

Interview No. 25 - S.E. Asia - June 17, 1977
Bob & Ruth Zile, with Alden Jones & wife Dora

Jones

Bob, you're working here for the company, of course, at the Longview operation, but what are your duties and your responsibilities here now?

Zile

I'm construction foreman for the 12 Road East District area in the woods, and I've been back from the Far East for about -- eight months, is it?

Ruth

Yes. Since last July.

Jones

Good enough. And Ruth, to get your voice on the recorder here, what was the first year that you and Bob went over to S.E. Asia?

Ruth

January 1970. We were over there for 6-1/2 years.

Jones

Six and a half years. Do you have any particular regrets for the six and a half years, or are they all happy memories?

Ruth

Well, they're all fairly good. It's been a wonderful education, that I hope Weyerhaeuser never charges me for.

Jones

Very good. Dora, when was your trip over there?

Dora

1970.

Jones

And for how long were you over there, approximately, in 1970?

Dora

We were there for two and a half months, then I came home for six weeks, and went back for seven months.

Jones

Okay. Very good.

Zile

We saw you down at Zamboanga one time, didn't we?

Dora

Right.

Jones

Okay, now we're sitting around in a circle and we may have to kind of raise our voices just a little bit, to be sure that we're being recorded sharply. Bob, what are some of your very strong impressions of your experience over there, in that country?

Zile

Well, the biggest impression that formed in my mind was the Filipino people themselves. I like their fun-loving nature, and, as far as their work force, they were a wonderful work force and with a little guidance, you could really do things with these people, and I thought they really responded. If I ever had the chance to go back, I think I would like to go back to the Philippines. Indonesia - that was an experience, too, but there were quite a few rough moments in that area. We had some pretty crude living there.

Jones

Well, we want to get into that a little later. What particular place in the Philippines were you happy to visit?

Zile

Well, we liked our camp at Milbuk - that was in southern Mindanao. We flew in to Davao by commercial plane and then took the company Beechcraft - there was about a 45-minute flight, I think there was - to camp. Our housing was right on the beach. We had a nice lagoon to swim in - a little bit warm, but every time the tide came in, there it was. About 20 steps from the house and you were in the water.

Jones

What were your activities there at Milbuk, for the company?

Zile

I was involved in road construction, same as we are here. I think when I went over, Weyerhaeuser was just actually starting to get organized over there from the outfit that they bought out. I think they bought Elliott Bay Timber Company. Actually I don't think Weyerhaeuser had been involved in that operation too long at that time.

Jones

They bought Elliott Bay in 1966, and you went over there when?

Zile

In '70.

Jones

1970? They had owned it, I guess, a little less than four years, but they, of course, were still getting organized,

changing over to our company's system. Did you have any particularly memorable experience down at Milbuk, that you always think of when you reflect back on that country?

Zile

Well, I think -- there again, we go back to the Filipino people and their fun-loving nature. I think it's those parties and how they accepted us that stood out, don't you, Ruth? The people, it was just like they live next door here - just like your next-door neighbors.

Jones

Did they visit back and forth very much?

Zile

Oh, yes. We visited back and forth, and we had parties and picnics. Our houses were fairly open - there were no windows - so we could hear the people next door and we could smell what they were cooking and what they were talking about. It was just kind of a pleasant thing.

Ruth

Well, if an excuse for a party was thought of any time during the day, you were in on it, just in a five-minute notice. It didn't matter whether you were ready for it or what - if it was just a bowl of rice you took. Still you were supposed to go.

Zile

And you had to go - the party wouldn't start unless you came, or they'd come and drag you out.

Jones

What did they do at the parties?

Zile

Well, the parties are a little different than we have here. Right off the bat, the women and the men would all separate. The men would sit out on the veranda and the women would sit in the house 'til things got going. And then later in the evening everybody would come out and somebody would have to turn on the music and somebody would have to lead the dance, you know. Then they had -- sometimes you'd play a few games, and then the people would start mixing a little bit. And then, of course, consuming gallons of San Miguel beer, that was quite standard for the whole proceeding.

There was always the ever-present lechon or the baked pig that we got. It wasn't too appetizing at first, but after a while you got used to it and you liked it, you enjoyed it. Kind of a grilled skin, and a lot of fat on it. I don't know how a pig could live with so little meat on it

as those pigs have, but they make it. Their cooking was quite simple. I think Ruthie can describe the cooking, more than I can.

Ruth

Well, it was according to what they could afford, as far as cooking is concerned. The way that they butchered was outstanding to me. For instance, a full-grown cow was more like a heifer for size and it was butchered right in the gravel road. The hide of it was the ground covering, and the main thing was to get there by 5:00 or 5:30 when it was just barely daylight before the flies got to the meat so that you could pick out the piece you wanted so it could be cut out and you could still get it home before it was swarmed by flies or before the dogs could get to it. It impressed me how little they could really afford. For instance, the heart was divided up in several tiny pieces and that's all a family could afford. It's just one little bit of heart or one little bit of liver or that sort of thing, would feed a family of five or six children.

Zile

It impressed me after the butcher shop closed. The dogs were up on top, licking the chopping blocks.

Ruth

Yes, that was a little bit later in the morning, like about 10:00 or 10:30 when the. . .but the main thing was to shop early in the morning for the meat that way. About one animal a week would come in to that butcher.

Zile

And then there was the odor of dried fish. You folks could smell that, too. It wasn't a bad smell, but if I smelled it now, I'd know right where I was. In the morning, another thing that impressed us was the roosters crowing. The roosters there would crow all night long.

Dora

I was impressed with how well you got along with the native ladies there and how friendly they were to you. I went shopping with you one day. Tell about that, because I can't remember just what we did. We went into several stores, and they were all so happy to see you.

Ruth

We walked wherever we went. I don't remember - a Filipino usually has an umbrella - if you had an umbrella or not. The main thing they were concerned that we should shade our white skin, if you remember, and the American doesn't usually worry about an umbrella to keep the sun off of us. But that was very necessary for them to keep their white

skin. And then we went to the barrio, which is an outlying little village just outside of our camp. And I think we went to Waray. Their little bitty shops don't seem to be bigger than like about 8-10 feet wide, I guess, and not much deeper so often. But then, you could find everything - thread, material, doilies, umbrellas or just about anything you wanted - crackers - it was very varied what they sold.

Zile

It impressed those people that - I think, for one thing, that Ruth would eat their food, anything that they would bring over, no matter what it looked like, Ruth would try a little bit. And whenever they cooked anything, they'd bring it over for Ruth to try. And I'm glad she was home and I wasn't home yet when they did a lot of this. The men themselves, it impressed them that we were willing to go out and actually work with them, setting chokers or whatever jobs they were doing - that we would pitch in and help. This impressed the people because, in the past, the white people - the round-eyes, as we called them - that were there, wouldn't work with these people. They would just give directions and scold them because they didn't do the job right. So they were kind of a little bit leery of the outsiders. But after you're around them for a while, and they got used to you and accepted you, they were wonderful people.

Ruth

Did you ever ride those little motorcycles that there was just enough room for two people to sit in?

Dora

No, but I did get to ride on a water buffalo at Milbuk.

Ruth

Oh, did you?

Dora

Just to say I had done it.

Ruth

Well, I should have tried, I guess.

Zile

Those Hondas with a sidecar were sure tough. They ran over the gravel roads and carried chickens and bananas and sacks of rice. I don't know, there'd be about 4 or 5 people - of course, those people are small, but they'd crowd in there and that was their transportation. It just cost a few pesos to go on that thing.

Ruth

Well, the main impression or the most enjoyable part for me was the swimming. Then when the tide went out, was the

coral and the seashells and even the tropical fish and the little pools and all the beauty. There was always something new to see and find.

Zile

Oh, Ruth, tell them about the typhoon, when we got the typhoon warnings. They come over the telex that there was going to be this typhoon. And Ruth was home, you know, and she didn't know what to do when the typhoon comes. She said, "Well, I'll ask a neighbor."

Ruth

Well, I went over to Nita Capaciti - he was one of the pilots, Buddy - and I asked her, "Now what do you do when a typhoon comes?" "Oh, well," she said, "you wait 'til it hits and then you do what you have to do." She didn't recommend any preparation ahead of time for a typhoon of which, here on the coast, we never have in the state of Washington at all. That's unheard of.

