

PRESS

Office of the High Commissioner

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PALAU'S ENTRY CHOSEN

Saipan, Mariana Islands, Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, Mar. 16 . . . A mural entry by Palau High School students has been chosen as the Trust Territory's contribution to the "Tom Sawyer Project" to be used at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

As in the United States and other participating areas, many Micronesian youths from Saipan, Truk, Ponape, Yap, and Palau participated in the project with enthusiasm. Although all entries were considered excellent which made selection difficult, Headquarters officials in Saipan finally decided to send the mural entered by the Palau High School to represent the Trust Territory at the Kennedy Center. The 8' x 8' mural depicts the famous Palauan breadfruit tree legend--a strange breadfruit tree which not only yielded fruit but also fish for an old woman of Ngipital hamlet. The panels will be used as part of the fence wall surrounding the Kennedy Center.

Coincidentally at the time the panels were being judged on March 2, Palau was unexpectedly struck by Typhoon Sally, whose 90-mile per hour winds inflicted extensive damage to government buildings and installations, homes, and food crops. The tornado-like tropical storm also claimed three lives--a 14-year-old high school girl and a 40-year-old mother and her two-year-old daughter. All were buried to death by collapsing buildings. An estimated 50 persons were also reported injured. In

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Koror, the main town of Palau, some 600 houses were damaged with 235 homes totally demolished by strong winds, leaving hundreds and hundreds of people homeless immediately following the storm. According to some reports more than \$5 million damage was inflicted by Sally.

Merciless Sally has passed unconcerned about the result of her fury, but the remote <sup>island</sup> inhabitants are now faced with the task of rebuilding their island--a task that will require at least two years before Palau can return to its pre-typhoon condition.

With food crops almost totally wiped out by the typhoon and water supplies contaminated, the Trust Territory Government and the people of Palau must carry out the difficult task of rehabilitation amidst food shortages and the possibility of epidemic outbreaks.

To alleviate the problem of food shortage, the American Red Cross Chapter in Guam, some 700 miles north of Palau, with the help of Peace Corps Volunteers, has organized a mass feeding program in Koror and the outlying villages in Babelthuap, the largest single island in the Trust Territory. Other residents from the neighboring islands of Yap, Saipan, Truk, Ponape, and the Marshalls are donating food supplies and clothing to help the typhoon victims. Women's and other charity organizations in Guam are conducting food and clothing campaigns for the storm-stricken residents of Palau, who include some 200 Americans.

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Situated approximately 500 miles east of the Philippines, Palau is the westernmost island group of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, which is administered by the United States under a 1947 Trusteeship Agreement with the United Nations. Before World War II, the area was mandated to Japan under the League of Nations. Palau has an indigenous population of 11,235 of whom nearly 9,000 were affected by Typhoon Sally.

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