

In the Far Pacific

At the Birth of Nations

By CAROLYN BENNETT PATTERSON
FORMER SENIOR ASSISTANT EDITOR

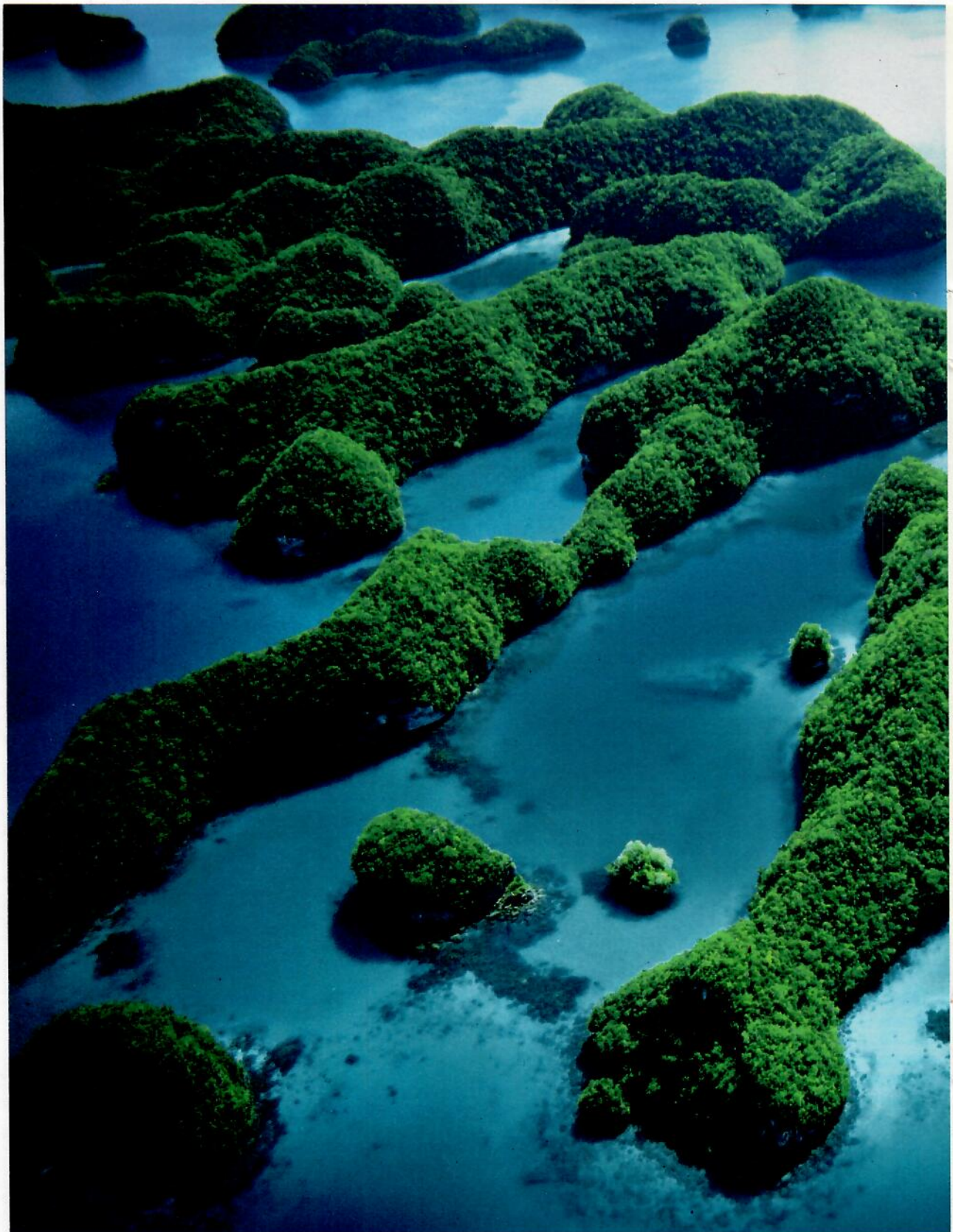
Photographs by DAVID HISER
and MELINDA BERGE

New flags in the Pacific go on proud display (below) at Truk state's Xavier High School, still scarred by World War II shells. Traditions are kept on Yap state's island of Mogmog, where Western dress is discouraged (right). Such are the contrasts among three new nations and a commonwealth, sponsored by the United States of America, that now are about to step onto the world stage.



FLAGS SHOWN CLOCKWISE FROM 12 O'CLOCK: YAP STATE, TRUK STATE, REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS, POHNPEI STATE, REPUBLIC OF PALAU, AND THE REPUBLIC OF KIRIBATI, FORMERLY THE GILBERT ISLANDS, WHICH WERE NOT PART OF THE TRUST TERRITORY UNDER THE U. S.