Zile

And the typhoon did come, but Milbuk was protected by the hills and it broke it up before it hit the town.

Ruth

One coconut tree fell down and knocked out all the lights.

Zile

And the waves from the ocean reached our patio and the house jumped up and down - all the logs from the bay, and they were all bouncing up and down and the house was jumping up and down.

Ruth

They would come and hit the front of the patio and jar the whole house. I went out at 3:30 in the morning to watch those waves come in and go. I was wondering if it was going to come on in.

Zile

I think we had a more pleasant time than the people who came later, when Dick Nesbit and some, when Roberts was there. They got involved in this conflict of the Moslems, but when we were there, there were very minor skirmishes and a few little problems, but we never were afraid to go into their area. We were always accepted. We went down to the far end - what was the name of that community?

Ruth

Sinangkangan?

Zile

No, the other way - where we went with the jeep.

Jones
Palimbang?

Ruth
No, Palimbang was further down - this is past the airport.

Zile
Well, we'd go down there with a jeep and the planks would be torn up on the bridge. And they'd look out and see who it was and they'd drag the planks out from under the house or anyplace and put them on the bridge. We'd drive across, they'd pick the planks up again and put them under their house. We used to take candy for the kids, and so they accepted us.

Dora
We were there during that typhoon, and I remember the coconut tree putting out all the lights and the air conditioning, but what impressed me most was that armed guard that circled the guest house, all of the time.

Ruth
That coconut tree, now, I was quite surprised - the very top is the choice eating, and because it laid right at our bedroom door, the Filipinos made sure that they could have that, that they would cut that up and cook it and eat it as a vegetable. Of course, I didn't know what to do with it. The very top of the growth, the brand-new growth of the coconut tree is their most choice eating.

Zile
It doesn't seem like it's the big things that impress you - it's just a collection of little things, like for you the armed guard and those various noises. To me, I can always remember the mill pond odor from the veneer mill, from the stale water. Just all kinds of little things. The people's honesty. You could leave a camera in your truck and, in the middle of the night, somebody would rap on the door and say, "Your camera, sir. You forgot it in your truck." We couldn't do that anywhere around here. They were a superstitious people. They had ghosts in the trees and various superstitions. That one house that nobody lived in very long - what was the reason for that, Ruth?

Ruth
Well, the porch was continuous. You could step up and walk clear straight across the end of the house and go down at the other end. It didn't stop, in other words, and that was a bad omen. The Filipino, when they move into a new house, there's quite a ritual they go through before they will enter the house. They have coins - that means for wealth. They have some rice - that means they'll have enough

to eat. I've forgotten - there are various other things that they make sure they have in their hands as they cross the threshold.

Jones

To ensure good luck and ward off bad luck?

Ruth

That's right.

Zile

Then, while we were building the clinic, we took some of those houses and made a temporary clinic. And there were some violent deaths there - people that died from the result of an accident and whatnot - and then when we restored the new clinic, then they were going to revert back to housing. But we never could get anybody to live in that house. We'd try to con them into it by having guests stay there and whatnot, but people just didn't want to stay in there. We couldn't hardly admit defeat, you know, and we didn't really know what to do about that.

Jones

Were you ever able to overcome that?

Zile

Not while we were there.

Ruth

Now there was a terrific landslide there burying that one fellow. And they were ready to release a white chicken, wasn't it?

Zile

Well, they had to have a ceremony because they figured the spirits would come and take something, unless they could find the body. They'd come and take them away. He was buried very deep in this landslide and we were about four days trying to find him.

Ruth

They used a dragline, wasn't it?

Zile

They've got a hard life in lots of ways. Death is hard for those people because, here you bury a man and you don't realize what the mortuary and the undertaker do for you - they take a lot of the grimness out of it. Those people even embalm their own people, and they just do everything themselves.

Ruth

Well, the carpenter shop made the coffins, you know, and then his foreman's brother was killed, and it was during a terrible

storm and no one could come in to do the embalming. They had to do that job themselves right in their own little house. It's a very rough life they lead. It seems like a lot of extra hardships.

Jones

Bob, you spoke a moment ago about some little skirmishes that they had had with the rebels, the Moslems. Do you remember any particular incident of this kind that occurred?

Zile

Well, most of the problems were over land - generally land-related problems. These people would be working in their coconuts, and there were several killings and several shootings. Ambushes and bullets flying back and forth, but you couldn't really connect them with this Moslem rebel situation. The law doesn't protect the people there, like it does here. Now, for instance, in their little pool hall, there was a stabbing. I would say there were probably 20 witnesses to that and yet the killer walked off scot-free. There was nothing ever done about it. Their law enforcement is kind of liberal. They might follow something up and they might not.

Ruth

Well, one Christian farmer had quite a rough time there. The Moslems - for instance, one farmer was working with his two little boys in the rice field, and I think three Moslems came up to him, wanting some coconuts. Well, he told them to go ahead and take the coconuts. "No, you go up the tree and get them for us." Which he wouldn't do. Well, they just shot him, just like that. I remember one morning our Beechcraft taking out one fellow with four bullet holes through him. He lived and was all right, but it was from one of those same sort of deals.

Zile

The Moslems in that area were kind of mean - they were mean-looking.

Ruth

They never worked for the company, either.

Zile

In Indonesia, the Moslems there were different. They were easy-going and happy-go-lucky.

Ruth

They'd just as soon observe, in Indonesia, the Christian holiday as well as their own. That just meant that much more time off.

Zile

They'd fit into the community and the neighborly society.

Ruth

Yes, but not in Milbuk. They held right to themselves - strictly to themselves.

Jones

That's an important point. I'm glad that's come up.

Zile

I'm not an authority on the history, but I think the Moslems were sort of a sea people. They were fishermen, small-time pirates and smugglers. They were independent.

Ruth

There was only one little, short Moslem that made any type of friendship with you at all. I don't know how that came about, though. He did come to the house.

Zile

Yeah, he came to the house and he'd be friendly if he was by himself. But if he was with the rest of them, he wouldn't even smile or wave. But if you got him by himself, a one-on-one situation, he'd be friendly.

Ruth

Many times I would ride down the road from Milbuk itself to Wasag, and if there was just one lone Moslem on the road, he would smile - you could get him to smile. But if there were two or more, never.

Zile

I think these people, the Filipinos in general, they were fairly intelligent people. Most of them have a little bit of education if not more or less. If you like them, you can feel this and I think they return the feeling.

Jones

Well, in your work, Bob, out in the hills, what was your impression of the difficulties of building road as compared with the problems in this country, for instance? Soil and rock and so on.

Zile

I think your problems are about the same as here, in our own locality here. We've got higher hills here, but those hills were every bit as steep over there, if not maybe even steeper. The biggest problem there that we had was on our new grades, the slides - we had a lot of slides. Then as the road got a little older, it got better. The logging was cable logging and high-lead logging. Again, the terrain was rough. It wasn't a rapid method of logging because they were logging through standing timber, which posed lots of problems, but their production was good. These people have logged for 10, 12, 14 years, some of them. They've made a career of logging, and they knew what was going on. They could do the job.

I think teaching them to coordinate and take part is the biggest problem. When we got there, these people wouldn't speak up. We started having meetings and on any controversial subject like safety and whatnot, and gradually they got so they spoke up. Eventually they got so they'd even argue with us - which is what we were after. We wanted them to feel that they were on the same level that we were, and I think we did a lot of work in that direction.

Jones

You spoke of lots of slides - what kind of soil was it over there?

Zile

Well, it was - the ground was rocky, it went from solid rock to loose rock. What caused the slides primarily was small, pea-sized gravel surrounded by mud and the tremendous rainfall, usually it started dribbling down the steep banks and it'd get bigger and bigger and cause large slides. The roadbeds themselves didn't slide out. Usually it got covered from on top. That was the biggest problem and we just had to put on tractors at night and that seemed to take care of it, so we could keep the logging going. Rock is plentiful, beach gravel and the bank gravel. We had the right equipment and the right people and we made it.

Jones

You spoke of getting the fellows to talk in meetings where the subjects weren't too controversial and you mentioned safety. Were you able to train them into safe procedures to improve their safety record over there?

