

LETTERS FROM BORNEO:



LIFE IN THE JUNGLE 1965-1967

By Joanne Huskilson

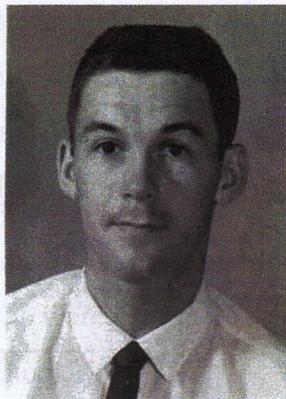


This book is dedicated to

Charlie,

in memory of

the many adventures we shared together
during these two special years.



Forward

One of the great experiences of my life (and Charlie's) was the two years we spent in Borneo. My High School geography teacher advised me to keep a diary of our experiences otherwise we would forget many of the details. The letters written home were intended to be my diary and everyone kept the weekly letters as I requested. They have been filed away for forty-five years and I have finally read them again.

Sarawak was a very different place in 1965. The changes since then have been remarkable, but the changes that occurred in the two years that we were in the Saratok area were also remarkable. The building of a road was the instrument for many of these changes. Instead of walking for hours to get to the school, students could catch a bus. People now had access to more goods and services, not the least of which was easier access to the nearest hospital. The other major change occurred because of access to a good education. This took place over many years, but we would like to think that the work of volunteers from the British Empire made a difference.

We realized very soon that we would gain much more than we would ever give. Malaysia was a multicultural society and that was true at Saratok Secondary School. The population at the school included Ibans, Malays and Chinese. It was not easy for these three different ethnic groups to co-exist at a boarding school, especially when many of the teachers were foreigners with limited understanding of their cultures. They were very gracious to the teachers who struggled to both teach and understand.

This book, using the information from the letters from 1965-1967, highlights many of our impressions and experiences. I will always be grateful that God gave us an opportunity to live in another part of the world and meet so many wonderful people.

Charlie and I returned to Saratok in 1990 and had a wonderful reunion with many of our former students. We were happy that they remembered us, and that they were grateful for the two years we spent there teaching them.

Why CUSO?

Many people asked us why we decided to apply to CUSO for an overseas assignment? We both had good jobs; Charlie at Du Pont, myself teaching at Sydenham High School with the Frontenac Board of Education. We knew it was not easy to leave a good job and then return to a "job search." We did know about CUSO from Tom Kear, a friend from Lanark who had already served in Sarawak teaching in a Chinese school.

We were very busy in 1964. There were various church activities including being youth sponsors on Friday evening, and teaching Sunday School on Sunday morning. We were also involved with the Christian Youth Centre (Barrie and Johnston Street) on Saturday and during the week lead the ISCF (Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship) group at Sydenham. We did not have a lot of spare time, especially Charlie who traveled a lot for Du Pont. We felt we were on a "treadmill."

We were both interested in travel and we felt we had skills that might be of benefit to a developing country. Charlie thought that his work in the textile business would be useful in India, a country that accepted CUSO volunteers. We found ourselves applying to CUSO, partly for an adventure, partly to get off the "treadmill," and partly with the hope that we could make a difference. Our country of choice was India.

In March 1965, we were informed that the National Selection Committee unanimously agreed that we should be recommended for an assignment overseas. Since there were no positions available in the textile industry in India, our applications were submitted to the Federal Secretary in Kuching and we were guaranteed that both of us would have a teaching position in a secondary school.

Thus began our journey to Saratok Secondary School, Sarawak, Malaysia.

Canadian University Services Overseas (CUSO)

A Brief History

Since 1961, CUSO has sent 11,000 Canadians abroad to work on poverty reduction, human rights, HIV/AIDS, equity, cultural preservation and environmental sustainability. We were CUSO volunteers in Sarawak, Malaysia, from 1965-1967.

On June 6, 1961, the Canadian University Service Overseas (CUSO) was initiated by Canadian Universities and several national organizations as an agency to develop schemes to send university graduates to serve in developing countries. At that time, CUSO was the only national, non-denominational organization in Canada to recruit qualified graduates (and not just university-trained personnel), for two years to "serve and learn" as a volunteer in developing countries. CUSO responded to specific requests from governments and agencies overseas. Volunteers were to work under conditions of service roughly equivalent to those of their local counterparts, and were expected to become an integral part of their adopted community. All agreed that the volunteer would gain more than he/she would give during the two years overseas. The local country would benefit from the contributions, the volunteer would gain immense benefits and Canada would benefit by having Canadians in various professions who had first-hand experience overseas.

In August 1961, the first volunteers left for a one-year posting in India, Ceylon, and Sarawak. Tom Kear from Lanark was one of the first volunteers working in Sarawak from 1962 to 1964.

In 1964, the Government of Canada became involved with CUSO by providing transportation. In 1965, the Federal Government became more involved by giving financial help to CUSO. It was felt that by having a working partnership with CUSO, the government would preserve the vitality and volunteer character of CUSO but at the same time lend the stability and resources of the government. Support continues today through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

In November 2008, CUSO merged with VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas) Canada, thus founding CUSO-VSO making this Canada's largest International Cooperation agency that works through volunteers.

"Changing the world, one volunteer at a time"



**CANADIAN UNIVERSITY SERVICE OVERSEAS
SERVICE UNIVERSITAIRE CANADIEN OUTRE-MER
75 ALBERT, OTTAWA 4, ONTARIO, CANADA**

Preparation

March 2, 1965

We received a letter from Bill McWhinney, Executive Secretary of CUSO, informing us that we had been accepted for service overseas. I am pleased to report that the committee unanimously agreed that you should be recommended for an assignment. I intend to submit your applications to the Federal Secretary in Kuching and can guarantee you that a teaching assignment at a secondary school in Sarawak will be available for both of you.

Our first order of business was to have a full medical examination. There were also many inoculations required for all volunteers. These inoculations began in June of that year, and continued well into our time overseas. Unless you could show that you had already had an inoculation, you were faced with needles for Tuberculosis, Cholera, Diphtheria, Smallpox, TAB, Typhus, Yellow Fever. While in Sarawak, we also had our Thursday Malaria pill.

June 23, 1965

Mr. McWhinney received a letter from Ian McCall, Technical Services Manager at Du Pont: "While we are extremely sorry to lose the services of Mr. Huskison at this time, it is our hope that he will rejoin Du Pont of Canada on the completion of his assignment in Sarawak. At that time, his previous service will be recognized." On the other hand, I had to resign from the Frontenac Board of Education and hope for the best when I returned.

There were many other things to look after. We decided to sublet our apartment on Helen Street. Although this worked out, it was not without some headaches while we were away. Many items were stored in the "hen house" at Lammermoor where my parents lived. We had to look after banking and insurance policies, and thankfully, CUSO had a good Group Insurance Plan. There was an extensive list of "recommended reading,"

including information on such topics as teaching, Malaysia, Health, and Hygiene Hazards. I cannot remember if we read much of this.

July 6, 1965

A letter from Bill McWhinney indicated that we had been assigned to teach at Saratok Secondary School. There is a slight possibility that the Department of Education will have to change your assignment prior to September as a result of the fluid supply and demand situation. You may not find yourselves terribly busy because the academic year in Sarawak commences in January. This was true for me but not for Charlie!



CUSO Group at U.B.C.

August, 1965

Orientation

June 3, 1965

From Bill McWhinney

Teachers are asked to report to York University in Toronto on August 15 (lasting until August 26). In most cases, a detailed language course will be provided as well as a course in community development. Accommodation has been arranged for all volunteers at the Wood residence, York University. CUSO will cover the expenses for all accommodations and meals.

The program content at York included teaching methodology, practice teaching (not very effective), language training, and sessions on community development.

June 11, 1965

CUSO informed us that the commencement of the Asia Studies Programme at UBC on Sunday, August 29, would necessitate flying immediately from Toronto to Vancouver on August 29. Since we were limited to forty-four pounds of luggage on this flight, we had to arrange to ship our trunk and other excess baggage by rail to the International House at UBC. We had previously been informed that our luggage limit would be from 100 to 150 pounds.

Late August

We have had our flight to Sarawak changed. We leave Vancouver September 10 and fly with the West African Group. We go back to Montreal, then to France, Ivory Coast, stop in Nigeria and Kenya, New Delhi and then to Singapore. It will take eight days and sounds very exciting. We were warned about Customs in Third World countries. If they want they can check everything and make you pay duty especially on Asian products. We

are going to declare all electronics at **Canadian Customs** here and get Customs to sign our list.

Did you hear that Singapore has succeeded from Malaysia?

Note: This event was a major concern for us as we prepared to go to Malaysia, but time would show that Singapore made the right decision. Today Singapore is a modern First World country, much more advanced than its neighbour, Malaysia.

Letters from UBC late August and early September.

Our trunk arrived and we are in the process of repacking and removing fifty pounds.

CUSO volunteers are being interviewed by the CBC and will be featured on the programme "This Hour Has Seven Days" in about two weeks. We were interviewed by Jack Webster, a well-known CBC reporter. During the interview, he suggested to Charlie that he probably was looking forward to spending time with the beautiful girls in South-East Asia. That was before he realized that I was Charlie's wife.

September from UBC

Our trip has been changed again. The whole India group has been cancelled because of the problem in Kashmir. We obviously do not go to India, but will stop in the Maldivé Islands in the Indian Ocean before going to Singapore.

We are making the final preparations. We got our yellow fever shot and have started taking malaria pills. We have obtained quite a few free books from the Overseas Book Store. We are packed and are ready for our ten- hour flight to Montreal where we will stay at McGill before an evening flight to France.

Canada To Saratok

September 12, 1965

We arrived in Marville, France this morning and are now leaving for Africa.

September 16, 1965

The plane stopped in Ivory Coast. We did not have permission to land so we had to stay on the airplane for a couple of hours. It was very hot. We flew on to Accra, Ghana and stayed at the University of Ghana, which has a beautiful campus. We all got into a "mammy wagon" (a truck with open sides which holds up to twenty people) and went to the downtown. We went through the market area where you have to bargain when you buy anything. Great fun! At night, the university put on a display of African dancing and music. There were colourful lizards everywhere you stepped- another new experience. This was an amazing day for me, a farmer's daughter from Lanark County.

We flew on to a stop in Nigeria before flying on to Nairobi, Kenya. The day was clear and we had a wonderful view of the Congo River area. The hotel we stayed at in Nairobi is very "British." We got up at 5:30 in the morning and went to the National Wildlife Park for an African safari to see the animals- another great experience. For the rest of the time, we shopped and feel great because we did all our Christmas shopping. Charlie decided to check out the good shopping areas the night before. He mentioned that no one was out on the street. Then we found out that there was a curfew on and it wasn't safe to be out alone

It took fifteen hours to fly from Nairobi to Singapore, with a stop for fuel in the Maldive Islands. We had a gorgeous room at the Cathay Hotel in Singapore. It is very hot and humid and I wondered how we would manage for two years. We discovered the Ten-Men



A "Mammy Wagon" in Accra, Ghana



Waterfront Scene, Singapore, 1965

Art Exhibition in a gallery (featuring a Tour of Sarawak) that was air-conditioned and found ourselves visiting it several times just to get cooled off! We visited the Canadian High Commission and last night had a wonderful Chinese meal. We had our first taste of sate, at a local food stall. Chicken, pork and beef on wooden skewers are barbequed and served with a peanut sauce. It was very good.

The best thing about Singapore is the shopping. We bought a big six-band radio at Lien Wah's store. Prices are very good in Singapore. We enjoyed wandering around the shopping area, especially the famous "Change Alley." (In 2010, we noticed a sign for "Change Alley" but all that is left of the old shopping street is the sign).

We find Singapore fairly dirty and smelly; at least the parts we saw coming from the airport. (The Singapore of the 21st century is much different)

On September 18, we flew from Singapore to Kuching where we spent nearly a week at the Government Rest House.

September 23, 1965

We are on a boat on the Rajang River going to Sarikei where a Land Rover will take us to Saratok. On arrival in Kuching we were given \$500 Malay to buy things for the house including a mattress and dishes. One of the people who greeted us at the airport had taught in Shelburne and knew Graham (Charlie's brother). What a small world! There are lots of Canadians in Kuching, some working for Colombo Plan. They have servants, cars, and lots of money compared to most of the locals. One of the more interesting things we did was visit a school twenty-four miles from Kuching. It was like an "armed camp" with soldiers and police everywhere. The Chinese work in the fields during the day and then are locked up behind barbed wire after 7p.m. It looked like a real concentration camp. Apparently the camps are both for the protection of the Chinese and to prevent any communist uprising.

We were impressed with the hospitality of the people both in Kuching and in Singapore, there was always someone to show you around, buy you a drink, or invite you to party.



CUSO Group, Kuching, Sarawak, September 1965

Front Row: Joan Barrett, Fran MacIninch, Barb Reid, Dianne Hill, Kathy Duffy, Me

Middle Row: Government official, Brian MacIninch, Peter Thompson, Charlie Huskilson, Mr. McIntosh (Canadian official)

Back Row: Stuart Gardiner, Dennis Taylor, Kirby Campbell, Cameron Young, Bill Harris, John Lazier

Missing: Heather Brown

First Impressions

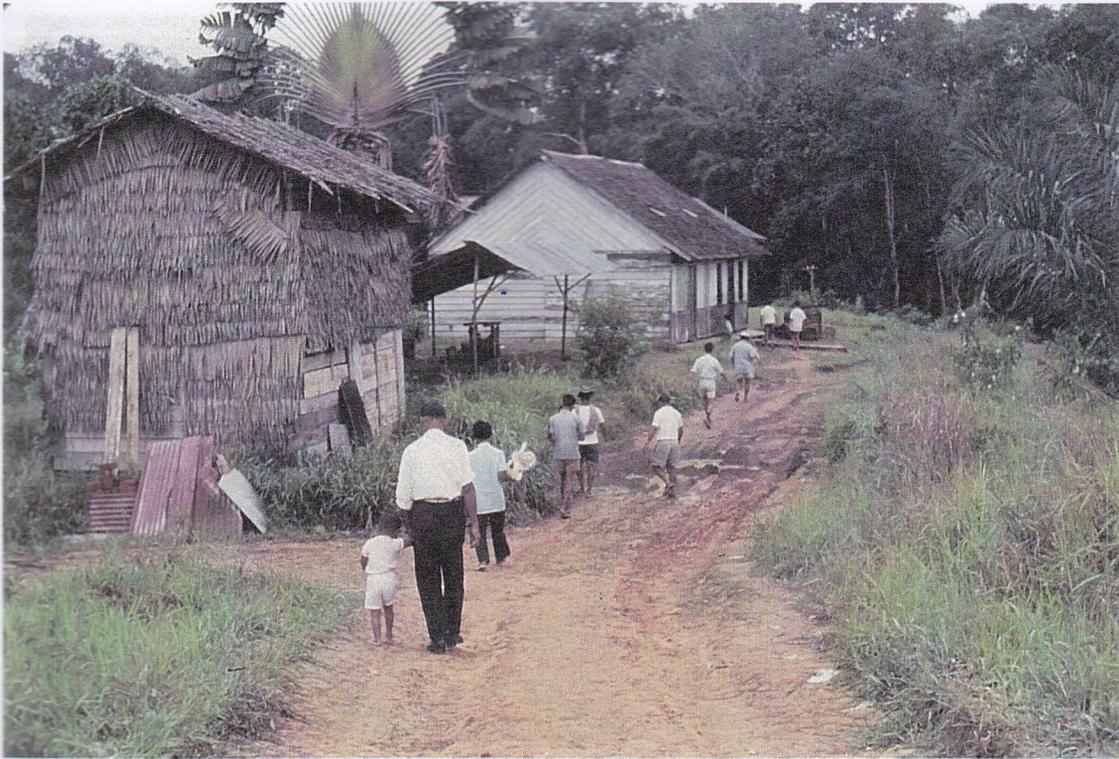
September 25, 1965

We took an overnight boat from Kuching to Sarikei, then a land rover over a very hilly area to the school. The new road isn't finished so we arrived at the school traveling over a road worse than any in Dad's bush. Saratok is four miles from the school and we are pretty isolated.

We have finally arrived and are now seeing what we imagined the jungle to be like. You can stop worrying about us "roughing it" here. We have our first home, newly built, with two bedrooms, a living room, dining room, kitchen and a split bathroom with an Asian toilet. The kitchen has a two burner kerosene stove, no oven, no frig (however, we may get both from a Peace Corps volunteer). The legs of the food storage cupboard are in little dishes with water. This prevents the ants from getting into the food. Because the bedrooms are screened, we do not have to use a mosquito net. Just take malaria pills once a week.

Have you ever seen an ant an inch long? You would have a fit if you could see all the lizards on the walls and the ceiling. They are harmless and they eat lots of bugs. Charlie caught a baby scorpion, the beginning of his collection no doubt.

Because the water at the school is chlorinated, we do not have to boil water. However, there is no hot water and we have found that it is refreshing to have a cold shower. The school power goes off at 10:00 p.m. We plan to eat two meals a day with the students, which costs \$7.00 Malay a week.