BOTH BY DAVID HISER



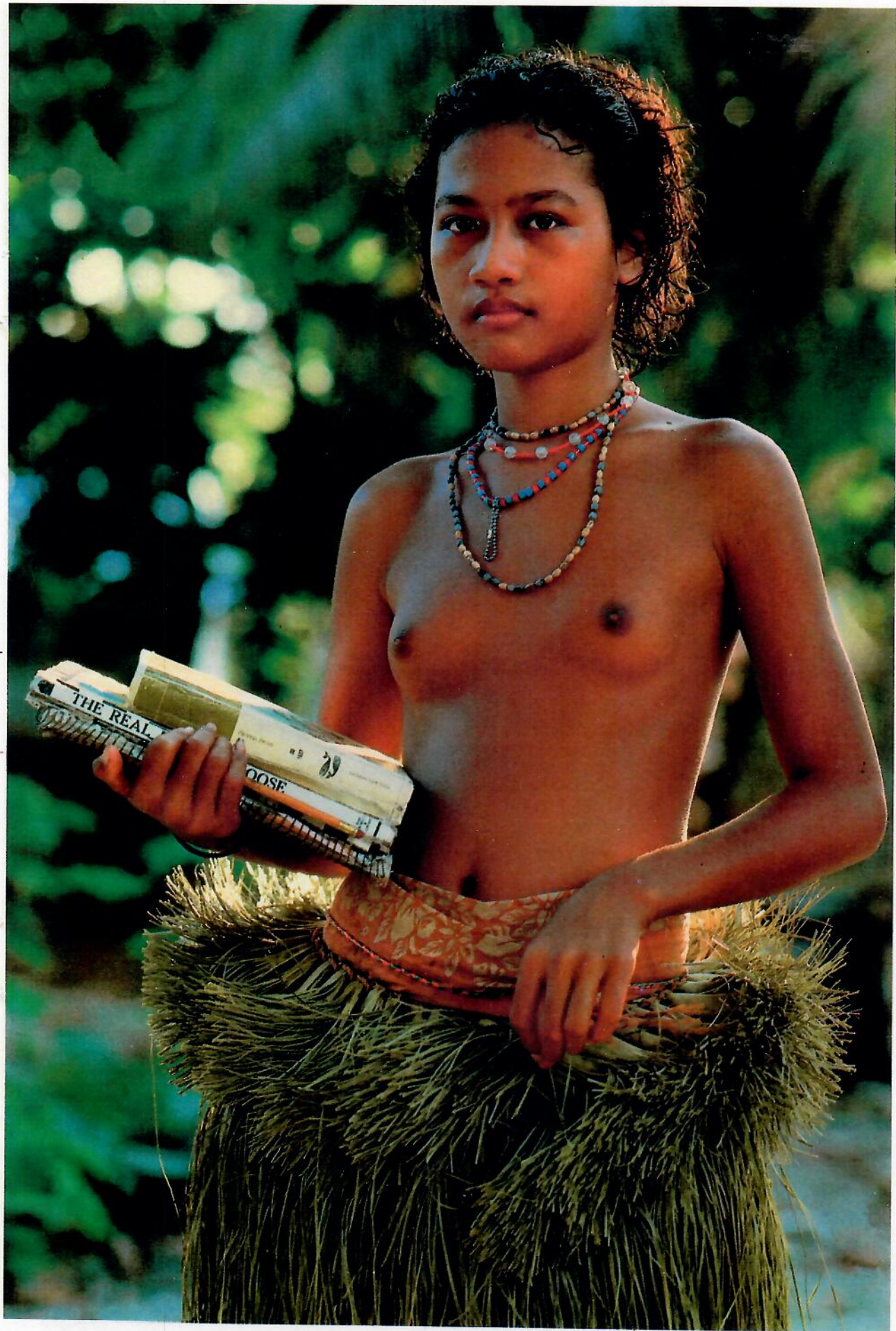
Maze of unsurpassed beauty, the Rock Islands of the Republic of Palau set tropical gardens atop coral ridges.



DAVID HISER

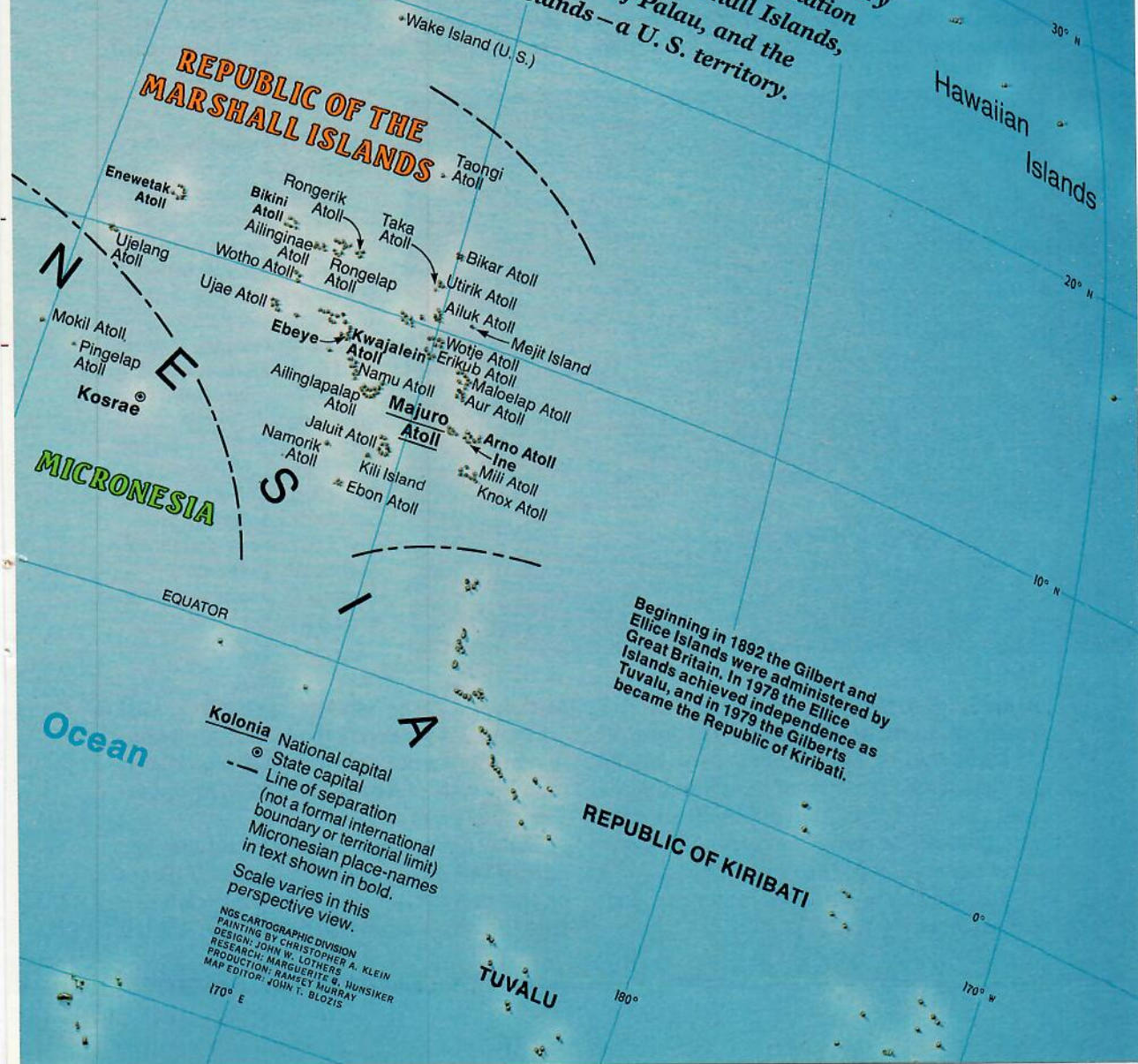
Speedboats carrying tourists, mostly Japanese, carve glass-clear waters filled with a fantasy of sea life.

