

Chapter 5

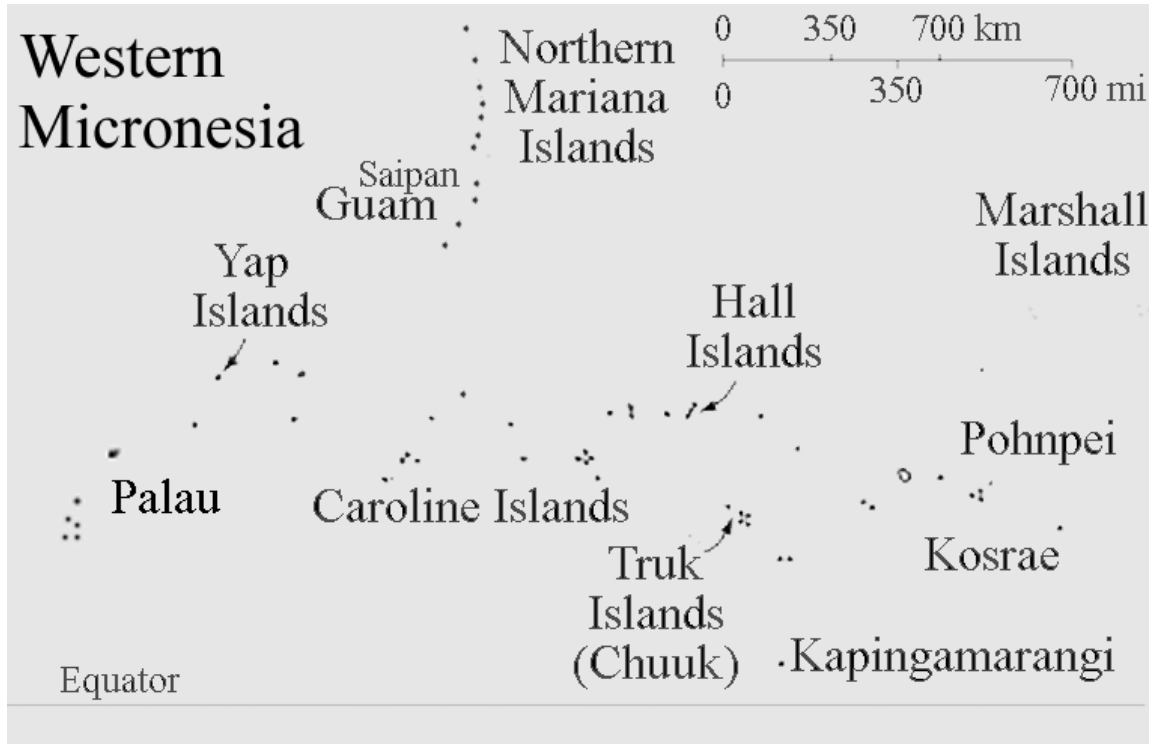
Netting the Stories of Pioneers from Micronesia

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On Guam, a Chamorro phrase heard frequently is *Nihi tafan laga atulai*, which means, “Let’s go catch some fish.” And many Chamorros look forward to the seasonal event of casting their nets to catch the *atulai* (fish). One of several methods for catching the *atulai* requires a large fishnet called a *chenchulu*. The fishermen load the *chenchulu* into their canoe or boat and move out from the shore. The fishermen then cast the net into the water in a semicircular manner, oftentimes from one side of a bay to another. When the net is ready, the fishermen signal people on shore to start walking toward the net. As the people from shore move closer to the *chenchulu*, the fishermen start bringing the net together in almost a circular fashion. This is done with great skill to ensure the safety of the people walking toward the *chenchulu*. Once the *chenchulu* is brought to a circular position, many assist in lifting the netted fish into the canoe or boat. As the nets are lifted out of the water, large numbers of *atulai* are caught because of the efforts of both the caster of the net and the people on shore.