The Road By The School



Our House

Saratok Secondary School

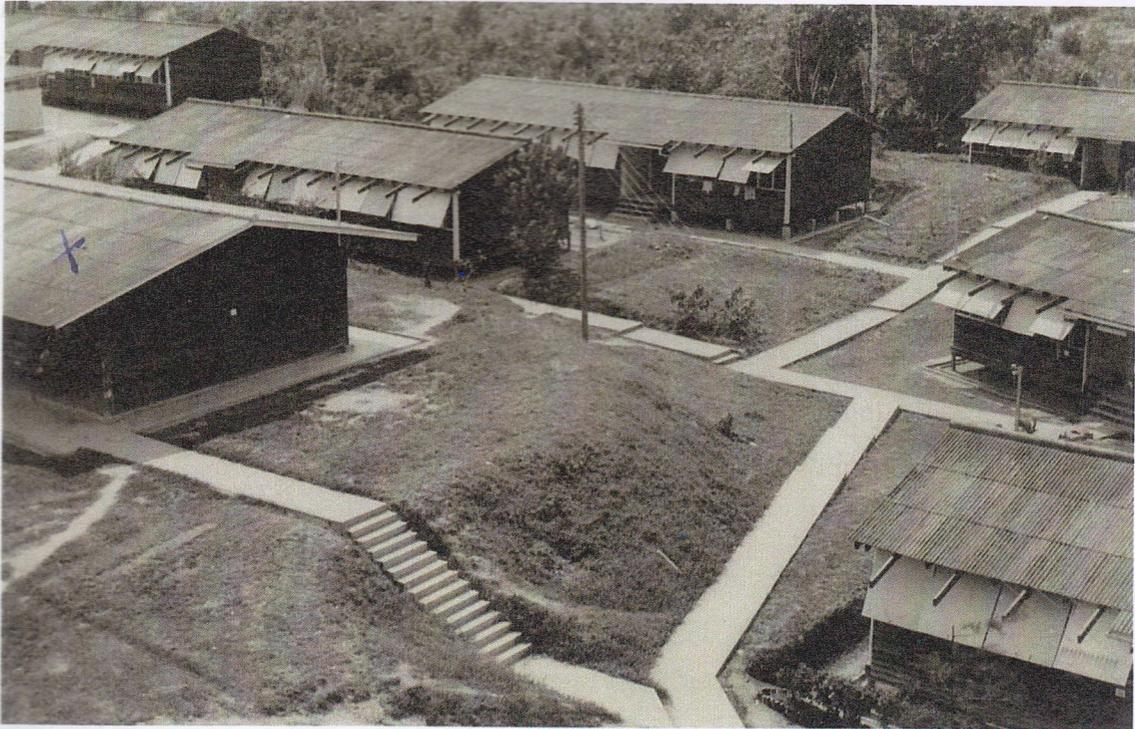
October 1, 1965

We have survived our first week of teaching. It is really no different from teaching in Canada, except there are no discipline problems and all the students have their homework done. Charlie is teaching General Science and Husbandry and I am teaching Geography and Commonwealth History. Most classes have no textbooks. Charlie spent all last night putting diagrams of grasshoppers on stencils. In the real world here, bugs and insects are wild! Except for the bedrooms, the rooms are open to the outside and everything flies in. We can close the windows but the big bugs about three inches long just fly "smash" into the walls. Our night sounds are dogs that bark, roosters, and the usual jungle sounds.

Our daily routine:

We get up at 6:30 and classes start at 7:45. If you happen to be the teacher on duty, you have to supervise "morning run" at 6:30. That means all of the students have a ½ hour run and then usually end up in the river for a cool down. Classes go to 11:30 and then go from 1:30 to 3:30. At this time there is a work party for all students. Right now five boys are cutting brush around our house. Then they will clean the drains and dig a garbage hole. Anything to keep them busy! At 6:30, all students go back to their classrooms and do homework, some as late as 9:30. Students take about four showers a day, so the power has to be shut off in the afternoon so the engine can rest from pumping so much water. There is no problem with dirty hands or necks here. Each teacher is to organize a "club." I have started a Glee Club but it is hard with no piano. Charlie has a Mechanics Club. He showed the students how to start the jeep yesterday and now plans to get some engines to tear apart and maybe even put back together.

Today a helicopter flew over the school. All the students ran from their seats to get a look. The Ibans call helicopters "flying longhouses."



Saratok Secondary School

(the building marked with an x is a classroom, the others are dormitories)



A Typical Classroom

(notice the open walls)

There is a lot to tell but I do need to mention the rain. You have never seen it rain until you experience a tropical storm. It rains so hard that the students cannot hear me teach at the front of the classroom and some of them get soaked "in" the classroom. The rainy season is called "the Landas Season."

October 8, 1965

Charlie is on duty today and this involves supervising Study Hall until 10 p.m. Since the engine running the power system is broken, the students have to use candles to do their homework. Our one lamp is being used in the staff room.

I have been washing our clothes by hand. I haven't quite figured out how I will wash the sheets in a pail. Most of the people here keep their clothes white by rubbing them on rocks or on the cement floor. The biggest problem is getting the clothes dry. The rain comes up so quickly that very often the clothes get a second washing on the line.

Today Charlie nearly stepped on a big snake in his science lab. It was gone when he went back to kill it. We saw several cobras around the school including one under my clothesline. When I see a snake or a Monitor Lizard near the house, I go one way and the intruder goes the other way. I am not sure which one of us is faster.

We eat two meals a day with the students (this changed later when we decided to eat all our meals at home) and the meals are not that bad. The students each eat an unbelievable amount of rice and they keep asking us why we eat so little. Each meal has meat or fish and a vegetable dish to put on top of the rice. The worst meal is salt fish, served on Sundays. So we have decided to eat at home on that day. We get bread three times a week from the bazaar (the name for town) and it is very good. You can buy almost anything you need - for a price. Much of the canned food is from China with Australian goods being next in importance. We can buy butter, bacon, dry cereal from Denmark, and I now use powdered milk. Charlie is hungry all the time so we buy big containers of cookies (or as the British call them-biscuits).



An Unwanted Guest



A View of the School Dining Room.
(boys and girls eat at separate tables)

October 17, 1965

We are discovering that we will have to do more than just "teach." CUSO provided us with a good medical kit (20-30 different pills, bandages, ointments). I had to patch up one fellow's foot that had a deep cut as a result of a football game. It takes a long time to heal here because of the humidity so you have to be really careful. My legs are covered with mosquito bites and I look like I have chicken pox.

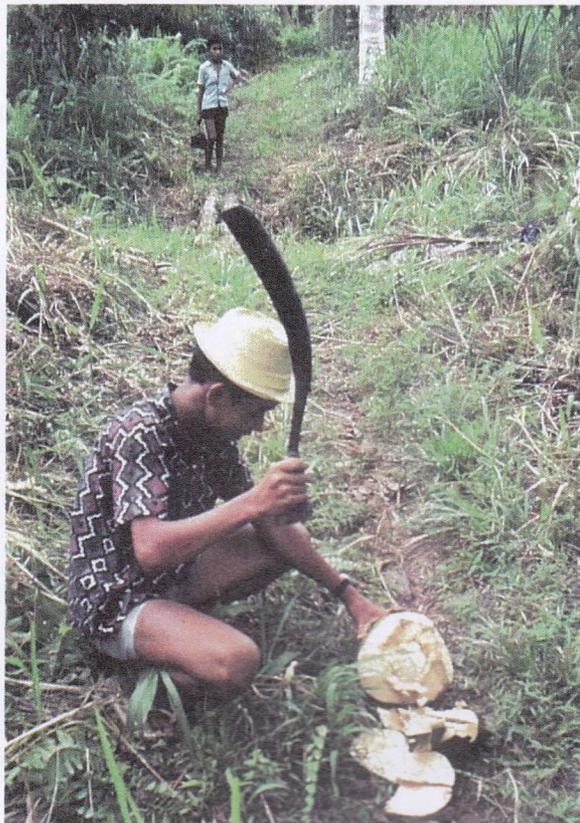
We have just bought an Iban blanket and will use it to decorate one wall. Charlie was interested in the dying and weaving designs on the blanket. Every week, the Ibans come to the school with things to sell and it is hard to turn them down because they really need the money.

Charlie has just looked at some of our clothes and found that any clothes we haven't been wearing are covered with mould. Also, any leather items - belts, shoes, our Bible are also mouldy because of the high humidity. We will have to air all these items out every week or so. Our bed often feels damp because of the humidity and we find that we always have a sore throat.

We visited a local pepper farm yesterday and found it very interesting. Charlie has to teach about white and black pepper in his Science class and he didn't know the difference. So we thought it would be a good idea to visit a pepper farm. There were rows and rows of pepper, also tapioca, sugar cane, ginger, and many types of fruit. This farm belonged to a student's family. The visit was the beginning of a life-long friendship with this student, Lim Hua Mei.



Pepper Plants at Hua Mei's Farm



Opening a Fresh Coconut

October 31, 1965

Charlie keeps quite busy. He is now coaching basketball as well as playing volleyball. He spends a lot of time in the lab getting materials organized. Right now he is on a campaign to collect insects as specimens and he is always on the lookout for snakes and so far has three different snakes in jars. The last one was seven feet long. Students are always bringing him all sorts and shapes of bugs. I must tell you about one of the English classes. The teacher was having students give a speech about "a person." One fellow gave a speech on the "smartest man I know." "This man teaches Science but knows everything about Math and he knows all there is to know about engines and machines and he has a Mechanics Club." Joyce realized he was talking about Charlie. Apparently this is because Charlie has been helping many students with their Math homework.

The school system here is very different from Canada. Primary School goes from grades 1 to 6. Then an exam is written on all six -year's work and about 30% of these students are able to continue to Form 1. There is an automatic promotion to Form 3 and then there is another set of exams on all three-year's work. Again, about 30% of the students are selected to go ahead to Form 4. At the completion of Form 5 there are more exams with another 30% continuing. Very few students continue to Form 6 and this two- year programme is only offered in the major centers. A student cannot repeat a year.

These students work hard, they have to earn money for school fees and they live away from the support of their families and community. There is no guarantee that they will be able to continue their education even with all their hard work.

Charlie's new hobby is "stamp collecting." Almost every one here is an avid stamp collector. We think the students are very good looking. They are well dressed and the girls wear bright colours. We are having some difficulty remembering their names- no wonder, three different ethnic groups all with a different name style.



Charlie and Students in Front of Land Rover



The Volleyball/Basketball Court

A Multicultural Community

November 7, 1965

One of our Chinese students invited us to her home in Saratok. Her father is a stamp collector so Charlie was very interested in seeing the collection. It is such an effort to go to town over the road, especially when we travel in one of the town Land Rovers. You get shaken to pieces, splashed with mud and are a wreck before you ever get to town. And then there is still the trip back home. We head to the shower when we get home and every item of clothes has to be washed. Actually the new road has just reached Saratok but it does not come to the school. They ran out of money for the cut-off to the school so we will still have to use the old road to get to the town.

We are in the rainy season and that means we can be quite cold at times. It is mostly very nice and there is almost always a breeze. We don't worry so much when it is very hot because you know it will rain soon and everything will be cooled off.

Last week was "Berjaya Week," sort of a togetherness week. The aim is to get the Chinese, Ibans, and Malays to realize they have to get along if Malaysia is to succeed as a country. The Headmaster gave the students a speech in an assembly about getting along. There have been some parties at the school. The entertainment included the students' version of Western music, especially trying to copy the Beatles. It is interesting that here boys dance with boys and girls with girls.

Charlie had to go to Saratok three days this week to play basketball and volleyball. He doesn't like playing with the people from town because they are "out to win" at all costs- if the teachers win the best out of three games, the town people change the rules to the best out of five games and the rules in general keep changing.



The Bridge and Road Near the School After a Heavy Rain.
(We had just walked 5 miles from the bazaar to the school)



A Dyak Boy From Local Longhouse

November 19, 1965

We had a bit of excitement at the school last night. We could hear girls screaming about 2:30 in the morning so Charlie went to the dormitories to check. Apparently a man got into one of the dorms and was prepared to settle down for the night with one of the girls. There is a problem with different value systems at the school. The Chinese are very strict about male/female relations but the Iban males often "visit" their girlfriends in the dorms during the night.

There are many cultural differences. Iban women wear sarongs (like a long skirt) but no top. No one thinks anything about it. When people eat here they make a lot of noise but here it shows politeness. It is also polite to burp. When given something to drink you always leave some in the glass, otherwise you will show you are greedy. In the longhouses, everything goes on the floor, seeds, bones. etc. Babies don't wear diapers so you have to watch out!

Many students either have or will be sent home because they haven't paid their school fees. This is not a problem with the Chinese who have more money but about one hundred Ibans were sent home. One way for the Ibans to raise money is to tap rubber trees and sell the rubber until they get enough to pay their fees. We also had some students expelled because they were gambling.

I cut my own hair today and Charlie trimmed the back-not a bad job.

Politically speaking, there are strong feelings about Malaysia. The Chinese and especially the Ibans are very opposed to Malaysia. Malaysia is at war with Indonesia (called "Confrontation") but we feel the bigger problems down the road will be racial tension in this country.



Students Relaxing At Their Dormitories

November 25-December 10, 1965

It doesn't seem very much like Christmas here and even the Christian families do not celebrate as we do. They may have a meal but do not exchange gifts except for the very rich. Chinese New Year occurs right after Christmas this year and that is a big celebration. The Muslims also will be celebrating Hari Raya about the same time (that is the end of Ramadan).

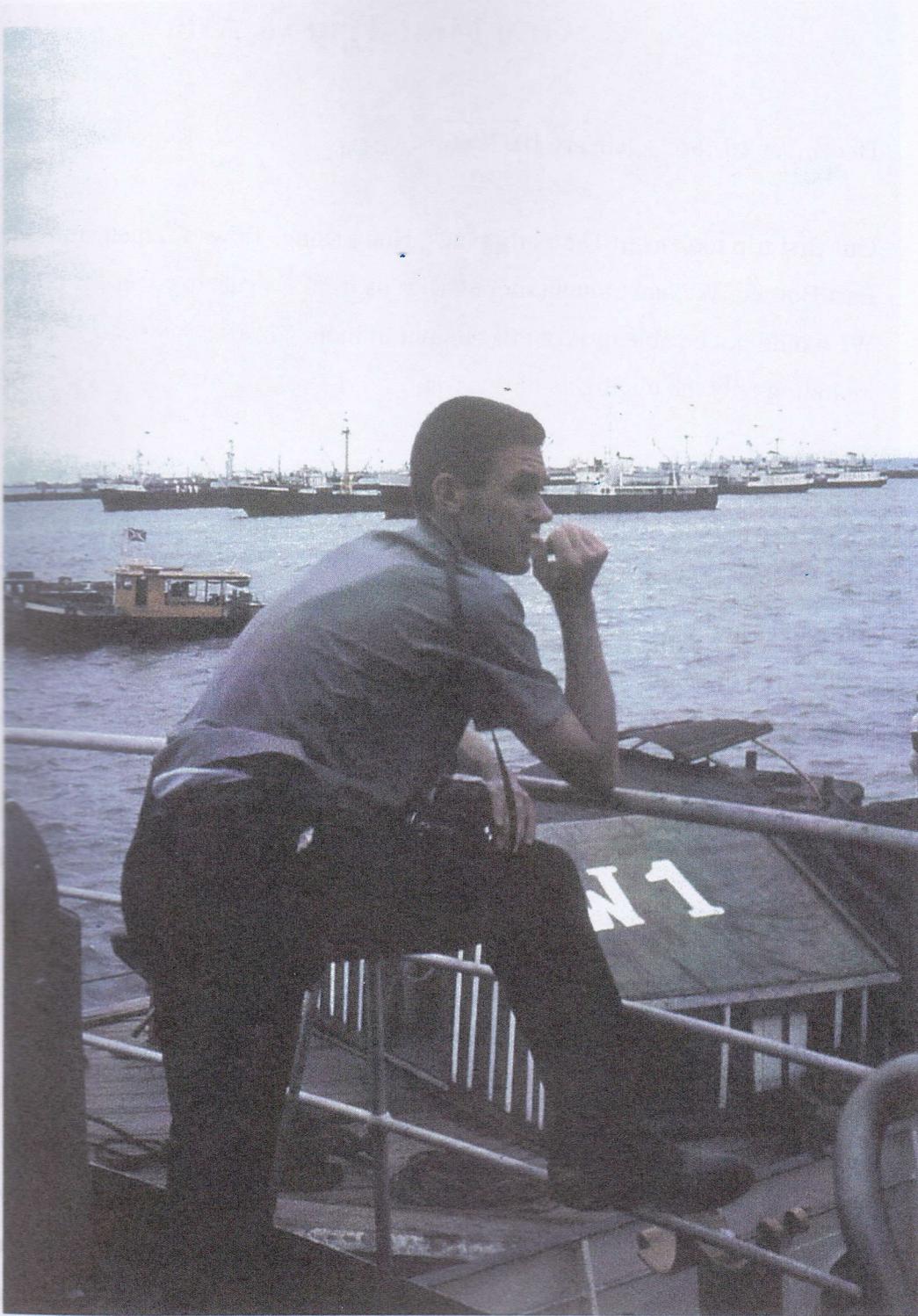
We have our Christmas decorations up. Charlie put white cotton batting on the bookcase for snow. We used Aunt Irene's sewing kit for a sleigh and sunglasses for runners. I have my plastic Santa and some carvings from Africa that look like reindeer and we used string for reins. Quite impressive!

We had a special feast (makan) to mark the end of the school year. There was chicken and mushrooms, a cucumber and pineapple salad, and very good white rice (usually bulgar wheat is added). The chicken wasn't bad. Usually it is a little bit of meat and mostly skin and bone. Also maybe the head and feet are included in the dish. Everything is cooked with ginger and spices so it always tastes a little different.

School is over until January 17. Charlie has been working quite hard to get his science classes caught up. He is the fifth teacher they have had this year and much of the work has been left out. He has been in the lab every night in case some students need help. There have been a lot of work parties to get the campus ready for the holidays. We have also been getting ready for our big trip- getting the arrangements made, getting travellers cheques, visas for several countries, etc.

We had a can of pork and beans for supper. I never thought I would say that was a great meal but it is definitely better than salt fish!

The road is now through to the school!!