New Nations in the Pacific



Islands on the Move

Specks of land scattered across an ocean area the size of the continental United States, the islands of Micronesia were first settled by seafarers from Southeast Asia. European discovery in the 16th century led to foreign domination by Spain, Germany, Japan, and, following World War II, the U. S., which has administered them as a trust territory under the United Nations. Now the more than 2,000 islands, with a population of some 160,000, will be divided into the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Palau, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands — a U. S. territory.



REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

Beginning in 1892 the Gilbert and Ellice Islands were administered by Great Britain. In 1978 the Ellice Islands achieved independence as Tuvalu, and in 1979 the Gilberts became the Republic of Kiribati.

Kolonia National capital
 © State capital
 --- Line of separation (not a formal international boundary or territorial limit)
 Micronesian place-names in text shown in bold.
 Scale varies in this perspective view.

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COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

- Maug Is.
- Farallon de Pajaros
- Asuncion
- Agrihan
- Pagan
- Alamagan
- Guguan
- Sarigan
- Anatahan
- Farallon de Medinilla
- Saipan
- Aguijan
- Tinian
- Rota
- Guam (U.S.)

PHILIPPINES

- Palau Islands
- Kayangel Is.
- Babelthuap
- Koror
- Peteliu
- Sonsorol Is.
- Pulo Anna
- Merir
- Tobi
- Helen Island

REPUBLIC OF PALAU (BELAU)

M I C R O N E S I A

- Ulithi Atoll
- Mogmog
- Yap Is.
- Colonla
- Ngulu Atoll
- Sorol Atoll
- Faraulep Atoll
- Pigailoe Atoll
- Gaferut
- Namonuito Atoll
- Ulul
- Puluwat Atoll
- Pulap Atoll
- Fayu
- Hall Is.
- Minto Reef
- Moen
- Oroluk Atoll
- Truk Islands
- Dublon
- Kolonla
- Pohnpei (Ponape)
- Ant Atoll
- Ngatik Atoll
- Lukunor Atoll
- Satawan Atoll
- Satawal
- Tamatom
- Pulusuk Etal Atoll
- Nukuoro Atoll
- Kapingamarangi Atoll

FEDERATED STATES OF

The Caroline Islands, stretching some 2,000 miles from Palau to Kosrae, are divided politically into the Republic of Palau and the Federated States of Micronesia.

INDONESIA

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

South Pacific

SOLOMON ISLANDS

AUSTRALIA

FROM THE SEA Puluwat is everyman's dream of paradise: an island set in the blue depths of the Pacific, ringed by a coral reef that encloses a crystal clear lagoon.

Ashore it looks like a garden, with towering coconut palms lining the broad sandy paths and great old breadfruit trees, their roots clutching the earth like gnarled fists, rising majestically above the green banana and taro patches.

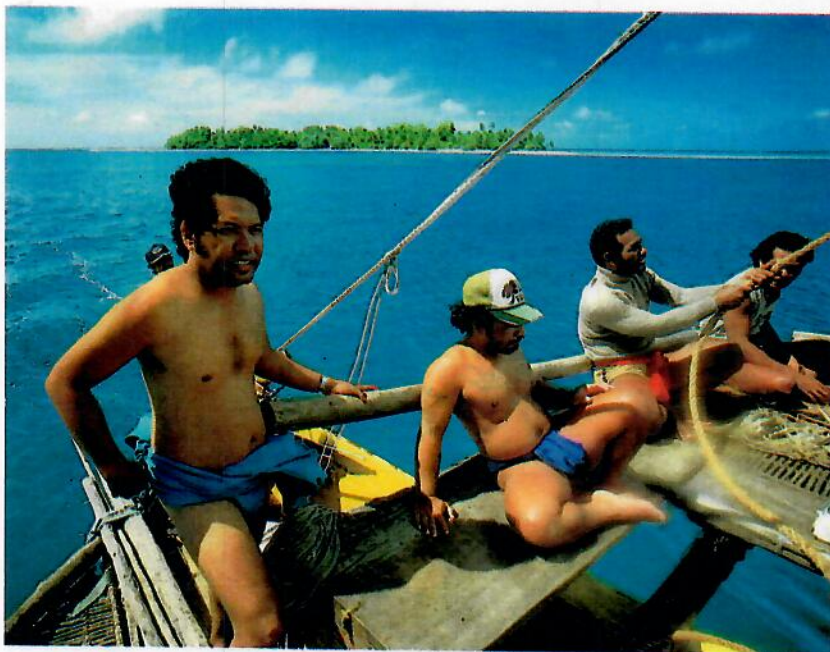
And the people. The men bare to the sun save for their *thus*, a bright swath of cotton stretched tight between the legs and tied around the waist with loose ends swinging. The women in long skirts, their breasts uncovered, bending low in obeisance whenever they meet older males. The youngest children, naked.

It was like this on Puluwat, one of the Caroline Islands, 18 years ago when the people held a feast to bid 21-year-old John Uruo

The wall John went to leap was figurative, built of conditions that separated him and fellow islanders from today's world— isolation, poor health care and education, and few financial resources. In good health, John had a plan to overcome the others. He would go to college in the United States—the first from his island to do so.

Aided by a scholarship, John succeeded. He graduated from Minnesota's Bemidji State University, married an American girl, and eventually returned to Truk in the Federated States of Micronesia, where I met him. There he serves the governor as a municipal affairs officer, in an area that includes his home island of Puluwat. Having jumped over the wall himself, John Uruo now helps others do the same.