Similarly, during the early days of Christ’s ministry, He sought out fishermen. He told them to leave their nets and follow Him that He might make them fishers of men. Just as Christ called the fishermen of Galilee to be fishers of men, latter-day prophets have cast the gospel net in Micronesia, which is situated in the vast waters of the western Pacific. Both proselytizing and member missionaries have gone forth as fishers of men to seek out the pure in heart. Over time, the gospel net has extended to the various island groupings of Micronesia. Micronesia stretches almost the width and the length of the continental United States, although most of this area is water. Geographical island groupings found in Micronesia include the Marshall Islands, Pohnpei, Kosrae, Yap, Chuuk, Palau, the Marianas, Nauru, and Kiribati.

Through the years, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has made efforts to foster the growth of its members in Micronesia. In 1977 President William Cannon, who was then the mission president of the Hawai’i Mission, sent



missionaries to Micronesia. In 1980 the Micronesia Guam Mission was organized. Because the Church is relatively new in this part of the Lord's vineyard, pioneering stories from faithful Latter-day Saints abound. As part of the 1997 Pioneers in the Pacific celebration, a handful of pioneers from Micronesia gathered together to share their stories of how they have benefited from living the gospel. This chapter draws on both their oral histories and written accounts. Those who shared their histories at the conference include Donald and Maria Calvo, Guam; Walter Simram, Pohnpei; Ben Roberto, Palau; and William Swain, Marshall Islands.¹ The story of the early years of the Church on Saipan, an island of the Marianas, is taken from personal accounts written by Matilda Gonzales, Brad Nago, and Hermann Arp. We acknowledge that there are stories from other pioneers of Micronesia that have yet to be told, heard, and recorded. May this chapter inspire others to gather such stories.

Guam

Guam, a U.S. territory, is located south of the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas. The Philippines are to the west of Guam, and Japan is toward the north.

Donald and Maria Calvo were the first Chamorro couple baptized on Guam. Since that moment in 1976, both Donald and Maria have served in various leadership positions in the Church. Maria has been the key translator of select portions of the Book of Mormon from English into Chamorro. Donald is a faithful priesthood leader in his family and in the Church.

Conversion and testimony. Donald and Maria shared the challenges that faced them as they searched for a church that would help them with the rearing of their children. It was through this searching process that they were taught the gospel of Jesus Christ.²

Donald: When I first married my wife, I was faced with the situation [of being] a married man and [looking] forward to [raising] a family. I looked into my former church and I guess I just didn't have the confidence that they would be able to provide [me] some guidance . . . to take care of this big responsibility. I appealed to Heavenly Father: "You know all things; show me the truth. Give me some guidance so that I can raise my family." So I was in the searching mode. Then finally, these elders came. I had that good feeling. I needed to open up the doors for these people to give me their message.

Maria: We didn't think of our friends. We were only concentrating on our family. [We often asked the question] what are we going to do with these children that we are bringing into this world? We knew that the Church was good because of all its auxiliaries and programs. As [Donald] mentioned before, we were searching and so we were a little different because we had gone to these different denominations and we wanted to find something better [to] make us a happier family. After joining the Church, I gave birth to our third child. Our family and friends knew of the birth and called inquiring about the christening date. This was the custom. Culture revolves around a lot of these traditions that were introduced by the Spanish, and so, being Catholic, it was expected of you to baptize your child right away. Some friends that knew of our conversion asked, "You are going to baptize this child, aren't you?" [My response would be] "No." I would explain we would wait till they turn eight. [Then] I would explain about our Mormon faith. Several friends called saying they would donate a case of ribs [or contribute this or that] already assuming we were going to baptize our child. Well, I was tired of the phone calls so I would simply respond, "No, I'm not going to have any baptism. You have to wait until she is eight years old." [Because of my response], some of our friends were really concerned. They would say, "How could you? You know that if your baby dies she will be possessed by the demons. You know that if your baby dies she will go to limbo." I had

this pressure from the Spanish influence. It is expected that you will baptize your baby. My friends, my relatives, all had that concern. I'd be like "Forget it! I am now a Mormon and I'm going to abide by the Mormon doctrine that our children will be taught and held accountable when they are eight and be baptized then." This [third] child never had a cold in her whole life. She never had to go to the doctor except when she needed shots or regular physicals. When everybody would be miserable with colds and coughing, she would be outside playing. [As a mother], I've never had faltering faith. I know it was my Heavenly Father showing me that [He] had [His] hand in this child because [I] proved to [Him] that [I] had faith. I never ever doubted that Heavenly Father would take care of this child and if anything was wrong that my child would be OK.

