

Seismographing Sumatra

By Jackson L. Gordon, '34eng

Excerpts from a letter to V. E. Monnett, director of the School of Geology

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FOR some time I have intended to write you, but wanted to wait until I got a fair idea of what the nature of foreign service was before I tried to give you an impression of the conditions here, and the circumstances under which we are working. I suppose you still have a vivid memory of your experience under similar circumstances but thought you might appreciate knowing the particulars of our set up.

First I will briefly give you an itinerary of our trip over, which I enjoyed very much. From San Francisco we sailed by Honolulu to Yokohama, Japan. From there we took a car to Tokyo, took a train across the interior of Japan to Kobe where we boarded the ship again, and then sailed to Hong Kong. After a short stop-over in Manila we progressed over a rough sea to Singapore, where we disembarked, thence to Palembang, Sumatra on an inter-island boat. The longest stop was at Singapore, (we were there four days) but a day in Honolulu was enough to convince me that it was the most beautiful place I've ever been.

We are located, as a party, about ninety-seven kilometers southwest of Palembang into the interior of Sumatra. Believe me it gets plenty lonesome out here in the jungles. There are four of us Americans here in camp and we are working about one hundred twenty Javanese Coolies, (the natives of Sumatra are lazy and more illiterate than those of Java).

The rainy season, which lasts for about six months, is supposed to be over but we still get two or three rains a week. You can imagine what the living conditions are here in this swampy, insect and disease infested country, with all the mosquitoes which we have an abundance of. Our food of course is essentially canned stuff with a few green vegetables and some fruit that we are able to get from the natives. The water we drink comes from the nearby streams and must obviously be boiled and filtered.

Our crew that came over in January has been pretty hard hit in the way of health, as four of us have already been to the Hospital with dysentery, fever, infected mosquito bites and poisoned blood. Dysentery, fevers and skin diseases are the most common health hazards, although there has never been a fatality that I have heard of. It is certainly a great sacrifice and one gets very discouraged sometimes, living and working under these conditions but we had no other choice other than to come to foreign service when Humble had its geophysical reduction in forces in January.

We are doing reflection work now al-

together, although there has been a refraction crew up until the last week. Frankly I do not believe this is much of a seismograph country but I suppose it is what we save the company instead of what we make them that justifies our work. This country is very much folded and faulted. Steep dips and lensing work rather adversely against good reflections and accurate correlation, and surface conditions make some of our work hardly accessible.

There are a lot of wild animals here, such as elephants, tigers, tapirs, wild hogs, deer, crocodiles, snakes, large lizards, bears, monkeys (galore), and Orang Utans. We have had fresh pork several times but none of us has killed any deer as yet. We have three pet monkeys which serve to attract our attention when snakes come into camp. I have killed five or six snakes, two of which were over eight feet long and more poisonous than the cobra, and one boy killed a 400-pound black bear.

As for the customs and strange beliefs of the natives here, they are so numerous that I could never get them all, but the predominate religion is Mohammedanism and most all the natives are very staunch adherents. You never see one indulge in intoxicating drinks, and although the children up to about twelve years of age go nude the adults are adequately clothed, contrary to the custom in Java where the women wear nothing above the waist.

We have not had any rain for three days now and the natives in the nearby Kompong (native village) are praying and beating their drums for it to rain. They have prayer services every hour of the day and you can hear a "gong" every morning, noon and night, signifying the call and dismissal for same. They have what they call a "Toekang Boeaja" (literally meaning an "Alligator or Crocodile Man") who presumably has the power to keep these animals away and thus protect anyone whom he is with. Our surveyor, a native, will not work without one, and we pay him more than we do the surveyor.

About our only recreation is badminton, when it isn't too wet to play. We get to go into Palembang once or twice a month but there is nothing to do there but go to a show. The theater is more or less a tin-roof barn and if it rains there is obviously so much noise that one cannot hear anything, so you get a rain check and go back some other time. But it is a change, and that helps a little.

Palembang has a population of approximately forty thousand people, of which there are about fifty Americans, a few more Dutchmen, some Japanese and Chi-

nese, and the rest are natives of Sumatra. Soengei Gerong is across the Moesi river from Palembang and is where the company refinery and office buildings are. We are working for the Standard of New Jersey here and N.K.P.M. is the local oil company, just as B.P.M. is the same as the Shell Oil company here. Soengei Gerong is the largest harbor in the Indies, and freighters are constantly coming and going there for oil and other products.