Recently I spent nearly three months among three Pacific island groups known as the Marshalls, the Carolines, and the Northern Marianas, in a part of the world called



DAVID HISER

Man of two worlds, John Uruo, left, pilots an outrigger sailing canoe on a visit to his home island of Puluwat in Truk state. Some 18 years ago he left Puluwat for college in the United States, believing that he was leaping over a wall to the modern world. Today, as a municipal affairs officer for the governor of Truk, he helps such islands as Puluwat in the struggle for a better life. John's American wife and two teenage daughters live mostly in the U. S. because he wants the girls to be educated there.

farewell. Related by blood and extended family to most of the islanders, John at his leave-taking drew a large crowd, who brought to the feast homegrown bounty—roast pig, fried fish, boiled breadfruit, taro root and leaf cooked in coconut milk, small sweet bananas, and coconut wine.

After the elders' speeches John rose. "I go to jump over the wall," he said.

Micronesia. The islands sprinkle a vast ocean kingdom about the size of the continental United States but with less land area than the state of Rhode Island and a population of only 160,000.

Today the islands are emerging into the light of self-government, taking their places on the world stage after nearly 40 years as a trust territory administered by the United

States under United Nations auspices. In May the United Nations Trusteeship Council recommended to dissolve this last trusteeship. The dissolution now awaits a Security Council vote, which will formalize the new arrangements.

Under new flags, the Marshalls in the east and Palau, a group of islands in the western Carolines, have voted to be republics, while the other islands in the chain have united as the Federated States of Micronesia—Kosrae, Pohnpei, Truk, and Yap.

Although self-governing, all three nations are to be closely tied to the United States by a compact of free association, an arrangement unprecedented in U. S. constitutional practice. Under the compact the U. S. will apportion among the three a total of 2.7 billion dollars, including adjustment for inflation, over a period of 15 years. (Palau's compact, presently being contested in Palau's Supreme Court, would run for 50 years but after the 15th year would be funded out of a 70-million-dollar investment fund.) In addition the U. S. will continue to provide airline and airport-safety services, public health and weather prediction, currency, an international postal service, and disaster relief.

For the Republic of the Marshall Islands, where on Bikini and Enewetak Atolls nuclear devices were tested from 1946 to 1958, the U. S. has agreed to set up a 150-million-dollar trust fund to benefit islanders affected by the tests.*

Finally, the United States assumes all responsibility for the defense of the three states, asking in exchange that they remain closed to the military forces of other nations unless the U. S. agrees otherwise.

The fourth group in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands—the Northern Mariana Islands—elected an even closer bond with the U. S., the status of a commonwealth. Its residents receive regular benefits from a wide range of U. S. government agencies, and their territorial government is given financial grants for special needs. Ultimately they will become U. S. citizens.

EVERYWHERE on my travels I looked for such walls as John had leapt and found many still standing. Others are crumbling, and some have disappeared. But I found that I too had

to jump over a wall, the wall of my own ignorance about the area.

Pipe-smoking and patient, Sam McPhetres came to my aid. Archivist for the trust territory government, he recounted how the islands were settled in prehistory by intrepid peoples who sailed there from Southeast Asia. After the region's discovery by Europeans—Magellan came through in the 1520s—trouble followed. Spain, claiming everything, lost everything in the Spanish-American War of 1898. The United States took Guam and the Philippines as territories; Spain sold the other islands to Germany, which lost them to Japan in the early days of World War I.

Under a League of Nations mandate, Japan energetically colonized and cultivated the islands until World War II, when the United States got them the hard way, with the lives of its fighting men. In 1947 the U. S. Navy set about administering the islands as a United Nations trust territory; the U. S. Department of the Interior took over the administration in 1951.

"But it was not quite that simple," said Sam. "Having fought our way across the Pacific, island by bloody island, our country wanted to be sure they would never again be used against us. The territory was declared a 'strategic trust,' a status that gave us the right to fortify it with military bases and close off certain areas if necessary.

"In fact," said Sam, "we're sitting in one of those once closed-off areas right now." His office in Saipan, the administrative center of the trust territory and capital of the Northern Marianas, was built in the 1950s by the Navy for the Central Intelligence Agency as part of a supersecret complex for training Chinese Nationalist troops to operate inside the Communist-ruled homeland.

The Kwajalein Missile Range in the Republic of the Marshall Islands is another case in point. With the 600 native people moved out, "Kwaj" harbors 3,000 American civilians in a 900-acre setting that most resembles a golfing condominium complex in, say, the state of Florida (pages 472-3).

But the purpose of the island's development is far from frivolous. Situated at one end of the world's largest atoll, Kwaj is the

*See "Bikini—A Way of Life Lost," by William S. Ellis, in the June 1986 NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC.

THE COMMONWEALTH
OF THE NORTHERN

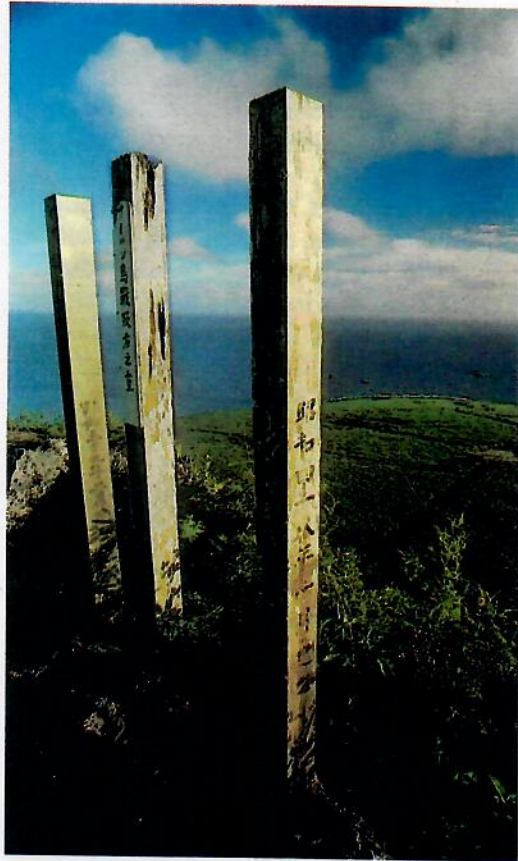
MARIANA ISLANDS

Candidate for addition to the U. S., the Northern Marianas have elected to be a commonwealth, with full U. S. citizenship.