Charlie on the Rejang River

Our First Trip In Asia

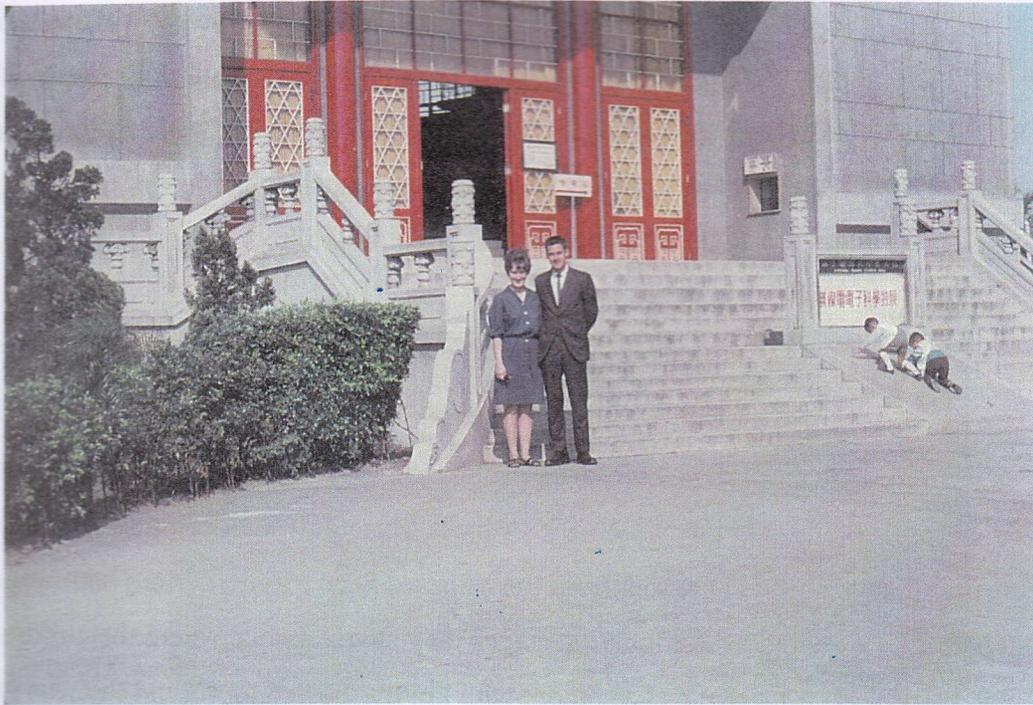
December 16, 1965 - January 10, 1966.

Our first trip took us to The Philippines, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, and Sabah in North East Borneo. We had brought money with us from Canada to cover the cost of this trip. We would not be able to save this amount of money from our regular salary here. I am including only the highlights of this trip.

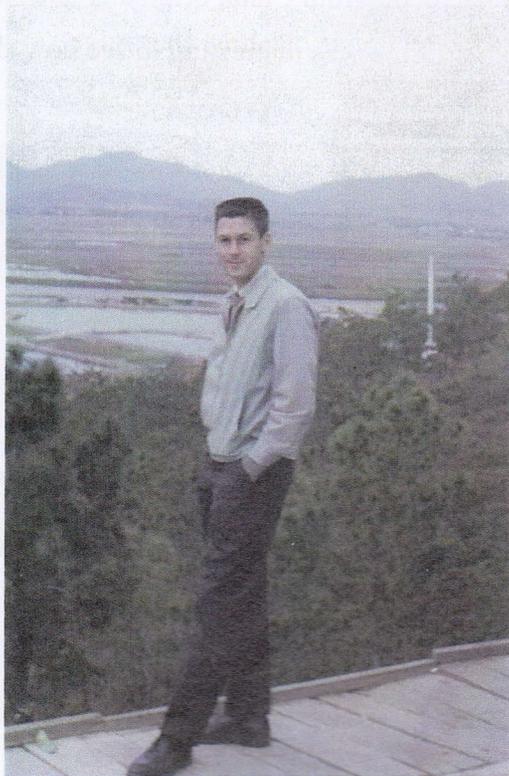
The Philippines: We found Manila very "Americanized", no doubt due to the presence of American military bases north of the city. However, once you get to the suburbs, things start to change. We found it strange to see all the Christmas decorations on the palm trees and we loved the many poinsettia trees. We found it expensive and we got really tired of people charging us more just because we are "white." We hired a taxi for a day to take us into the country (the cost was \$17 U.S.). We passed the Taal volcano that had erupted in September, killing 800 people. There are miles of fruit fields: pineapples, coconut, papaya, and many rice padis. We feel the Philippines is more advanced than Sarawak. Our hotel is on the famous Dewey Boulevard overlooking Manila Harbour. Much of this area was destroyed during the war so it has been rebuilt. Charlie went on a tour to Corrigedor where much of the Battle of Manila was fought.

Hong Kong

We arrived from sunny Manila to temperatures about 40 degrees F. Charlie had to buy a coat and my raincoat certainly is not keeping me warm. We like Hong Kong a lot- much better than Singapore. We haven't found many bargains here but we did buy some ivory. Most of the stores are new and there are small shopping plazas, unlike Singapore where there were only open shops. We took a tour of the New Territories which took us to the border of Communist China past miles of vegetable farms. Our hotel is in Kowloon. Yesterday we visited Hong Kong Island and went to Aberdeen where people live in fishing junks. There was a lot of poverty, filth, and the smells!



The Nationalist Chinese Museum in Taipei, Taiwan



Charlie at the border with Communist China

Everywhere we go there seem to be thousands of people moving in all directions. There are many resettlement areas for refugees from China. We went to Kowloon Baptist Church and enjoyed a Christmas service. We are both becoming very able with chopsticks and we have had some very good meals.

Taiwan

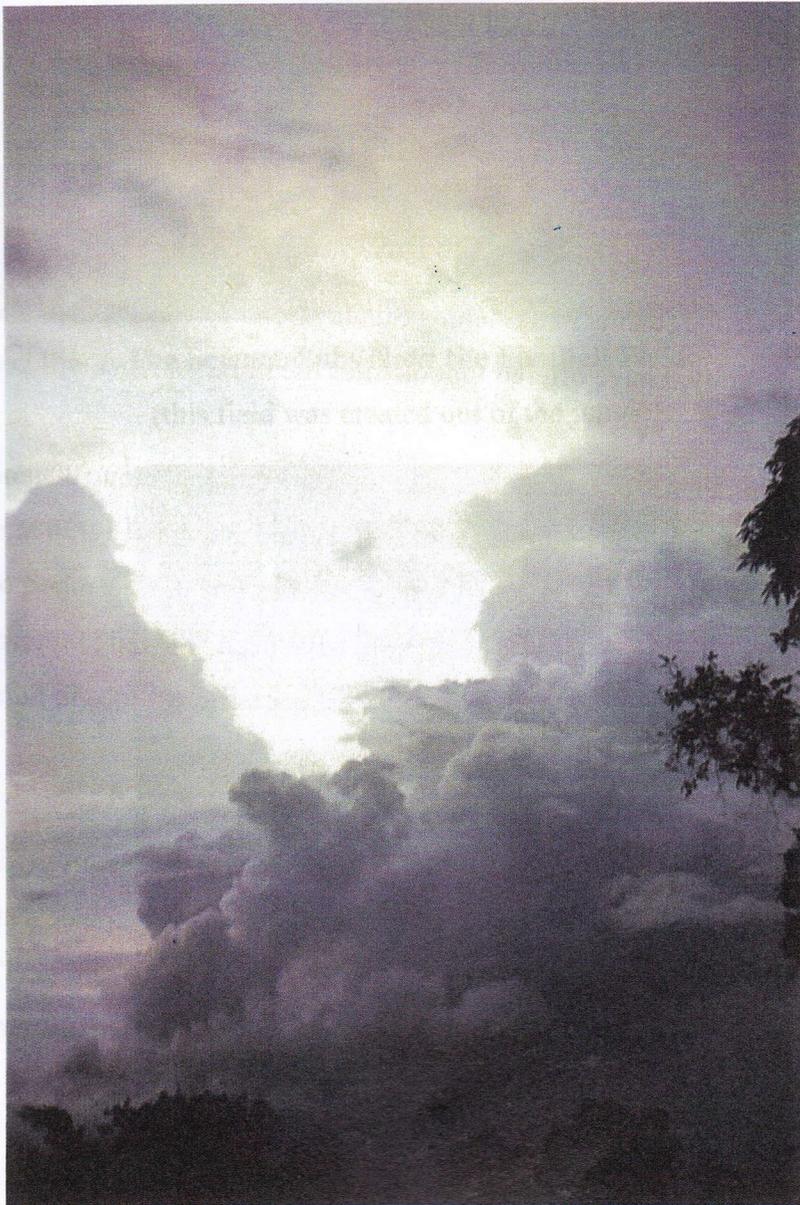
I nearly had my camera taken from me when we flew into Taipei. Because of the conflict between China and Taiwan, there are restrictions about taking pictures of such places as a military base that can be seen from the air. We took a tour out of Taipei to the countryside, visited the Nationalist Chinese Museum which had just opened, and visited a missionary, Lillian Dickson, from the Mustard Seed Mission. Mom had supported her for years. We visited two of the orphanages they have founded where the children sang Christmas Carols. We met a student who kindly showed us around (he was practicing his English) and then took us to his home for lunch (imagine doing that today!). His grandmother had come from China originally and she had her feet bound in China when she was a young girl. It was interesting to see how she walked.

Japan

We really liked Japan. The place was so clean and tidy, which was not true of the other places we visited. Tokyo has 11 million people and was very busy. We visited Tokyo Tower, a Buddhist temple, a Shinto shrine, the Imperial Palace grounds, a typical Japanese home and garden, a pearl farm, and the stadium where the 1964 Olympics were held. We saw "The Sound of Music" on New Year's Eve. We also spent time in Osaka, and enjoyed Kyoto, the old capital city, on Christmas Day when it actually snowed. We were able to take a ten-hour train ride to Hiroshima through 200 miles of Japanese countryside. We were only in Hiroshima for two hours but the trip was worth it! We left Japan on New Year's Day and to celebrate the captain took the plane right by Mount Fuji so we could all get a good picture. Japan is really the most prosperous place in Asia.

Sabah

We spent 2 ½ days here at the Peace Corps House before returning to Saratok. This part of North Borneo is very similar to Sarawak. The worst part of the trip was taking a two-hour boat trip on the Rejang River on an overloaded boat with a reckless driver and an engine that wasn't working properly. Even Charlie thought we would sink!



Thunder Clouds At The School

A New School Year

January 15, 1966

From this point on, all our letters will be typed on our new Brother Valient typewriter bought in Kuching. We need it at school because there are no secretaries to type any of work, including exams.

We are busy getting ready for school to start. There are a number of new teachers coming: American Peace Corps, British VSO's (Volunteer Service Overseas), and several local teachers. I will be teaching five different classes of Geography and Religious Knowledge (that is like teaching Sunday School) while Charlie is teaching Science and Geography. I have offered to look after the library so that will keep me busy.

The students are starting to trickle in, some coming a long distance by foot. One group of boys set out Friday morning at 8 o'clock and arrived at 11:30 at night. From nearly seventy Form 3s who wrote Departmental exams in December, only ten were actually selected for Form 4, but eleven more have been allowed to return. The rest are out and they will have to look for jobs and there are very few jobs in Sarawak. Most of these students will end up teaching at the Primary level.

Charlie and I are both in charge of a dormitory. That means getting to know these students well and eating with them once a day. Charlie made a staff letterbox and has been looking after the hens and geese belonging to the school. There are two geese under the house right now that he is nursing back to health. There are also pigs from the local longhouse wandering around and of course a dog and a cat.

I have an oven now and we had a cake pan made in the bazaar. The problem is that the oven is only eight inches long but the pan is twelve inches long so I will have to get another pan made. We are tired out from cleaning and polishing our floors but I have to say that our house looks very good.



The Science Labs Near the Football Field
(this field was created out of the jungle)



The Dining Room/Work Room
(Notice the very nice floors)

Ethnic Celebrations

January 24, 1966

We are now on the fifth day of our week-long holiday and it has been very interesting. Chinese New Year was on Friday and Hari Raya Day to mark the end of Ramadan was on Sunday. These two festivals do not occur so close together very often.

Chinese New Year

We walked to the Bazaar, starting out at seven in the morning and we arrived at the first place about 8 a.m. The idea is to visit as many places as you can and wish people a Happy New Year. At each home, you will find a table spread with all sorts of goodies and you are expected to eat and drink a lot. We had a hard job convincing them we don't drink alcohol because most whites, especially the British, are heavy drinkers here. Apparently last year, some of the staff felt pretty good and on the road home, the Land Rover ended up in the ditch and they had to walk home after dark and with no flashlight. This year we visited nine different places and when we returned to the school, many students were watching us very closely. We disappointed them! So for eight hours we visited nine places and at each place we had to eat and drink- I think we had about fifteen bottles of pop each. The food consisted of all sorts of cakes and cookies, nuts, candies, big plates of duck, chicken, pork, rice cakes, small salted fish. The Chinese are very hospitable. After all this, we had to walk back to the school and then we slept for about twelve hours.

The most memorable place we visited in Saratok was at Chai Seng's store which is where we all do our grocery shopping. They put on a twelve-course meal and the best food is always at the end. We were "stuffed."

Hari Raya Day

Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset during Ramadan. This ended on Saturday so Sunday was the day to celebrate. They also open their homes and you are expected to visit and

wish them a "Selamat Hari Raya" or a "Happy Hari Raya Day." We did go by Land Rover but figured that we would have been better walking. It had rained all night and the roads were in an unbelievable condition. We were nearly shaken to pieces. We only visited two places and unlike Chinese New Year, we weren't expected to eat as much or stay as long. The Muslims were dressed in special costumes and, on the whole, it was very interesting. Their food was different-rice cooked in bamboo or small leaves and dipped in various dishes of curry. There were also many cakes. We decided to walk back to the school- not a good idea in the middle of the day with the hot sun. We were dizzy and burned when we arrived home. The river at the school was really flooded because of the rain and when we walked across, the water came to our knees. The current was so strong that we were nearly knocked down.

All in all, this was a very different but exciting week.



Chai Seng's Store in Saratok

The Cultural Divide

February 1, 1966

We have discovered why no mail has been arriving. There were riots in Kuching over soldiers arriving from Malaya and so all boats were stopped. We heard about it on Radio Australia. Later in the week, we heard that these riots were serious and anti-Malaysia, thus the soldiers. We can see the lack of co-operation between the races here at the school. The Ibans are quick to say nasty things about the Malays while the Chinese generally keep quiet and they tend to stick to themselves. The town closest to us, Sarikei, is one of the suspected communist centers of Sarawak and one of the CUSO volunteers Denis teaches there. There were a number of people killed right outside his school one night. Since he doesn't speak Chinese, he didn't know anything about it until later. The Malays are by far in the minority and they also stick together.

One "sore point" at the school involves food. The Malays are Muslims and therefore do not eat pork and so there is no pork served at the school. But pork is one of the main food items of both the Chinese and the Ibans and they both resent the Malays because of this. It is interesting to note that Charlie is getting some pigs for his club and we wonder if this will cause more problems.

In a letter dated March 6, I referred to another political problem- "Confrontation" with Indonesia. This was the name of a border war between Malaysia and Indonesia. There are no Indonesians here that we know of but there has been a lot of trouble in the First Division with several Indonesians and locals being shot. An article in the paper, dated February 19 referred to a number of people who had been killed near Kuching. They were Sarawakian Chinese who have been training in Indonesia with some of the Communists. But we are in an Iban area so there won't be any problems

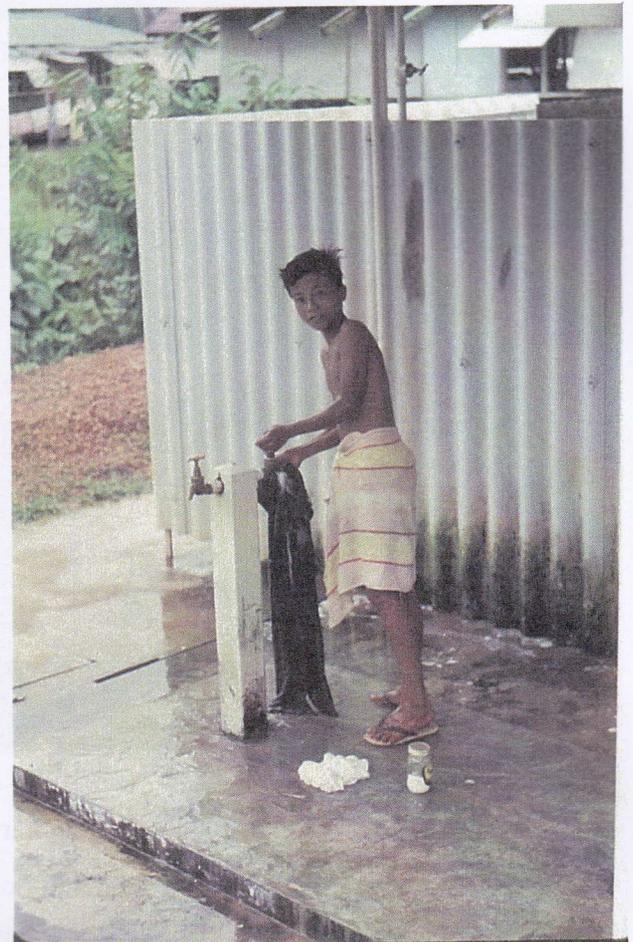
Note: Before we arrived in Sarawak, CUSO had made arrangements for us to be evacuated by the British should a problem with safety occur. These were interesting times!



Connie, a Chinese Girl



Mordiah in typical Malay dress



**An Iban boy
at the school laundromat**

Mundane Things

February 1 - February 15, 1966

It has been raining a lot. I don't mind if it rains all week, but it would be nice to get the washing done on the weekend! We had a big election at school and Charlie used all our sheets to make voting booths. Now I have to wash everything in my red pail and hope that the sheets will dry.

We are very busy at school. I have done a lot of work on Religious Knowledge. There are both Muslims and Buddhists in the classes. I wonder what they think?

We have had trouble with the U.S. Peace Corps volunteers. One girl left after a day and another just never arrived. The Peace Corps works on the policy of asking whether the volunteer would like to take the assignment whereas CUSO just tells people what their assignment will be - CUSO has been much more successful.

We had an International breakfast today - bread from Sarawak, margarine and milk from Australia, coffee from the U.K., peanut butter from the People's Republic of China, jam from Canada (Mom's jam).