A culture due to history. Donald and Maria shared their feelings about the Spanish colonizers and how this has impacted the lives of many Chamorros.³

Donald: The profile of a Chamorro is a Catholic born on Guam [who is] carrying on the traditions of their forefathers. That concept grew from the 1700s onward, but the Chamorros fail to take into consideration their forefathers before the 1700s, and before the Spaniards came. They have forgotten that side of their lineage. The Spaniards, when they came to the Mariana Islands, saw fit to make Guam a stepping-stone to pick up some more supplies. When [in Guam], they sought to colonize the Chamorros. [Because of this], the people on the islands were subdued. The numbers you will find in the history books mention the Chamorros in the ten thousands as far as population. [Both the combination of wars and outside diseases] diminished the population to hundreds. They [the Spaniards] collected the people [and continued to] subdue them. [The result, then], was a people with no more fighting spirit. Either you accepted Catholicism or you died. It is unfortunate.

Maria: You have to remember also that this was during the Spanish Inquisition. So we are

not saying they were right or they were wrong [in] how they forced the people, how they said they were going to civilize Chamorros. One way to civilize [a people] is to bring Christianity. You have to remember they were out to conquer land and power and to spread Christianity in their way.

Donald: Now, the hardest thing [a Chamorro] would [have to] come up with is how to break this core value of belonging. Many ask themselves: "What would my parents say? What will my friends do?" It's not easy. A lot have succumbed and a lot have not converted because of that. How do you get a person to let go of that safety net?

Challenges that hinder conversion. Maria explained some of the vices that hinder the conversion of many Chamorros.⁴

Maria: I think . . . the reasons why there are a lot of Chamorros [who] will not embrace the gospel [are] because it is hard to get rid of their vices. They smoke. They drink. Young children are exposed to social drinking as early as twelve years old. Every party has alcoholic beverages. So some vices are very hard to give up. And then we have [the] family. These families have had traditions from generation to generation. I hear some people who are investigating [the Church] say, "You know, I am so close to getting baptized but my mother said, 'Over my dead body.'" And the mother and father control those children so strongly. It's like they will ostracize them. They will disown them if they change their religion. There are so many who come so close [to being baptized], but it is because of the family traditions that are embedded in them [that hinder this from happening]. It is traditions and the powerful family force that makes it very difficult for a [Chamorro] to change their religion and to stay.

Donald: What do you do when the gospel has been presented to you and you ask yourself, *What should I do?* The truth is there. It's good to me. It's good to my heart.

Donald and Maria continue to live in Guam and are stalwart members of the Church.

Saipan

Saipan, the largest island of the U.S. Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, is located just north of Guam in the western Pacific.

Missionary work in the Marianas. The beginnings of missionary work in what is now the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas was closely connected to missionary work on Guam. World War II brought Latter-day Saint soldiers to Saipan, the largest of the Northern Marianas Islands. According to anonymous records in the Guam mission headquarters, and repeated in William W. Cannon's *Beachheads in Micronesia*, young servicemen, including Elder L. Tom Perry, met together as a group.⁵ It was not until many years later, however, that the Church was formally organized in Saipan.

Mustang arrives in the nick of time. Missionaries who introduced the gospel to the people of Saipan ran into the same difficulties as the missionaries on Guam. The population is Catholic and has been Catholic since the coming of the Spaniards in the 1500s. Catholicism on Saipan is religion, family, culture, custom, and country. For someone to leave the Catholic Church and join another church is to turn his back on everything. When Elders Jeff Frame and Callis Carleton arrived on Saipan in 1975 and began looking for people to teach the gospel to, they were chased off with rocks, machetes, and shotguns.⁶ This very deep-rooted hostility toward any religion other than Catholicism means that the early pioneers of the Church in Saipan were people of other nationalities who came to Saipan to work. One such man was Mustang Gonzales.