Well, I believe that I have touched upon most everything, although I suppose it would take hours of talking to present a clear picture of it all. Dr. Monnett if there is anything in particular that I could send you from this part of the world I would be very glad to do so. During my stay here I will possibly visit other places such as Shanghai, Manila, and possibly French Indo China, on my vacations so there might be some article of interest that I could get for you. I get a vacation next month and I am going to the Island of Bali and also stop a while in Java (Batavia and Soerabaya). I am really ready for it too, as six or eight months at a time is about all one's mind and body can stand of this jungle life.

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Campus Review

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pep order, over a field of eleven other candidates.

. . . The Student Good Government League, a new campus organization, has presented a petition bearing the names of 450 students to President Bizzell asking that more students be placed on University committees dealing directly with the student body. The petition also requests restoration of the student activities trust fund board of trustees.

. . . Ted Shawn and his dancers will appear on the campus in a Celebrity Series program on December 6 . . . A. J. Strauss, managing editor of the *Enid News and Eagle* was elected chairman of the Associated Press in Oklahoma at the press association's annual fall meeting held in Norman recently . . . A \$40,000 WPA grant to continue a project directed by Dr. Henry D. Rinsland, professor of school measurements at the University, has been made. The grant will provide for thirteen months' research into meanings of words used by school children of the United States. The work will be carried on in Oklahoma City.

. . . Robert Carter, El Reno, has been elected president of the Physics Club . . . Philip Wade, Tulsa, has been named head of the Las Dos Americas, Spanish Club . . . Tom Boyd, Norman, has been selected by Tau Beta Pi, national honorary engineering fraternity, as the outstanding junior student in the College of engineering . . . Joel Ketonen, Brooklyn, New York, is the new headmaster of Delta Sigma Pi, national commercial fraternity . . .

Dick Musser, Enid, has been named president of the Sophomore Class. Other new soph officers are Douglas Stewart, Norman, vice president; Marcelle Peters, Mountain View, secretary, and Jean Daniels, Tulsa, treasurer.

. . . John Tippit, Sallisaw, is president of the senior law class . . . A. M. Brixey, Jr., '39, is president of the freshman class of the University School of Medicine . . . Although the position in the School of Pharmacy left vacant this fall by resignation of Dr. Ralph Beegle, associate professor of commercial pharmacy, was not filled, the school has continued all the regular courses in commercial pharmacy and two additional courses were inserted. Other members of the faculty teach the courses.

. . . An editorial insinuation of the *Tulsa Tribune* that the student loan funds at the University were politically manipulated brought a quick retort from O.U. officials. The *Tribune* editorial asked "How did it happen that the student loan funds at the University of Oklahoma which were supposed to go to deserving penniless youngsters, have been handed out almost exclusively to the youthful supporters of Senator Josh Lee?" Dean S. W. Reaves, a member of the student loan committee, promptly declared that there was no truth whatever in the charge.

. . . Mrs. Flora D. Nifong, housemother at the Kappa Sigma fraternity house for fourteen years, has resigned because of ill health. She has returned to St. Louis, Missouri, her former home . . . Twenty-seven pieces of sculpture by faculty members and students of the University School of Art were exhibited in the Museum of Fine Arts at Dallas, Texas, in November . . . The Presbyterian Foundation of Oklahoma has started a campaign for \$250,000 to build a new church and student center in Norman, and erect additional church facilities in Stillwater . . . The European war has seriously reduced the production of new books, particularly in Germany and France, and therefore threatens a shortage of literary material for *Books Abroad*, the international book review quarterly published at the University. Dr. Roy Temple House, editor, said that he had enough material on hand for the fall and winter issues, but that continuation of the war might cause serious difficulty in subsequent issues.

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Rhodes scholar returns

His studies as a Rhodes scholar cut short by war, dapper Jack Luttrell, '38, who left the Norman campus to enter Oxford University, has returned to enrol in the University School of Law.

Said Luttrell to reporters on his arrival in Norman: "I'm glad to be back in a country where a 24-hour course in bomb-dodging isn't part of the curriculum."

He addressed students of the School of Journalism in the first of this year's journalism lectures.

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