But economically the Northern Marianas look to Japan to support the chief industry, tourism. On Saipan, Japanese visitors (facing page) stand atop seaside Banzai Cliff, where hundreds of Japanese soldiers and civilians leapt to their death rather than be captured by Americans in 1944. Prayers adorn wooden memorials (right) on nearby Suicide Cliff, where hundreds more died.

An American visitor excited attention last year. Flag-waving youngsters (below) gather to welcome Vice President George Bush.



ALL BY MELINDA BERGE



Pacific terminus of a U. S. missile range, where experts measure the splashdown accuracy of ballistic rockets fired from Vandenberg Air Force Base, 4,500 miles away in California. The facility is expected to play an important part should President Reagan's "Star Wars" technology go forward.

For the use of Kwajalein and the other islands in the missile range, the United States pays a rent of more than 10 million dollars a year. The money goes to the Republic of the Marshall Islands, chiefly for transmittal to 5,000 landowners, most of whom live on nearby Ebeye. Many work on Kwajalein, commuting to some 600 jobs there.

"SLUM OF THE PACIFIC," I had heard Ebeye called, but, even so, I was unprepared for its squalor when I arrived at dusk from Kwaj. Along a pocked asphalt lane, houses of sheet metal and cinder block crowded wall-to-wall with no space for grass or trees. Bands of children, some mere toddlers, ranged the street, their only playground on the 78-acre island where 8,000 people live (pages 474-5). Spotting me, the youngsters crowded around, incessantly calling "Hello."

The next day I visited the hospital and met the public health nurse. To the question "How are things?" she answered: "How can I make a progress report to the United Nations when there is no progress? We need help! Today, for example, we have no insulin." A serious matter when at least a third of the adult population on Ebeye, as elsewhere in urban areas of the Marshalls, have diabetes, due to genetics and diet.

Making the steamy rounds of the several dimly lit, unair-conditioned, and expensive grocery stores, I found Ebeye lacked other things: fresh meat and fish, fresh fruits, fresh vegetables. In the freezer of the largest store there were only a few chickens and two cans of orange juice.

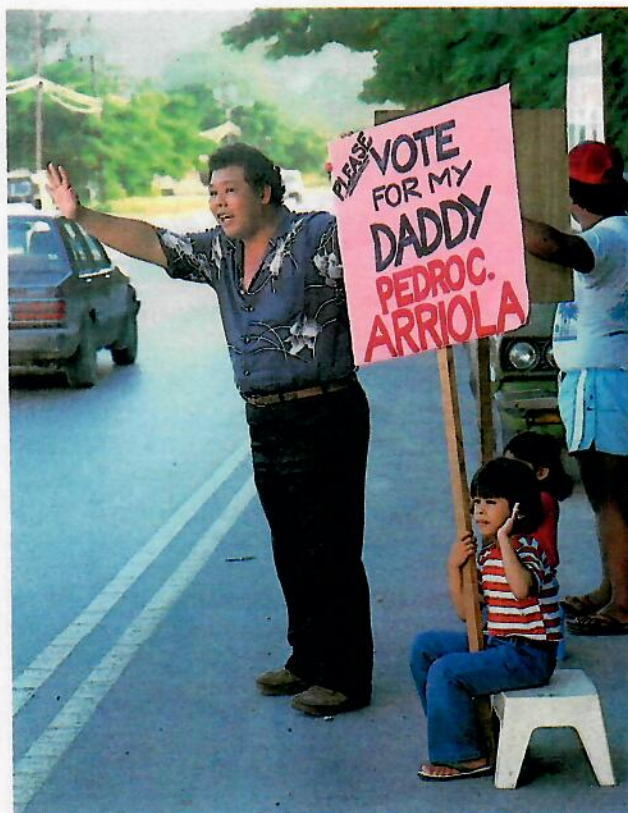
The next day I strolled about neighboring Kwajalein, where the banning of passenger cars gives streets over to the pleasantries of bicycles and foot traffic. The shops were filled with the plenty of their stateside counterparts. And as with U. S. military commissaries worldwide, they were off-limits to the natives who work on the base.

I noted three playing fields on Kwaj, a

bowling alley, swimming pool, and golf course. The bulletin board announced the Commodore's Ball up at the Yacht Club, \$17.50 a person for cocktails, petit filet mignon, and dancing under the stars.

I was glad my fellow Americans had such a good life on Kwajalein. But I wondered about the stark contrast on Ebeye. So I put some questions to various officials: Why the terrible crowding? It's due, they say, to the traditions of the people and their belief in the extended family. For example, if you are in need and a relative is getting rent money or good wages from Uncle Sam, you move in with the relative.

And why no insulin in the hospital? From Majuro, capital of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the secretary of health services sends word: "Ebeye never out of insulin."



MELINDA BERGE

Hitching a vote, the daughter of Pedro C. Arriola helps daddy win a seat in the legislature. During a general election last year, American-style politics swept Saipan like a tidal wave, bringing massive rallies with free beer and food, blaring loudspeakers, and posters that papered every vista.

Other officials agreed. Who to believe?

High prices and poor selection of food? It is explained that the merchants on Majuro supply Ebeye's shops and don't appreciate subsidized U. S. competition from Kwaj.

And what about the scant water and electricity? I'm told that new plants will be finished this year.

Shortly after I left the Marshall Islands, the U. S. use agreements on Kwaj expired, and some of the landowners occupied several islands on the missile range, asserting their right to the land and demanding significantly increased rent and direct negotiations with the U. S.

During that uncertain period, the U. S. Congress enacted the Compact of Free Association, which will provide to the Marshall Islands government nearly 400 million dollars over 30 years for payment to the Kwajalein landowners in direct income and for projects. Their development plan calls for a causeway to link Ebeye to six other islands, new roads, elementary schools, a high school, renovated housing, and a new dock.

Hope for Ebeye rises as the walls that enclose it promise to fall.