Zile

Yes, Alden, to a certain - I think to a certain degree we did. I think we made them a little more safety conscious. If you had a man working on some piece of equipment, he did a good job of watching. They took care of each other. They had a kind of buddy system there that you don't have here. These people, they look out after each other. And they were agile. They were an agile people. They were quick on their feet and alert. I think this kept them out of trouble. And then we did get some of our safety message across to a certain extent.

Ruth

I couldn't get over the wearing of tennis shoes all the time over there.

Jones

Instead of cork shoes?

Ruth

Oh yes. They all had tennis shoes.

Zile

Tennis shoes did the job, though. That stuck to the log and when you got in all that mud there - there was a lot of fresh-water streams there - you could wash your shoes off. They were cheap. And then one forgets too, our work force probably took a few more men to do the same job we do here. But those people are small. They don't have the strength that we do. They're agile and quick, but so far as brute strength, they just don't have it.

Ruth

I was impressed with their schools, their schools in the camp. Of course, there were guards all the time, you know, about that Milbuk School. The first through the sixth grade, I think, was something like 1,000 students, you know. And in that rough board, oh, it was more ready for a chicken house than anything else, I thought. Here the stairway had all of these many thongs of all of the children. They would never step inside the schoolroom with their thongs on, shoes on.

Jones

Take them off on the porch and go in barefooted?

Ruth

Yes. And many holes and uneven boards. They really were wanting their education, and how they were getting it, well, the rough boards, that was minor.

Zile

Living there for six years, though, we picked up those habits. We tend now to still kick off our shoes when we come to somebody's house. Another thing that was quite - most of those people spoke English to a certain degree. Maybe not quite all of them but most of them did. As a matter of fact, they had to talk with each other because with as many dialects they'd run into trouble and they'd have to go to English to straighten out. They'd rather talk in their own dialect because they could talk a lot faster and more comfortable. They would get going but if they had a problem go right back to English until they got it over with. I imagine that Dick described the mayor quite thoroughly. You know, Droz Ali?

Jones

He did mention him and made some comments about it, but what would you add to it, Bob? How would you describe him?

Zile

I keep thinking of old Mexican movies, when they had old Pancho Gonzales and these old generals. The first time I met him, he invited me to the house and he had his bodyguards, four of them I think, with machine guns. He says, "You sit here. You take coffee." That was an order. I thought, "Boy, what are we getting

into?" He had a lot of people who didn't like him and he had lots going for him, but I think he was an intelligent man. You got that impression after you talked to him. He was trying to better his cause.

Jones

Now he was the mayor of what city?

Zile

He was the mayor of the Province of North Cotabato, and that here would be the equivalent of, probably like here we'd have a county commissioner, he'd be more like a county. So he wasn't the mayor of the city, he was the mayor of this province.

Jones

Okay. And, what town or city did he use as his headquarters?

Zile

A little town called Palimbang. When we were - naturally, you could only get there by boat. And then eventually as we bettered the logging road. We built a road into the town. They had somewhat of a trail there already. This little town had. . .

Ruth

Judge Cautionero.

Zile

The judge was there, Judge Cautionero.

Jones

How do you spell that?

Ruth

C-A-U-T-E-R-O, I think, because he was, oh, the papers for our house had to be notarized and he had that ability. But he had the secretaries that had to hand - he had to type every word on those notary papers because they had no copying machine. So the judge brought down his game of Scrabble from the top of the cabinet and we played Scrabble while this boy was typing out these pages.

Zile

That's a big deal, getting something notarized there. You get three copies: one for yourself, and one for whoever you're doing this for and then they gotta put one in the archives. And then you've committed yourself. Then you've gotta pay a tax.

Ruth

A residential tax.

Zile

A residential tax because they would do this business, so then they hook you for a couple more pesos then. It's quite a process. It took us about three hours, I guess.

Jones

And where was the old rice mill? I've heard of that, but I don't recognize it.

Zile

Well, the old rice mill is in the second village.

Ruth

Demolo?

Zile

Demolo. No, no. What was the first village? I guess it was the first village.

Ruth

Sinangkangan?

Zile

Sinangkangan was the rice mill. It seemed to them, this activity seemed to start there. I don't remember what it was.

Jones

This was near the first village out of Milbuk, when you drove up the coast?

Zile

Yeah. The old road used to go right through the village, and then when we built the road, we didn't want to haul through the village, so we built that road around. We went across the water a ways from the front and we went behind that village and back down the coast.

Jones

This was after the road went around that point that stuck out of the water where you had to kind of build a roadway around the edge of the water?

Zile

Yeah, the same one.

Jones

Okay, and that's where the rice mill was. How do you spell that?

Ruth

S-I-N-A-N-G-K-A-N-G-A-N. Sinangkangan.

Zile

Now, these little villages, the barrios they call them, now each one has its own market day. Some of them are on Sunday and some

of them are on Monday, and so on around. Now, Milbuk itself and the little barrios that nestled right up next to it, I guess the population there was around 5,000 people, at Milbuk and the surrounding barrios so it was quite a little community.

Jones

Sure, by our standards it didn't seem to be large enough to have that many people, but they lived close together and large families in small shacks and huts.

Zile

Probably they averaged five to eight to ten people in every house. It was the same thing in Samarinda on the Mahakam River in Indonesia, where we lived. That town had over 200,000 people in it. You would think it was a town the size of Chehalis. It didn't look like Chehalis, but in size it was about that big.

Jones

I wonder if maybe we couldn't move on to one of the other areas now and give equally good coverage of your experiences and impressions there. If you happen to think of an anecdote or an experience back in Milbuk, why, let's get it in for the record. But where can we jump to next? Did you spend any time at all at Isabela, on Basilan Island?

Zile

Only for a visit. Ruth stayed there once for almost two weeks while I went down to. . .

Ruth

Oh no. Now, that's Bakapit.

Zile

That was Bakapit?

Ruth

Yeah, Isabela, now that's Basilan. In the Philippines.

Zile

Oh yes. I know now.

Ruth

Just visiting.

Zile

Yeah, visiting. That was a beautiful guest house.

Ruth

Don and Leonor.

Jones

It's a nice place, sure.

Zile

It had all those big bookcases and I just felt like I wanted to put my feet up there and just sit there and read forever. It was cool and nice. Those are wonderful people, those Wesel-skys. They were wonderful hosts. We used to enjoy going there.

Jones

They certainly are.

Zile

But I didn't like their guard post. I was always scared to death of all those guns where you had to go through the gate.

Jones

Alongside the mill?

Zile

Alongside the mill. Jumping over those slabs, sawdust piles.

Jones

Okay. Well, let's move on then. Let's move across the water there to Sabah or Borneo, and you certainly were there at both Bakapit and Silam. Didn't you stay there for a time?

Zile

Just only for visiting.

Jones

I see.

Ruth

Bob was never in Bakapit. I was there two weeks when he was first sent down into Balikpapan.

Jones

I see.

Ruth

Yes. I had to remain there because they didn't have a visa for me to go on down. And that was in May of 1970. Then in July of 1970 I got to go with him for 10 days.

Zile

When Ruth stayed there - when I went to Balikpapan - we sent her a telex that I was coming to pick her up. And the message got garbled, and she got the impression that we were going to stay there. So she came up to the airport to meet us, in the company rig.

Ruth

That was LaHad Datu.

Zile

And she didn't bring a suitcase with her. We just grabbed her and put her on the plane and away we went. We landed in, we finally wound up in Davao that day, and some dignitary was coming through, so we didn't go to Milbuk that night. There we were standing against the hotel and Ruth had old scrubby clothes, you know. We were going to go out to dinner that night.

Ruth

Yeah, Bill Sim came through, you know. He wanted to see what was going on, what Bob's impression was of Balikpapan.

Zile

I walked by this little drugstore in the hotel and it had about three or four dresses hanging on the racks, you know. I just happened to spot something. One of them caught my eye but I didn't say anything. We went up in the room and Ruth, she was talking and complaining because she didn't have anything to wear. I said, "Just a minute." So I went downstairs and I grabbed this old kind of red dress with a Filipino embroidery on the front. I took it upstairs and gave it to her and said, "Here try this." It just fit perfect. To this day, she still wears that dress. I think it - well, in pesos equivalent to U.S. it cost about \$3.

Jones

There aren't very many dresses that have that kind of a story connected with them, do they?

Ruth

No.

Jones

Now look. This time when you came to meet Bob there at LaHad Datu at the airport, thinking he was coming to stay, wasn't that the first time that I met you folks over there?

