

## TECH GEOLOGIST REACHES SUMATRA

Tech geologists continue to spread to the four corners of the Earth, and **Richard Hopper, Ph.D., '39**, in a recent letter cleverly details a typical experience.

Hopper, who sailed for Medan, Sumatra, N.E.I., after Commencement, has perhaps been more fortunate than some, in that he had an opportunity to inspect the conditions in both Japan and China brought about by the 'China incident.' He found the buildings in Tokio, Kobe, Osaka, and other Japanese cities plastered with anti-British slogans, and the British Crown Colony of Honkkong teeming with Chinese refugees.

According to Hopper, over 300,000 undernourished and filthy refugees are in Hongkong. At night these wretched people sleep on sidewalks and in gutters, and each night takes heavy toll in victims of starvation and cholera.

In Medan, located on the northeastern coast of Sumatra, conditions are in startling contrast. Under the benevolent rule of the Dutch, the natives are clean, happy, and prosperous. Buildings are modern, parks are numerous, and the climate delightful. In fact, says Hopper, Medan is about the size of Pasadena, and perhaps just as modern. Bicycles and bullock carts are the favorite modes of transportation, with a few three-wheeled Dutch and German cars. Dick believes that the American suspender manufacturers should prosper in Medan, since the native sarongs seem to stay in place with no visible means of support.

Professionally, Dick's first job is in the jungle two hundred miles South of Medan, and he feels that his first geological map will be characterized by a large black line, running from left to right, labeled **Equator**. The approved method for the geologist to traverse the bush, is to follow the numerous elephant trails and streams, after a preliminary aerial reconnaissance.

The Dutch frown upon guns, and since Sumatran ivory is the most valuable in the world, Dick feels that he may be able to strangle one of the small native elephants, and recover the ivory by way of a slight bonus.

### Jungle Immunity

In regard to jungle denizens, it appears that tigers are not hesitant about seizing natives, but the smell of the white man renders him relatively immune. Hopper feels that because of this, it may pay to wear the same shirt for the entire duration of any field trip . . . as anti-tiger bait.

With the exception of the king-cobra, the most poisonous reptile known, the other animals are quite tolerant of white geologists. Dick writes, ". . . the orang utans are of the type that will give you a pat on the back, and an encouraging smile, while you examine an outcrop. Elephants probe into your pockets for peanuts while you are taking dip-and-strike. Leopards rub against your legs and purr. Rhinoceroses maintain a hands-off policy, and pythons scarcely look up from their work as you pass."

Communications with base camps or main office is maintained by short wave radio, but Dick feels that by the time this story is in press, his feeble crys may not carry over his field radio, except as a low "belch from deep within some tiger who has managed to eat his first white meat by holding his nose . . ."

## LETTERS

Carlton Hotel  
Amsterdam

June 29, 1939

Dear Editor:

My Cal Tech class ring is noticed quite frequently here in Europe, and I am always glad to tell people where I received it. Most aviation people know Cal Tech well by name, if they haven't been there personally.

The weather here cannot compare with that in California . . . However, there are occasionally days without clouds and rain, and I am able to get sunburned while sailing on one of the many lakes or canals in Holland.

Preparations for war are in evidence everywhere, but the people in general are going about business and pleasure much the same as before. Around most airports you will find gun emplacements, if not the actual guns, while in London, the parks are being dug up for the installation of bombproof shelters. Many of the downtown buildings in all cities here are converting their basements into bombproof shelters. With it all, the flowers are as lovely, and the canals and buildings are as picturesque as ever, and I am having an enjoyable time. My duties as Technical Advisor to the Factory Representative of the Lockheed Aircraft Corp. keep me very busy.

With best personal regards,

Charles F. Thomas, '35.

% The Caribbean Petroleum Co.  
Maracaibo, Venezuela  
July 10, 1939.

Hello Everybody!

I was glad to receive your letter about commencement activities, even if I could not take advantage of them, and containing a bill for dues as it did. If you can give me credit on the latter for a short time, I shall be glad to join. My desire for credit comes not from lack of money, but from lack of facilities for exchange in the particular part of the jungle in which I am stationed.

In the meantime, I would appreciate very much your sending me whatever publications you may have with news of my old friends and school. I am somewhat out of touch with the association as this was the first letter forwarded to me in my two years of isolation.

Sincerely,  
R. A. McRae, '35.

Union Oil Co. of Calif.  
Singapore, S. S.  
August 4th, 1939.

Dear Association:

Thank you for your letter which, I regret to say, arrived too late to enable me to make the necessary arrangements to attend the Commencement Day Banquet this year. I would have received it during July instead of August, had I not been travelling in the wilds of Siam at the time. However, I am pulling things together here and hope to be able to make the banquet next year,

which I note is a "Re-Union Year" for the class of 1930.

Work out here is interesting, since it takes me to India, Burma, Ceylon, Sumatra, Java, Bali, the Celebes, Siam (just renamed "Thailand"), French Indo-China, North Borneo, the Philippines, and Hongkong as well as British Malaya (where I have my headquarters). It's no place for a person who cannot live reasonably happily in a continual bath of perspiration, however, and if you are prejudiced against insects and bugs in general, this is a good place to stay away from. The tigers, pythons, cobras, etc., are overrated as menaces, but the ubiquitous mosquito and cockroach make life a trifle burdensome at times.

If you have any other Tech men on your mailing lists anywhere in the oriental tropics, I would like to have their addresses and might look them up if the occasion presented.

Sincerely,  
Robert I. Stirton, '30.

Northwood,  
Middlesex,  
England.  
July 10, 1939.

Dear Editor:

From time to time I have received letters regarding the Cal Tech Alumni Association, and have felt rather guilty that I have not responded. I am afraid 8,000 miles separation has reinforced my natural laziness so that I have never made sufficient effort.

However, as I recently acquired three one dollar notes which cannot so easily be spent in this country I have managed to restrain my inclination to spend them and send them along herewith as a subscription to the Alumni Association. Very best wishes for its future prosperity and should any members visit England I shall be happy to meet them.

Sincerely,  
John Read, Ph.D., '34.

### 1939—Contd.

**Perry Brown** is working in the engineering department of the Pomona Pump Company at Pomona, Calif.

**Fred Hoff** and **Harry O. Davis** are employed by the Sterling Motors Company.

**V. K. Crawford** is now an applied chemist for the General Petroleum Corporation.

**James McKinlay** is working for the Douglas Aircraft Corporation.

**Howard Craft** and **Ray V. Gerhart** are employed by the Gilmore Oil Company.

**Kenneth Collins** was married to Miss Billie Crain of Altadena on September 16th in Pasadena, and the couple will make their home in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

## STUDENTS TO BE FLIERS

The Civil Aeronautics Authority announced on Sept. 10th that students at the California Institute of Technology would be eligible to participate in the government's civilian pilot training program, the Institute being one of the 166 educational institutions certified to help with the campaign to instruct 11,000 young men in flying during the coming school year.