In 1975, when Elder Frame and Elder Carleton were trying to do missionary work, a small group of Latter-day Saints working with the military met for Sunday meetings. However, some of these members were transferred to Guam in October 1975, and because of the hostility and indifference of the people of Saipan toward the missionaries, it appeared that the area of Saipan would have to be closed to missionary work.

However, as frequently happens, Heavenly Father was not ready to give up on this part of His vineyard.

Parson's International, the architecture and engineering consultant firm that was hired to design and manage the construction of the Saipan International Airport, began having trouble with its resident managers. The first resident manager decided he wanted to retire early. To accommodate his wishes, Parson's International sent a new resident manager to Saipan. This man left very quickly because of ill health, and the third resident manager sent to Saipan also had to return to Hawai'i because of health problems. Finally, Parson's International sent Mustang Gonzales. Mustang, a strong Latter-day Saint, was called as the Latter-day Saint group leader for Saipan. Because Matilda Gonzales kept a diary of their time on Saipan, we have a picture of the early days of the Church.⁷ Under the direction of Mission President William W. Cannon, the focus of missionary work on Saipan shifted from the Chamorros and Carolineans (a group descended from the 1815 settlement from Chuuk) to people from other countries who were living and working on Saipan. On October 26, 1975, two investigators, Brad Nago and an employee of his, Jacob Santos, attended Church services held in the Gonzales home. Slowly more investigators began to attend church and the congregation soon outgrew the Gonzales's home. Mustang was able to obtain an old Quonset hut, which needed a lot of work. Brad, not yet a member of the Church, donated men, materials, and time to the task of turning the Quonset hut into a meetinghouse.⁸

The shift of leadership from Mustang to Brad.

According to Brad's history of his conversion and activity in the Church, he and his wife Jean were baptized in January 1976—the first convert baptisms on Saipan. Several of Brad's workers heard the missionary lessons and later joined the Church. Soon, Mustang was assigned to another project. Brad writes, "Seven months after my baptism I was called to lead this [Saipan] dependent branch of a Guam ward. . . . I kept saying 'why

me?' All I can remember is President Schutte saying, 'The Lord needs you.'"⁹

Under the leadership of Brad Nago, the branch continued to grow as missionary work went forward. Brad started the first seminary program on Saipan. He wrote that that first year the seminary had either 100 percent attendance or 0 percent attendance because Madison Ramon was the only student at that time. Madison graduated from seminary and received the first seminary scholarship to Brigham Young University–Hawai'i from Micronesia. He served a mission in the Micronesia Guam Mission and then returned to BYU–Hawai'i and graduated. After graduation, he returned to Saipan to manage a clothing store and became a strength to the Church there.

The Lord sends the Arp family. Brad served as branch president until 1984 when he moved to Hawai'i to be with his wife and children. Brad prayed diligently for the Lord to send someone to lead the branch. Once again the Lord answered the prayers of His faithful Saints by sending the Arp family.

Brother and Sister Hermann Arp, their three children, and their niece arrived in Saipan sometime in August 1984. They came from a ward in Hawai'i of about six hundred people to a branch where three people on average attended sacrament meeting. In his account, Hermann wrote, "I could see the members so full of excitement because of the teachings of the Church [and how they] related to their own cultures and values."¹⁰ After three weeks, Hermann realized that he was on Saipan for a purpose although he did not know the reason. Hermann explained, "I was sitting behind the mango tree by the church building, when I saw a gentleman [Brad Nago] walking toward the office. He saw me and came to greet me under the tree. He said, 'You must be Brother Hermann Arp. . . . You're the man I'm waiting for. . . . Many brothers have moved over with their families but I did not have the feeling that they were the right ones. But when I heard about you and I have met you, I know you are the right man.'"¹¹

The Arps had some difficult times on Saipan. They could not come to an agreement with the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Department of Education, who had hired both Brother and Sister Arp to teach at the high school. The family had determined that they would have to return to Hawai'i, and began making preparations to do so. A week before Hermann and his family were to leave Saipan for Hawai'i, he was called to be branch president. Despite the many problems the Arps were experiencing with the Department of Education, he agreed to stay.