Ruth

That is right. That is right.

Jones

I was there early in '70. Sure thing.

Ruth

Right. And Eslick hadn't interpreted Nardo's message correctly, and that's - because from Bakapit, we came by boat to Silam, see, and then we had to get into a pickup or something to come clear into LaHad Datu. And it was just to meet the plane, thinking it was staying. And it wasn't staying. Of course, at that time, the Beechcraft was allowed to go into Indonesia and all over, you know. So, the next trip down - of course, it wasn't too long after that that the Beechcraft was shut off from going into Indonesia altogether.

Zile

Another time - I can't remember, of course, the time I was there - but we flew back commercial and we went to Jesselton or what's the name, what do they call it? Kota Kinabalu.

Ruth

You're speaking of March 1970, when we - that was our first leave out. We were on visitor's visa the whole year and a half in the Philippines. In other words, every 59 days we had to go out of the country to renew that visa. That is why, when we saw you folks, we were travelling so much. Yes. Because - and then going there the first of January, that 59 days fell right in March and that's when we went down to KenBay the first time to Silam and Jesselton or is. . .

Zile

Kota Kinabalu.

Ruth

Yeah, Kota Kinabalu. And then in May was his first time he was sent down to Balikpapan. I had to remain in Bakapit. That's when we saw you. And then in July we both went down.

Zile

That was the first time I knew that, you know, when your flight was interrupted that the airline would put you up in a hotel for a night, you know. We'd been used to getting taken every place we went, you know. We went there and a car took us to the hotel. We stayed in the hotel, and I was trying to pay the next morning and, in broken Chinese and Malay, they were trying to tell me that the airlines took care of everything, and I couldn't understand that, why the airlines would pay for that. And that's the first Chinese dinner we got involved in. They had fish and beef and something else. I thought that you chose between them, but you got all three on the menu.

Ruth

Yeah, you see, what was on the menu was what you got.

Zile

Instead of three courses. Well, the first impression was, "Well, this isn't what I ordered." I ordered beef and here I got fish or something first, you know? Then pretty soon they took that plate away and here comes what I ordered, you know.

Jones

Still didn't have your beef?

Zile

No, I got it the second time. I thought, "Well, this is getting a little better. This is what I really wanted." Then pretty soon here came the third plate.

Ruth

The menu was written up as if it was a choice, but actually you were given the whole thing on there, before the dinner was over.

Zile

I thought first we're not going to get very much to eat here. I'm going to have a problem.

Jones

So, you never did locate yourself there in Sabah then, and work in the operation.

Zile

No. I really - like I say, Ruth was there a little while, but I wasn't even there long enough to even orient myself. We just passed through. And I think I went out with Harold Burkhalter for a couple of hours and the old fellow who died.

Ruth

Fotheringill.

Zile

Fotheringill.

Ruth

Dick Fotheringill.

Jones

While you were there a couple of weeks, Ruth, did you have any unusual experiences that we ought to record here, as something indicative of the country?

Ruth

Yes, during the two weeks, there were two or three of the women decided to go into LaHad Datu to shop. I was greatly impressed, first of all, how clean LaHad Datu was. Even sidewalks to walk on, you know. We didn't have that in the Philippines at Milbuk. No sidewalks.

Zile

You really cashed the check there, didn't you? You had checks there, too, if I remember right.

Ruth

Yeah, that's when I was getting around to telling you. I found out that a U.S. check would buy nice jewelry. I bought my first gold bracelet and earrings there in LaHad Datu.

Zile

What was the jeweler's dress?

Ruth

Oh, well, they're Chinese jewelers dressed in just pajamas. Kind of a striped white pajama material, and that's what they worked in and that's how he kept his shop.

Zile

We keep mentioning the Chinese, Ruth. We have - the Chinese are the business people of the Far East and they are prevalent all through that area.

Ruth

Yes, but anyway, Mr. Eslick told me that the bank would accept my check. There wasn't any problem whatsoever, so I got to spend my first American money on jewelry.

Jones

That's certainly an experience worth remembering. Okay. Is there something else that you remember about those two weeks at Bakapit?

Ruth

Well, I was quite interested in, there again, with schools, and the children had to get in a little boat. The company people seemed to live across the bay sort of, and even the children, they had to get into a boat and paddle across that water to come to the dock in order to get themselves to school and the same thing in the afternoon. They would get in those little boats and cross that bay. They seemed to be tiny children, too.

Dora

Were the Marxes there at that time?

Ruth

Yes. Yeah, Larry and Reba were there right at that time, yes. In fact, he retired from there shortly after that, it seems to me. I think they were packed then to go home. I think they left in June right after.

Dora

I remember that when we were there, they were talking about some child had been killed by some sort of fish in that little bay.

Ruth

Oh, is that right?

Dora

And it was quite dangerous.

Ruth

Yes, it's considered. . .

Dora

Although the Marxes kept going swimming.

Zile

Those tropical waters have got all kinds of creepy crawlies in them. A few snakes, bugs, you had to wear tennis shoes when you went in swimming to keep from getting scratched up.

Ruth

But, you know, those islands were beautiful down there, around that KenBay area.

Zile

Didn't that remind you of the San Juan Islands?

Jones

Quite a lot.

Zile

I thought it did, you know, with a little imagination. That was a beautiful place.

Jones

They had flying fish there, too.

Ruth

Yes, I have seen them.

Jones

Out in the bay.

Ruth

Yes, we saw them too.

Dora

Yes we did. At the same time we could look over and see these big cliffs where they got the material for this bird's nest soup.

Ruth

Yes. Right.

Dora

And up until then I hadn't known what they made bird's nest soup from.

Ruth

That's right. Yeah, that was my education, too.

Jones

Why don't we jump on down to Indonesia then for your experiences? What was the circumstance when you, Bob, or the two of you first went to Indonesia? Just to start the story from the beginning.

Zile

Well, I think mainly, I think in the Philippines we had served our purpose. We'd trained the people in our work force and they had responded well. We were ahead on roads. We had a good comfortable lead on roads. We felt that they could keep that lead. And so, we really worked ourselves out of a job, I guess. The work was done and we had the new operations starting in Indonesia.

Jones

That was the Balsam operation?

Zile

Yes, that was - the original operation over there was a 100 percent Weyerhaeuser operation, I think it was, and we went down to start that. Then this camp at Kenangan, the present big camp, that belonged to - who was that fellow?

Ruth

DeLong

Zile

Yeah, a fellow by the name of DeLong and we didn't have anything to do with it at the time. I think somebody was negotiating for it. We started this and went up this old muddy river and that was a real ride there. That was a kind of dismal-looking place. We just about got demoralized. We lived there. That's where we had grass roofs, had this long-house that was divided up into four or five rooms, I think it was. And that was our bedrooms. We'd all eat in the same room. We said good night like the Waltons to each other down the line. They proceeded to try to build some roads, get the outfit going. That's all we had for a solid year and a half was rain.

Ruth

We were there one year. Now, it was known as Balsam when we first went in. When did it change to Kemantes? I've always referred to it as Kemantes.

Jones

Well, Kemantes was the little river where the camp was established, but the area was called the Balsam area because it extended from Balikpapan up toward Samarinda. But Kemantes was the name of the camp because it was near the mouth of that river.

Ruth

Which Owen Perkins said had a big alligator in it when he first went in there. Do you remember that?

Jones

No, I don't. How did that go?

Ruth

Yes. He said there were sitings of quite a large alligator in there two or three times and then apparently it moved out when more activity, more equipment and things came in and fixing up a little place where the sort yards were. We moved down the first of July 1971, from the Philippines to Kemantes, and I'll never forget the American woman to bid me goodbye as being the first American to go upriver was Mrs. Betty Sheaffer. She was at the dock at Balikpapan and I was getting on the boat, I felt like I was going off the end of the earth there.

Jones
And you were going where?

Ruth
Up to camp.

Jones
Up to camp?

Ruth
Yes, on this little boat, this little. . .

Zile
That was, what, that boat was an hour, oh, hour and a half trip, I guess, in that old boat, you know. It just went out and went putting along.

Ruth
The boatboy, Muhammed, is still employed now, yet with the company. He's the oldest.

Jones
We'll have to see him when we go over there.

Ruth
Yes.

Jones
But this was in 1971?

