ANTHROPOLOGY

Pacific Savages Grow Up

Dr. Margaret Mead reports a striking change in the South Pacific village she first studied 25 years ago. The natives have leaped into the Atomic Age in one generation.

➤ FROM THE Stone Age to the Atomic Age in a single generation is the striking social change in a South Pacific village found by Dr. Margaret Mead, anthropologist of the American Museum of Natural History.

She has just returned from a seven-month trip to the Admiralty Islands to re-visit the people she studied as children 25 years ago. Her observations of a quarter of a century ago were reported in her widely read book, "Growing Up in New Guinea."

In 1928, Dr. Mead encountered a warlike people, dressed like "savages," who were completely ignorant of the outside world. They were greedy, stingy and quarrelsome. But they were described by Dr. Mead as "happy, willful children."

In 1953, she found that "the Manus have modeled their society on what they think an American town is like, that is, a place filled with people who have so many things that they don't have to be greedy, stingy and quarrelsome and to slave their lives away for material things."

She found that they had adopted new laws, new parent-child relationships, that they had new marriage and courtship customs, and even redesigned their clothes and their houses.

They have bi-weekly air service which brings them frequent contact with the outside world. They have a local radio station. And their illnesses are treated with sulfa drugs and penicillin.

However, the anthropologist and her collection has changed as well as the people, Dr. Mead pointed out. In 1928, she came home with a collection of spears, shell necklaces and carved wooden bowls. This year, she brought back film and sound recordings. The pencil and pad that were her equipment in 1928 were replaced by stenotype machine, a tape recorder, telephoto lenses, electronic flash equipment and infrared film.

"The anthropologist, like the natives, has stepped from the Stone Age into modern times," Dr. Mead explained.

Science News Letter, February 27, 1954

ASTRONOMY

New Astronomical Vistas

➤ ASTRONOMERS HOPE to peer twice as far into space as now possible if an "exciting idea" being studied can be made to work.

The idea is to combine photography and electronics in order to get the clearest possible picture of stars so deep in space that their light is too feeble to be caught on present telescopes. At least two groups of scientists have already worked with such a combination in a limited way, and their results have been sufficiently promising so that the Carnegie Corporation is backing development of the idea with a $50,000 grant.

Just as a photographic plate gives a picture of a certain area of the sky, so the astronomers hope to build a "gadget" that will give, on a photoelectric surface, an electronic picture of a section of the heavens, which can then be transferred by way of a television-like tube to a photographic plate. In this way, they could pick up stars much too faint to be seen with even the powerful 200-inch on Mt. Palomar, and the seeing power of smaller telescopes could be increased proportionately.

When light falls directly on a photographic plate, only about one in 200 of the light units, or quanta, reacts with the emulsion to give an image. A photoelectric plate already built by Drs. Andre Lallemand and Maurice Duchesne of the Observatory of Paris, France, is 50 times more sensitive than this. (See SNL, July 25, 1953, p. 51.) Although the device gives a picture of a small area of the sky, its exposure time is limited because of the light of the night sky, present even in what appears to be a dark sky.

A device known as a photon-counting photometer has been built by Dr. William A. Baum of Mount Wilson and Palomar Observatories. It literally counts individual light quanta, but can be focused only on one object at a time. (See SNL, Sept. 5, 1953, p. 150.)

Astronomers now hope that their two- to three-year study will lead to other new methods of putting electronics and light to work to search the heavens billions of light years away.

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The tip of the Washington Monument is an *aluminum* pyramid weighing 100 ounces.

A census of the Pacific gray whale conducted at Point Loma, Calif., counted more than 1,000 *whales,* as compared with 850 last year.

• RADIO

Saturday, March 6, 1954, 3:15-3:30 p.m. EST

"Adventures in Science" with Watson Davis, director of Science Service, over the CBS Radio Network. Check your local CBS Station.

Capt. Howard T. Orville, U.S.N. Ret., Chairman of U. S. Advisory Committee on Weather Control and technical consultant to Bendix Aviation Corporation, will discuss "Weather Control."

ASTRONOMY

Rediscover Comet Not Seen Since 1932

➤ A COMET unseen since 1932 has been spotted again in the northeastern sky, but it is much too faint to be seen without a large telescope.

Known as Comet Borrelly 1932 IV, the diffuse object was rediscovered by Miss Elizabeth Roemer of Lick Observatory, Mt. Hamilton, Calif. She was a winner of the Science Talent Search for the Westinghouse Science Scholarships in 1946, and this is the third periodic comet discovery to her credit.

In June, 1953, Dr. Hamilton M. Jeffers, also of Lick Observatory, and Miss Roemer spotted two comets, Brooks (2) 1946E and Pons-Brooks 1884-I, making their periodic trips across the sky. (See SNL, July 4, 1953, p. 8.)

Comet Borrelly was in the constellation of Canes Venatici, or the hunting dogs, visible high in the northeastern sky, when it was found on Feb. 8. The object, originally discovered in 1904, makes its return visit every seven years, but it was not picked up in 1939 nor 1946. Although its return was scheduled in 1953, observations of it were not made until this year, and the faint object is now receding from view.

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MEDICINE

Plant Debris May Add To Hay Fever Suffering

➤ HAY FEVER that goes on after the pollen season is over may be due to material from plant debris that gets into the air as leaves and seeds dry and blow about in late fall winds.

Evidence suggesting this was presented by Drs. Samuel M. Feinberg, Joseph Rebhun and Saul Malkiel of Northwestern University Medical School, Chicago, at the meeting of the American Academy of Allergy in Houston.

Seeds and leaves of giant ragweed, they found, contain the pollen antigen that is responsible for the ragweed hay-feverite's suffering. The antigen is present in much smaller amounts in seeds and leaves, and these could not, therefore, be practical sources of material for testing or treatment of hay fever patients. However, the amounts might be enough to make plant debris troublesome as a source of pollen and hay fever.

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