You should see the sunsets here. They are really something at times. The sun rises and sets at the same time every day - 7:00. This is because we are living on the equator. When the sun goes down, the bugs come out. Every mosquito bite I get turns into a red bump and then a sore.

Charlie is very popular with the students - he swims with them, and gives a lot of extra classes in Math and Science for them to catch up. Tonight he is teaching them about electricity - not an easy task when none of them have electricity in their homes or longhouses.



A Typical Borneo Sunset

Wild Life

February 18, 1966

One of the "blessings" of living in the tropics is discovering fire-ants. They are about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch long and travel together by the millions in long columns. We see them after it rains and of course, that is just about every day. Usually they form a line about three inches wide and the length can be several hundred yards (we have never found the end of a line yet). The problem is that they bite and these bites are worse than a bee sting. You can imagine what happens when you step into the middle of a few hundred! The first time it happened (after dark), Charlie thought he had been bitten by a scorpion. Lately they have been just outside our house so Charlie's latest hobby is killing fire-ants. He pours gasoline along a line and then drops a match in the middle. (I should note that at a later date, a column of fire-ants decided to go right through another house. The teachers living in the house had no choice but move out until all the fire-ants had moved through).

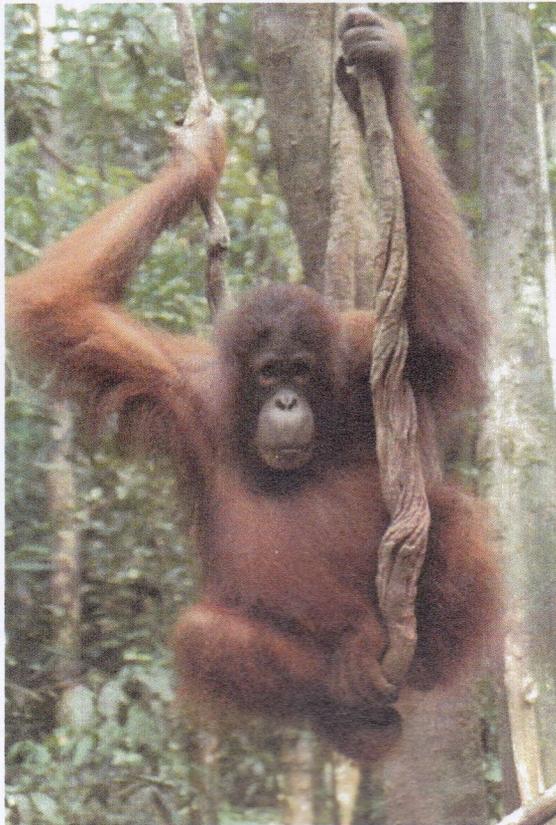
We also have Monitor Lizards around the school. They look like small crocodiles and can be very vicious. The students killed one recently. If the locals see a snake, they kill it first and then ask questions later- that is because most of the snakes are poisonous.

We had a visitor in the house- a rat. Charlie tried to kill it but it went down the drain in the bathroom where it no doubt came from. In later letters, I made comments about rats and squirrels being in the house. We also had a centipede in the kitchen- a deadly insect and we didn't rest until we found it and killed it.

We also had a poisonous snake in the house, a cobra and a Monitor Lizard under the clothesline but usually they are more scared of us than we are of them. And we always check for scorpions in our shoes or in dark places. On occasion, the students see anteaters but that has been rare. There are "Mouse" Deer back in the jungle but in general, there are no large animals. It would be rare to see a monkey here because most of them have been eaten. We have seen them in eastern Sarawak when driving through the jungle. We also saw Orang Utans in the wild near the Brunei border.



Fireants at the front of our house



The “Orang Utan”, Borneo’s Most Famous Animal

Staff Issues

Note: There are always personality conflicts on any staff. But the difficulties at Saratok Secondary School were more intense because of the isolation of the school, the different level of ability and maturity of the staff, the various accents and nationalities (Chinese, Iban, Indian, British, Canadian and various American), and the issues between Asians and Westerners. When we arrived, the Headmaster was your typical colonial leader who treated the locals as "children." The new Headmaster was a Canadian from Saskatchewan who had no leadership skills and, regretfully, he was our biggest problem. Enough said.

March 20, 1966

We are having a bit of trouble among the staff- some of the Asians do not like the Whites very much. We have one Indian teacher who is just impossible. He is not a good teacher, he is lazy, and he is a real troublemaker. If he comes to a section of Science or Math that is too hard, he just skips it. He has recently married a Chinese girl from Singapore and they have been telling the locals not to have anything to do with the Westerners- and that includes mealtime when they refuse to sit near us. It can be worse. We have heard of a Peace Corps girl in a Chinese School where the staff never spoke to her all year long. And the American girl spoke one Chinese dialect. I admire her for sticking it out for the year.

There were some difficulties over morning run, in fact there was a near riot in the dorms early in the morning protesting the whole idea of morning run. Apparently the Indian and his wife have been telling the students that only a few whites wanted morning run and according to the husband, it is dangerous to take a bath after a run.

There are lots of other small problems (a note appeared recently telling all the "whites" to go home) but, for the most part, the Western teachers and most of the locals get along quite well and there are lots of good times together. I think our intentions were good but when I think back, I can understand how some locals felt.



Charlie's New Friend

Home and Garden

March 6, 1966

I did some baking today and it turned out not too badly. I haven't figured out what kind of flour I have- it just doesn't taste like it should. At first I thought it was sago flour but I am not sure. Perhaps the bugs that are in it add extra taste. I have to sift the bugs and worms out of both the sugar and the flour. After all, we live in the tropics.

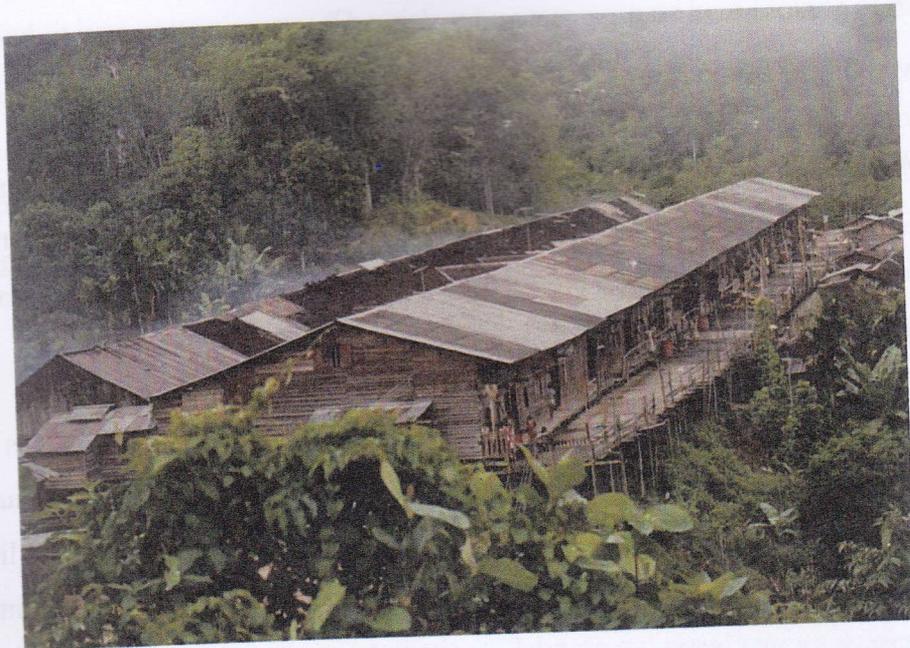
I made a cake and then some peanut butter cookies. I decided to hang some clothes on the line while the last batch of cookies was in the oven. But the door slammed shut and I couldn't get back in so I had to run to the school to get Charlie to climb in the bathroom window and rescue the cookies. Our doors lock when they shut and you have to have a key to get in (the key was in the house). The cookies were eaten very quickly so I guess they weren't too bad.

Charlie has had some boys over to clear stumps around the house and we are trying to make a garden. We have planted two pineapple plants and a papaya tree. Later we planted long beans, ginger, and marigolds in the new garden. We also grow bean sprouts in the bathroom.

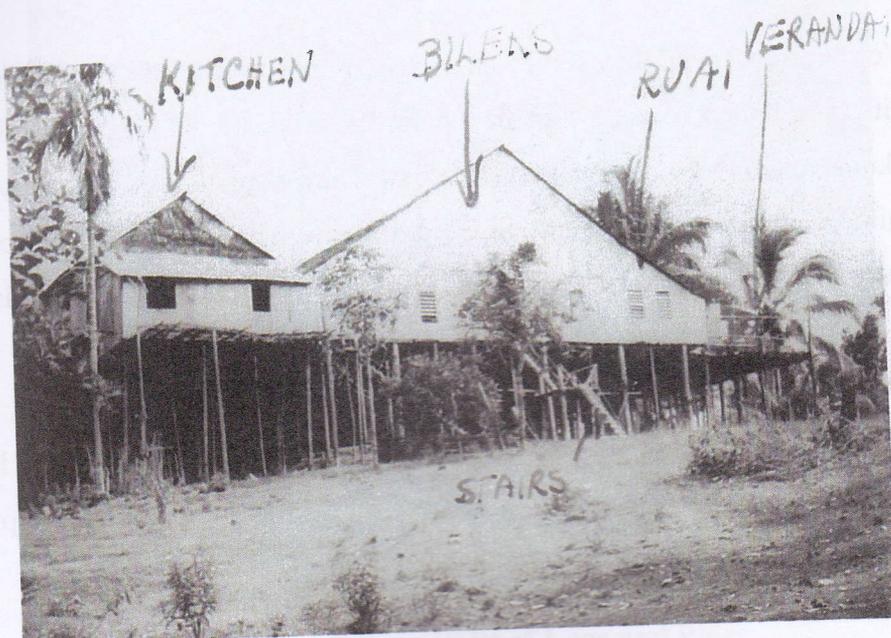
Charlie and I have been entertaining the students from the dorms we supervise. It is easy to have a party here- we showed slides of our Christmas trip and served tea (with lots of sugar) cookies, biscuits and candy. There were twenty-five to Charlie's party and twenty-nine to my party.

** I mentioned our medical experiences several times. Lately we have treated everything from a toothache to a stubbed toe, to a gash made by a monkey, an injured eye and the many aches and pains resulting from colds and the flu. We find our CUSO medical kit very useful and we are running out of pills and bandages. We have discovered 1) that Vicks Vapor Rub can solve many back problems and 2) go easy on the aspirin because most students have never had any type of pill and they can react badly!

An Iban Longhouse



One of Sarawak's famous Iban Longhouses where a village community from ten to sixty families live under one roof. The longhouse consists of individual family rooms (bileks) including a kitchen, a communal covered platform (ruai) used for social activities and a long open verandah. We visited Rumah Lauwah below on June 1, 1966.



Rumah Lauwah

Our Longhouse Experiences

March 23, 1966

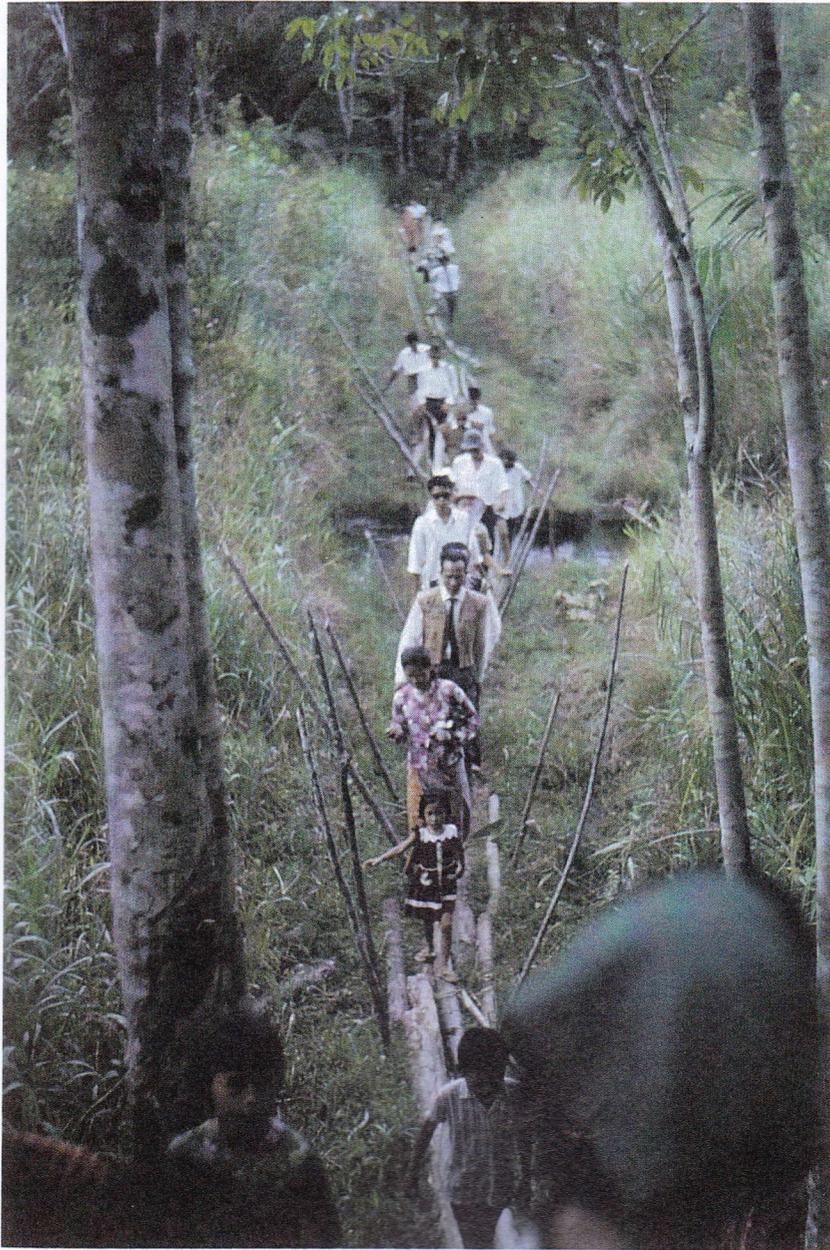
We have been "longhousing" lately. In the last two weeks we have been to four longhouses and we are going to another this weekend. It is very interesting and we have concluded that the Ibans are like the Canadian Indians must have been about 200 years ago.

We visited our first longhouse (Rumah Tambi) on Sunday evening. It is only about ten minutes from the school and it is very interesting to think that there is such a different kind of life being led so close to the school. There are over 100 people living in this longhouse and I think most of them must be children. All along the front of the house there is a long closed in verandah, the area where people congregate at night. All along this verandah are doors opening into the area where individual families live. I would think this longhouse is more modern- there were clocks, a china cabinet, and mattresses to sleep on. The small children sleep in a blanket hanging from the ceiling on a spring-like a jolly jumper. This way they can be rocked to sleep at any time during the night.

We sat on mats and they served us coffee or tea with lots of sugar. Several mothers came with their babies to ask for medical help. We talked about weaving and they offered to take us to another longhouse on Saturday. They were curious as to why we had no children and they were interested in getting information on birth control. Several of the people from this longhouse work at the school, including Tambi, who is one of the cooks.

We also visited a longhouse further from the school, Sungei Kelampai, where we were very welcome. One of the Members of Parliament lives here, but there had also been a Canadian, John Young, from Vancouver Island who had been very helpful in the area and he gave Canadians a very good name.

To get there, we had to walk two miles up the new road and then across country for another two miles. The path across the cleared jungle was okay in some places but where it had rained, it was quite slippery. The girls who were with us kept looking at me to see if I was okay, but I think I was doing as well as they were. To cross a stream or as I understand it any river, means walking on a log felled across the water. There may be a rail to hang on to but if the stream is very wide there will be nothing. It can be interesting trying to get to the other side without falling in. We are not as agile as the Ibans.



A Typical Bridge Built of Logs and Poles

This longhouse is on a hill and there are twenty doors (that means twenty family units) Rice is being harvested right now so many people are working in the rice padis. Ibans build huts away from the longhouse in the padis and stay there from the planting to the harvesting of the rice.

The Ibans are very friendly and very hospitable. We had some Iban cakes made of rice flour with our coffee. These cakes are made into designs and then deep-fried. I find that these cakes are very greasy. We had a meal that consisted of rice (very dry) and two types of fish- clams from a can and a type of dried fish. Their food tends to be very plain- rice and often very fat pork. In Saratok, a pig can be killed right in the street and then portions are cut off as required. Not very appetizing but they do cook their food at a very high temperature so that is good. If you order a chicken from the bazaar, that is what you get- one chicken that has very good lungs. Then you have to find someone to kill it.

In this longhouse, we saw many of the old knives, guns, blowguns, parangs (like machetes). Some knives were really fancy and usually there is a story behind each one. We heard a great deal about the Second World War and in fact, we have seen quite a few Japanese skulls hanging in longhouses. The country was over -run by the Japanese and a local force, the Sarawak Rangers (the leader of this group lived in this particular longhouse) was instrumental in the defeat of the Japanese. The Ibans would hide in the bushes with their blowguns and shoot a dart at the Japanese on the ground. The poison on the dart was deadly and the Japanese never knew what hit them. I have heard that some of the poison paralyzed the person and then it was easy for the Iban to chop the head off. Perhaps it is because of the war that the Iban got the title of the "Wild Men of Borneo." In recent years a few heads may have been taken but usually because of a "lover's quarrel."

There are many interesting and practical customs. For example, children are often adopted by childless couples. If one family member has several children and another none, then they sort of "share" their children. This is important because couples need children to look after them in their old age and they also take on the responsibility of

raising these children. A good deal all around. So when we ask a student how many brothers and sisters he/she has, the answer is often "Do you mean my real brothers or my adopted family?" There are no orphans in the longhouses and no need for a Seniors' Residence because these people look out for each other. We did hear of an elderly couple just adopting a baby and we wonder how that child will look after them in their "old age." The way this man remembers his age is because he was born on the second day of the Krakatoa eruption. This was a volcano in Indonesia that erupted in 1883. So that would make this man eighty-three. Just the right age to adopt a baby? We have talked to other old people about Krakatoa including a woman who remembered the eruption (she would be at least ninety). It was like talking to a history book.



