Preface

Spoken Marshallese is a course of 30 lessons designed to give the student a basic fluency in the Marshallese language, and a feeling for its structure that will enable him to converse freely with islanders on a broad range of subjects without additional formal instruction. The course is designed for teaching by modern drill methods, and is based on a scientific analysis of the language. Tapes averaging between 30 and 60 minutes duration are available* for each lesson to supplement class work, or to enable students to work on the language independently.

Individual lessons consist of one or more short but authentic dialogues, from 15 to 20 structural drills of a variety of designs, grammatical notes, and a listing of new vocabulary. Earlier lessons include drills on difficult sound contrasts, and later lessons include short prose passages, proverbs, and miscellaneous other selections designed to display important syntactic structures in context and give practice in reading the language as well. Lessons introducing key paradigms display them in reference sections. Illustrations are included where they are germane.

The total number of vocabulary items introduced is about 1500, but because of the nature of the structure of the language, the student completing the course is able to form many times this number of new words by recombining parts of words. The morphology of the language is treated exhaustively; all major syntactic patterns and a number of important idioms are included. The course provides material for at least 300 hours of classroom drill and should take the capable student to a Foreign Service Institute rating of at least 2 in both speaking and reading.

The Marshall Islands have an indigenous population of only 20,000, but by virtue of their strategic location have acquired a disproportionate weight on the international scene since World War II. Kwajalein, Eniwetok,

*From the National Center for Audio Tapes, Bureau of Audiovisual Instruction, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado 80302.

and Bikini will not soon pass from memory. With new Trust Territory government programs and the advent of the Peace Corps to the islands, there are today an estimated 250 non-indigenous civil employees working out of the District Center at Majuro, and a much larger group--exact number unknown, but estimated to approach 2000--of Stateside personnel who work at the Kwajalein missile base of the Pacific Test Range. The former work closely with the Marshallese populace and have a deep interest in the language; this group turns over about once every two years. The latter group--at Kwajalein--has sufficient contact with Marshallese speakers to stimulate interest in the language on the part of many, and a much higher turnover rate. (The interest in the language on the part of these Kwajalein residents was sufficient to cause the publication on local presses of a small English-Marshallese dictionary in 1962, and the printing of another edition of an earlier 'Navy' dictionary in 1968.)

The amount of scientific information contained in the course--in the introduction, grammatical notes, reference sections, and vocabulary listings--is sufficiently exhaustive to make this volume the most comprehensive treatment of the language to date. As such, it should be in considerable (and continuing) demand in the scholarly community.

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