ALTHOUGH EBEYE is in the worst-case category, its problems are shared to some extent throughout the trust territory. Despite an immense flow of American money, effort, and goodwill, many islands still suffer from a shortage of water and power, poor to nonexistent roads, struggling educational systems, meager public services, few job opportunities, limited natural resources, and, at the top of the list, inadequate health care. Much blame must be laid to the region's geography, especially difficult when it comes to delivering adequate health services.

In the Marshall Islands, as elsewhere, every island is supposed to have a health aide, operating out of a well-equipped dispensary, with access to a radio in the event of an emergency. In a life-or-death situation a patient is picked up by boat or plane, if possible, and taken to the nearest hospital, often hundreds of miles away, or to Hawaii.

The bill can be astronomical. And it is paid for by the government. The Republic of the Marshall Islands is going broke trying to meet the cost of modern medicine. When I

was in Majuro, it was reported in the press that the republic's department of health had overspent its budget, and that all other departments would be cut to provide the necessary funds.

I asked President Amata Kabua about the story, and, sadly, he admitted that it was true. "But what are we to do?" he appealed to me. "We are a Christian nation. We can't simply allow people to die when doctors in Honolulu can save their lives."

The Marimed Foundation, established by two altruistic Bostonians, Dr. Lonny Higgins, a gynecologist, and her lawyer husband, David, expects to address this very problem with its specially designed sailing ship, equipped with the latest in medical technology. The Higginses plan to enlist doctors and nurses for limited volunteer service. Sailing among the islands, they will use their diagnostic, surgical, and treatment skills, while teaching preventive medicine.

I accompanied the Higginses on a medical excursion to Arno Atoll, a three-hour motorboat trip from Majuro. We arrived at Ine at twilight, but already a huge full moon had risen, creamy white in a gray-blue void. Lonny's supplies went from our motorboat to a rowboat and finally into our arms as we waded ashore through the gentle surf.

A 15-minute stroll down a rutted lane brought us to the dispensary, where we discovered that the health aide was off-island, taking a refresher course in Majuro.

The dispensary was far from clean. The refrigerator didn't function for lack of electric power on the island. The broken toilet was useful only with water supplied by a bucket. The few supplies included a cream for burns, a clamp for an umbilical cord, test tapes for diabetes, vitamins for pregnancy. The single bed even lacked a mattress.

My husband, Pat, and I headed for the beach, where we unrolled our mats and slept under a full moon. Then about 3:30 a.m. we awoke in eerie darkness. Totally unexpected to us, with the impact of a miracle, there was a magnificent full eclipse of the moon.

The next day, stripped to the waist in the terrible heat, David Higgins scrubbed down the dispensary walls while Lonny drew simple, colorful pictures of the human reproductive organs as a way of teaching her patients. Then they

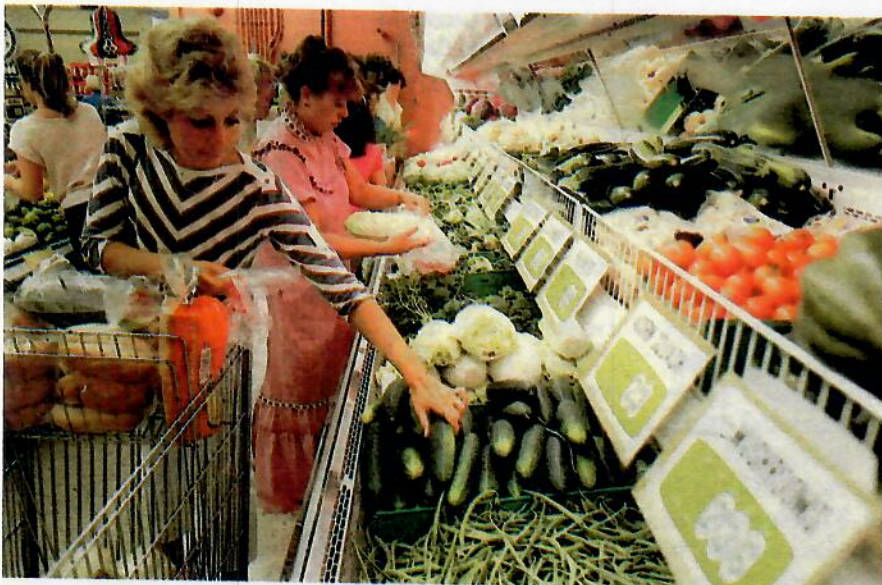
(Continued on page 476)



REPUBLIC OF THE

MARSHALL ISLANDS

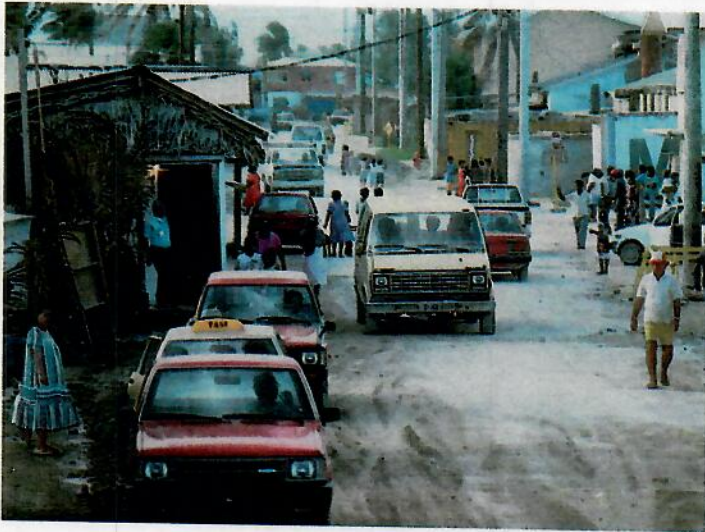
Oceanic bull's-eye, Kwajalein Atoll is the target for rockets **(above)** launched 4,500 miles away in California. The 3,000 Americans on the 900-acre island **(right)**—mostly civilians employed by private contractors to the U. S. Army Strategic Defense Command—enjoy such amenities as the supermarket dubbed “Surfway” **(below)**. Some 8,000 Marshallese, many commuting to jobs on “Kwaj” by boat, occupy 78-acre Ebeye (distant island, **right**). The U. S. pays more than 10 million dollars a year for use of the Kwajalein land.



