

Where Airplanes Are Taxis

WALK or fly—that's the alternative faced by Harve Loomis, '16, who is employed by the Vacuum Oil Company in far-off Madang, New Guinea.

He is living in a region of the world so rough that ordinary means of transportation are out of the question and flying is the customary, instead of unusual, form of travel.

Gold in good quantities was found in the interior of New Guinea about a dozen years ago and as there were no roads and it took from ten days to two weeks to walk to the gold field from the coast, the transportation problem became acute. Carrying supplies on the backs of natives' was tried, but it was too slow and difficult. The problem was solved by building airports and resorting entirely to aerial transportation.

Ten years ago the first all-metal Junkers plane went into service between the beach and the gold fields and since that time there has been continuous service. In the Madang area, airplane passenger traffic is probably higher per white person than in any other location in the world, Mr. Loomis comments.

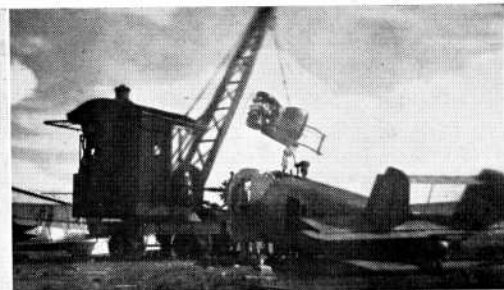
"One of the remarkable features of this service is that they have had very few accidents," he writes. When one stops to consider that some of the dredges transported by plane are really big and heavy machines, it seems impossible that they actually were brought in by air. Everything used in the fields there is brought in by plane—cows, cars, food-stuffs, and building material. Planes make in a half hour a trip that would require at least ten days by ground travel.

"While flying to the gold fields is the big end of the aviation business here, it is not all of it. I have even cleared landing fields in the jungle where there was an open grass spot, so that a plane could come out and pick me up, rather than spend the week or ten days walking back to Madang."

The planes handle freight at 5 cents a pound, but one of the big ships can handle more than 7,000 pounds per trip and on a good day a pilot may make as many as ten trips, so the total returns are substantial.

Mr. Loomis has found the Aiome Pygmies in New Guinea to be an interesting and industrious people, not nearly so wild looking as their pictures might indicate to the uninitiated. They are found seventy-five miles inland from Madang, on the north coast of New Guinea, and some two hundred miles up the Ramu River, following its meandering course.

These people are not pygmies in the true sense of the word for most of them are more than four feet in height. The



Above left, two of the more friendly natives encountered by Harve Loomis, '16, in Dutch New Guinea. Right, loading a big truck in a plane for transport from the coast to the gold fields; and below, a map showing location of New Guinea.

two pictured on this page are four feet six and four feet four respectively. The husband has a head-dress of bark which makes him look more than two inches taller than his wife. As the picture shows, they are a well built and sturdy people.

The bow is strung with very strong bamboo and is made of the sap wood of the *Linbaum* palm. It takes a strong man to use it, though this lad seemed to have no trouble at all in pulling it back sufficient to shoot his four-foot arrow more than a hundred yards, Mr. Loomis states. The pygmies are fair marksmen too.

"**T**HESE little people are quite industrious and have extensive gardens that are well cared for," Mr. Loomis writes. "For the past six months or more our camp near them has depended on food from them for the native labor line of nearly eighty 'boys.' Yams, taro and sweet potatoes make up most of their garden, though their principal food is the *sak-sak*, a local name for sago. This *sak-sak* is made from the trunk of the palm tree which is beaten with stone hammers till the starchy portion of the tree is well washed of all fiber. This starchy part, or sago, is dried and will keep for several days.

"Preparation of the stuff is beyond me, other than it is sometimes rolled in leaves and thrown on a fire for it to roast in this leaf. I have never tasted it, nor do I want to have to—if the natives have

made it—for they are all filthy dirty."

Mr. Loomis calls attention to the heads of the arrows in the lad's hand in the picture. They are made of a hard wood and the barbs well carved. They are tied to the shaft of cane with grass and a neat job is the general rule. Some of the points are made of bamboo which when dry attains a real hardness.

"Ordinarily one lad will carry six to ten of these arrows, some of which may have a cluster of four or five points within a radius of two inches, to increase the chances of hitting the bird or fish.

"It is from these people that we get most of the stone axes which have been made by the mountain folk much above them and traded downward to the frontier. In passing, I might say that all people behind these are in the uncontrolled area, and no Europeans are allowed to go in for fear of trouble."

Mr. Loomis has done petroleum geological work in Mexico, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Dutch East Indies and New Guinea and as he puts it modestly, has been "fortunate enough to find a few pools of oil for some of the clients." He is a charter member of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists.

In New Guinea he is chief geologist in charge of exploratory work in the Madang Territory of New Guinea for his company. The complete staff consists of twenty-three Europeans and two hundred seventy-three natives.