Ruth
Yes. July 1971 because Bill Johnson said, "There will be no more American women spoiled in Singapore. You will go into camp. We've got to get the women into camp." So, at that time, it was this nepa roof long-house. It had four bedrooms and it had wall divisions, but the walls didn't go clear to the point of the ceiling or the roof at the top, at all. And that's the reason Bob said we could tell each other good night, you know. And you could just hear right through those walls.

Zile
And then after it got, oh, little bit older, then the snakes started coming in. They'd crawl along. . .

Ruth
Pythons, usually. The small pythons.

Zile
Yeah, the small pythons going after rats.

Ruth
Because the mice were in there then.

Zile

And I always told - we had an outhouse - and I told Ruth, "Now, when you go out there at night, you take a flashlight with you." She did and this walkway was made out of little small logs and one day she, night, she went out there and stepped over one of these small logs and it crawled off. It was a young python. Looked just exactly like those logs.

Jones

And Betty Sheaffer said you were the first white woman to what?

Ruth

To go up to camp to live, which I was. She was living there in Balikpapan. Happened to be there in Balikpapan there at the time, you know. The office was there in that army barracks - wasn't it or something like that?

Jones

Something like that. They had rebuilt it the year before, when we were there.

Ruth

Yes. And she came down to the dock to bid me goodbye.

Zile

Backing up a little bit, when we came in we came in through Jakarta, and we didn't know anybody. There was nobody there to meet us. Here we had these five suitcases and the kids were grabbing the suitcases and trying to grab your passport, I was trying to hang onto my billfold.

Ruth

The Indonesian boys, you know.

Zile

We didn't know where we were going, and I didn't want to be there in the first place. We had an awful time. Then, we had a - now you know what a battle for a taxi it is to get a taxi in that country. You really have to barter and dicker. You don't know where you're going, you don't know where they're going to take you. But this fella insisted he knew where Weyerhaeuser's house was. This office wasn't an office like we think of it. It was in a house out in the suburbs. And I'll be doggoned if he didn't take us to that house.

Ruth

And Hans Jent was there.

Zile

And Hans Jent was there and he paid for the taxi. And they were squabbling yet when I went to bed out there. They were still arguing over the fare.

Dora
Was this in Jakarta?

Zile
This was Jakarta.

Dora
We understand that.

Ruth
You went through that then.

Dora
Oh yes, a number of times.

Zile
We had some awful times in Jakarta. There were all kinds of cars there but they were always out partying someplace and we were always left holding the bag. Then it got, it got pretty good towards the last, they got better cars. Then it got pretty good. Somebody always had your passport and brought it back, just before you stepped on the plane. Never knew what was going to happen. I don't know how we made it.

Jones
Your lucky day.

Zile
Yeah. And then when we got up to Kemantes and got settled down and started to work, that was - I guess every so many years they have a wet cycle. We got tangled up in another one of the wet cycles. They'd just about dry out, get ready to do something and the rain would come. It'd come and there was no work and then the rain poured down. Just almost the whole time we were there like that. Oh, we got a couple of good dry periods. It was awful ratty timber. It was a small operation. Just about the time the weather was breaking and things were looking up a little bit, not too good, but a little bit, we started this new camp and they decided to start all over again. That was about the time that Kenangan got going and organized and that became a Weyerhaeuser operation. They decided that they wanted to start another operation. So we went up on the next river and started a camp. We went up there on the barge with all the equipment. I went up by myself first.

Jones
This was up on the Mahakam?

Zile
On the Mahakam, yeah.

Ruth
That was in the first of April of 1972.

Zile

Masten, he went up a week or so before I did and I laughed at him because he got tapped to go up there. Next thing I knew, I was going up there.

Ruth

And Masten came home on the month home-leave.

Zile

Masten came home and said, "You can take care of it for the month." And we never got out of there. And Ruth, she stayed back. I didn't know a man could sink so low. We got so we were just like animals up there. We'd eat out of the cans, throw an old spoon in the can, everybody would share the same spoon, you know, and we wouldn't shave.

Ruth

That was at Senuni.

Zile

At Senuni. There was an old warehouse there with, oh, kind of a shaked roof. We put plastic bags on it. The natives lived in one end and we lived in the other. It had dirt floors. Oh, that was an awful place. We were building the log pond. We were working the tractors night and day. Here the tractors, they were moving dirt right alongside of us. That shack was just a-jumping up and down all night long. Then, it got a little bit better and we got Ruth to come down. They made some workers barracks, so we threw a mattress on the floor in the worker's barracks and that was our bedroom. We'd go up there and sleep at night. I would still eat down at this place with the Indonesians. I can remember one day Ruth, she chased a little python under the refrigerator. And we cooked on a little smoky kerosene stove. Really tasted like kerosene. And our transportation to go home at night, we'd ride the grader up the road to camp.

Jones

Kind of primitive living.

Ruth

Well, Kemantes, now, back to Kemantes again. When we went in there, in July of '71, we were in this nepa roof, pioneering that, for about four months. And the company at that time had these mobile homes from Australia, which they called caravans. And we were given, I think, three or four, four, and Kenangan had the rest. That was 35 feet long and 10 feet wide, and that was our home for four and a half years. We moved into that then from the long-house and. . .

Jones

You're still at. . .?

Ruth
Kemantes.

Jones
Four and a half years?

Ruth
Yeah. We lived in that, that's been with us. . .

Zile
We lived in that house. They moved that house. When we moved, we moved the house with us.

Jones
Okay. Now, you're going to have to straighten me out on the Senuni camp and the Kemantes camp.

Ruth
Yeah. Well, at Kemantes now we were there, like I say, July of '71, and then in four months is when we moved into this trailer. This mobile home came into that camp. That was the ultimate of all ultimates, I can assure you.

Jones
It must have been.

Ruth
And then April of '72 is when he started pioneering then Senuni, also known as Selerong. But Senuni is the little tiny stream there right by that camp and that, the Indonesian always called it Senuni because of that. Selerong is the village upriver a ways.

Jones
Selerong?

Ruth
Yes. S-E-L-E-R-O-N-G. And then we pioneered Senuni for about four months, until the barge brought our trailer in.

Jones
Okay, how long after Bob had gone up there did you come up there?

Ruth
He went in April. He was there and I came in June 15.

Jones
About two months later. Okay fine. Now, what else happened up there?

Ruth
Well, that was rougher than Kemantes for pioneering.

Zile

But the production and getting the organization going worked well. We went up there and very shortly we had enough road to start moving logs. It just got started right.

Ruth

Well, I think about the - now, I went in there about the middle of June. Now, June 15, and it was right at the first of July they had that first log going into the river.

Zile

We took care of our own problems and the timber wasn't all that far away, you know. . .

Ruth

But the long-house, at Kemantes, had its oil barrels that water could be put into, you know, and I could - right off from the bedroom that we were sleeping in, which had no windows, no nothing else, we had our own mosquito nets over our beds there. It had this little room that was our shower room, you know, with the slats in the floor and you just dip the water and put it over you. But we never even had water in Senuni then, when we went up there. That form of pioneering. The bucket of water that I had, that was put in the sun so it'd kind of warm up and then I would carefully shower with that or scrub off, I should say, and then with the water left, that's what I washed my clothes in and hung out for the next day. I had this - I went in there with two batches of clothes because I wasn't going to stay in very long. Well, it ended up I was there for six weeks, before we came out the first time.

Jones

This was up at Senuni? All right. While you were up there, Ruth, did you do the cooking in the camp?

Ruth

Some. Yes.

Jones

Seems like you mentioned that to us in a letter you wrote.

Ruth

Yes.

Zile

She ended up cooking and she was the camp nurse. She was the first-aid attendant.

Ruth

Yes. They didn't send up any Indonesian nurse or anything to patch people or with their scratches or whatever happened to them. If a man was hurt bad enough, he had to be put in a

boat and taken way down the river to Selerong and put in a hospital there. There was a doctor there. Otherwise, why we had to ask for band-aids and merthiolate and a few things like that for awhile there, until they could get going. It was quite awhile before they had someone in there that could be the nurse, an Indonesian nurse to. . .

Jones

Meanwhile, you took care of the cuts and the scratches.

Ruth

Yes. Yes. And, for Boerdjani now the Indonesian that is still there, he was on personnel then and - if he put a bandage on a fellow, it didn't ever seem to last so well as mine.