Like many wards and branches of the Church, the Chalan Laulau Branch had many inactive members. Hermann writes, "It took me a while to really study the situation which we were in. I had to spiritually ponder the matter and find the best solution. Finally after much contemplation and prayerful discussion with my priesthood leaders, I decided the only way was to approach the matter from a cultural point of view. As an islander, I understood the cultural values and the uniqueness of the Church in relationship to the traditional expectations and how important these were to those involved. So the immediate task at hand was to strengthen active members and to build their testimonies that the Church was indeed an important part of traditional values."¹² He began to have the members teach one another, and the average attendance increased from three or four people (besides the Arp family) to about thirty.

The Church grew on Saipan in many ways. The Chalan Laulau Branch Boy Scout Troop, first chartered in 1977, was a strong influence for many young men. One was Flemming Harumi, who, in 1985, became the first native-born Micronesian to be awarded the rank of Eagle Scout. William Hunter was the first Boy Scout from Saipan to attend a national jamboree. Both Mutual Improvement Association and early morning seminary classes were well attended; many people living on Saipan heard the missionary lessons and joined the Church. The membership of the branch grew large enough that the phase-two

building was no longer large enough to hold all the members. Due to the hard work, many prayers, and great faith of Hermann, the third phase of the meetinghouse was finished and dedicated in August 1988.

Pohnpei

One of five states of the Federated States of Micronesia, Pohnpei is located south of Guam in the western Pacific. Pohnpei is home to the archeological site of the spectacular ruins Nan Madol, which are located off the eastern coast of Pohnpei.

Walter Simram grew up as a Protestant. He married and he and his wife had thirteen children. Most Latter-day Saints in Pohnpei know him as their district president. Here is his story:¹³

Walter: "Are you Walter Simram?" asked the missionary. I didn't even say "yes." I said, "How do you know my name?" One man from Pohnpei, Herlino Makaya, had given [them my] name. They asked me if I had time so that they could speak to me. So I agreed and we went to a certain room to talk. When we first went in, we didn't talk about anything much, but something that really surprised me was they asked if we could pray first. [Back then], rumors [were] going around in Pohnpei that a sister who joined the Church [was not attending], so [the missionaries] went looking for her later and . . . killed her. [This was the rumor.] And so I immediately [decided] I can't join this kind of church. [The missionaries] came back the next day. We started with a prayer. I was thinking, how about this group that comes in here killing people and they always want to start with prayer? [Another appointment was made. This time] I told them I would come to their apartment the next afternoon at 4:30 p.m. The next day as I was looking up at their apartment, I couldn't see anybody so I thought [I would] knock [on the door] really fast and [then] run away. Before I knocked on the door, I looked around to make sure they hadn't come back yet. What I didn't know was that they were in their room. [The door came open and] a hand

reached out and grabbed mine. After that there was nothing else I could do. I went in and we started to speak again. [From] that day on, I realized I was beginning to believe what they were saying. After about a month of asking if I was ready to be baptized, I answered them that “yes, I am ready.” At that time I was drinking and smoking. I didn’t think to mention it. Up to the day before my baptism I was smoking. I walked up to the church where I was going to be baptized, took them out of my pocket and threw them away.

When I was being taught, I would come home late at night. My wife was always asking me what [I was] doing coming home so late. I thought it would be good to tell [her] all the [things] the missionaries were teaching me. When I told my wife that I was baptized, she told me that “you alone are going to join the Church.

None of us are going to join with you.” After that time, I asked the missionaries to go and teach my family. Three months after my baptism, the missionaries also asked them if they were ready to be baptized into the Church. They answered yes. After that, all my children were baptized. I am thankful for the missionaries because if they hadn’t come perhaps I wouldn’t be alive at this time and my life definitely would not have changed.

Today Walter continues as patriarch of his family. He, his wife, their children and numerous grandchildren are active members of the Church.

Palau

A self-governing republic, Palau is part of the Western Caroline Islands. It is located above the equator southwest of Guam.



