

Teacher Writes Home From Borneo Mission

The following news-letter was received at Christmas time from Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Herbison of Borneo. Mrs. Herbison is the former Agnes Klinck of Stouffville. With her husband and five children, they left Vancouver in August on a two-year teaching mission. Their eldest daughter, Kathie, is teaching in India. Wendy is married and living in Vancouver. She is an accomplished violinist, playing in a Symphony Orchestra in that city. Mrs. Herbison writes as follows:

— prawns and perfumes, rice and radios. There's a bank, a theatre, a swimming pool (SO refreshing these hot December days) and sidewalk eating places where the service is plain but the cooking is fancy. All this beside the famous tidal bore river, Batang Lupar.

Downriver are Malay "Kampongs", Moslem villages of fishermen and farmers. Even on the muddy bank their boats are graceful; but aloft, each with unique design and colorful passengers; they look like dreams of South-east Asia come vividly, unbelievably, true.

One day last month (on official duty) we found ourselves beyond the mouth of the Lupar, in a small boat out in the South China Sea. Singapore was westward, Vietnam a thousand miles to the north, Sarawak only a misty line on the horizon southward. Back to that shoreline, we snaked through sand-bars at the mouth of the Krian along low-lying swampy coast crowded with mangrove trees, then nipah palms (used for sugar, roofing, and cigarettes), stopped at a Malay fishing village where a thousand thatched homes crowded together on pilings above the mud. Along the river bank would sometimes be a sago mill, with booms of logs waiting to be ground into flour. Everywhere were low, muddy padi farms where cone-hatted Chinese or Iban men and women stooped under the torrid sun, planting rice. Tall coconut trees were in the distance.

Our travels took us overland through hilly country charred and smoking from fires set to clear ground for the planting of hill padi, a rice grown traditionally by the Ibans in dry jungle soil. Soon we came to the wide 350-mile long Rejang, went by speedboat (60-horse Johnson outboard made in Canada) for two hours and arrived at Sibul, where

ocean-going vessels were loading rubber, timber, and pepper. Someday perhaps, we'll ascend the Rejang to its "ulu" up-country, and see the Kayans, Kenyahs, and shy Punans ... but now ...

Here we are sliding along another river, this time a narrow stream meandering through quiet forest. We sit low in a long, slim native boat skillfully manoeuvred by a dark Sea Dayak. Monstrous vine-covered jungle trees arch across the clear waters of our winding waterway: an idyllic picture-perfect scene. By trail through a forest of rubber trees, to a real Iban longhouse. What would it be like, this typical communal home of the "Sea Dayaks", makers of legends about head-hunting, picay, and pagan beauty. Fifteen feet above ground for sanitation and protection, 400 feet long ... the front steps are notches in a sloping log. Inside (remove your muddy shoes) a far-reaching "porch" of bamboo strips covered by woven mats. Rice storage bins above, a few old heads hanging around. A young man in loin cloth squatting, trimming wifes for a fish-trap. The old Tuai Rumah coming to meet us — his kindly face smiling a welcome, tattoos on neck and chest, and on hands showing the number of heads. The women and children hesitant, intrigued by Nancy's braids and Brenda's coloring. Sound the gong! (a huge, shaped circle of bronze) with muted hammer; call everybody in — guests have come. We must bathe in the stream, and after a while tea is served, with sago biscuits. (Not a feast, but that's another story, about sinewy men dancing by lamplight, girls wearing silver dollars, gongs clanging till dawn ...). We squat on mats; admire the women's beautiful weaving, play with the pet monkey, pretend to exchange children (the wizened old ladies laugh in glee, their lips

ludicrously red with betel-nut juice). We ache to talk their language, trying by helpless gestures to close the wide gap between our cultures ...

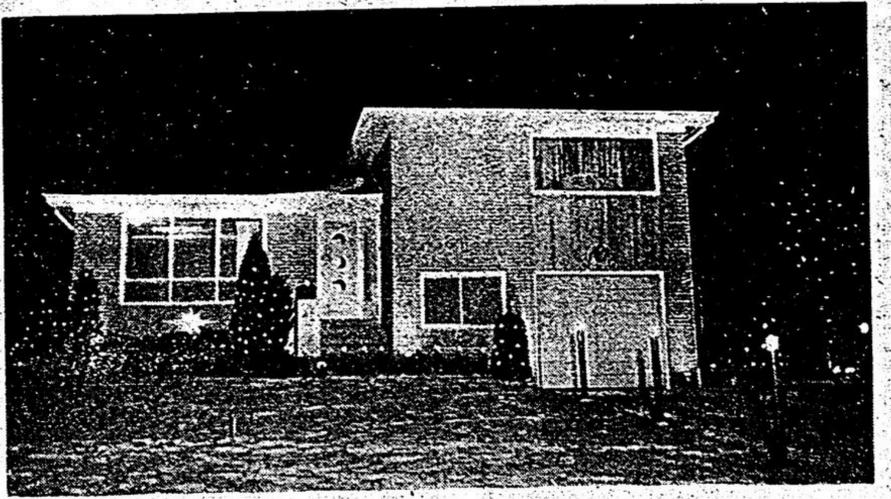
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Exterior Lighting Enhances Markham Home
Markham's several subdivisions took on a new look during the Christmas and New Year's season. One of the most eye-catching was the residence of Edgar Fisher, Paradise Avenue. —Staff Photo.

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Titled Birds of Canada, the book was recently released by Ottawa.

The new publication describes 518 bird species found in Canada and includes 69 color plates and 68 black-and-white line drawings. In addition, there are 380 range maps and a glossary of ornithological terms.

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