Jones

And what was this Indonesian's name?

Ruth

Boerdjani. Let's see, B-O-E-R-D-J-A-N-I. He is still there. He's still at Senuni. If you go up, you will see him or he'll come down to. . .

Zile

He speaks good English.

Jones

Okay, what other exciting things happened up there?

Ruth

Well, did Clyde Cassell tell you of the pet monkey he had for awhile?

Jones

I don't believe he did. Don't remember it. How did that go?

Ruth

Yes, he was a little fellow - hardly a foot high, I suppose. An Indonesian had caught him and he was full of mischief. We'd had to keep him tied up or he would get into the garbage or our food or whatever and you ask Claud Masten how they fed that little thing beer.

Jones

Beer?

Ruth

Beer. Yes. And it had. . .

Zile

Oh, that little monkey got drunk. Oh, man, he couldn't do nothing.

Ruth

He couldn't - he would go climb up a pole and he couldn't stay on top of that, he'd fall off and slide all the way down on the other side. But now he learned a lesson.

Zile

The next morning he had a hangover. And he was just. . .

Ruth

But he would never taste that stuff again.

Zile

He never would drink again.

Ruth

Claud and the fellows would - they were never able to get him to touch another drop after that one incident.

Jones

Oh, this getting him drunk happened only one time?

Ruth

One time.

Jones

Oh, gee.

Zile

And since that I've heard that a monkey would never drink a second time.

Jones

They're smarter than people, aren't they?

Ruth

Yes, that's right.

Jones

Well, that's interesting. How did you get your supplies up there?

Ruth

Our food, right at the beginning a lot of it came from the Kemantes camp and was - the helicopter brought in some, when it was coming in.

Jones

Direct from Kemantes up to Senuni?

Ruth

Well, boat too. The tin foods came by boat. Some from Kemantes and some from Samarinda and then we started ordering from Samarinda. But as far as that village up the river, Selerong, it

just didn't have enough food to supply us at all. And then gradually, over a period of time, why we had a connection with Samarinda that we could order our food and it'd come in.

Zile

And then we had boats come in - boat connection by land and boat. After we got going we didn't really eat that bad. We weren't too bad off. I think one of the funniest things I remember was - tell them about the time that the Swiss ambassador was there and we burnt the noodles and threw it in the toilet. That really got. . .

Ruth

No. I don't think we'd better tell that one.

Zile

All this royalty came to see us, you know, and it was all just very short notice, you know.

Jones

Where did they come from?

Zile

Oh, they came from. . .

Ruth

Jakarta. He was the ambassador. . .

Zile

About fifty people came all at once but I suppose we were involved with about 20 of them.

Ruth

Well, his purpose was to look at the timber for a furniture factory for the Swiss government to set up a furniture factory.

Zile

He had his wife and. . .

Ruth

And daughter - teenage daughter. She was about. . .

Jones

These were Swiss? Or Indonesian people?

Ruth

Yes, from Switzerland.

Zile

And some Indonesian officials. So Ruth, she made a real quick menu, macaroni and noodles.

Ruth
No, spaghetti.

Zile
Spaghetti and meatball. You know, kind of a meat dish, you know. And she burned it so she scraped the pan. She threw it in the toilet but she forgot to flush the toilet.

Ruth
This was at our own little trailer home.

Zile
And then after the officials came, of course, this ambassador's wife, well, she wanted to go to the restroom, so Ruth invited her up to the house, you know. And here these burnt noodles were in the toilet, just like somebody threw up in there. She just about died.

Ruth
But that was an interesting incident. I was the only American woman right then. Marie Masten was out on leave and some of the others had transferred to Kenangan camp. Of course, being the ambassador of Switzerland you see that was the police from Tigrion. They really sent up many Indonesians. There was, I think, about every five feet along our road was an Indonesian policeman with him and his wife and daughter there and they took a tour out in the woods. He wanted to see the timber because of this furniture factory and so it was very interesting.

We had to - well, Wes Welch is the one that saved the day. Our communication was so poor, I didn't know he was coming in but he came in at 11 o'clock that morning from Kenangan. And the cook at that time in Kenangan was a Filipino fellow and here came in all this chicken, already cooked, ham and all because Wes was managing then and he knew we were not set up to try to entertain anybody at all. There was no way we could cook for anybody like that and so that was a blessing, I'll tell you. Salads all made and everything all made, that I never will - I never have gotten over thanking Wes for saving the day on the food.

Another thing, I didn't foresee so many Indonesians. It takes a mass of rice to feed the Indonesians, of course, and they won't eat pork either so the ham wasn't their food but they got by with the chicken. And then to top it off here came young George Weyerhaeuser too. I wasn't expecting him but the spaghetti - he was interested in that part. So I had something to please him too, so we had quite a day that day.

Zile
For such an isolated area, we sure met a lot of nice people. It's surprising the people who stop there - authors and various dignitaries, you know, which there never would be ordinarily, you know. And then we meet them in a place like that.

Ruth

Yes, a priest from France had taken a vacation with the pure reason of collecting bugs and insects and spent a week in camp.

Jones

He came to the right place, eh?

Ruth

Yes, he knew, somehow had found out information, that he could get any specimen there. He couldn't speak English too well. Of course, we couldn't speak French but. . .

Zile

Ruth and him, boy, they talked bugs to beat the dickens. Neither one could understand each other but yet they communicated.

Ruth

He had a very extensive collection.

Dora

It was while you were in this camp that you were in the helicopter wreck?

Ruth and Zile

Yes.

Zile

We were going out on local leave. Well, up there every two months we were supposed to be able to get out and go to Singapore or whatever, where we wanted to mostly, but we generally went out about every three months. It was too much to go every two months.

Ruth

It's too difficult to travel, you know. We would have to - we'd start out in the morning by boat, go down the Mahakam River, which was a four-hour trip by boat to Samarinda - to Handel Dua, which is little past Samarinda because Handel Dua is where the taxis then came, in various sizes and shapes and descriptions, from Balikpapan and. . .

Jones

Across the river from Samarinda now.

Ruth

Yes, and down river from. . .

Zile

And that was a two-hour trip then to Balikpapan.

Ruth

Over a very bumpy road and. . .

Zile

However, now the Russian road is in use, so they land up the river a little further. But then. . .

Ruth

Well, right across from Samarinda they go now.

Zile

Then once in a while then we would be fortunate enough to ride the helicopter out. Then we could make that trip to the airport in about. . .

Ruth

Twenty-five minutes.

Zile

Yeah, a little bit under an hour and about 45 minutes to another camp or something like that, depending on how we went.

Ruth

Because we were - see, Senuni is 80 air miles from Kenangan. Kenangan, I should pronounce it.

Zile

Well anyhow, on one of these trips the tail rotor got bent up and down we went. We were flying about 2,000 feet and it crashed on the Russian road. I don't know how the pilot ever hit that road because we weren't over it. And it hit so hard that the engine and mast of the rotor fell down through the frame of the helicopter and the rotaries, they sliced the top of the bubble off, over our heads. Then the fuel tank, it caught on fire and I saw that and I thought, "Well, we'd better get out of here." It didn't really do too much.

Ruth

No, their fuel isn't that good. So the other tank never did catch on fire.

Jones

Low octane, eh?

Ruth

Evidently.

Zile

That was a gas fire. And we just got out in time. We were just about to be cremated.

Jones

Total wreck?

Ruth

Yep, 47, that happened on that old Russian road out of Balikpapan at Kilometer 47. So the first Indonesian that came along,

he was a taxi-driver and he had several Indonesians with him. He stopped but he wouldn't help us. And the next one was an engineer and his passenger got out and he was the one that took us back to the office at Balikpapan or he took to the office in Balikpapan, I should say, and we made our connecting flight and got on out to Singapore. But the pilot, Jim Carmichael, he had to remain with the helicopter.

Zile

Ruth was sitting between us and yet she was hanging on to the seatbelt so tight she put her elbow through the pilot's ribs and cracked a couple of his ribs.

Ruth

Yes, I did. Of course, you know, we were sitting so close together and that was all I could think of to hang on to was that seatbelt. Bob being the heaviest, of course, that's where the helicopter kind of hit first, see, and that's what caused his back injury.

Jones

What other injuries were there besides Bob's back and Carmichael's ribs?

Ruth

Well, that was all.

Zile

Ruth caved in a cheek.

