

Those Listed Below

June 14, 1954

Robey L. Southwick, Acting Chief
Public Information Service



FIFTH ARTICLE OF A.P. ARTICLES ON MARSHALLESE

SYMBOL: IEP:RLS

Attached for your information is a copy of the fifth article by Bill
Nough, A.P., on the Marshallese as approved after review by the
Departments of State, Defense and Interior and AEC.

Minor changes were made on pages 1 and 3 as noted.

Attachment:
Copy of fifth article

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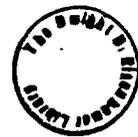
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CC: L. Wechsler, USIA
→ Col. Hirsch, OCS

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The Rongelap natives exposed to radiation during the March 1 hydrogen explosion reached their new home today on Ejit Island in the Majuro Atoll.

They left Kwajalein yesterday afternoon after three months of care by the U.S. Navy and Atomic Energy Commission's doctors.

Awaiting them was a brand new village of 27 buildings constructed in the past three weeks by crews from Eniwetok, headquarters for the AEC Pacific Nuclear Testing Grounds.

There were 82 Rongelap people exposed to radiation when a fallout occurred from the tremendous explosion that far exceeded the ^{calculations} ~~fondest hopes~~ of the scientists.

Eighty-one of these people were aboard, along with 16 others who joined the expedition from Ebeye, adjoining Isle to Kwajalein.

A woman who had been on Rongelap was taken from the LST a few hours before sailing time and gave birth to a baby. They will be flown to Ejit later.

This LST, commanded by Lt. Commander Richard S. Scott, Jr., of Philadelphia, was a modern version of the early American covered wagons.

Loaded aboard with the natives were personal furniture, chickens, bedding, and other household equipment -- almost all of it given to them by the U.S. Navy.

On deck were two native sailing craft that Scott's ship picked up at Rongelap for transfer to the natives new home.

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PRIVACY ACT MATERIAL REMOVED

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The Rongelap natives, according to AEC Announcements, will remain at Ejit, a 14 acre lush island, for about a year and then be returned to their native atoll. Scientists say that any contamination on Rongelap will dissipate in that time.

The Rongelap group, which calls themselves the poisoned people, have expressed fear that they would suffer the same fate as the natives moved from the Bikini Atoll in 1946. The Bikinians' present home is on a single volcanic island called Kili.

The Marshallese seem to be enjoying the trip. One thing the natives seem to be able to quickly adjust themselves to any situation. This probably comes from their long domination by outsiders -- first by the Germans and later the Japanese.

. . . 30-year old magistrate and leader of the Rongelap group, came aboard with a picture of Rear Admiral R. S. Clarke, former Kwajalein Commander, under his arm.

Later as I travelled through the quarters assigned the Rongelap people, I saw the picture propped up in a bunk in which Anjin's sister was fast asleep.

Captain Scott and his crew have gone all out to make the natives comfortable. They don't have to help in the preparation of meals. They are fed in the crews' mess. They've had access to the ships store and as one Trust Territory Official travelling with the natives said: "They've been buying ice cream by the gallon."

The nightly movies, of course, draw nearly one hundred percent attendance from the Marshallese passengers.

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The show last night, Bob Hope in Son of Paleface, was interrupted four times by tropical showers but each time the projector was restarted all the Marshallese -- some carrying small babies -- were back in their seats.

1200 Rhode Island red chickens, flown to Kwajalein from Honolulu, attracted the most attention among the natives during the loading.

The chickens being tended by Harry Sutsui, Honolulu Poultryman, were swung aboard in crates. As they were lowered into the hold Magistrate watched wide-eyed and occasionally whistled softly.

There was one humorous aspect to the chickens. Sailors aboard this ship kidded about their cargo among themselves but they didn't smile at outsiders joining in the joking.

A few sailors working on the dock area around Kwajalein couldn't resist the temptation of heckling the LST crew. (Result: A few very interesting and lively arguments after dark).

The natives will not be put ashore until early tomorrow morning. Most of their equipment will reach the beach some time during the day.

Captain Scott ordered this schedule to permit the natives to have breakfast aboard ship and then all day in which to get settled in their new village.

For the next year the ^{JTF}AEC will supply food and ^{the AEC provides medical checkups} ~~medical care~~ for the Rongelap people. The natives will be under the direct supervision and care of the Trust Territory Marshall Island Headquarters on Majuro, which is within walking distance of Ejit.