

HOW THEY SPENT LAST CHRISTMAS

N.Z. DIVISION

WE were just back from Libya, resting at a place called Bargoush beside the sea—and very glad to be there. The boys sang pretty well the hymns and carols at the padre's parade in the morning. But celebrations really began when we had Christmas Dinner at night. There was Christmas Cake, besides the usuals, and those who had Christmas puddings handed them in to the cooks to be pooled. We all had parcels of course. And some Aussie beer came up from Cairo. So as the night wore on there were rifle shots and tommy-gun rounds going off mysteriously from those who had to let off steam somehow. But most of us were glad enough just to sit and talk in the beautiful starry desert night. In my two-man tent there were half a dozen of us going over what we had just been through in Libya.

U.S. MERCHANT SAILOR

CHRISTMAS don't mean nuthin' at sea. Ship's routine has got to go through, boy. The war has got to go on. Well, y'do get dinner—a real swell dinner. And last Christmas we near got a present too. We was off the Florida coast before they started convoys, and a torpedo just nicely missed us. Otherwise Christmas like Sunday, is like any other day at sea. Ship's routine has got to go through, boy; the war has got to go on.

MEDICAL UNIT

I WAS sitting on the floor of a big Fijian hut watching a *meke* and staggering up occasionally to dance with a golly-wog maiden in a *sulu* skirt—and cotton blouse. "Consorting with natives" strictly speaking was illegal of course; but this was Christmas Eve. The *meke* was good—Fijian girls, dressed alike, and with

IN THE NAVY: "The war has got to go on." But there is a real swell dinner as well as work on Christmas Day



FIJI PARTY: N.Z. soldiers dressed up for a Christmas party in Fiji

bands of green leaves round their wrists, ankles, and necks, sitting on the floor doing action songs. But about eleven o'clock the sky fell in. Rain!!! And of course there were patriotic parcels—razor blades, jam, condensed milk, chocolate. Good to get? I'll say.

THE THREE MARINES

(1). No, I'm one that ain't gotten no Christmas invite yet. But then I can't. I'm in the quartet back at camp and gotta be right there. Last Christmas was rather like that too. We had only two days off full training altogether. But I put a long-distance through to my mother in Chicago—it was only about 900 miles, see—and felt almost like as if I was home.

(2). All that most of the boys in Cuba could do was soak up rum. Some hired

horses and had fun riding around. But I was asked to visit with a family. Real Cubans they were. Everybody went to church in the morning, lay round all day, and then had *fiesta* night after it got cool—dancing, singing, dressing up.

(3). No Sir. Iceland was nothing too hot. Day before Christmas we saw daylight—dawn and sunset together—first time after fourteen days of dark. (We had nineteen days clear sunlight the summer before, of course.) Then you only get two bottles in Iceland of near beer—like yours. Whisky's a bootlegger's price too—like yours—sixteen dollars a gallon. And then buddy here and me have to go guard duty all Christmas day!

BACK FROM EGYPT

I GOT hit out beyond Gazala on December 15. By Christmas, I believe, the boys had pulled out from chasing Rommel and had chicken and so on in the desert. But the only Christmas Dinner I got was half a potato and half a tinned peach. I shouldn't have had that either, but one of the nurses squeezed it past the bandage round my jaw—just to make me feel that I was in things. This happened in an English hospital on the Canal. We got there right on Christmas Eve out of an Italian hospital ship that had been taken over for breaking some war rule. Hospital on Christmas morning was rather like waking in heaven. Everyone managed to stagger up for dinner, except two of us, including me of course, and the nurses had paper caps on and Christmas eats for all, parcels for some, and even a bottle or two to go round in sips.

SELANGOR VOLUNTEER

REALLY there is very little special that I can remember about last Christmas. I suppose the events that came so quickly after it have made it seem very tame and usual and very far away. The long retreat down the peninsula through the jungle, I mean, with the Japs. infiltrating in behind us from

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