Ruth

Well, that was just a black eye, that's all.

Zile

She got a tremendous black eye out of it and even now when the weather is not right, you know, it turns a little color. But she came out of it pretty good.

Jones

What caused the damage to the tail rotor, 2,000 feet in the air?

Zile

We don't really know.

Ruth

Well, we had a small suitcase and a big suitcase and the big suitcase was with us when we landed but not the small one. So they feel that somehow that little suitcase must have worked out of the rack, underneath the holding band, and must have went into the tail rotor. They even had rewards of many rupiahs, to see if someone could find it, but it was never found. That was the only thing that could - because we just didn't have it with us when we hit.

Zile

People talk about being brave but you don't have time to be afraid and all that, it's so fast. And yet it seems like it takes a long time to come down.

Ruth

The interesting part was, well, I'm forever grateful to Jim Carmichael. He saw to it at all times, he had an out to come down which the NUH - the National Utility Helicopters don't. They take it as a crow flies and if something happens to one of them, they wouldn't have a road to land on, you know. But he was very careful that way, which saved our lives, no doubt about it.

Jones

Well, when a helicopter loses its rotor, then that helicopter usually starts spinning around.

Ruth

Yes. Oh, yes. And what I was going to say was that he switched off right then and put in a mayday call to Balikpapan Airport and they answered it was garbled. They couldn't understand him too well, so he sent it again. This was when we were coming down, but they never answered it and then he had some little box on the helicopter but they never came out to see what happened. And the same thing happened with a Union Oil our English neighbor was killed six months later in - there was 10 passengers in that helicopter. It crashed south of Balikpapan. They sent out a mayday call. It was never answered either. They just don't bother with them, in the Balikpapan Airport.

Jones

They don't know about mayday and SOS, huh?

Ruth

Well, they know about them but then it's just another helicopter coming down, you know.

Zile

You set the clock back, I don't know, about 30 years of your life when you go over there.

Jones

But it landed right on the roadway did it?

Ruth

Yes. Yes, we have pictures of it, showing how it landed and all because his camera, Bob's camera was all right and Jim took pictures of it.

Zile

My camera was out of the case laying on the floor. We picked it up at least 20 feet from the helicopter. Still we took pictures.

Ruth

He took several pictures.

Zile

But you know over here that would have been a big deal, but over there that seems like that is part of the course, just another day. And then - oh, a guy could go on and on about the little incidents that happened - but another - then when we came home once on vacation and then we moved to the big camp and the way we moved was kind of. . . we put everything into a speedboat that we had out of this house which is seven or eight big boxes. We loaded the speedboat up and went down the river and then we stayed in - there's a hotel in Samarinda. We stayed overnight in that. . .

Ruth

That was December of 1975 we were moving out of Senuni, down the river.

Zile

We stayed in that hotel overnight and the boat boys, they slept on the boat and watched our stuff. Then we got up bright and early the next morning and we went on down the river and went out on the ocean. We went up the ocean and we went out that other river where Balikpapan is and up that river right to camp. And that took what? How many hours was it?

Ruth

It was just four hours and 10 minutes getting us from Samarinda down the Mahakam and out to sea and up to Balikpapan and Kenangan.

Zile

And I got seasick.

Dora

Did you spend much time in Balikpapan?

Ruth

Not too much, Dora. The - oh, I just didn't want to leave camp that much. Actually we lived in Kenangan in just three months in '76.

Zile

It sounds as though things have changed, that they spend more time in Balikpapan now. It's a different - I'm just guessing that's it's a little bit different atmosphere over there now. It's a complete change of personnel, you know, and they do things a little different, but they go to Balikpapan quite a bit now.

Dora

I spent quite a bit of time there. Of course, at that time they had a guest house, an old Dutch home. Well, you had been there?

Ruth

Yes, when we came down river we had to stay overnight in that guest house in order to put us in a position, the next morning, to fly out to wherever we were going.

Zile

We couldn't make it. . .

Ruth

Yeah, that's right.

Zile

I always had the feeling in those little towns that they was out to get us. And there was some feeling like that.

Dora

I had an interesting experience. One Sunday morning Les Smith asked me to go downtown with him and they had a little bus which they used there and so we went downtown to the main store down in Bananatown. And Les knew the proprietor and we shopped around and bought some material - he wanted to send some to friends of his in Australia - and then the proprietor took us into the back room and Les said to him, "Show her your gold."

Ruth

That's Djempol store.

Dora

And so the man went over in the corner and rummaged around in some rags and things and pulled out a metal can like we put Christmas gifts in and opened it up and here were all these gold bars and he showed them to me and he gets that gold from the natives and melts it down and then sends it back to India.

Zile

And that fellow there, when Weyerhaeuser first started, we used to borrow money from him to pay the payroll - to meet the payroll.

Ruth

Les did the same, too, in July of 1970 when Bob and I - that was the first time the both of us went to Balikpapan and that's when that Pertamina had the guest house or we leased - Weyerhaeuser leased one house of Pertamina Oil Company. And that's where we lived and the gold bricks he had at that time were small but they were wrapped in brown paper and he was just

kind of pulling them out, like from underneath yard goods or something like that. He had them hidden in that store everywhere. And jewelry - he had every kind of jewelry too that he'd sell you. That's what he would melt down then evidently. I didn't realize he melted them down.

Dora

I never would have guessed it but that's what Les told me.

Zile

He tried to sell Ruth a necklace that was made with heavy gold beads, sort of like. It was around \$100 but now-a-days that thing would be worth about \$800.

Jones

What was the value of these bars that he showed you? Was that mentioned?

Dora

No.

Ruth

I don't know the - I have forgotten what gold was selling by the ounce at that time too.

Zile

About \$36.

Ruth

Was it \$36? And then right across from Jimbos too was the Atomic Restaurant. Did you eat there? Did Les take you there?

Dora

No.

Ruth

There was Chinese food, crab or shrimp or that kind.

Zile

We liked all the things that went with being over there, like the travelling to Singapore and how we got to go to Bangkok and we got to travel around the world to some other places that ordinarily it's out of the range for a man to do something like that. We really enjoyed it. Lots to see. Even though we did a lot of travelling, you look at the globe and there's just an awful lot of places we haven't been.

Dora

And then what determined you coming home?

Zile

I had a small heart attack.

Ruth

That was in May of last year, he had this heart attack. Last week of April of '76, we were out in Singapore on local leave and it was a medical also. He was having considerable back trouble again from the Toyotas and having to go some 70 Kilometers in camp to just get to the job and then all of the driving all day long and the pain was severe. We went out to see what was going on, in April of '76, and the doctor said that his blood pressure was up some but maybe it could be because he ate lunch. Well, we were coming back to the camp when he got sick and then he had the heart attack during the night. Of course the DC3 being right in camp, well they brought him right back out again. We were fortunate with Mary Ellis. She was sick also and she was coming out for a medical and of course she's a registered nurse and she took care of him, coming out.

Jones

That was fortunate.

Ruth

Yeah. May 5 of '76 and that's what determined. . .

Zile

I promised myself when I went over there that if I ever got sick or Ruth got sick that would be the end of our career and we would come home. So we came home. And then we were there long enough. We were almost ready to come. But we had a wonderful time recovering. During our recovery we spent a lot of time in Singapore and we went to Penang.

Ruth

Well, it was a total of six weeks. He was two weeks in the hospital from his heart attack and then they called it - they didn't say heart attack to us - the Chinese doctor called it coronary insufficiency or something like that, I guess it was. But anyway, he could travel by train though, after he got out of the hospital, so we took the train from Singapore out to Penang for five days and came back and we came on home through Switzerland to Montreal and then in Montreal was when we decided to take the train. That would be easy travel for him, clear across Canada, see, coming into Seattle, and that was a good trip.

Zile

Except when we left Winnipeg the train wrecked and they told us to get off the train. The trains were crowded because there was an air strike at that time, we couldn't get compartments together and in my compartment I had my suitcase in it and this car was sitting all by itself about 1,000 feet down the track. I was up front with Ruth and behind that was eight cars that tipped off the rails. There was a broken rail.

Jones

On your way from Singapore to Switzerland, where did you make stops? Did you stay over anywhere?

Zile

We stayed a week in Switzerland.

Jones

And before you got to Switzerland, did you spend any time. . .

