

MEDICINE-ANTHROPOLOGY

Aleuts Aid Heart Study

Their freedom from heart disease has led scientists to study their diet in the hope that it may show the way to control of this condition.

► ALEUTIAN Island natives, familiar to American troops who served on remote outposts on the chain of islands between Alaska and Russia during the war, may show the way to a new dietary control of heart disease.

This possibility appears in the report of the Harvard University Expedition, which made a six-field study of Aleuts during this past summer.

The Aleuts enjoy almost complete freedom from heart disease, Dr. Fred Alexander, expedition doctor and heart specialist on the staff of Massachusetts General Hospital, found in his examination of 132 of the fewer than 1,000 natives now on the islands.

Because the Aleuts have always lived mainly on fish and meat, foods high in protein, the scientists wonder whether this type of diet may be partly responsible for the lack of heart disease.

The Aleuts' consistent fish-and-meat eating, changed only when the Russians brought in flour and sugar in the 18th century, is expected to prove helpful also in studying the effect of diet on teeth. During the 2,000 years before the arrival of the Russians, the Aleuts apparently had little or no tooth trouble, Dr. Coenraad Moorrees, of the Forsyth Dental Infirmary, Boston, reports.

Remains of "Lost" Race

Possible discovery of the existence of a "lost" race of North Americans may have been made, Dr. William S. Laughlin, Peabody Museum anthropologist and field director of the expedition, said. Skulls dating back some 2,000 years were found which indicated that Aleutian Islanders of that time were taller than the modern Aleuts found on the islands by the Russians only 200 years ago. The "lost" race was more like present Eskimos than the Aleuts.

Head measurements made on the modern Aleuts revealed one of the largest heads ever recorded. One Aleut had a cranial capacity of 2,000 cubic centimeters, compared with the 1,450-cubic-centimeter-capacity of average heads.

An excavation of 23 feet made by archaeologists Charles I. Shade of Harvard University and Alan G. May of Wenatchee, Wash., resulted in the discovery of the 2,000-year-old skulls. Theodore Banks of the University of Michigan also used the excavation to make a study of soil samples which may give a record of the effect of climate on vegetation over many centuries.

Other members of the expedition were: Dr. Gordon Marsh of the University of Nevada, who studied the language of the Aleuts, and Dr. Stanley Garn, research fellow at the Forsyth Dental Infirmary, who made a photographic record.

Under the direction of the Peabody Museum of Harvard University, the expedition was sponsored by the Viking Fund and the Office of Naval Research.

Science News Letter, November 27, 1948

BIOPHYSICS

Red Blood Cells Write Radioactive Signatures

► RED BLOOD cells have written their radioactive signatures on photographic film in Rochester, N. Y. The feat was accomplished by a medical research team at the University of Rochester, headed by Dr. George A. Boyd.

The researchers first incorporated radioactive carbon into one of the building-blocks of protein, the amino acid glycine.

They then injected this into the body of a rat.

Later, they took some of the rat's blood from the vein in its tail, and smeared a drop of this on photographic film, so thinly that individual red cells stood out by themselves. Radiations from these affected the sensitive emulsion like light rays, leaving microscopic dots when the film was developed.

Results of the experiment are described in the journal, *SCIENCE* (Nov. 12).

Science News Letter, November 27, 1948

GEOLOGY

Mississippi Grew Giants 75,000,000 Years Ago

► A PLACE in Mississippi where living things grew to gigantic size 75,000,000 years ago has been discovered.

Scientists who study the past life of this planet are used to dwarf or pygmy animals discovered as fossils, but Dr. Paul H. Dunn, geologist of Mississippi State College, told the Geological Society of America about ancient creatures that are five times or more the usually normal size.

A fossil known as a cephalopod was five feet in diameter whereas the usual fossil of this sort is only several inches. An oyster-like prehistoric creature, called a rudistid, was more than a foot and a half long compared with the normal few inches.

Science News Letter, November 27, 1948



NOVEL EXPERIMENT—In order to relate the electrical potential of the heart to the body weight in mammals, an electrocardiogram is made on a fur-seal pup in the Aleutians. Experimenters from left to right are: Dr. Fred Alexander, cardiologist from the Massachusetts General Hospital, Dr. William S. Laughlin of Harvard, and Karl Kenyon, biologist, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.