pastor's wife was the chairman and as such no matter what she decided on giving us--they had to do just as she said. I'm sending the two necklaces home later--I want Pauline to have the nice necklace for her or the baby, and Dad is to have the necklace given me personally by the Parson. Pauline is to keep the small mat that the committee gave me, or if you wish, give it to Dad to show around to his people.

At about a quarter to three o'clock in the morning, they were still going strong and the Pastor Samuel asked if we would like to go to bed. I went with him--the others stayed on another hour. It turned out that the "Seva-seva" lasted until 4:30 A. M. and was only stopped then at their request of the chief on one of his speeches because he had to make a trip the next day. At this request, Frank said one of the natives yelled out that he was still a young man and should be able to stand the night life, and of course the whole "folly" rocked with laughter at this remark.

The pastor took me to his "folly" where he had put up (much to my surprise) three cots with mattresses and sheets and pillows. He had moved his entire family (except the oldest son) into the auxiliary "folly" for the night. In the morning he was at our bedside with a can of water when we were awakened. We dipped in and washed our face and hands before getting out of bed. Then we sat down again to eat; coffee and pancakes, while his youngest son was delegated to wave a palm branch over us to keep away the flies. The little fellow got tired, but would change hands and continue.

We bade the Pastor "Tofa" which means goodbye--(Tolafa means Hello) and got back the five miles to our Base in another "Pow-pow". This time we had to paddle the vessel back as the wind was in the wrong direction to use the sails.