U. S. ARMY STRATEGIC DEFENSE COMMAND (TOP); MELINDA BERGE







Pollution in paradise, junk overwhelms a beach on crowded Ebeye (above). People flock to the island because the Marshallese tradition of extended family obligates an islander with good wages or rent money to care for less fortunate relatives. Ebeye's busy main street (left) contrasts with Kwaj, where private vehicles are forbidden. The U. S. is financing an intensive program to improve living conditions on Ebeye.



Free lunch for senior citizens in Majuro, capital of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, reflects a weakening of the extended family that in earlier times would have provided for its own elderly.

Western-style education, where long hours in the classroom preempt time once spent in traditional pursuits, tends to break down the heritage of island culture. Few young men of Majuro, for example, now know how to sail an outrigger canoe.



ALL BY MELINDA BERGE

(Continued from page 471) began arriving.

That day, assisted by three women who had come with us from Majuro—a public health nurse, a social worker, and Jinnie deBrum, a Marshallese member of the Married Board—Dr. Lonny Higgins examined 27 women. She discovered a pelvic mass, a thyroid abnormality, and several bleeding disorders. Of 27 Pap smears taken to Hawaii for testing, six signaled follow-up tests.

And that night another seeming miracle transpired. As darkness fell, we heard singing and saw a procession of lanterns swinging down the road. The island chief and a laughing crowd of women and children had come bearing gifts of bananas, fish, pork, and breadfruit. And time slipped away in dancing, singing, and speeches from a host of grateful hearts.

MOVING EVER WEST, we flew to Kosrae, one of the four Federated States of Micronesia, where in the 19th century diseases

strictness, is Kosrae's most powerful force. Women are modestly clothed—bathing suits are too risqué, even for visitors—and Sundays are strictly for churchgoing.

The American presence today appears beneficial, as we saw upon arrival on Kosrae's enormous new jet runway (pages 478-9), a legacy of the trusteeship and big enough for 727s, although such planes have yet to be scheduled through Kosrae.

We were met by Madison Nena, Kosrae's 34-year-old director of tourism, and Christopher O'Connor, a 25-year-old Peace Corps volunteer assigned to develop tourism. Slender and dark with a neatly trimmed mustache, Chris, a hotelier, came to Kosrae from New York City's Waldorf Astoria, where he worked in guest services.

Aside from the island's beauty the major sight is the Leluh ruins, whose huge stone walls, canals, and kings' tombs speak of a highly developed culture that flourished 500 years ago. Teddy John, Kosrae's historic preservation director, guided us through the



DAVID HISER

Tears flow as a Civic Action Team "Doc" on Yap investigates an injured foot. Composed of men from the United States Army, Navy, and Air Force, Civic Action Teams regularly spend several months on duty in the Federated States of Micronesia, responding to needs identified by the state governments. They build bridges and roads, repair buildings, improve playgrounds, entertain with free movies, and provide medical care.

brought by traders and American whalers nearly wiped out the native community. Incidentally, I was told that the seagoing visitors of that day so habitually uttered a certain four-letter expletive that islanders gave all white people the name "ohshits."

When the Congregational missionaries arrived, Kosraeans flocked to Christianity. Now the church, clinging to past-century

jumble of stone, still in private hands and littered with beer cans.

A burly man with black hair and beard, Teddy spoke with deep regret about the condition of the ruins and of his hope that the government could buy the land and stabilize the stone structures. "When I was a boy, water still flowed through the canals, and I could dive off the walls," Teddy told us. "If

we could dredge the canals, we could make the place look like the old days."

When Leluh was at its height, the king and high chiefs owned all the land and lived with their servants in this city of more than a hundred walled compounds. The compounds of royalty were used for burial as well as worship of Kosraean gods.

"Those gods must have been really powerful," Teddy said with a smile, "because Kosraean legend claims that magic moved these stones, since the people had no machines to transport such heavy material."

Teddy invited us to dinner at his two-room, concrete-floored home, where we met his wife, nine children, and a lively group of Americans, mostly government advisers, who like to hang out at Teddy's. Teddy is an admiring listener to the swirling conversation. "I learn so much every night," he told me. He is, in fact, an intellectual but is too innocent and modest to discern it.

Thirteen Americans on the island are in the U. S. Army, part of a Civic Action Team. They live at spick-and-span Camp Wilbur L. Trahan and work on civic projects such as road and bridge construction, government buildings, and school playgrounds. Everybody is invited to their monthly outdoor movies. Hundreds find help from "Doc," their medical corpsman.

The team's Doc, Sgt. Leonard Resler from Boulder City, Nevada, explained: "Each Civic Action Team stays for six months, and we're getting ready to pull out, but I am grateful for this experience. I have the feeling that we have really helped."

THE SAME FEELING prevails at The Village, a hotel in Pohnpei that employs some 50 neighbors to serve guests in but 21 rooms. By employing a large staff only part-time, the innovative American owner-managers, Bob and Patti Arthur, run a first-class hotel while recognizing native habits and traditions.

"The people here value their leisure time," said Patti. "They also need time for their pattern of living. A funeral, for example, takes four days."

The Village demonstrates how tourism might proceed in today's Micronesia. Built on a hillside, the hotel rises in a tropical garden with an open-sided dining, bar, and

lobby area. Positioned for privacy, thatched-roofed guest cottages are screened to permit the full sweep of Pacific breezes.

The island's town, Kolonia, is capital of the state of Pohnpei as well as capital of the Federated States of Micronesia. Although a new FSM capitol building is in the planning stage, the seat of government at present is in the remodeled Navy hospital, a one-story frame left from the 1940s. The national congress meets in the old operating room; the president's office was the children's ward.

Calling on President Tosiwo Nakayama, I learned the story of his life—another tale of walls and extraordinary effort to scale them. Nakayama's father was a Japanese businessman sent to Truk before World War II. He married a girl from the island of Ulul in the Namonuito Atoll.