Ruth

No. We went to Geneva and were there four days and two days in Zurich and then came on into Montreal and that was the easiest or, I should say, easy travel for him across. Then coming through customs, Vancouver, they took us to be just ordinary travelers. "How long have you been in Canada?" And well, we were in Canada eight days and they wanted identification and we both had our driver's license.

Zile

We never had to show our passports. And half that train overhead was full of my stuff.

Ruth

No. We just had I think we had two suitcases and we had a camera in a suitcase but I thought they were quizzing people pretty strongly about how much they had with them before they got to us. And then they got to us and they dropped the luggage and anything else like that so we came into the United States like we'd always been here.

Jones

This was in Montreal?

Ruth

Well, no, in Vancouver.

Zile

We came through Blaine, see.

Jones

How did you get into Canada?

Ruth

Well, now in Montreal, when we came into Montreal, there wasn't any customs at all when we came into Canada.

Jones

What was that story you were telling me about the Filipino workers at Milbuk coming to you and Orris Burrill, Bob? How does that go?

Zile

Oh, these people formed a union down there and they didn't know how to negotiate with the company so they came to us. We were the supervisors. We had to tell them how to go about negotiating for higher wages and working conditions. We had to help get them organized.

Jones

And you gave them some ideas about that, huh?

Zile

Oh yeah. We gave them some ideas. We thought they just as well learn right.

Jones

And how did it work out?

Zile

Oh, I don't know. I don't think there's - their union was, it was quite compatible. We got, when they elected officials, they always had to go to the Far East.

Jones

You were telling me, too, Bob, about the time Buddy Capaciti was flying Lloyd Roberts and his family out to Davao. What was it that happened that time?

Zile

Well, our airfield was right next to the sea, and we always - when we landed we landed from the sea and then when we took off, we took off from the sea -- no, towards the sea. This little Cessna was taking off with Lloyd Roberts and his wife and baby and Buddy was doing the piloting. It took off. Behind the airfield is a range of mountains which you have to circle a few times to get up height to go over them and just about the time he was over the mountains, the motor started sputtering on the plane. He'd run out of fuel. The pilot checked and double-checked and finally found out that the small baby had crawled up and switched the fuel tanks and got them in the halfway position and the engine was starved for fuel and the plane was starting to go down. So, that's how close they came to piling it up.

Jones

And the little fellow was how old?

Zile

Oh, he was less than a year. He was just at crawling stage. I was riding in this boat over there. I think they called it a palm boat. Didn't they call it a palm boat, those little outriggers?

Jones
Yeah. That's right.

Zile
Yeah. And Erwin Anderson had us in the boat and a couple boat boys.

Jones
This was at Milbuk?

Zile
Yeah, this was at Milbuk. We were going to Wasag because we had to go by sea. There was no land route at that time. I don't know why he was taking it but they had a great big hawser off the tugboat. It was about a three-inch rope, all coiled up. I don't know what they were doing with that small boat. But he says, "Get rid of that the first chance you get." Never thought about that Filipino boat boy. He just turned around and grabbed that rope and threw it in the bay.

Yeah, Bonnie Roberts and I were always trying to get the best of each other, you know. What made this so good, this was unintentional on my part. She was a movie nut and she liked to go to the movies, anytime they had a movie. Anyhow, they used to show the movies sometimes first at the guest house before they'd show them on the screen at the plaza. I was listening to them talk and I thought I heard them say something about a movie for this Thursday night, you know. I don't know why I retained that but when I saw Bonnie I said, "Bonnie, there's a movie at the guest house on Thursday night, if you want to go there." Oh yeah, she'll go. So, she went over and went to it and it was a birth control clinic is what it was, you know. Anyhow, they showed slides and the Filipino people, the men and women, boy they get pretty rough at those things, you know. And she was just embarrassed to tears in there, you know. And she was going to sneak out and get me out of bed because she knew I got up early and had to go by her house. She got up to leave, the doctor walked her home and she couldn't stop. And boy, the next morning when she went by there, she was telling me about it. And here I was innocent. I really thought there was a movie.

Jones
Was there another story that you mentioned a moment ago, Bob, about the boys - there was some rock throwing at the end of it?

Zile
Oh, we showed our movies out in the plaza right outside and the kids all sat in the grass and some brought chairs from home and whatnot and this was a western story and, in one of the scenes, there was a poker game going on and this was too involved and too deep for the kids. They couldn't understand it so they got disgusted and threw rocks at the screen and went home. They took off.

Jones
That was their reaction?

Zile
That was their reaction. And boy when the chase was on and the good guys were chasing the bad guys, oh, those kids would scream and hoot and holler and raise the roof off the house.

Jones
Yes, just like we did 30 years ago.

Ruth, you were telling about flying in Buddy Capaciti's plane there and that he had a little prayer stuck to the window, what was that?

Ruth
Yes, it was a little poem and it went like this: "Grant me, oh Lord, a steady hand, a watchful eye that no one shall be hurt if I pass by." And I thought that was very nice.

Zile
He was a gentle little fellow anyway.

Jones
I always thought he was a little timid - was that true?

Ruth
Timid, but he was very deeply religious, too. He made tapes of, was it a sermon? I think, yes, a Christmas sermon.

Zile
Yes, he was deeply religious.

Jones
What became of him when the company moved out?

Ruth
He's at Davao.

Zile
We think in Davao. He and Nardo got a charter service.

Jones
Well, is that right?

Zile
But I'm not sure about this, it was just kind of hearsay Gordy was telling me.

Jones
Nardo used to work with a fellow by the name of Almaden. Do you remember him in the Beechcraft?

Ruth
Yes.

Jones
I wonder what became of him - you don't happen to remember anything?

Zile
Didn't he have some light aircraft of his own?

Ruth
Yes, he did.

Zile
He had some of his own twin engines.

Jones
I see. He was a mechanic. Yeah. He may have his own planes.

Ruth
Have you heard anything about Lee Jacobson?

Jones
Yes, I had heard that he went down to the Jari project with Ludwig and I'd sure like to get him on a tape because he was over there for so long and he knows so many stories. I'm hopeful that he may come back up into this country on vacation later this summer. I'm going to try to get in touch with his parents who still live out at Kent and find out if they know what his travel plans are so maybe we can catch him when he comes up.

Ruth
Yes, I was going to suggest Reba and Larry Martz. They keep close track of him also, but if the parents are up at Kent, why that would be a sure thing.

Jones
Fine, we'll try them both.

Zile
I tell you, if you get this Marshall Thompson to talk to, he'll crack you up. He's got a big expedition ahead for Boise Cascade. He worked for them, he was hired. And that was in New Guinea or some place and they planned this thing for oh, six months, oh, a great long time, you know, and everything went wrong. They had all kinds of problems. And finally they got it going. They loaded the boat down with all these supplies and they were going to go up to Round River and they were going to be gone for two or three months or something like that. But anyhow, they ended up on a sand bar about two hours' up the river, and there were still roads up that far yet, but they never did, they lost the whole deal, and that was the highest water of the year and the boat, I guess, had to stay there for the next year. They just blew the whole thing right there.

Jones

There have been a number of incidents in airplane flights over there and you mentioned one time when Lloyd Roberts' small son had partly turned the gasoline off. And there was also the matter of the Beechcraft there at Zamboanga that time, when Nardo had trouble getting down for a landing. We mentioned this a moment ago. What was it you recall, Bob, about the difficulties? Something to do with the flaps, wasn't it?

Zile

Yes, the flaps, but he landed that and we didn't know about it until we landed.

Jones

Well, it may have been the same time when I was - were you in the aircraft when it happened?

Zile

Yes.

Jones

Well, was I in it on the same flight? I can't remember.

Zile

I can't remember.

Jones

I can't remember if it was the same flight or. . . I remember he made his approach to the runway and was lined up with it and he started to pull his flaps and they would go down, but then it banged back up. It wouldn't stay down and he went around, because I remember this time. He didn't complete his landing and he went around and tried it and they still wouldn't stay down, so he came down and made a high speed landing with his flaps up.

Zile

We landed one time with Jackson Beaman and he taxied up in front of the terminal at Zamboanga and made a big turn and went off in the mud and sunk that thing in the mud one time. We had an awful time getting that plane out of that mud. You know, an airplane isn't like a piece of equipment or a rig. There's nothing to hook on to.

Jones

No place for a tow bar, huh?