Fig. 1. From left to right: Walter Simram (Pohnpei), Donald & Maria Calvo (Guam), Rose Ram (Moderator), Ben Roberto (Palau), Will Swain (Marshall Islands)

Courtesy of Faye Durham & Rosalind Ram

Ben Roberto joined the Church in 1981 and became the first Palauan missionary to serve in Palau. Subsequently, he served as scoutmaster, branch president, and district president. He testified, "I've tried my best to obey God's commandments because [He] is powerful and merciful. . . . The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the true church. Joseph Smith was a prophet of God and the Book of Mormon is the word of God."¹⁴

God does have a hand in all things. Ben shared how the Lord led him to Palau, where he eventually accepted the gospel.

Ben Roberto's road to his testimony was not necessarily an easy one. His spiritual journey began in Alaska, where he was an ironworker. His friends in Alaska began to bring him newspaper stories about Palau and about the efforts to get missionaries there. "I never missed Palauan food," he said. "I never missed anything about Palau. I just wanted to get away from Palau." However, because of the newspaper clippings, he began to think about Palau, and, as he said, "I started thinking about Palau and then pretty soon I started [to] hear a voice saying 'Go to Palau.'" Ben quit his job as an ironworker, sold his car, and went to Palau.¹⁵

In Palau he met the missionaries. The first time they came to his house, he said, "I thought [the missionaries] were census workers because of their white shirts." After the young men identified themselves as missionaries for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, they asked Ben if they could come in, "and [he] said, 'Oh, yes.' [When] they told me to . . . pray . . . I [hung] down my head to pray and I couldn't open my mouth. I start[ed] to get these inner emotional knots. When they asked me if I was okay, I asked 'How come I feel like [this], like I'm dizzy and I [can't] open my mouth?'" The missionaries related the story of Joseph Smith's experience in the Sacred Grove and Ben wondered, "Maybe that's the same thing that happened to me. I don't know, but I couldn't pray."

After hearing the missionary discussions, Ben decided to join the Church. He went to An-

gaur to be baptized only to be told that he would have to wait for an interview with the mission president. Ben was so angry that the missionaries had said he had to wait to be "forgiven" by the mission president, that he went back to his car, picked up the Doctrine and Covenants and decided to throw it in the ocean. He recounted, "I was going to throw it in the ocean. I said, 'I don't believe this church. Why won't they let me get baptized?' But I couldn't throw it. Deep inside there was something that touched me, [that told me] that it's true. . . . I [could] not throw it away because I would be foolish if it's true and I don't follow it."

Ben also came to recognize that the Holy Ghost had influenced his life long before he knew about the gospel. Years before he heard the missionary discussions, and while he was still living in Alaska, he was arrested. He says, "I almost went to jail for twenty years." The day he and several other prisoners appeared before the judge, they were all handcuffed together and standing before the judge in a line. Ben relates how the judge went from person to person asking how each pleaded to the charges. After hearing the person next to Ben plead "not guilty," the judge was ready to pass sentence. Ben raised his hand and said "Judge, you forgot me." The judge could not find Ben's name on the list of defendants nor did the police station have any record of his arrest. The judge told Ben that he was free to go. In remembering this and other experiences, Ben said, "There is somebody that's strong enough to take care of the court for me, better than any lawyer could do. Somebody that's strong enough to take care of the court for me and strong enough to make me come to Palau against my own will or without me even knowing about it. . . . When somebody is strong enough to make me do those things and strong enough to make the gospel go forth . . . I guess that's because it is true. And ever since [my baptism] I've never been away from him."¹⁶

You are going to be a missionary. Some time after his baptism, Ben was called to be a

missionary. He was forty-one years old at the time. He explained, "I looked up at the ceiling and the ceiling [said] you are going to be a missionary. I look[ed] at the trees and the trees told me 'you are going to be a missionary.' I knew that if God wants you to do something, he has no problem delivering the message . . . but I was forty-one years old. . . . I went to the branch president and told him about these feelings. The branch president said, 'Oh no, Ben. You are wrong. You can't be a missionary because you are too old. What you need to do is find a wife, get married, and you are going to be the first Palauan Branch president.'" Then Ben and the branch president prayed together and when they finished, the branch president said, "The Lord wants you to be a missionary." While the branch president and Ben were discussing the fact that Ben would have to go to Guam to see the mission president, a car drove up and parked in front of the branch president's home. The mission president got out. Ben told him that the Lord wanted him to be a missionary, but he did not tell the mission president about praying with the branch president. The mission president's response was the same as the branch president's, "No, Ben, you are wrong. There is no way you are going to be a missionary. . . . You should find a wife, get married, and be the first Palauan Branch president." The mission president then left to return to his hotel; however, before he arrived, he returned to the branch president's home and told Ben, "Yes, the Lord wants you to be a missionary." The mission president set Ben apart as a missionary.¹⁷