When the Pacific war broke out, the family, now with several children, settled on Dublon in Truk Lagoon, Japanese headquarters. It was from Dublon, at the age of nine, that young Tosiwo heard the "ominous, incessant, ever louder drone" of the U. S. airplanes that sank a Japanese fleet of 60 naval and cargo vessels.*

At the end of the war the United States sent home all the Japanese nationals living in Micronesia, including the elder Nakayama. Deprived of his father, the young Tosiwo took on the responsibility of his family. He went to work and earned enough money to take his mother and sisters back to her relatives on Ulul. Only then, at 16, did Tosiwo voice his ambition: "I want to go to school." He had never spent a day in a classroom up to that time.

Nakayama eventually went to the University of Hawaii on a U. S. government scholarship, where the quality of his mind and personality attracted attention, and he was set on the track of leadership.

What kind of influences shaped the young Nakayama, I wondered. I decided to visit the island of his mother's people, Ulul—a resolve that sent me on the unforgettable voyage of the *Micro Dawn*.

All the outer islands in Micronesia are supposed to be regularly served by such ships, sent by the various governments to deliver supplies (Continued on page 486)

*See "Life Springs From Death in Truk Lagoon," by Sylvia A. Earle, in the May 1976 GEOGRAPHIC.

KOSRAE

Built with American dollars, a runway (below) long enough for large jets is the gateway to the state of Kosrae, but at present a 16-passenger



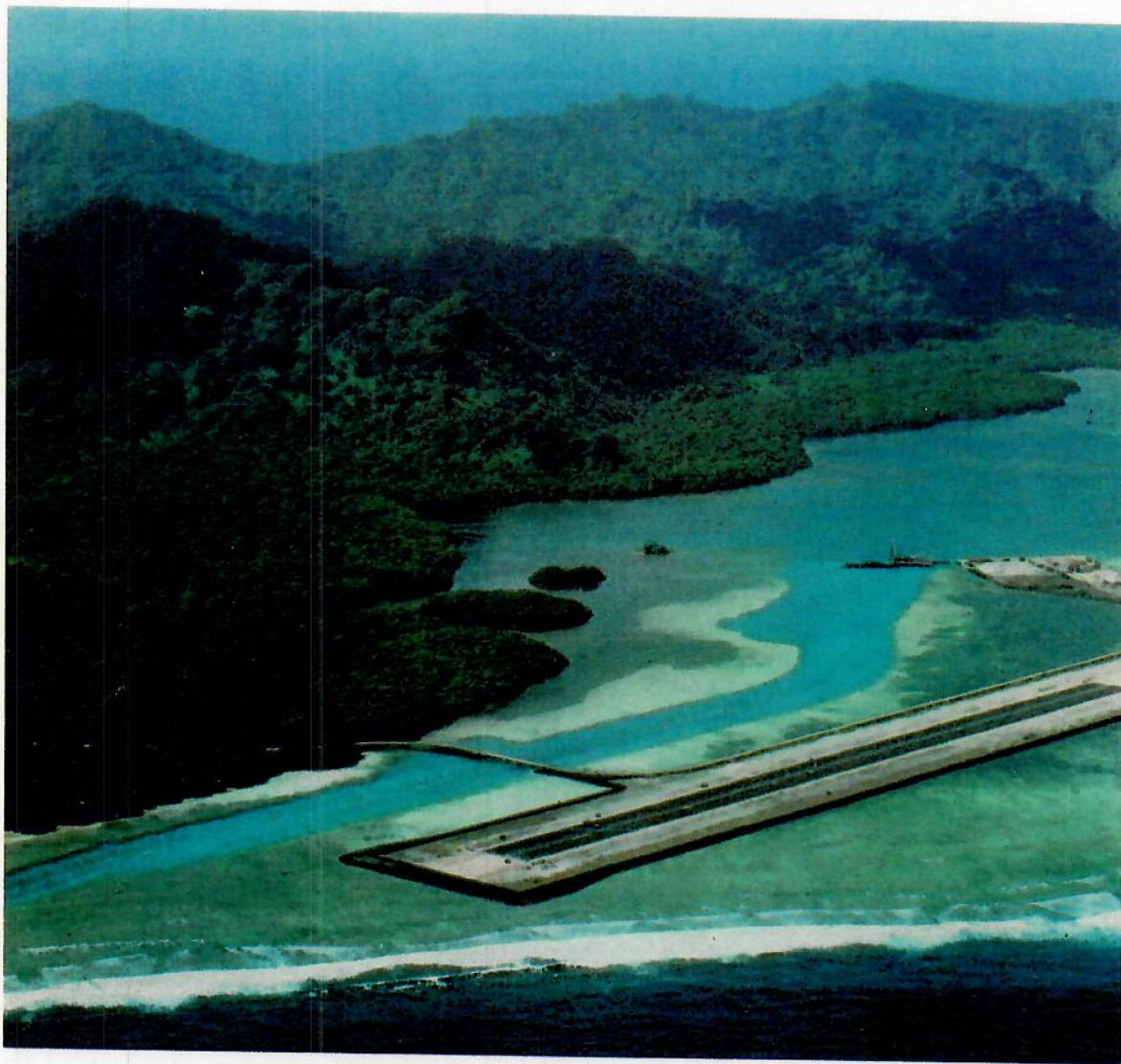
propeller plane is the biggest aircraft that regularly serves the island, one of the largest in the trust territory. Five hundred years ago the tribes on the island united under a powerful king and built Leluh, a city of more than a hundred basalt-walled compounds threaded by canals. There the king, his servants, and a few nobles lived off the labor

of commoners, who farmed and fished.

With the coming of the Europeans, that way of life ended. Diseases brought by whalers and copra traders so ravaged the islanders that at one time only 300 people were counted.

Congregational missionaries converted the entire population, and religion is now the chief force ordering social life.

On the economic side Kosrae, noted for its fine tangerines, limes, and oranges, promises to become the vegetable and fruit basket of the Pacific (right). A project is under way to restore giant clams, once plentiful, to the surrounding reef, using juveniles raised in the Micronesian Mariculture Development Center in Palau. And with the ruins of Leluh as an attraction, tourism is viable.





BOTH BY MELINDA BERGE