

Guam's No Island to Get Away From It All

By ISABEL ROSEBRAUGH
Staff Writer, The Statesman
Out "where America's day begins" on Guam, a good 12 hours away in the South Pacific even by fast jet, fad fashions arrive a little late, food is shipped in and is therefore more expensive than in Oregon, but news travels fast.

Sister Marita Bos, who taught English and math at Serra High School during its first years of operation, 1954-56, and again in 1963-64, visiting friends in Salem early this week, testified to the enlightened condition of residents of the island territory which has been her home the past six years.

Among her stories of the land and people of Guam which she loves ("I like Salem; I love Guam!") is one about the recent action of a first grade classroom in a Catholic school. Distressed over frequent absences of a lad who had been elected "senator" from their room, the youngsters proceeded to "impeach" him.

Both Serra and the long black habit Sister Marita wore when she taught there are gone. Even her name is changed, back to that with which she was christened at birth. "Gerardine," the name she was given on entering the convent 31 years ago was as easily discarded as the old garb of the nun when rules were changed.

The habit uncomfortable or a hindrance to any athletic endeavor — "I climbed mountains, hiked, did everything but swim in it," but she does think it attracted attention even while providing a type of anonymity. "You have to prove yourself more" now, Sister Marita thinks.

She does "feel bad about Serra closing," however.

On Guam, she is a science and math teacher in a Catholic junior high school with a student body of approximately 300 and also teaches chemistry in a boys' high school. Glad to be returning there in the fall, she would, nevertheless, like an opportunity to teach for a few years in New Zealand.

Young people everywhere she has been have much in common, Marita Bos finds. They seem to expect a teacher to know — or to claim to know — everything about a subject she teaches. "Impossible!" she tells them. "The field of chemistry is great and changing rapidly, but I can find the answer or tell you how to find it." And she hopes that they can then accept what she tells them that she does know. But she comments that today's youth has many built-in doubts.

A hobby like scuba diving, now, that wins admiration among students, especially in a land where most of the populace fears the water. Great sharks abound in the Pacific around Guam, which is at the southern end of the Marianas, and there is much sharp coral.

Sinajanan, where she lives and teaches is about midway between coasts at the



Sister Marita Bos of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration "likes" Salem, but "loves" Guam. For the former Serra High School teacher, the island territory is where the action is. (Statesman photo by Lewis H. Arends Jr.)

narrowest point, where the island is only four miles wide.

An enthusiastic swimmer and snorkeler before she went to Guam, Sister Marita took her scuba training in a class with nine Seabees. Famed for their uninhibited language, not one of them has ever uttered "so much as a damn" in her hearing.

Sister Marita holds three diving cards, and is the only qualified nun among divers in that area of the Pacific. "It's gorgeous," she says of her year-around hobby. A recently purchased underwater camera has enabled her to show less venturesome friends some of the beauty she enjoys.

There is little local seafood, she says, although sports fishing is on the increase in the area which is becoming a popular tourist attraction. The largest marlin ever caught was taken off Guam, she notes.

Topping all other groups among tourists are Japanese honeymooners. Orientals and American military personnel make up a fair percentage

of the island's population, and natives are U.S. citizens.

The Chamorro language, which was that of the Guamanians, is now taught along with English to children in elementary schools of the territory. Sister Marita has just enough of it to hold her own with teenagers who when she was new there talked in it to one another in an effort to confuse and frustrate her.

"Now," she says, "I can shrug my shoulders, pretend to understand and to be bored by the whole proceeding, so most of the conversation is in English."

Food prices are "half again as much as they are here," she said while in Salem. "A pound can of red salmon was \$3.20 when I left. Almost everything has to be shipped in. There are many free-running chickens, but the price of feed has brought large eggs to \$1.25 a dozen." Clothing is about the same price as that advertised here," but she buys her shoes elsewhere because her size is not readily available.

Although she comes back to the mainland only every three years, new church and convent attitudes have made considerable summer travel possible and she has seen much of the South Pacific.

When Sister Marita left Salem on Wednesday she headed for the mother house of her order, the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in LaCrosse, Wis. After visiting friends in the eastern half of the country she will return to the West Coast for a reunion with her family in Spokane.



Festival Due in