Iban Woman Making Rice Cakes

Most of the Iban women go topless until a Westerner comes along or Charlie asks to take their picture. Then they like to be properly dressed (for Westerners) and that means putting on some kind of top.

Most longhouses have a small house that looks something like an open birdhouse at the path leading to the longhouse. Apparently this is a house where offerings are made to the gods. We saw the same small house later at another longhouse. Inside were two dolls and when we asked the significance, we found out that the dolls represented us and that they were asking the gods to bless our visit



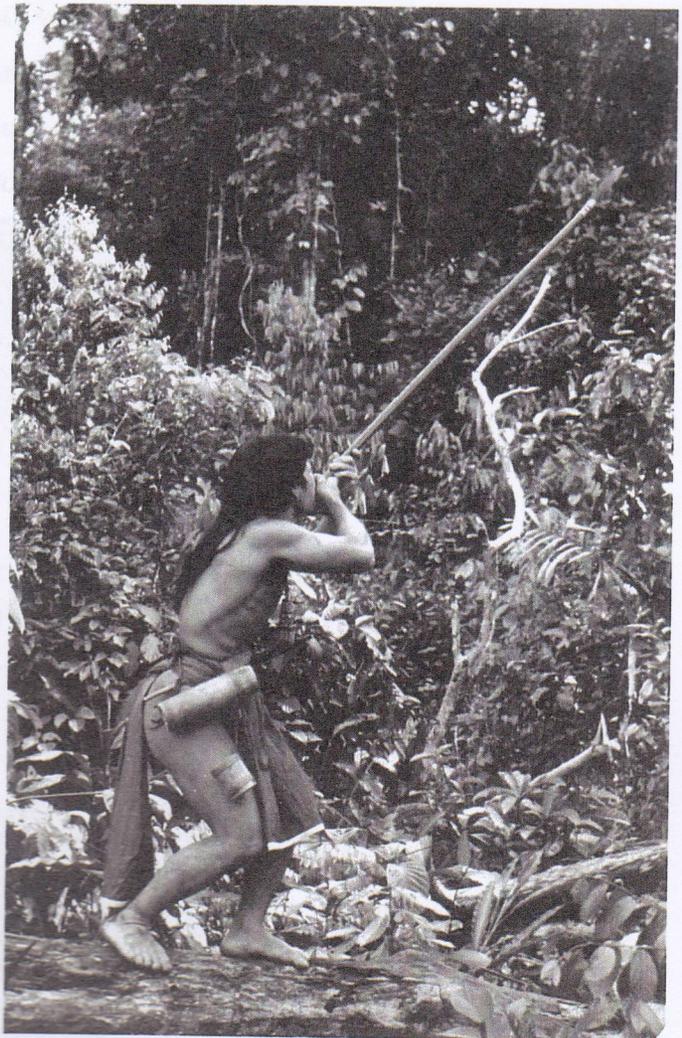
Small House Built for Offerings

Note: We took many rolls of film, some developed into slides and some into prints. The slides were sent to Australia or Hong Kong to be developed. We had to keep film in an airtight container with silica gel. Every so often we would heat the silica gel and then put it back into the container. Charlie took many rolls of film that were never developed—mostly of some aspect of weaving. He had good intentions to do something with them someday. We sent most of our slides home to prevent damage from the humidity.

We were always on the lookout for treasures and we were often successful. That is why we have a superb blowpipe, shield, several amazing blankets, mats, baskets, and hats.



**Japanese Heads In
A Longhouse**



**Iban Hunter With Blowgun and
Dart Container**

April 11, 1966

Weekend visitors arrived by the new road from Sarikei. Our water tank went dry because the pump is not working right and it was that way all weekend. However we were able to get water from some of the other houses but we had to bathe in the river with the snakes. The best part of the weekend was the food. They all brought something- jello, potato salad, fried chicken, ground beef, and I made a cake. To top everything off, we had pancakes with your maple syrup. It is good to talk to other volunteers about their school and area. We are finding that this is a very peaceful area with friendly people. This is not true in the areas where our visitors work. Of course, the highlight of the weekend for all of us was a visit to a longhouse.

April 17, 1966

Charlie is battling another cold. He has never had so many before and this is the result of the damp weather. Sometimes it can be quite chilly after a rain and many of the students don't have sweaters or any warm clothes.

We have had several occasions to practise our medical skills. One girl had her leg cut when she lifted up the lawnmower. Another boy split his knee open when he fell on a rock. Thank goodness for our CUSO medical kit. Charlie had to go to a local longhouse and act as doctor to help with a man who had fallen on a saw resulting in cuts on his chest and hands.

Last weekend, we were lucky to see a cock fight. It often takes hours to get started and there is a lot of gambling. This is a barbaric sport and actually it is not legal. They tie sharp spurs to the legs of the cocks and whichever cock cuts the other one up wins. This takes about three seconds.

Some of the students went home for the Easter Weekend. To get to their longhouse they had to take a three-hour boat ride and then walk for a day. Then they had to walk all day Monday to get back for school on Tuesday. I guess we were not so badly off with our long bus ride to Perth High School each day.



**Me With CUSO volunteers
Dennis Taylor, Fran and Brian MacIninch
And Butch, our Peace Corps Friend**



Ibans At A Cock Fight

April, 1966

Note: We are enjoying a three- week holiday; you cannot call it a "Spring Holiday" because there are no seasons here. The school year starts in January and ends around the first of December. There are three long holidays; three weeks in April, three weeks in August, and about five weeks in December. It is a very good system because you actually feel that each break is a real holiday.

We are "on duty" for two weeks of the three week holiday. Charlie had a bit of a change when he went with a Peace Corps fellow to a Malay village called Kabong. This village is on the sea and I guess a "real mud hole." Even though this is a Malay village, the shops are run by the Chinese. The Malays usually build their homes on muddy areas and therefore each house is on stilts. Garbage disposal is easy in these homes- just drop everything through the floor and the tide washes it away. Many of the Malays are fishermen although some here farm. I could not go because it is more difficult for them to put up a woman overnight.

While we were on duty at the school, we were busy working. Our Peace Corps friend Butch, is here and he and Charlie are building a counter, shelves, a display shelf and a slot to return books in the library. While they are doing that I am cleaning, sorting books, and typing up cards for all of the books. We find that many books "just disappear," probably because the students take them home. I am also kept busy cooking for everyone, including another Peace Corps fellow. We have rice and curry just about every day and Butch doesn't like curry so that is a problem. But he drinks gallons of coffee. Charlie made me a cutting board, a towel rack, and an ironing board in the woodshop.

For the last week of our holidays, we went to Sibuh (about 50 miles away) and stayed with another CUSO volunteer. I had three dresses made and Charlie had a pair of shorts made. They just take measurements and in one day you have new clothes that are a perfect fit. We had fun just looking around and eating things like Dairy Queen that we cannot get in Saratok.

I think we spent one of the most interesting days here so far yesterday. We were at a longhouse about 1½ miles from the school. We had seen one of the women weaving before and we had taken some pictures. The Ibans don't mind if you take their photo as long as you give them a copy. Everyone wanted to have their photo taken and especially the women who were weaving. These people are so friendly-they just drop what they are doing and we sit and talk. There is always someone who speaks good English.



Iban Woman Weaving Our Red Blanket

This morning I saw something move in the grass and at first I thought it was a snake. It was not a snake but rather a big scorpion. It is now in Charlie's lab as part of his collection. And now I will have to add scorpions to my "watch list."

May 29-31, 1966

The bulldozers are here now making a football field that has been promised for some time. The school is growing and space for construction is now scarce. We are also getting a new staff house right next to our house and are also promised more housing and classrooms. A new Peace Corps couple is coming and that now makes a total of seven North Americans on the staff- far too many. The staff total is now seventeen with eleven coming from outside Sarawak.

We were involved in a bit of "community" work this week, something CUSO encourages. The people in the closest longhouse wanted information on family planning and we arranged for a family planning clinic to be held in Saratok. Charlie took the Land Rover and I went with one woman. Now other women are asking questions so there are plans for another clinic in two months. I hope the women all remember to take their pills or there will be a population explosion instead.

We had a visit from eight or nine Ministers of Education- tea was served in our new library. They were accompanied by ten armed guards with loaded Bren guns and automatic rifles. Things aren't quite "normal" here.



Dayak Women Wearing Sarongs and Traditional Hats



On The Road To A Longhouse

Gawai Dayak

June 1, 1966

Gawai Dayak is the big Iban celebration for their New Year. School is closed for nearly a week. We have been invited to four longhouses but will not be able to go all of them. This is the biggest event in the Iban year and they spend a lot of money on the celebrations, including the making of Arak, Iban wine. During the festival, many will be dressed in traditional costumes, and that will be something to see.

Charlie went to the first longhouse on Tuesday night but since I was on duty, I could not come until Wednesday. The Land Rover didn't come so I had a ride on the back of one of the Peace Corps' motor scooter. We still had to walk for an hour beyond the main road. I was the first white woman to visit this longhouse so there had to be special preparations. We had to wait for a few moments and then all the people from the longhouse came down the steps to meet us and shake hands. The first in the procession carried a flag. Inside, we were offered the Iban wine (Arak or the really strong stuff, Tuak). We touch the glass to our lips and then the Iban drinks what is left, fills the glass, and offers it to the next person. You had to do this at each home in the longhouse- and there were twenty individual families here. After eight to ten hours of this hospitality, you can feel pretty good as some of the Peace Corps fellows found out.

The raising of the flag is very important. They start with the Sarawak flag and then seven smaller flags, for each of the seven gods. The flags are raised on a rope that also includes baskets of food as offerings to the gods. Usually, there are also a few shots from a gun. The entertainment and eating went on for hours. I have never seen so much food in one place; we figured that each group would have no fewer than three hundred dishes including a wide variety of foods. The first meal was at 9:30 p.m. and the last one at 4 a.m. We learned quickly just to eat a small portion. That way you don't offend the people but you also don't get too full. Before each meal there was a ritual where the leader of the longhouse held a rooster and swayed back and forth chanting. The idea is to bless the food and keep the evil spirits away. At the end of each meal, three or four men beating

drums would form a line and everyone would follow them and go on to the next meal. Then we would experience the same all over- meal, drinks, procession, and on to the next group.

Before we left, we were given some Iban cakes and about ten feet of rice, which is sticky rice cooked in bamboo. This rice is great for traveling and it is how the Viet Cong travel and eat.



The Welcoming Committee

From A Longhouse Near the School.

(Charlie spent a lot of time with these women learning how to weave)

Note: We visited many other longhouses during this Gawai Dayak, and also during the time we were in Sarawak. We took part in many meals, observed Iban dancing and of course, spent many hours watching the women weave and dye their materials. We walked through the jungle for hours, drove on buses, dump trucks, long boats, and on the back of scooters. We even arrived on a bicycle once- Charlie peddled and I sat on the crossbar. We both lost weight and looked “really bad” most of the time. We felt that the best way to get the most of our two years here was to get out and be with the people. Schoolwork is important especially when you are preparing the students for major exams, but we will always remember these other experiences. Charlie made a speech at one of the longhouses and he told the people that the things we would remember the most were the times we spent with them. The Ibans replied that they were glad to have white people in the longhouses and not always think of them as people of the “big towns.” Even though we did not find the Chinese to be as friendly, many of my friends in Sarawak today (2010) are Chinese.



Mit Kubu In Traditional Dress

Wars and Weddings

June 10, 1966

This is a good news war story- the war with Indonesia has ended as of yesterday. I guess this will mean that there will be no more border raids and probably also means that the British troops will go home. Indonesia cannot afford a war with any country and this war was really one-sided. There are still communist problems in Sarawak but now Indonesia cannot be blamed for this problem. There have been over 100,000 Chinese killed in Indonesia and this could happen here too. Both of these countries are Muslim and they don't want Chinese communists around.

One of last year's form three girls is marrying a federal minister and the staff has been invited to the wedding. I saw her (Irene Charanie) again in 1999 and 2010. The service was at the Anglican Church at 8:30 a.m. and apparently this is the biggest wedding this area has ever seen- very Western with a white dress, five-tiered wedding cake. At night, six of us went to the longhouse (Sungei Kelampai) for the Iban celebrations and it was very much like the Iban festival last week. There was lots of Tuak and Arak as well as champagne. We walked home after the celebrations on a very slippery road. At one time three of the teachers were sprawled in the mud at about 1:30 in the morning. We still had to get up for classes early on Sunday.

We were invited to a tea in late May in honour of the marriage of the school secretary, Bede Ho. The event was held in the Chinese School in Saratok. The Chinese are generally not as friendly so we felt uncomfortable during the whole tea. I was placed in the room with all of the men and since the Chinese custom is for women and men to be separate, I felt even more uncomfortable. Bede is a Roman Catholic so they have to go to Kuching to be married officially. We live in Second Division and the churches here are all Anglican. You would find Methodist Churches in Third Division. The food was good at the celebration- curried puffs, sticky rice, prawn crackers, lots of different cakes, and beer, and Green Spot, the orange crush of Sarawak.

The Big Track Meet

Late June, 1966

The Track and Field Team has been practicing very hard- Charlie coaches the girls in running (I look after the stop watch). All forty students and six teachers are looking forward to the Divisional Track Meet in Simanggang this weekend.

What a time we had getting there and back. We left the school at 6:00 a.m. in dump trucks. After driving for an hour we rode in longboats for another hour. The tide was going out so we ran aground several times. After this we walked through the jungle for four hours and after a heavy rain, the paths were very slippery. I managed to slip off a log and go to my waist in water and mud. As a result, I lost one of my shoes so I walked the rest of the way in bare feet. Eventually we came to the new road and drove the remaining sixty miles in a Land Rover. One thing for sure- our track team was in good shape when they arrived at the meet. As a result, we won three of the four trophies and Charlie's girls came first and second in every race. I must say that I do a lot of things here that I would never do at home.

We met several Canadians in Simanggang where there is quite a Western community.

After spending four days in the sun, we had bad sunburns.

Our standard of living is improving now that we have a Peace Corps' kerosene frig. But we don't have much to put in it and we have become used to drinking warm water. We are amused at the new Peace Corps couple- they have to have bacon and eggs several times a week and they only want to eat Western food. They are not exactly "roughing it"!



The Track and Field Team, Simmangang 1966, and Binnatang 1967



Daily Life at Saratok Secondary School

July, 1966

The weather can be very strange- the temperatures may be in the 70's but we are finding it very cold. The seasons seem to be backward- it is now the dry season but it has been raining a lot. We have a blanket, flannelette sheet, and bedspread but we are still cold at night.

Charlie is still going to longhouses not just to study weaving but also to get information on dyeing yarn using leaves and plants. He spends a lot of time in the lab boiling leaves and bark to get "the right colour." He also has been growing indigo in our garden.

School problems continue- too many westerners and sometimes it is better not to do too much. When things go wrong, the locals blame the white teachers especially when it comes to mechanical problems. It makes life difficult especially when people like Charlie can do so many things- I would say there is a bit of jealousy.

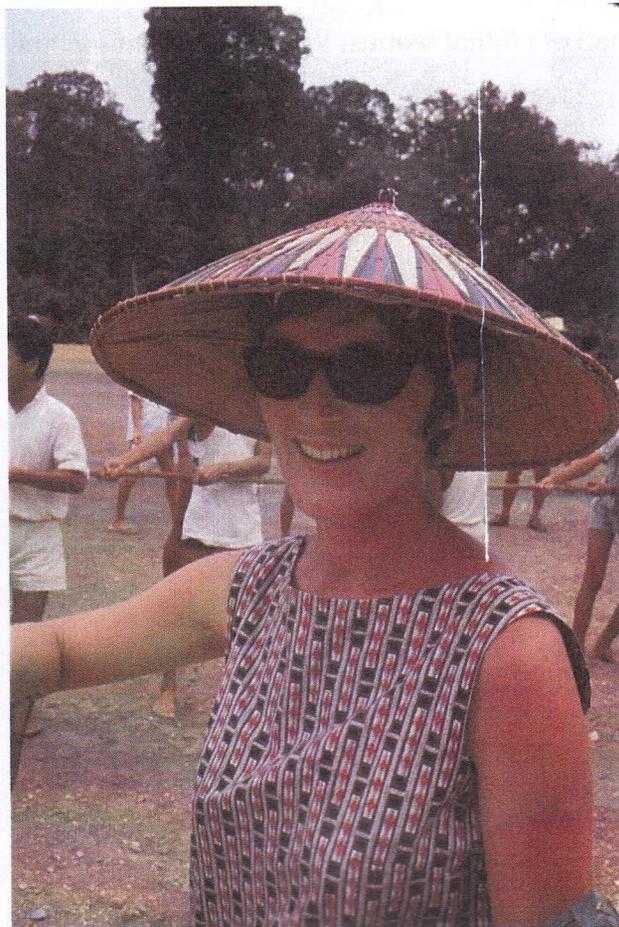
My small oven works well (it is a square metal box that is placed over a burner on the kerosene stove) and I seem to be doing a lot of baking for the staff. I entertained the girls from my dorm and we had fun eating, playing games, and having a make-up demonstration (given by the Peace Corps girl). I recently made doughnuts in my wok- invited the Peace Corps fellows over to taste them and it didn't take long for them to disappear.

We continue to give out medicine to students and many people from the longhouses. The problem is that they expect miracles without going to a doctor.

There is a lot of work at this time of the year because students write another set of exams before they go on another three- week holiday.

One day last week in class, I wondered why the students were all staring at the wall. There was a fairly big scorpion walking around at the top of the blackboard. One of the boys put up a broom and the scorpion grabbed on to it. It is now in a bottle in Charlie's lab.

We have been listening to Radio Peking. The topic is U.S. aggression in Viet Nam and the fight for freedom of the Chinese and Vietnamese people. There is also a lot of reporting on the Negro riots in the U.S. We tend to listen to Radio Australia a lot because we feel they give a "balanced view" of events in Asia as compared to the Chinese and the Americans. We get Radio Peking and also the Voice of America from the Philippines. We can also get "Back To The Bible" from the Southern Cross Radio Station in Ecuador.



