

Tuvalu Philatelic Bureau

Newsletter



Thomas Vincent Carter's Memoirs (continued from last Newsletter)



Thomas Vincent Carter

Inside this issue:

- Thomas Carter Memoirs (continued from last newsletter)
- News in Brief from around Tuvalu

For other interesting information on Tuvalu, please check out the following websites:

www.friendsoftuvalu.tv
www.tuvaluaislands.com

My tent was the closest to the lagoon, which was no more than 50 feet away. Every single morning I would hop out of my sack and take a refreshing dip in the water. Then, I would douse off with a bucket of our precious rainwater and I was ready for the day, whatever it might bring. All I ever wore was a pair of shoes and a pair of khaki shorts. No shirt, no hat, no socks. In a month's time you could hardly tell me from a native, I was so brown--except for sun-bleached hair.

We were told by the Marines in charge that we faced the possibility of air attack and perhaps even an invasion by Jap forces from up north on Tarawa. So the word was out that we should be prepared for the worst and hope for the best. My immediate reaction was to start digging a foxhole right next to my tent as fast as I could shovel coral sand. When I hit sea

water at three feet down, I knew this could be very big trouble. But I dug it anyway, just big enough for one body, mine!

As fighting men we would have been a total bust. We didn't have rifles and we didn't have helmets. The Marines never did issue rifles to us...maybe they didn't trust a bunch of wimpy sailors with loaded weapons. We finally did get helmets, though, from a passing World War I vintage battleship a couple of months later.

Within a few weeks we were comfortably settled in our new camp and had lost our sea legs--that rolling, pitching sensation you experience when you first hit land after a long sea voyage. The Marine fighter pilots were mighty glad to see us and were exhilarated to get their tough little Grumman Wildcats into the sky again. Our aviation mechs and ordnance people got them flying in no time, and it was thrilling to see those powerful, squat little planes roar off the airstrip and power straight up into the blue. They also gave us a sense of protection and confidence--at least we now had something to fight back with, we weren't totally helpless.

Willie Furrer was the other aviation metalsmith, besides me, but these planes were spanking new from the factory, so there was nothing for us to fix or patch up. As a consequence, we had no daily duties on the line at the airstrip. So, Chief Wood put us in charge of sprucing up and maintaining the camp area. I immediately put my woodworking talents to good use by scrounging up the necessary materials to build camp tables and lounge chairs. Willie set about lining our clearing with a ring of coral rocks, some of which you can see in our group photo. We soon were recognized as the most spic-and-span camp on the whole island. We didn't get a four-star honor certificate from House & Garden, but it was a personal pleasure to be the best at something on Funafuti.

Sharing one tent with me was Willie Furrer, Mel Ozan, and Slivver Burandt. Willie was from Centralia or Chehalis, Washington, Mel was from Cajun country in Louisiana, and Slivver was from Casper, Wyoming. Everyone except Ozan was a clean and tidy guy, so we got along quite well. Ozan was about 6'-1" and had the body of a Greek god. He was very tanned (maybe some Creole blood) and weighed about 200 lbs. He was very

muscular and looked meaner than a pit bull.

But, we were to find out that he needed to go to Oz for a bottle of Courage.

One thing I don't ever recall hearing was reveille. We just slept in until we felt like getting up...just as long as we were up in time for chow. Unfortunately, the Marines were lousy cooks, so we frequently sneaked in for Seabee chow.

ROLL CALL

Just for posterity, here are the names of those comprising the Altamaha Detachment:

Chief "Jug" Jungers
 Chief Wood
 J. P. O'Dell
 Jack Vosburgh
 Vern "Slivver" Burandt
 Seaman White
 "Goot" Williams
 Joe Harkless
 Tom Brian
 Lou Arends
 Melvin Ozan
 Willie Furrer
 Bob Byrns
 Don Congram
 George Otto
 John Schlepp
 Charlie Sheehan
 George Steiger
 Bill Gunzel
 "Ma" Trembly

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

Scotty O'Hara
"Baby" Wasson
"Shady" Lane
Tom "Nick" Carter

Although some of the first names escape me, that's not too bad for a memory test after almost 50 years. The group was comprised of several rates necessary to service aircraft. There were two metalsmiths, one radioman, the two chiefs, and twenty ordnance men and motor mechanics.

SIVA-SIVA

We had barely arrived on Funafuti when the natives put on a welcome dance in our honor. It was held in what they called a Siva-Siva, a long, open structure with a thatched roof. It was probably used for activities other than dancing, such as a meeting hall for the leaders or chiefs of the village. The floor was hard-packed coral sand, elevated about a foot off the ground. It made a great dance pavilion.

They used empty metal tins for drums and they pounded out a good beat to accompany their singing of native songs. I tried dancing with a fairly husky native girl who swung me around like a rag doll. She had a helluva good time and had me exhausted in no time. She certainly had more stamina and was considerably stronger than I. Whoever said that women were the weaker sex never met any South Pacific maidens.

(To be continued in our next newsletter)

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- For thematic collectors, Tuvalu stamps also portray themes that are popular around the world, themes that include famous people and important events, from Moon Landing to Beijing 2008 to Princess Diana to Global warming ... take your pick!
- They're value for your money
- and they're simply beautiful!



News in Brief from around Tuvalu

XVI South Pacific Games

The XIV SPG was held in Noumea, New Caledonia from 27th August to 10th September. It was the second time this country has hosted this regional event and it won the most medals, topping the medal tally with a total of 286 medals, out of which 119 were gold medals. The next country on the medal tally was Tahiti with a total of 60 gold medals out of a total of 144 medals. Next was Papua New Guinea followed by Fiji.

Out of the 22 countries that participated, Tuvalu came seventeenth with a total of 3 medals out of which 2 were silver and one bronze. All three medals were won by a young weightlifter: Lapua T Lapua. Another athlete who fared well and got to the final stage in his event was Tuvalu's powerlifter,

Nakibae Kitiseni, who came fifth in the Powerlifting 74kg division.

Apart from those two events, Tuvalu also participated in Men's Football, Men's volleyball, Men's Rugby 7, Men's Badminton, Men's Long Jump, Women's Volleyball, Women's Tennis, Women's Badminton, Women's 100 metres, Mixed Tennis and Mixed Badminton. Although significant improvement could be seen in Tuvalu's performances in these events, it was unfortunate none reached medal competition stages.

Climate Change

Tuvalu is currently going through a drought that is affecting most islands in the group. This extended drought period is something not quite normal and is believed to be the effects of Global Warming that is clearly

affecting climate around the globe. In Nukulaelae, where the drought is also quite severe, it is also reported that 2 islets are now on the verge of disappearance. In 1997, an islet in Funafuti, Te Pukasavilivili completely disappeared.

Tuvalu Island Leaders Summit

The capital, Funafuti, will be hosting another meeting for all its island leaders next month, commencing on the 6th October 2011. The previous meeting was held last year. The development of rural areas has been a very important issue with all elected governments. A Falekaupule Trust Fund was established in 1997 to assist in development of island communities. Among the issues that will be discussed in this Tuvalu Island Leaders Assembly (TILA) will be one addressing the possibility of getting or drilling for ground water to alleviate the problem of water shortage. ◆