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NAVY AIDS TINIAN FARMERS

PEARL HARBOR, T.H. — When shipwrecked sailors hit many of these Pacific islands centuries ago, they often subsisted on nothing more than coconuts or bananas. There was one fortunate fellow though, an Englishman named Lord George Anson, who after losing five of his six ships in a smashing tropical typhoon, came upon the tiny Pacific island of Tinian.

For Anson and his crew, sailing months without finding any land where fresh meats, fruits or vegetables could be found, Tinian looked like Paradise. With his crew half dead from scurvy, he decided to chance the beach where he was met by a friendly Spaniard, the only European inhabitant of the island.

The year was 1742 and the entry in the ship's log praised the quality of fruits and vegetables and noted the richness of the Tinian soil and woods. Indeed a heavenly paradise to men who had been lost at sea for many months.

Long after Anson and his men departed, Spain controlled the Marianas, including Tinian, until the Spanish-American war, when the U.S. cruiser Charleston entered the harbor of Guam and seized that island for the United States.

In 1899, Spain sold all her remaining holdings in the Marianas and Carolines to Germany for over \$4,000,000. German domination of the island lasted only until shortly after the outbreak of World War I, when Japan seized most of Germany's Pacific Territory. After that war the League of Nations mandated the Carolines, Marshalls, and Marianas (excepting Guam) to Japan.

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Japan - Tinian

The Japanese after World War I, expanded the island of Tinian into a thriving sugar cane industry, digging wells for irrigation and building a large alcohol plant. The plant was subsequently destroyed by the U.S. invasion in 1944.

With the alcohol plant destroyed and the 125,000 fighting men who built runways and flew the warplanes gone, post-war Tinian fell back into nothing much more than caretakers status. The natives returned to the old way of life, fishing some and raising pitifully small crops for their own use only.

This thriving island, where the historic first atom bomb was assembled for delivery on the shrinking Japanese empire, surrendered to an overgrowth of Tangantangan (a heavy tropical acacia like shrub) and a not too productive existence.

During an inspection tour of the Marianas-Bonin Islands in early 1958, Rear Admiral W.L. Erdmann, Commander Naval Forces Marianas, noticed, like Lord Anson, over 200 years back, the producing capabilities of Tinian. The Admiral swung into action, starting project "Produce from Tinian." Taking stock of the abundance of fresh water and natural resources of the soil, he called a cooperative meeting, through the Naval Administrative Unit, Saipan, of all Tinian farmers in an effort to better the economic situation of the island. Following this meeting the Admiral suggested that the Naval Supply Depot on Guam purchase all the produce Tinian could raise. He appointed Commander A.F. Holzappel, Staff Special Projects Officer, to coordinate and supply weekly transportation for the produce to Guam. To aid the farmers even more, pipe and other materials were provided for better irrigation and a bulldozer loaned for land clearing.

Spurred by the Navy's enthusiastic support, the natives returned to their farms. With new zest they began the battle against the intruding Tangantangan. The lush farm lands, idle for more than 12 years, began to produce ~~once more~~.

Now, Tinian is again becoming the garden isle of the Marianas.

The Tinian farmer was briefed on the needs of the American housewife and now cultivates crops that will sell to the consumer on Guam. A variety of produce including cucumbers, watermelon, cantaloupe, sweet melon, oranges, okra, bell peppers, tangerines, radishes, papaya, sweet potatoes and tomatoes are now being produced in ever increasing quantity. The provisions department of the Naval Supply Depot purchases this produce delivering it to Army, Navy and Air Force general messes and the commissary stores on Guam.

According to Lieutenant Commander R.J. Orr, NSD Provision Officer, this increased interest in agricultural development not only helps the lot of the Tinian farmer (the Navy's first purchase of Tinian produce amounted to only \$500 a week in Aug. 1958, last purchase of Tinian produce the final week of Feb. 1959: \$2700) who now has a sizable market for his goods, but aids in cutting the cost of transportation normally expended by the Navy to import produce from the United States. Tinian lies only some 100 miles north of Guam.

Sometime back, a 68 percent loss occurred each time fresh vegetables and fruits were shipped from the mainland to Guam. With new packaging methods being introduced, the loss has been cut, but is still considerable in many cases. Now, with Tinian on the increasing production scale and Guam only one day away from sorting and crating plants, the loss is down to nil. The Tinian farmer believes in selling only the best produce to the Navy and the Naval Administrative Unit on Saipan rigidly inspects all fruits and vegetables shipped for export.

Coming into his own, production wise, the Tinian farmer is proud of his island. From the air it resembles a sparkling gem that someone carefully placed next to its jagged coral sister Saipan. Tinian is open and park like, with groves of trees occasionally breaking the monotony of the

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rectangular fields. The island is almost entirely encircled by cliffs rising directly from the sea.

Now on her lush flatlands, thanks to the help and administration of the U.S. Navy, the Tinian farmer and his family are gaining more independence and a feeling of accomplishment in producing for profit consumer goods that not only provide satisfaction for the public on Guam but are aiding in a big monetary saving for the Navy.