

Tinian

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Want to shiver a little? What would be one of the world's greatest potential tourist attractions, if it weren't so isolated, is located just a bare 110 miles from Guam.

Saturday, I accompanied retired Marine General John Scott, his son Steve, and Daily News publisher Bob Udick to Tinian, and Saipan. Scott is now publisher of the Honolulu Star-Bulletin, and was on Guam to participate in the Liberation Day festivities. He was a Marine Captain who took part in the Liberation, and in fact, wound up being dunked in the ocean not far from where Andersen AF base is today.

I've never spent any time in Tinian before, although I've landed there once or twice, and have flown over it dozens and dozens of times. Jim Flemming met us on the airstrip, and took us around the island. I was impressed driving down the beautiful, wide Broadway boulevard, past Times Square. Fifth, Avenue, though wide and in good shape, has some of the darnest cattle guards to keep Ken Jones' cows safely in pasture.

I met the good mayor, Mr. Antonio Borja, and even invested a quarter in the slot machines in the Mermaid bar. We went into what used to be Gen. Curtis LeMay's home, still surrounded by the loveliest flowers imaginable. It is now Flemming's hotel.

We saw the famed Royal Taga latte stones, spectacular in themselves, well worth a trip to Tinian for. We also inspected many of the runways, and air strips, and found them to be in pretty fair condition after 29 years of neglect. Except, as our pilot, Capt. Brandenburg pointed out, that the jungle is breaking through in many places, and any new airstrip would probably require removing all of the existing asphalt, and almost starting over.

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The most memorable part of any visit to Tinian, though, is the plaques denoting the loading zones for both the atomic bombs that blasted Hiroshima, and Nagasaki, thus moving the world into a completely new era. Looking at those plaques, which tell the pilot's name, and the date of departure, really gives a guy goose bumps, especially when it happened on our Liberation Day. History, real history, was made right at that spot, and thousands of lives were lost because of those bombs. Truly, it is a chilling, awesome experience. If those plaques were located near some populated area in the U.S. I would imagine they would draw a million visitors a year, and would be complete with restaurants and souvenir shops. On Tinian there was only silence. And piles of cow dung nearby. Perhaps that is sort of symbolic.

And now the Air Force is coming back to Tinian. I would imagine such a thought might give additional chills to the people of Japan.

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