

## Leda's Crew Entertains An Island Prince

### SPEAR FISHING IN CORAL LAGOONS OF TONGA

(By W. A. Wilson)  
(II)

We had been nearly three days in Tonga without doing any fishing, which was one of the main things we had come for. The thought of eating another banana was not particularly attractive at the moment so Dave and I got our flippers, diving masks and snorkel tubes and spear gufs and paddled across to the nearest reef.

I went over first and spent ten enchanted minutes gliding down past coral caves, surrounded by hosts of tiny, brilliantly coloured fishes. I climbed back into the dinghy and kept it off the reef while Dave had a go, but there was nothing worth spearing.

Two natives in a little red canoe, who had been watching us intently, paddled past just as Dave's flippers disappeared from view and he went down deep looking for big fish. A thickset man sitting in the bow of the canoe called out to me.

"Caught anything?" he asked in perfect English.

"No, they're all too small and too quick," I said.

"You'll find it much better over there," and he pointed to a beacon on a reef about a mile away. "I'm going over there now," he added.

#### The Fish Were Numerous

I told Dave when he came up, so we rowed back to the Leda, picked up my brother and his diving gear and rowed across to where we could see the canoe. The thickset one who had spoken to me was diving while the other native kept the canoe painstakingly alongside.

The diver had a long snorkel tube, much longer than the ones we use, kept on the surface by being tied to a little rubber lifebuoy. He surfaced as we rowed past, grunted and smiled and dived again.

We spent about two hours cruising up and down the reef in the warm water, discovering a much wider variety of fish but still nothing much worth spearing. The fish were all very nervous, unlike New Zealand fish, and had evidently been well scared by previous divers. They were so quick they could swim as fast as a launched spear.

#### A Friendly Chat

On our way back the canoe came across to intercept us and we struck up quite a friendly conversation with the man in the bow. His English was perfect and we discussed spear-fishing tackle. He said he had taken up the sport three months ago.

Eventually he asked us if we had any spare solid rubber tubing for spear guns. His had perished, he said, and it would take a month to six weeks for him to get more from Australia and in the meantime he could not use his good bamboo gun.

We had plenty on board the boat. He asked if he could buy some and we said that if he came over with us then he could have some. The canoe followed us across the lagoon to the stern still paddling.

The big native climbed aboard Leda, quite a difficult feat from the narrow, unstable canoe. He introduced himself: "They call me Tungl," he said, as he stepped along the counter and into the cockpit.

"Oh," said my brother, "I am Dooley, this is Dave and this is my brother, Sandy." He shook hands with us.

#### Lemon and Ginger

The paddler remained sitting in the canoe. "What about him?" asked my brother. Tungl replied that he would stay where he was. But we insisted.

"Oh no, he must come aboard, too," we said. So the big native spoke to his companion in Tongan and he, too, scrambled aboard. Something to drink, we suggested, as we stepped below.

"No, thank you," said Tungl, he didn't drink or smoke. He was wearing red bathing shorts and a white singlet, we three were in wet bathing shorts so we remained standing and did not invite him to sit down. I mixed Tungl a drink of lemon and ginger ale, from the frig. and poured beer for the rest of us.

"What about your friend?" I asked, for the other native had remained sitting on deck.

"Well, I think he might be tempted to have a beer," said Tungl, with a smile. We realised when he was in

the cabin that the English-speaking native was really a very big man. He had to bend his head in the galley, even between deck-beams, which placed him at least in the six foot four class, and yet he appeared thickset and had legs like tree trunks.

#### He Seemed Important

We chatted happily for half-an-hour and he told us a great deal about Tonga and what they were doing there, and about his visits to neighbouring islands. He was very interesting and I gathered that he held quite an important position on the island. Several times I was on the point of asking him what work he did.

We produced the rubber tubing and he was very pleased with it. Even when we told him we wouldn't dream of asking him to pay for it and it was a pleasure to be able to help him, he was scrupulously fair about taking only sufficient for his needs although we had a big roll of the stuff.

He showed us the fish he had speared, an extraordinary looking thing which he said even he had not seen before. He called it a peacock fish, and said he thought the Auckland Museum might appreciate a specimen but we found it left on deck after he had left.

#### Owned Some Islands

Finally, as he was leaving, he asked us if we would like to go fishing with him one day in his yacht. We would go further afield, he said, where the fish were bigger and tamer.

We thanked him. No, we couldn't go this Saturday; we had been invited to a feast, but the following Saturday would suit admirably.

"Where would we go?" I asked, as

we stepped out into the cockpit once more. "Over by that island?"

Yes, he said, that was quite a good spot. "Actually," he said, rather diffidently, "I own that island, and there is a good beach, but the fishing is better out at those two more distant islands. I own them too."

"Oh, yes," we said, embarrassed at such wealth of ownership.

He left shortly after, jumping adroitly into the bobbing canoe, despite his weight, which we later discovered was round the 22-stone blue mark.

He waved cheerily and said, "See you on Saturday."

#### So That Was It

We discussed him back in the cabin. Very nice bloke, we said. Must have a fair bit of cash.

"Probably a prince or something," suggested Dave.

Prince? We looked at each other wildly, then dived for the bookcase and grabbed the Pacific Islands Year Book. We turned to Tonga: The Crown Prince and heir to the throne, Tupouto'a, succeeded to his father's title of Tungl in 1946," we read. "Matriculating from Newington College, Sydney, he took an honours degree in jurisprudence at Sydney University in 1943. On his return to Tonga in the same year he was appointed Minister of Education and was subsequently given the additional portfolio of Health . . ."

Of course! In the absence of Queen Salote at the Coronation celebrations in England, Tungl is the reigning monarch of Tonga.

We await Saturday's fishing trip with some trepidation.

(To be Continued)