

Interview with Bob Gaines

BY KYLE PARKER

On December 12, 2006 Robert (Bob) Gaines gave me a report on what it was like to be sunk on the Navy ship U.S.S. Coolidge. After that, he spent a whole month on the Esbreda Sando in the New Hebrides, a small island north of New Zealand, west of Fiji Island, and east of the Solomon Islands.

Bob Gaines: We were assigned to come in the bay at the New Hebrides. The captain of the ship, for some reason, didn't have all the correct instructions. He went to the channel that could take us into this bay, but he was supposed to turn around to a certain degree, and go into another area because the main channel was mined by our own mines. So about 9:00 a.m. one beautiful day, I was eating breakfast in the galley. All of a sudden there was a terrific explosion and the ship went up then settled back down. One of the officers in charge jumped up on the table and said, "Quiet down! Quiet down! There was a boiler that exploded!" Just about that time another explosion came up and it knocked him off the table and dishes fell all over the floor. Then we were hailed to quiet down and told to go back to our quarters. The ship was tipping and squeaking, but we were held in our room, because there was troops all the way down at the D deck and the water was clear up to their waists. At the time they let us and walk on the side of the wall because the ship was at that point. I got into the water, and I was able to swim away; of course I had my life jacket on or I would have never made it. I just watched the ship roll over, and then the nose went straight up, then right into the water. It was quite a sight.

Kyle: So you swam to the island of Esbreda Sando. What was it like?

Bob Gaines: There were about 200 white people on the island. The natives lived in small groups in the jungle and they

depended 100% on growing their own food. After we got off the boat and swam ashore, one of my first assignments as a radio operator was to be sent to an outpost which was on the back side of the island. This outpost had a radio shack which was built by the natives, a bamboo shack with leaves for the roof. There were six riflemen and myself on this outpost, and we had two natives working for us. One was a young man, probably 20 years old. He didn't know how old he was...We called him "Soapy." And another older man that acted as a general did the cookin' for us, which was warming up our Army meals. Sometimes the natives would bring in yams or a pineapple, and there were also bananas that grew on the island.

At night I had to report on the radio back to the main base, every hour I had to report back. In order to do it, we had a hand generator to generate power to transmit that message back to main base. The natives came in - their rifleman was overlooking this bay, and they were supposed to stay up at night to make sure that no enemy landed on the island, on this beach. That was my job, to report back if something like this happened.

So these natives were young people; they came round, so at night our soldiers talked them into overlooking and they went to bed. Every now and then someone had to come in to turn on the generator. So the natives would come in and they'd turn the generator on. It was very interesting to live with these people. They were happy to take some of our Army rations. We also gave them shoes, because most of them never had any shoes. They didn't wear very many clothes. They didn't go naked, but they would just wear very simple shorts, if you want to call it that.

We'd be talking and one of the natives would say, "Tomorrow we go long bush." And that meant they wanted to go out in the jungle and explore to see if there was any enemy around. About the first week that I was there, one of the natives said, "You want to shoot bull?" And I said,

"Yeah, sure!" There were some beef cattle that run wild on that part of the island. So the guys got the rifles, and they went out and shot a bull. He probably weighed 1,000 pounds; he was probably a short-horn. The natives all gathered around the bull and dressed him out and we got a couple of steaks, and that's probably all we got out of it. It was a real interesting deal.

There was a chief that used to come around, and they called him Chief Fiji. Most people were fairly small, those natives, and this man was probably five feet tall, well built. The only thing that he wore was a hat that the Marines had given him, which looked like a straw hat, only a little neater and looked like cardboard. The Sergeant that was with us, he had to go back to main base for some more supplies, and when he came back he brought a can of red paint. So he took this helmet that the chief had worn and he put a big red star on the front side of it and wrote "Chief Fiji" on it and then on the side he wrote "Sergeant Smith, Chief's Advisor." That Chief was so proud of that helmet!

Soapy, the younger man who I say was about 20 years old, he had to bring us water which was down on the bottom of the island and we was on top of the ledges there. The older man who acted as a cook used to tend the fire and warm up our beans or whatever we had for Army stew. As I say, he would bring in yams and cook them for us. We sometimes sat down - he didn't talk much of any English - but I had some magazines there and I would open them up and show him pictures. He never saw an automobile; he had no idea what an automobile was, had no idea of what buildings were and I'd show him things and tell him what it was like **continues on next page**

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Continued from page 10

It was an experience living with those people that I'm sure few Vermonters had at that time. There was coconut groves along the one coastal area and the white men were people that more or less had charge of the natives that worked the coconut groves. That was about the only industry on the island itself. Now, even today, that island is practically uninhabited as far as white people are concerned. They have an independent government now and there is a little bit more activity there because the USS Coolidge sank off the coast and now there are a lot of people from all over the world - SCUBA divers - that like to go down into the Coolidge. There is quite a little action on that score. But the basic natives are still living by themselves out in the jungle. They live in individual groups, probably three or four families in a group and they built these bamboo houses. And over a period of time these houses would go down and then the natives, instead of rebuilding the houses there, would move from there to another area of the jungle and build a little city, if you want to call it that, for themselves. That's the way we operated.

(This article is excerpted from a transcript of Kyle Parker's December 12, 2007 interview with Bob Gaines.)

Pluto

BY TRAVIS GRAVES

Pluto has been announced a dwarf planet. Pluto has been known to us for 75 years and now scientists say Pluto is too small to be called our ninth planet. Most people think this isn't a big deal but some students in the future are most likely not going to know what Pluto is. Now most adults and kids know the saying "My Very Educated Mother Just Served Us Nine Pies," but now there is no pie in the galaxy—what are we to do without pie!?

Pluto is 2274 km in diameter; the mass is $1.27e^{22}$ kg and its orbit is 5,913,5200,000 km from the sun. It was one of the smallest planets but is now called a dwarf planet. Pluto was found in 1930, and in Greek mythology, Pluto is the Roman name for Hades, the god of the underworld. Pluto has a surface temperature of negative 235F°, or negative 210C°. There is a spacecraft on its way to Pluto. If all goes well, it should land on Pluto by 2015; it was launched in January 2006.

Unfortunately for poor Pluto it will not be known as a planet, but will join the dwarf race of planets like UB 313 and Ceres. Goodbye, Pluto!

Favorite Winter Sports In The 8th Grade

BY JESSICA BOUDREAU

I asked all the 8th graders in the middle school (30 students) what their favorite winter sports are, and also 13 teachers in the school. I collected the data that I have and placed it out as percentages for everyone to see what the most popular sport is, and what is least popular.

Ice Skating:	26%
Snowboarding:	23%
Skiing:	16%
Bowling:	14%
Sledding:	5%
Horseback Ridng:	5%
Snowshoeing:	5%
Ice Sculpting:	2%
Snowmobiling:	2%
Feeding The Birds:	2%

As you can see, ice skating is 3% more popular than snowboarding which makes it the most popular winter sport out of all. Snowboarding is 7% more popular than skiing, which is 2% more popular than bowling; snowboarding is in second and skiing is in third. There is a tie at five percent between horseback riding, snowshoeing, and sledding. There is also a tie between ice sculpting, snowmobiling and feeding the birds at 2%. There are many different sports that everyone enjoys to do, which are all extremely fun, but the data shows that ice skating is the most popular sport. All these sports are great to do; but whatever sport you are doing, be sure to be careful!

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