Check the Sunburn

Our Mid-Term Holiday

August, 1966

Before the three- week holiday starts, there is a lot of work to be done at a Boarding School. First we have an assembly, then work party to get the area cleaned up.

Homeroom teachers have to collect textbooks and have their classrooms cleaned. In the afternoon, we have to supervise the cleaning of the dorms. Students cannot leave for home until they pass inspection. We are also marking exam papers- I have all of mine marked but Charlie will have to continue after the holiday. We also have a lot of work to do at our house since we are also going away. I found time to make another batch of doughnuts to take to our friend in Sibü as a gift. We have been getting flour, a donation from the U.S. Government. The problem is that it sits on the dock too long and in this tropical climate, gets full of worms. We sift the worms out of the flour and then use it. It take five-six sifts before we think it is okay.

Many of the local Ibans come just before holidays to try and sell their wares- we did buy a very nice blanket (the one that was on the piano bench for years)

The school Land Rover is going to Sarikei tomorrow and there are about twelve teachers expecting to get a ride. We spent this holiday on North Borneo and had an amazing time.

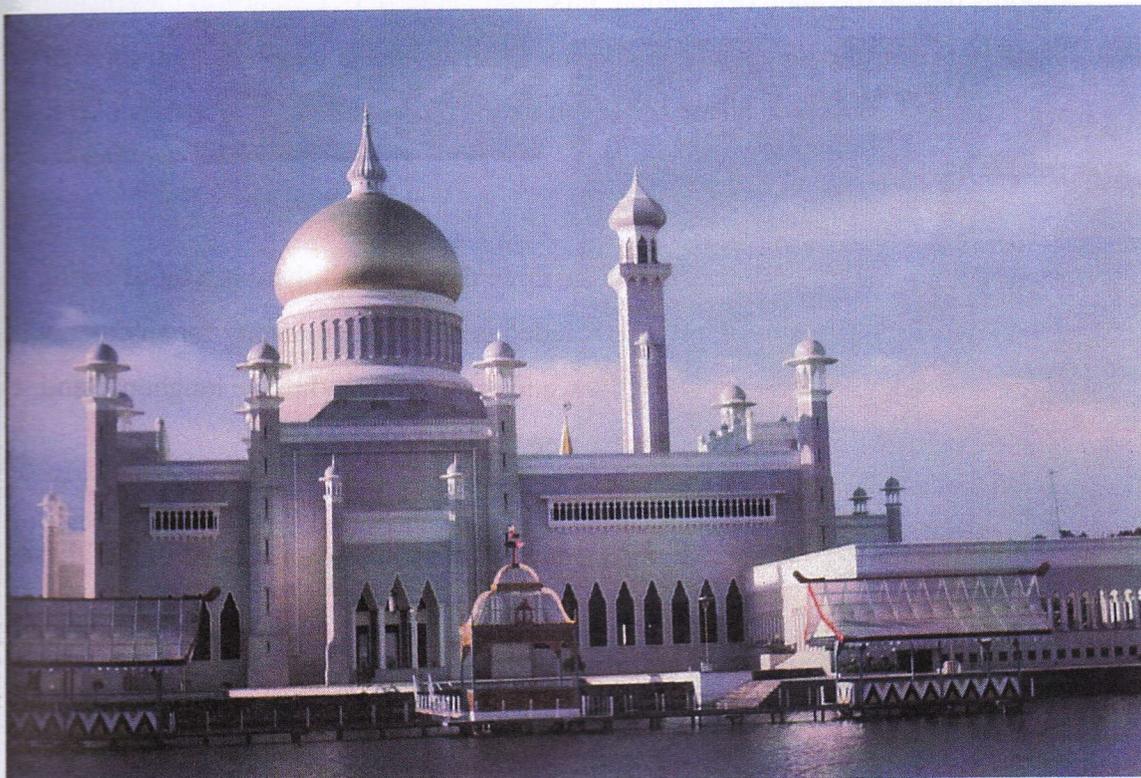
Kapit

We intended to fly to Brunei but could not get a flight for several days so we decided to take a boat inland to Kapit, a fairly remote place. We took a ten- hour trip on a Chinese launch. We hadn't made any arrangements ahead so we went to the Methodist Mission Hospital and a Chinese doctor invited us to stay at his place. Hospitality like this does not come very often. The Ibans here were more backward and we saw a lot of long hair on the men and people with big holes in their ears. On the long trip back to Sibü we saw many Gurkha troops—they are excellent fighters and the British use them in many situations. No doubt they were returning from the Indonesian border now that the war is over.

Brunei

We flew from Sibul to Brunei, a Sultanate and also a British Protectorate. This country has oil. All the people are either Malays or Indians and Brunei is a strong Islamic area. The big attraction is the Mosque, which is really fantastic. It has a pure gold dome and the whole structure cost millions of dollars. Brunei is a very wealthy area because of the oil and it is much more developed than any other part of Borneo. The streets are clean, the stores and houses are modern, and there are cars everywhere. We stayed in a cheap Chinese hotel – we didn't get much sleep because the men were gambling right outside our room most of the night.

We also visited several towns in Eastern Sarawak, Kuala Belait, Miri, Sibul, and visited with some other CUSO volunteers before returning to Saratok.



The Mosque in Brunei

The Big Iban Festival- Gawai Antu

Sept 1, 1966

Gawai Antu is a Sea Dayak (or Iban) Feast of the Departed Spirits. It is an unwritten law amongst Dayaks that every generation should celebrate at least one Gawai Antu in a lifetime. The longhouse that Charlie attended was thirty-three years old and this was the first Gawai Antu. There is no fixed date for the celebration- this depends on how many people have died and also whether the longhouse can afford the festival. The Gawai Charlie went to cost about \$18,000 and in addition to money, the longhouse slaughtered three cows, twenty-two pigs, and fifty chickens. A lot of Iban wine is also made ahead.

It takes up to three years to prepare for the festival and the festivities begin about two months before the main celebration. First there are offerings made to the spirits in the small huts near the longhouse. Then each family makes a basket of food for every person who has died. This is to please the seven main spirits and make the spirits of the dead people happy.

I will not go into all of the details of the three day festival- there is a lot of eating and drinking, dancing, and celebration. Included is a special ceremony for any man who has taken a head and, in general, the Dayak gods are welcomed to the longhouse and it is hoped that the spirits of the dead have been made happy too.

Our conclusion: "This was fascinating and we were lucky to get in on one of these festivals."

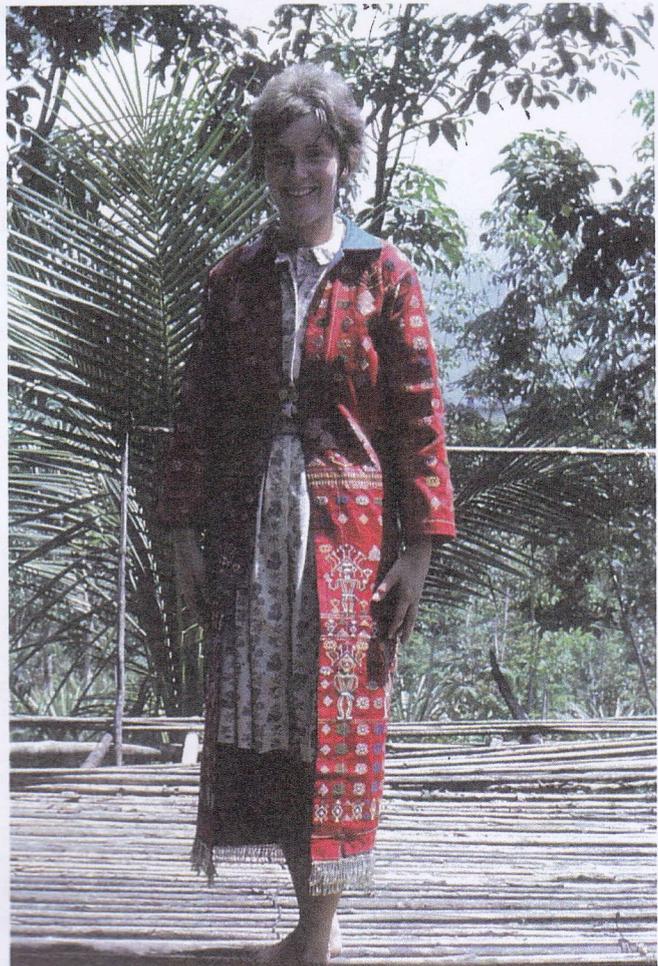
Sept 5, 1966

In a letter we wrote to the Huskilsons: "We received bad news about Dad. He was badly hurt in an accident while cutting trees and is in the hospital. They are selling cattle and crops because it is unlikely he will be able to farm again." It is not easy being so far away.



Tuai Rumah In Traditional Dress
(The Head of The Longhouse)

Joanne In
Traditional Hand Woven Dress



September 15, 1966

We are attempting to get our garden back in order. When we were on holiday some "friendly person" removed our two pineapple plants and our papaya tree. We still have three banana trees but they are a long way from producing fruit. We now grow indigo in the garden along with the beans and ginger.

Christianity is really growing in Borneo. Last Friday, there were two busloads of students going to the Anglican Church to be confirmed. To be modern for many of these people also means becoming a Christian. It also means that they can escape Islam. It is official policy of the Malaysian Government to try and spread the state religion and since the Ibans do not favour Malaysia, they certainly do not favour the religion. It is hard for us to understand a situation where church and state are one.

Sept 21, 1966

We have finally added to our family. We have acquired a Slow Loris, a Borneo animal that looks like a teddy bear. If you remember the comic strip Ook-Pic, then you will know what they look like. Of course we have named our new pet Ook-Pic. These animals are mostly fur, have big eyes, and generally move very slowly, except when they are catching bugs for food. They are nocturnal so Ook-Pic sleeps all day in his bamboo cage. He eats bananas and other fruit, vegetables, and drinks milk. He is very cute. (When I think back, it was a bad idea to have a jungle animal for a pet. He eventually died and Charlie was heart-broken. He said he would never have another pet. The Peace Corps couple also had a Slow Loris and they did take him back to the U.S. and I know he lived for several years. We had all the papers ready for Ook-Pic but he died just before we came home).

I saw a big Monitor Lizard in our backyard. The body was about three feet long and they are very vicious. We figure they have been killing the ducks in the pond near our house.



Ook-Pic



Death and A Funeral In A Longhouse

September 21, 1966

We visited a local longhouse where we discovered that the mother of one of our school cooks was very ill. We were asked to go into her room and see her. She was lying in a very brightly lit room and every single person in the longhouse was in the room watching her. I have never seen anything like this before. The woman was obviously dying and we did convince them they should take her to the hospital. She went in the school Land Rover the next morning and everyone in the longhouse was crying. They are afraid of hospitals and modern medicine and usually a visit to the hospital means certain death.

The lady did die and we were invited to attend the funeral. The funeral went on all night and at different times, there were different events. There was a meal at eight o'clock, coffee was served at ten o'clock, at midnight Tuak was served, and at four o'clock breakfast was served. The body and all of the woman's possessions were in the main part of the longhouse. A woman was hired to stay with the body and she chanted and sang all night.

It costs a lot to die. There were twelve other longhouses invited to the funeral and this meant a lot of people to feed. Everyone in the longhouse shared in the cost. This is one of the good things about life in a longhouse- everyone shares in everything so it is like one large family.

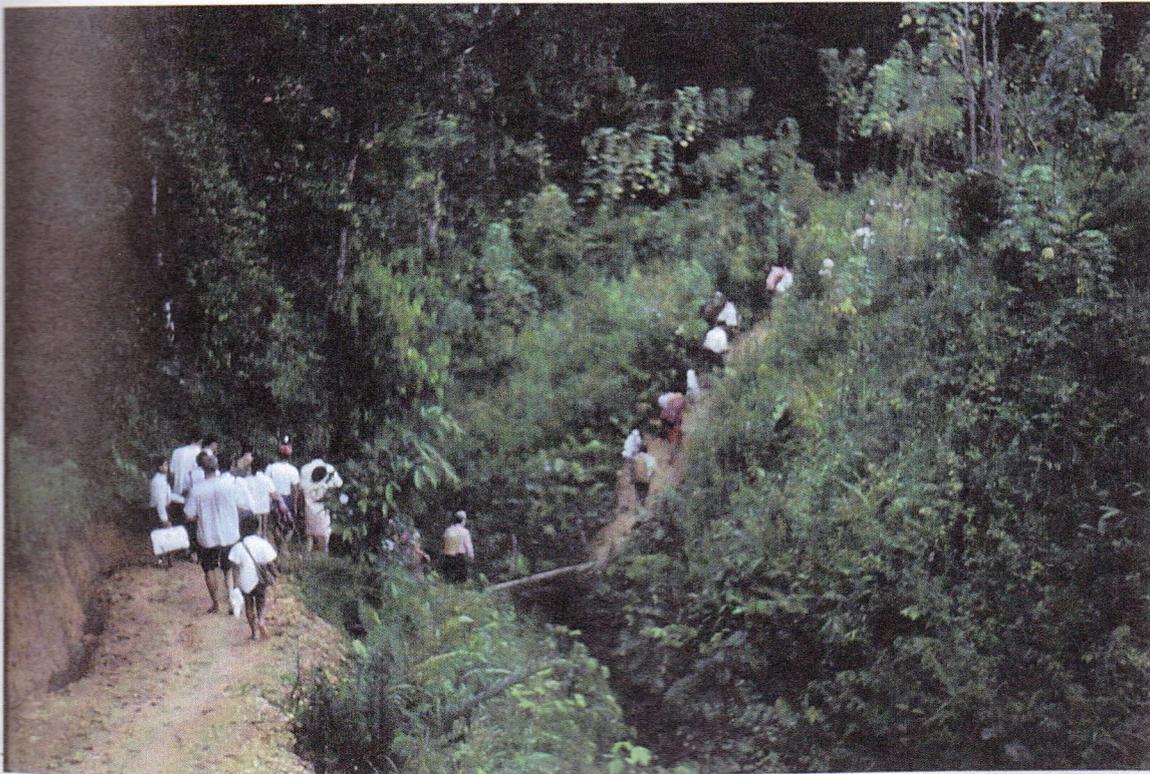
When sunrise came, the men took the body to a local cemetery.

Dangerous Paths

September 29, 1966

We visited a longhouse after a two- hour walk through the jungle. The walking was okay except that on the way back we had to walk through a rainstorm and it was chilly.

One of the exciting things walking in the jungle is to manoeuvre on the hundreds of yards of logs dropped across swamps and deep valleys. It is okay as long as you don't slip- you could either get wet or badly hurt or both. The longhouse we visited was very hospitable and they really put themselves out for us. We had excellent curried beef and we wondered if they had killed a cow for our visit as we know they usually just have rice.



A Jungle Bridge

(The path is slippery because of the rain. Note that there is no railing on the bridge)

Health Issues

October, 1966

There are lots of local medical issues and one of the main problems is getting Hook Worm, probably the result of walking through the jungle and swamps in bare feet. As I recall, the whole school was de-wormed about twice a year. The medicine is bitter but it works. There are lots of other fungal infections caused by sitting on mats in the longhouses. I got a glimpse of the medical system when I had to visit the new hospital in Sarikei- there was one doctor (he had trained in Canada) and what seemed like thousands of people around. The whole family accompanies a patient, partly to prepare the necessary food and partly to look after the patient.

There is an epidemic of small pox in Kuching so everyone in Sarawak is getting vaccinated. We both were vaccinated again and Charlie was sick for a few days. There were 700-800 people vaccinated here- from two schools and from the longhouses in the area.

Last night I treated two cases of boils, three cases of the flu, one dog bite, one scraped knee, and numerous headaches. As you can see, the most needed person here is a nurse. There seem to be a lot of students with boils, and they are not easy to treat. And it is not a pretty sight when they burst.

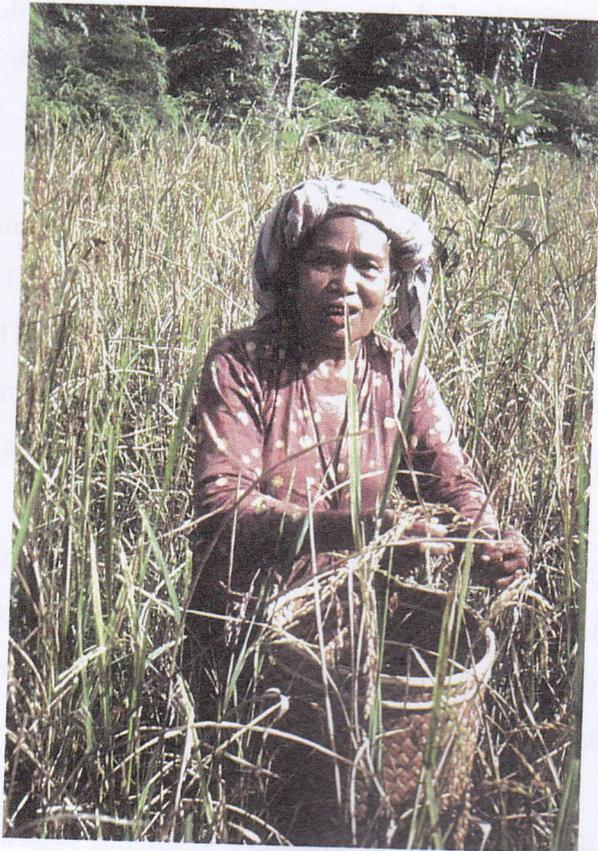
A woman came by looking for help with her eyes. As it turns out, she had cataracts and was supposed to go to see a specialist. I think she was hoping we would have a quick cure. Then she wanted to borrow money so she could go to the hospital and this included the cost for her mother, husband and three children. It is really hard because we don't have extra money and if we helped one person there would be hundreds more asking for help too.