Cultural customs a barrier for many. Like many cultures in the world, Palauans have cultural customs that are difficult to give up. Ben related what Palauans say concerning some of their cultural customs. Becoming a member of the Church in Palau is a difficult step for many people to take. Ben explained that the cultural customs are difficult to overcome. Betel nut chewing is a common practice among the older people, and because it is mildly addicting, it is

difficult for the older people to give it up. At the same time, many of the people recognize that joining the Church is a good thing, so they say, "Let our children go, [as for us] we are too old to quit betel nut chewing. . . . We don't want to join your church because you don't chew betel nut."¹⁸

Another stumbling block is paying tithing because of the custom of giving money to extended family to help buy a house, or pay medical bills, or help send someone to a hospital in the Philippines or Hawai'i. This worthy practice of sharing their means with others makes paying tithing a very real challenge that many Palauans feel they are unable to meet.

Another difficulty is the Palauan custom of *ngasech*. When a young woman has her first baby, she is expected to go out without a shirt, to be bare-chested. Many of the young people recognize the conflict between their culture and the teachings of the Church. When they obey the gospel principle of modesty, they must go against the wishes of their parents and the expectations of the community.

Despite these cultural conflicts and difficulties, despite the early missionaries having had rocks thrown at them, finding dead animals on the mission car, having tires slashed, and being spit at with betel nut, the gospel is spreading in Palau. Ben reports that by "hanging on to the gospel and getting through cultural tensions, I [have] convert[ed] two of my aunties and some of my own people . . . have joined the Church."¹⁹

Marshall Islands

The Republic of the Marshall Islands consists of low-lying coral atolls. It is located in the eastern-most area of the Micronesian archipelago.

The growth of the Church in the Marshall Islands. William Swain is well respected, and not only in the Church. Everyone in the Marshall Islands looks to him as a spiritual leader and as an intellectual leader as well. He has been an ambassador to the United Nations for his country.

He has been involved in many different government ministries of the Marshall Islands. Most importantly, he persists in doing good, and wherever he goes he shows his integrity and honesty. Will, as he is sometimes known, has completed the translation of the Book of Mormon into Marshallese and continues to do other translation projects for the Church. He is happily married to Rosemarie, and they are now the parents of two children.²⁰

Will: When I was at a Catholic school, I used to hang around a lot with a priest, so I did not meet the elders until I went to Arizona. [Will then converted to the Church and went on a mission.] Having come back from my mission in 1983, and seeing the Church worship in a former bar room, I laid awake at night and covenanted in my heart that there would be a church [building] in the Marshall Islands. [After obtaining my education at BYU–Hawai‘i], I went back and tried to help build up the Church. We then grew from no planned buildings to one, two, three, four buildings on Majuro, the main island. We grew from twelve members at the end of 1977 to over four thousand right now [estimation in 1997].

Challenges with ordination—a cultural point of view. Generally, there is no difficulty in setting apart a person for a position in the Church. However, if a person is Marshallese with royal blood, the Marshallese brethren have a challenge. Will explained why.²¹

Will: In the Marshall Islands, [one of our main challenges] has to do with ordination. [As an example], we look to the priesthood brethren [in the Marshall Islands]. My foster dad was one. When he was the district president, he had to call a Relief Society president. It just so happened that this Relief Society president that he was impressed to call happened to be a lady from the royal blood in the Ratak Chain on the eastern side of the Marshall Islands. He was confronted with [a] dilemma. [In order to set her apart], he had to place his hands upon her head, at the highest point of the body. My foster dad knows the role of life [as a Marshallese]. He is

[considered] a quintessential Marshallese traditional leader [by many]. He refused to ordain this lady and set her apart because she was of royal blood and you should not put your hands upon the heads of the royal blood. When that time came, in the midst of all the leaders from the mission as well as the local leaders, he refused [to set this woman apart]. The challenge still remains [in the Marshall Islands] as to how a priesthood leader would ordain those of royal lineage.