Padi Fields

October 6, 1966

Note: Rice is grown in two ways in South East Asia. Rice grown in flat areas, usually irrigated, is called Wet Padi and with this method, the yields are quite good. The Chinese tend to use this method. Dry Padi is found in the hilly areas and most of the rice grown by the Ibans is of this type. The yields are much lower than with Wet Padi.

It is the dry season and the Ibans are preparing the land for growing rice. There is smoke everywhere because the trees are cut down and then burned. Sometimes the whole sky is darkened with smoke. Generally the women do the planting using a special stick to dig the hole where the rice is planted among the stumps. Since it is in the hilly area, there is no irrigation. The rice will be harvested in May after the rainy season.



Iban Woman in Padi Field

Education Activities

November, 1966

We finally have a caretaker at the school- a much- needed addition. The education system will be changing drastically in the next few years in all of Malaysia. All of the Ex-Pats (the British Colonial types) have been ordered out of Sarawak by the end of 1967. This means that the locals will be taking over and it also means less qualified teachers will be running the system. Also many of the missionaries have to go home unless they have a permanent visa. This only emphasizes the point that we should be training locals rather than sending Western teachers and missionaries.

We had a big party for our Form 5s who will be writing exams soon and most will be leaving school. The evening was a great success, especially the meal. We had noodles, fried prawns, curried beef, dishes of fried chicken, fried fish, corn with pieces of chicken, and mushrooms with various vegetables. There was no pork because the Muslims cannot eat pork.

There was great excitement at the school yesterday when one of the students caught a Monitor Lizard. It was about six feet long, including the tail. Some of the Form 5s skinned it in the afternoon and no doubt cooked the meat. They are always building fires and cooking many things, from bamboo shoots to insects, including grasshoppers. Just light a match, hold the grasshopper over the flame and voila- a cooked treat.

We had visitors this week- Wendy from Kingston and a Japanese friend from Montreal. They are on a world tour but I think they found it very hot here and they did not have the energy to do much. However, they did get to a longhouse yesterday and also made it to the Saratok Bazaar.

We are both tired and ready for a holiday. There has been a lot of marking and exam supervision.

Our Last Big Trip Before Heading Home



Me and A Young Girl in Northern Thailand



Charlie On The Train From Bangkok To Cheng Mai In Northern Thailand

December, 1966-January, 1967

Note: I will include some of the highlights of this trip only. According to the letters, this was the "best holiday ever."

To Singapore

We left Sarawak by boat on December 15 and arrived in Singapore two days later. One member of the family did not have her "sea legs" and as a result was sick the whole trip. The Chinese breakfast on the boat did not help- rice gruel, salt fish and some nuts. We actually returned to Sarawak on the same boat (to save money) later and this time we went through a Monsoon. Everyone was sick, including Charlie and all the workers. Ugh! We are staying at the Chinese "Y" in Singapore and it is not too bad.

Singapore is a great place to get cameras and camera equipment. Charlie bought a telescopic lens for his Pentax camera and we also bought an Olympus half-frame camera. We also had some great meals including our first venture with Chinese Steamboat- sort of like fondue.

Malaya and Thailand

We joined a two-week tour of Malaya and Thailand traveling by bus and then train. We were the only white people on the trip along with forty-five Chinese, Malays, and Indians. We started out eating with the Chinese but after getting permission, we ate the curry meals with the Malays- much more interesting. It was a great trip- seeing the countryside (tin mining areas, rubber plantations) and learning about the customs from our fellow travelers. Later we came back to Malaya for a week, visited people in the Cameron Highlands (it was chilly in the mountains), and Martha Blair from Kingston in Eastern Malaya.

We traveled from Penang to Bangkok by train and then from Bangkok to Cheng Mai in Northern Thailand- also by train. In all, this trip took nearly one hundred hours and covered 1500 miles. This included four nights sitting up all night and these trains are not

like trains in North America- just wooden seats. We saw a lot from the windows, including some elephants drawing timber in the jungle. We did the usual "touristy" things in Bangkok – the Floating Market, the Buddhist Temples, the snake farm, the Imperial Palace. We really liked Cheng Mai- the people were friendly and the shopping was good. We bought our teak elephants here as well as the teak vases that are in the living room. We were in Cheng Mai at Christmas and were able to take in some of the local services. The singing was amazing and we felt very much a part of the service, even though it was in Thai.

It was Hari Raya, the Moslem Holiday, when we returned to Sarawak. To get back to Saratok meant another boat trip overnight, by deck passage. We slept on mats on top of the hold and it rained. However, there were twelve others from our school on the same boat so it was fun.



Pineapples at the Dock In Sarekei

(each pineapple cost ten cents- the best we have ever eaten)

January 17-January 29, 1967

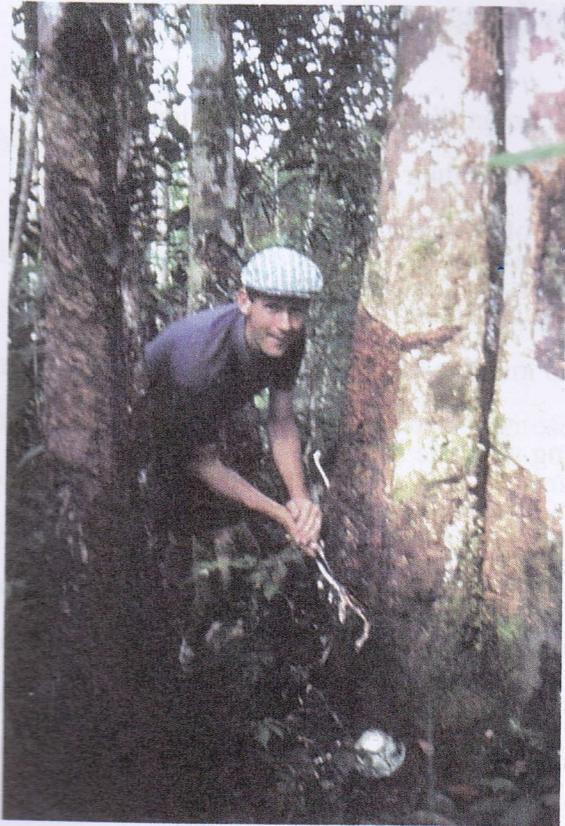
A new school year has started with classes now starting at 7:30. There are over 400 students and because the new dormitories are not ready, 100 students are sleeping on the floor. The power is also not working. But we are happy with our classes- Charlie is teaching Husbandry, Math, and a Geography class. I am teaching Geography and Bible Knowledge with the topics being History of Israel and studies in Acts and Luke. Thank you for the Gideon Bibles that have been handed out to the students. The Geography marks were the best Form 3 results in the school and the only distinction that the school has ever had in a subject was gained by one of the geography students.

We have a new Peace Corps girl and she will be looking after the sick, the kitchen, and doing lots of different jobs. We took Laura to a longhouse but I don't think she liked the swamps very much. It has been raining so everything is soaked but I don't think she is keen on jungle walks anyway.

We had a pretty bad storm yesterday. After the storm, I noticed that it looked different at the back of the house. The wind plus the weight of the water in the clay caused the whole hill to collapse into the river. The vertical drop to the river is about five feet from the house and we are wondering how much more will collapse and how soon we will find ourselves in the river. This is what happens when all the trees are cut down.

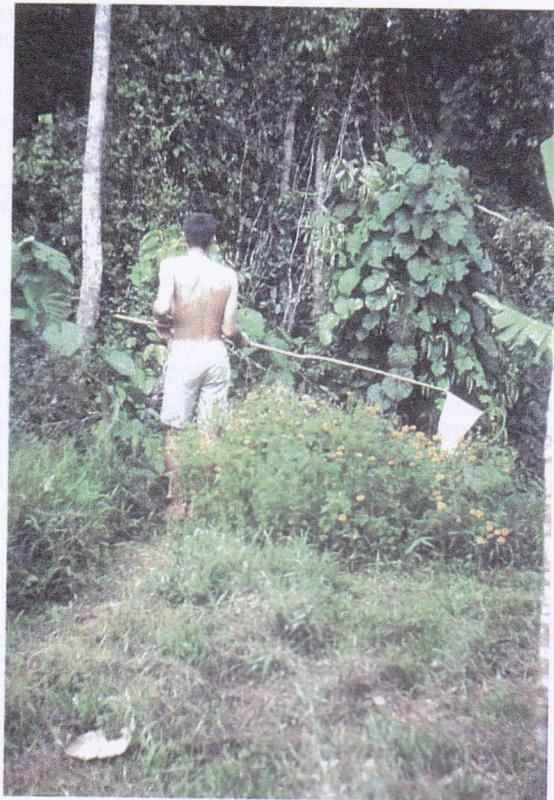
Laura and I discovered that they were charging us two-three times the correct amount to mail packages. But you cannot say anything! There are many times when we would like to speak up when we know we are not really being treated right but we have learned just to keep quiet and smile

Charlie has been in charge of the Student's Council for over a year now and he is looking forward to someone else taking over. We have succeeded in getting a local to be in charge of the library and also the Science lab. This is what the foreigners should be doing- working ourselves out of a job.



"The Great White Hunter"

Tapping A Rubber Tree and Catching a Butterfly.



February 17- 26, 1967

We have both been writing rather important letters regarding our jobs for September. Charlie has written Du Pont- I hope they are as good as their word and have a job for him in September. I have just heard from the Principal of Sydenham High School and it looks like I might have my old job back – this depends on whether the man who replaced me resigns as he is expected to.

Charlie is always busy and he has not been feeling well. He is so thin- perhaps he needs pie and potato chips to fatten him up. Or perhaps he needs to slow down. He is going rubber tapping with one of the students who lives up the road. He has taken photos of all of the stages of making rubber from tapping the trees to making the finished product.

March, 1967

We have been buying mats to take home as gifts. These women only work if they have need of money so things must be pretty tight right now. The women come around about five at night and they are really cute. They sit on the floor chewing beetle nuts (these nuts turn their teeth and gums bright red) and they try to convince us that they are very sick and need extra money. But we have heard that story before. They go away looking very sad but return in a few days with more mats. It always takes them “two cigarettes” to make a deal. They do love a good price battle.

Charlie also is known as “The Great White Hunter” because he is out catching butterflies with his big white net. He then presses them between sheets of newspaper and he hopes to bring a good collection home. (Some of these butterflies are in our lampshades).

Superstitions and the Husbandry Class

March 12-19, 1967

There have been some interesting things happening around the school this week. First one boy had to be rushed to the hospital presumably for appendicitis. Another boy had to go home because his grandfather had a dream that "any of his sons going to school would have a short life." Another boy was diagnosed with shingles but he wants to go home and have the witch doctor cast a spell on him to get rid of the shingles. This has happened before and we have to respect the student's wishes. Iban customs are tied with their religion focusing on good and evil spirits. Even those who profess to be Christians believe in most of the old customs. The Ibans use their dreams in the same way we believe in the Bible. If they have a dream, they believe that the gods are speaking to them, and they try to interpret the dream the best they can.

We have just received the results from the Form 5 exams and it appears the results were very good. Since this was the first year of Form 5, having good results is very important.

Each Saturday Radio Sarawak has a request programme and people from all over Sarawak send in their requests to dedicate a song to a person. This Saturday the request came from Charlie's Husbandry Class to him. He has worked very hard with this class and is very pleased with the results. They are very responsible. They have fifty chickens and have built a chicken house. The chicken house wasn't ready on time so we had the chickens in our bathroom overnight. They have three pigs and will soon get a goat. The students are having trouble finding the right time to have the hog bred. Interesting class! They have gone on a field trip to a pepper farm and a sago mill (that trip involved many hours of walking). It will be hard for them to find another teacher like Charlie who has spent so much time with them. (We found out the Monitor Lizards killed many of the chickens as well as ducks from the duck pond)

Local Trekking

March 26- April 7, 1967

Charlie and I went in different directions over the long weekend. It was both the Easter Holiday and the Malay celebration called Hari Raya Haji. On this day, the Malays remember all those who have gone to Mecca on a pilgrimage- about 300 go every year from Sarawak.

Me to Kabong: I went to Connie's home for the weekend. She is a Chinese girl living in a Malay community so I was able to see two different cultures and I had a great time. We visited five homes in the Malay Kampong. All those who have been to Mecca wear special clothes and that was very interesting. I learned a lot about Chinese customs, food, and since it was prawn season and we were in a fishing village, we had great food.

Charlie went quite a distance to go home with an Iban student. He saw a lot and took five rolls of film during the trip. They traveled by bus, walked for six hours and in many cases, it was in a mountainous area. He stayed in the longhouse for two days and then kept going away from the school and stayed in a village in a Chinese shop. Luckily, there was a road that eventually joined up to the main road so they were able to get a bus back to the school. He was very tired when he returned and decided not to go on a long, arduous trip like this again. He saw wild boar paths and enjoyed some venison.

We had a very successful track meet at the school- we both look like beets from all the exposure to the sun over the two days. This school has some top athletes who will now be training for the Inter-divisional Meet in June.

Staff Meetings continue to bring out problems among the staff members. The two controversial issues are morning run and the need to "speak English" during school time. The local staff members do not co-operate and most whites have stopped giving an opinion. It is not really a solvable issue as long as there is still a "British System."

The Pig and The Python



These two photos were circulating when we were in Sarawak.

This was a really bad case of indigestion



George's Arrival

April –May, 1967

We had an early holiday mainly because the power system at the school was broken. A lot of students were sick before this. We can manage without power but not without water and so the school was closed a week before our holiday was to start.

We went to Kuching via the new road- so much faster and cheaper to get there. While there, we had some clothes made for our trip home and we also spent time with the travel agent planning the trip. We also bought some books to bring home and we did manage to buy a bit of gold jewelry.

Charlie had to go to Simanggang to get a medical for his job at Du Pont. He was able to see a Canadian doctor who is also a CUSO volunteer. He has now added a new trophy to his list- "George." Charlie was coming home on a bus and a huge snake was seen in the ditch. Pretty soon the people realized that this was a very big snake. So three or four of them (including brave Charlie) got out and killed the snake. It was a King Cobra, over 12 feet long and quite large. They had cut the head off and so Charlie brought this treasure home. George was put into a Maxwell House coffee jar with formaldehyde and he was brought back to Canada that way. Charlie didn't look great because he had fainted while giving blood in the hospital and had a gash on his head. At this point, he weighed one hundred and thirty-eight pounds.

Last Monday, another King Cobra was found near one of the boys' dorms and it is now also a trophy in the Science lab. Snakes that big are rare because most of them have been killed. They are supposed to taste like chicken when cooked but I think I would prefer chicken.

There are many staff changes right now and many volunteers returning home. It is doubtful that they will be replaced because of an issue over salary with the Malaysian

Government. Two of our new teachers are Form 5 graduates from last year; in fact one has taken over a senior history class. The locals do not want us here in spite of the fact that they have no trained teachers to replace us. There will be Peace Corps volunteers because the American Government pays their salary.

After listening to the radio this morning, we think we may be touring more of Europe on the way home instead of traveling to the Middle East. There was also some fighting in Kashmir reported yesterday. We won't know about some of these places until we get to the border. As long as we don't miss India, it will be okay.



Form Five Students

Tebari, Hua Mei, Connie, Boi Eng

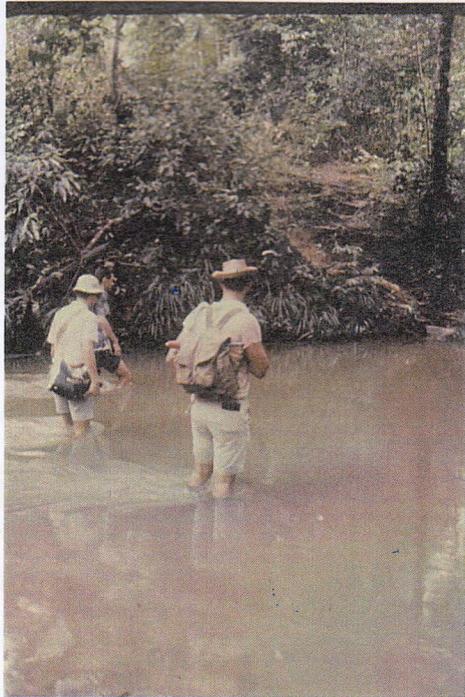
Our Last Big Dayak Festival

June 4, 1967

Because these festivals cost a lot of money, we have a lot of traffic to our house with people trying to sell us crafts. They need the money for the festival. We were given a gift- a hand carved bamboo stick used in their festivals. We bought a hand woven tie and the lady finally brought us the red blanket she was weaving. When we go to the longhouses we are expected to take something. So I have decided to take some baking. We want to get away from the idea that all whites are rich. One of the women who has been making us mats told us she would miss us and in the next breath, she said, "No more money." She asked to have some of my old clothes- she could make them smaller.

I think we can say that at this time we have seen enough longhouses and have eaten enough Iban cakes and sticky rice. June 1 is the Dayak New Year and we are going to a longhouse we were at last year. Two other CUSO volunteers will be coming and also the Third Secretary of the Canadian High Commission in Kuala Lumpur. He is only twenty-two and had just graduated from University. So this will be a big experience for him.

It took us about two hours to get to the longhouse, mainly because some of these people have not walked in the jungle often. Because many of the longhouses are superstitious about people entering when they have been sweating, we all stopped by the river and had a bath. I was quite happy because I wouldn't want to take a bath in front of fifty people because my sarong would probably fall down. The Ibans can undress in front of you like magic. We started the evening with curried beef and pork and of course all types of cakes. The evening was similar to other festivals we have attended- lots of food, Tuak and Arak, speeches, dancing, ceremony. At 2 a.m. we went to bed. We expected to sleep on the floor but Barb and I got to sleep in a four-poster bed with curtains all around (see photo on the next page). We had to be up at 7a.m. for the flag raising ceremony.



One of the Many River Crossings En Route to the Festival



Barb, Denis, Charlie, the Diplomat, Me, Ussack and Aling's Family

After the flag raising and breakfast, the big ceremonies of the day began. However, we had to leave because (Leslie) the Canadian Diplomat had to be back in Sibul that night. These people were very friendly and were pleased that white people (especially Leslie) would come to their special event. So we left the longhouse carrying our luggage, bottles of Tuak, dozens of cakes, and yards of rice.