Temple attendance is a direct link to church activity. Through his observation, Will linked church activity with temple attendance.²²

Will: I have seen a direct correspondence between [church] activity and temple [attendance]. The people that have attended the temple tend to serve in positions that are very critical in the growth of the Church there [the Marshall Islands]. In 1995/96, I got tired because I ran out of money [trying] to support [Marshallese members of] this Church [who wanted to attend the temple]. So I went and established a bank account for temple excursions. I opened the account and solicited assistance from outside former elders, missionaries that have been [to the Marshall Islands]. Now [we have been on] three temple trips [and we are] able to use that account. The Area Presidency for us is in the Philippines and technically we should be under the Philippines Temple in Manila, but it is easier and closer for us to go to Hawai‘i. One of the greatest experiences in my life is to bring people that speak no English at all to the temple. You enter the temple [for] the first time as a couple. You go through in the morning at 6:30 a.m. and don’t leave the temple until 4 p.m. in the afternoon. You are tired but it is a good tired. When you get out it is extremely gratifying. I have brought a number of people to the temple; it has always been a positive experience. As you know, we don’t have a temple. I proposed to the brethren that a temple be built on a boat. I did meet with Elder Perry two or three years ago and at that time I did propose that we build a temple on a boat. Elder Perry and the brethren

need to reconcile this idea [using] the scriptures as they say. So the temple for the Marshall Islands won't be on ground but will be on a boat.

Despite the struggles with missionary work in Micronesia, the Lord continues to look upon the people with much love and concern. He continues to forge ahead with missionary work through the able hands and enduring faith of the Latter-day Saints who live in that part of the Lord's vineyard.

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Notes

1. "Our Stories: Original Pioneers from the Micronesia Guam Mission" was a session consisting of William Swain, Walter Simram, Donald Calvo, Maria Calvo, Ben V. Roberto, and Ben Nago at the Pioneers in the Pacific Conference at Brigham Young University–Hawai'i, in Lā'ie, Hawai'i, on October 9, 1997; transcript in author's possession.

2. The following dialogue is from Donald and Maria Calvo, "Our Stories: Original Pioneers from the Micronesia Guam Mission."

3. Calvo, "Our Stories."

4. Calvo, "Our Stories."

5. William W. Cannon, *Beachheads in Micronesia: A View of the Proselyting Efforts of Mormon Missionaries Who Followed the Liberating Campaigns of Military Forces of the United States in Micronesia* (Salt Lake City: W. W. Cannon, 1997), 2.

6. Cannon, *Beachheads in Micronesia*, 10.

7. Matilda Gonzales, personal journal; copy in author's possession; Brad Nago, "History of Saipan Branch, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," unpublished manuscript; copy in author's possession.

8. Matilda Gonzales, November 11, 1975, and November 15, 1975, personal journal; copy in author's possession.

9. Nago, "History of Saipan Branch."

10. Hermann Arp, "A Most Humbling Experience" by Fredrick Hermann Walter Arp, Branch President, 1984–1990" (n.p.), 1; copy in author's possession.

11. Arp, "A Most Humbling Experience," 1.

12. Arp, "A Most Humbling Experience," 3–4.

13. Walter Simram, "Our Stories: Original Pioneers from the Micronesia Guam Mission."

14. The following story is from Ben V. Roberto, "Our Stories: Original Pioneers from the Micronesia Guam Mission."

15. Roberto, "Our Stories."

16. Roberto, "Our Stories."

17. Roberto, "Our Stories."

18. Roberto, "Our Stories."

19. Roberto, "Our Stories."

20. The following dialogue is from William Swain, "Our Stories: Original Pioneers from the Micronesia Guam Mission."

21. Swain, "Our Stories."

22. Swain, "Our Stories."