We went to many other longhouses in the school area in the next three days. The only staff to show up were the Canadians. These people had prepared special meals for us, they had dressed up in traditional costumes, and had really gone out of their way for us. All we could think as we left each longhouse, "What if we hadn't showed up?" We now know just to touch the glasses of Arak to our lips, we know to make sure we eat certain people's food, and we know just to have a good time. In fact, we joined up with people from one longhouse and went with them for one of the days as they visited other longhouses. In several of the longhouses, every single person was there to welcome us and it was really hard to get away. We were given a number of gifts because they knew we were going home.

These last four days have been just amazing and we feel very fortunate to have been here in such an interesting area with such wonderful people.

We have many holidays here because of the different ethnic groups and religions. Tomorrow we celebrate the Prophet's birthday. Last week it was the King's birthday, then the Governor's birthday and so on. We celebrate Chinese New Year, the Dayak New Year, Hari Raya for the Muslims, and also all of the Christian celebrations. It makes it difficult to cover all the school curriculum and with Forms 4 and 5 writing British exams, covering the curriculum is very important.



Me Offering Arak To Old Man

(Ussack, our student is in the background)

Preparations To Return To Canada

A Sad Time

July 4, 1967

Charlie decided to make a big box (I called it a coffin) to put some of our belongings in to send home. If things aren't safe in that box, I don't know how they ever could be. It weighs several hundred pounds and it took fifteen boys to carry it to be put on the Land Rover. Mind you, it is a long way and it is very hilly. We need a certain length to get our blowpipe in. We have been given a lot of gifts from the longhouses and they have been included. We took the box to Sarikei on Saturday, it went through customs okay and it is on its way to Singapore where a ship will leave for Montreal on July 15. The biggest problem mailing the box is that it will arrive in Canada before we do so we had to inconvenience some people to unload it for us.

We have been having difficulty with final plans for our trip home. There has been a War in the Middle East (the Six Day War) and also problems in Kashmir. We know we will be going to India but between India and Europe, we will just have to play it by ear.

We celebrated Canada Day and Canada's 100th birthday in Sarikei with a number of other Canadians. We had roast beef, jello salads, fried chicken, pan browned potatoes, and finished the meal off with a cake with one hundred candles on it.

We never dreamed that we would receive so many gifts when we left the country. The list includes floor mats, old plates, a stamp album, numerous gifts of food, books, brass ware, a chess set, more hand woven ties, and the list goes on. We made a tour of the longhouses to say goodbye quietly and twice had to sneak out while people sat and cried. Sometimes you wonder if you have been of any value but these last two days made us realize we have made many friends. We are the only staff members who have had anything much to do with the longhouses.

On Sunday, we went to the bazaar to visit many of the Chinese families and say goodbye. One family had prepared an eight-course dinner for us. We saw many of last year's students and it was like celebrating Chinese New Year all over.

On Saturday there was a party for us and tomorrow there will be a Tea. We have been given more gifts and wonder where we will put them all.

We cleaned our house and gave away a lot of our possessions. One of the local longhouses had another special farewell party for us.

The very last evening we were at the school, we had many students at the house. They wanted to ask us about family planning. My last lesson in Geography was "How To Control The World's Population." I told the students to come to the house if they wanted to talk about it. About forty came and they were very interested and planned to tell their parents about family planning.



Connie and Hua Mei Just Before We left The School.

(These two girls remain very special to me)

Kuching To Kingston

July- August, 1967

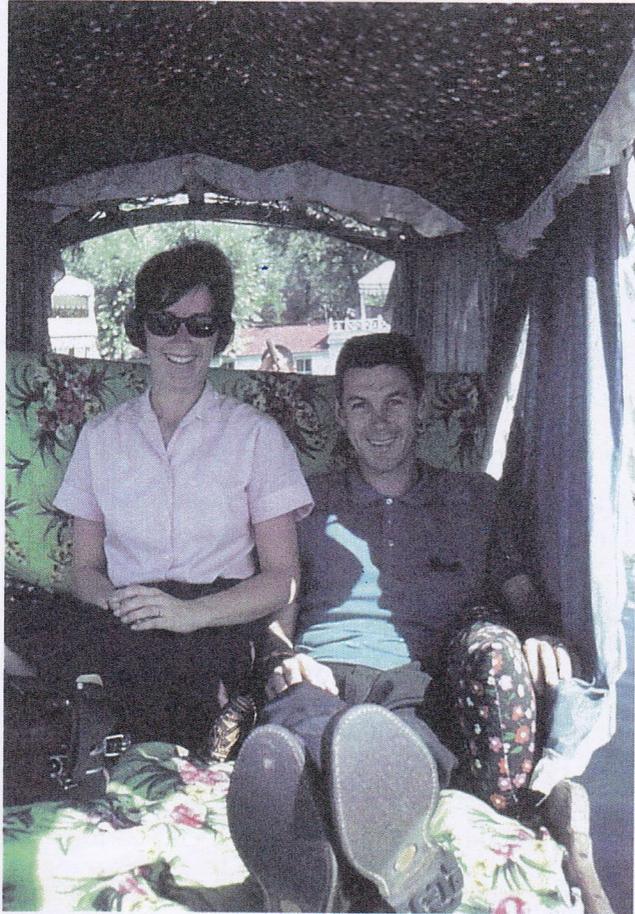
I will describe only the highlights of this amazing trip. In spite of the Six Day War in the Middle East, we were still able to see a bit of that region. We were both very tired and perhaps didn't enjoy this trip as much as we might have. After two years, we just wanted to get home and get back to a routine.

We left the school on July 20 and had a short five- hour trip to Kuching. What a difference the road makes. We still feel that Kuching is one of the nicest places we have been to. We spent two days in Singapore shopping and eating some great meals. Then it was on to Bangkok where we were impressed again with the Thai people. The large number of American soldiers and tourists was noticeable. Charlie left my camera in the airport in Singapore and the airlines had it flown to Calcutta where we picked it up. Imagine!

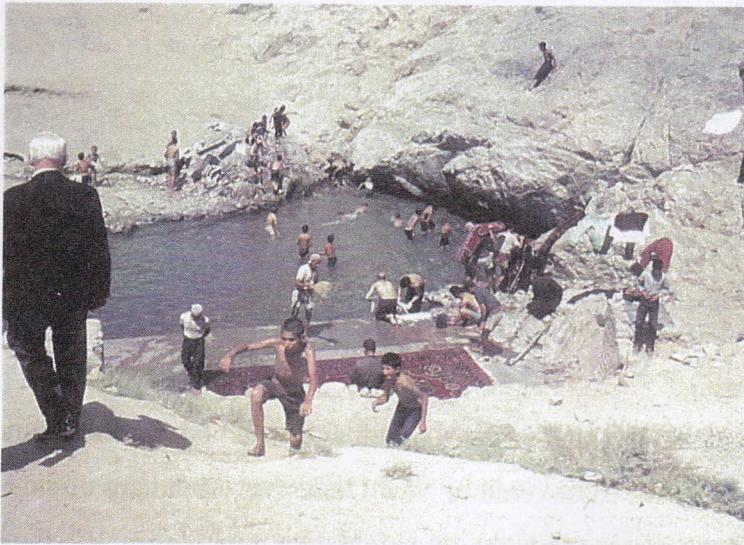
India: (July 23-August 4).

India has been quite an experience and we will never be able to describe what we have seen. Actually to sum up, India is like one big "cow byre". There are cows everywhere – these sacred animals are very thin and they are allowed to go wherever they want. There is no beef served in India. We expected the filth and the poverty and we were not disappointed. There were people everywhere and this included a lot of beggars. It was very congested and we felt suffocated. We rented a car and went out into the countryside, saw the farming areas, visited a small silk factory, and were glad that we stayed in a typical British colonial hotel in our first stop-Calcutta.

We met with four other CUSO volunteers in Benares (Varanasi) the Holy City of the Hindus. We stayed in very cheap hotels (one was \$1.00 per night for the two of us). We got up at 4:30 a.m. to go down to the Ganges River and see the people bathing and going



Floating Around Daal Lake in Shrinagar, Kashmir



Washing Carpets Outside of Teheran, Iran

through special purification rituals. We saw several cremations along the shore- people come to Benares to die and have their ashes thrown on the Ganges River. We walked through the narrow streets, visited silk and brass shops, toured Hindu and Buddhist shrines, and overall we had a great time.

We spent one day in Agra and visited the Taj Mahal. The five of us (all CUSO) got a tour from the train station that lasted all day- saw the Red Fort, the Mogul Palace, and then caught an efficient train to New Delhi. We spent three days in New Delhi, mainly getting tickets and visas in order for the rest of our trip. We found that the farther west we came, the cleaner India seemed to be. We are very tired of India.

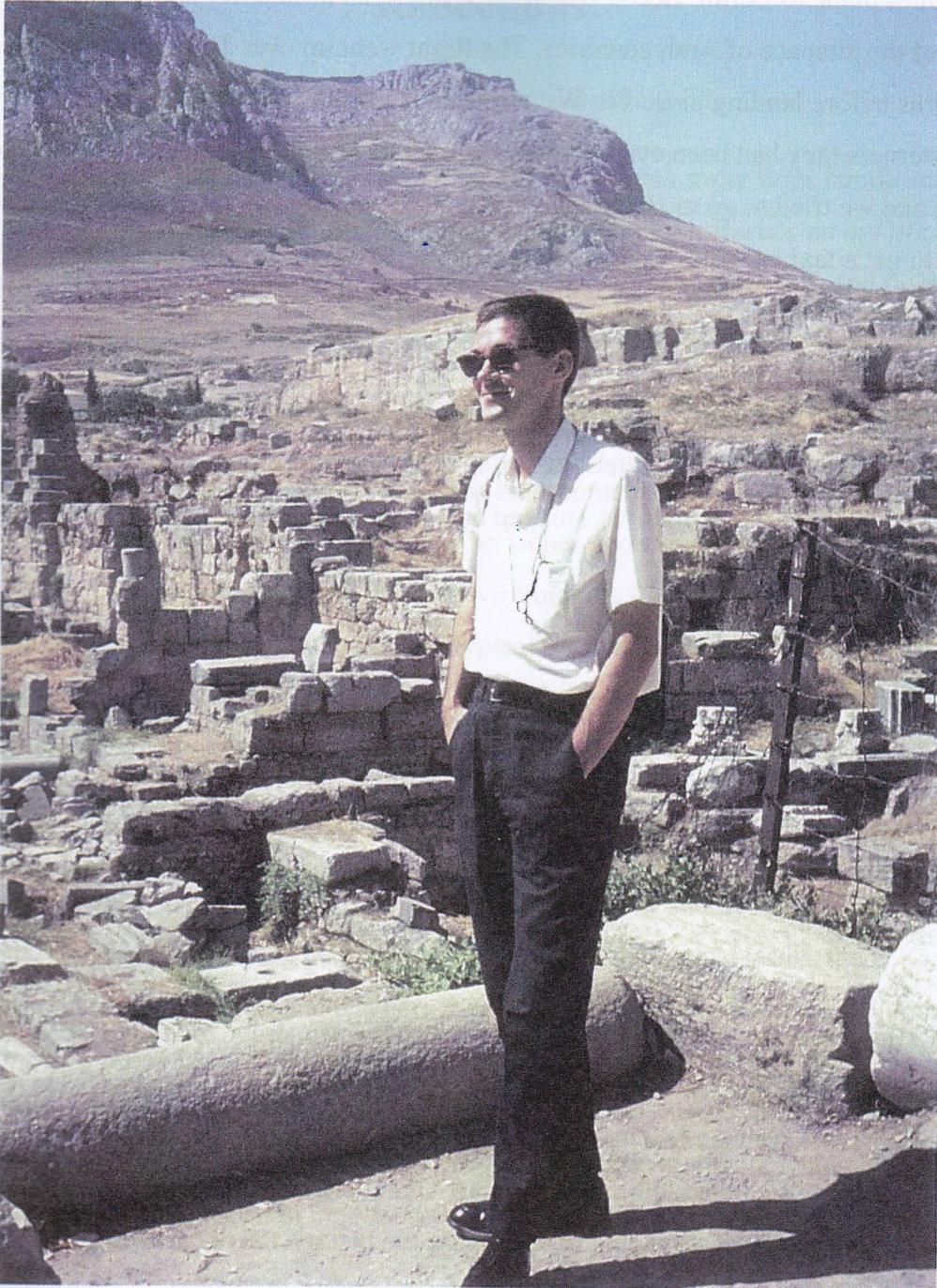
We flew up over the Himalayas to the "Vale of Kashmir," an absolutely beautiful place. We lived on a houseboat on Daal Lake for three days. One big problem here is that there were restrictions on photography because India and Pakistan are fighting over Kashmir (they still are in 2010). We really splurged here and bought a number of pieces of furniture for our house including the coffee table, end tables, lamps, and jewelry box. Our houseboat came with several servants. We took a boat around the lake, visited a carpet factory and a Mogul castle. This was a great experience.

Iran (August 5-8)

Teheran was a modern, clean city. We took a tour to Rey, an old Persian capital. We saw tombs, a place where Persian rugs are washed, and generally found the city hot and dry. The highlight of our visit was when we saw the Shah of Iran tearing by our bus in a sports car. We enjoyed our first hamburgers and hotdogs in two years.

The Middle East (August 8-12)

We had a great trip planned through Egypt and Israel but that was cancelled because of the Six Day War. We discovered in New Delhi that Canadians could travel to any Middle Eastern country so we thought we would give it a try. We flew in a Pan American



Charlie in Corinth, Greece.

Airlines plane to Beirut. Because it was an American airline, we had to fly completely out of the airspace of Arab countries. The flight went up over Turkey and then over Cyprus before landing in Beirut. We had friends in Beirut but like all the other Westerners they had been evacuated. We did go to Tripoli and the Cedars of Lebanon area and we tried to go to Damascus, Syria. However, we were stopped at the border and had to get a taxi back to Beirut. In spite of these adventures, we found Lebanon to be a beautiful country.

We stopped in Istanbul, Turkey for two days. This amazing city is in both Asia and Europe. We went to the Covered Bazaar and saw the highlights of the city. Then we took a boat ride down the Bosphorus, stopped at a small village for lunch and had a great time studying the locals.

Europe (August 12-17)

Athens, Greece, is the most beautiful city that we have ever seen. We spent a day climbing over the ruins and read up on a bit of the history. We took a tour out to Corinth, Argolis, Mycenae, and enjoyed the countryside. We saw the place where Paul had preached to the Corinthians. We took another bus for miles along the seacoast past lots of tourist areas.

Italy was a very interesting country. We went to Naples, drove to the top of Mount Vesuvius, toured around Pompei, spent a few days in Rome. There was a lot to do here and we spent more than two days just walking around the city. It was easy to figure out the bus routes. We loved touring around the Art Galleries in Florence but realized that we needed to do some more reading to appreciate the history and the art work.

We flew on to Zurich Switzerland and spent two days just looking around and resting. We spent our last few dollars buying a cuckoo clock that we still have.

We arrived in Halifax where we met the Huskilsons. Charlie stayed on for a few days and I flew to Ottawa, then to Lanark, and Kingston to get ready for the start of school.

Reflections

June, 2010

Looking back, I realize that these two years spent in Sarawak away from family and friends and living in a totally different culture had a profound influence on my life. Yet my three visits back to Sarawak, in 1990 with Charlie, in 1999 by myself, and in 2010 with Ron, also played a part on my reflections not just about the two years, but about life in general.

Our worldview is developed as a result of our environment- home, school, community, faith, workplace, and geographic location. The values and mores we develop are different from those of people who live in different environments. I found this out when I went to Sarawak. My letters indicate that I had the typical western attitude of “helping a part of the Developing World” without realizing the many things I could learn from these people. The letters written towards the end of our stay show a different mindset- thank goodness.

For the students, we did make a difference. I have been told that by many of my former students. The volunteers from many countries (Canada, the United states, the U.K., Australia and New Zealand) and teachers from other organizations like the Columbo Plan, made it possible for them to go to school. The former students we met in March of this year included government and office workers, teachers, nurses, business people, politicians, and an Anglican Bishop. The foundation for development in any country is universal education, as seen in the Malaysia of 2010.

People don't have to be perfect to be influential- I sometimes wonder how the students at Saratok learned anything. There were eleven teachers from foreign countries, all with their own accents (American, British, Indian, Chinese, accents, as well as the Canadians and Australians). Most teachers were not trained as teachers and in addition, had no idea of the local culture. The students were often successful, in spite of the teachers.

Be careful to listen to the students. The two biggest issues at the school were morning run and language issues. Students could speak only English in class and if they were caught speaking their own language, they could be disciplined. Imagine! (It is true that their exams were in English). At 6:30 a.m. was the dreaded morning run, held seven days a week. The bell rang, the students had to run about a mile, then shower or jump in the river, and get ready for class. Morning run, in particular, was a leftover from the British Colonial era. Perhaps more consultation with students and the local staff could have avoided some of the tension and a compromise for each issue could have been reached.

You have to go to “where people are at” rather than expect them to come to you if you want to get to know them. Charlie knew how to do this very well. He spent time in the longhouses learning about weaving, planting rubber, looking at stamp collections, and in general talking to the locals. That is why he was so well remembered.

You need to have “long term vision.” I was not aware of the success of many of the students until years later. I taught many senior classes who wrote examinations set in England. I learned twenty-five years later that their geography and religious knowledge results were good. We were also not aware that there were many Christians in the school. Each time I return to Sarawak, I learn of more former students who have been fine Christians for many years. Some have even told me it was “because of what I taught in religious knowledge.”

Take time to get to know strangers, especially new Canadians. Charlie always discovered that “people just stopped what they were doing, sat on the floor and talked.”

You cannot always look back and wish you had done things differently. You cannot always look ahead and plan to do things differently. You have to “grab today” and make a difference.