

of the time on the ceiling and is quite cute. I have named him "Timmy". He eats the insects and never seems to leave the wall or ceiling. (It is supposed to be bad luck not to have one in your room.) If he disappears for a day I begin to worry about my "luck". It is amazing to watch the lizards in our rooms suddenly dart after a fly but if they see the little black insects with the hard shell they completely ignore them. I am told they can eat even a large moth and if there happens to be two lizards, they almost have a fight over the moth. Timmy is quite sensible - he usually stays on the ceiling in the centre of the room over the electric fan where it is cool. Actually, so far as insects are concerned, this place so far has been no worse than any summer cottage.

The post at Vientiane is, so I am told, the smallest and perhaps that is why it is the nicest. Also Vientiane is much smaller than the other 3 cities and so we are thrown more on our own for entertainment. There are a couple of night clubs where the officers go sometimes but they are very expensive. Usually everyone just sits around the table and talks until around ten and then strolls back to the Bungalow. We sometimes play scrabble or liar's dice but outside of a few parties and cocktails for the higher-ups, there isn't much to do. However, as everyone has been all over the place, there are many with interesting stories to tell. I have seldom met such an interesting crowd. Col. Delamare has his wife here - the only other Canadian woman in Laos - which is nice for him and also nice for me as 2 women at the table makes it easier. I do think the Army tried to send out the very best types.

I do not know whether it is in deference to two women or if they always do it in army messes, but the men all change to white shirts and white trousers for dinner at night. Actually I do think it is a good idea as it would be so easy to get sloppy here. The food in our mess is very good as the boys have been taught to cook in Western style. We have a Chinese head boy and several Chinese boys under him. We usually have soup, fish, meat course, dessert and coffee. Wine is served with meals as it is apparently good for us to have it in this climate. The fish is quite good. It seems usually to be some kind of fillet with a sauce on it. We get fowl, some beef and little pork. We do get buffalo meat which is quite similar to beef. We get bananas and

papaya and watermelon; also fresh tomatoes, beans and the other day we had corn on the cob - in March of all things. I understand the fresh vegetables are brought across the river from Thailand as the Laotians don't bother growing vegetables. All drinking water has to be purified but that is done at the mess in a big canvas bag. We take bottles over to the mess and the boys fill them so we can have water for drinking in our rooms. It is very flat and insipid but we drink it anyway. At the mess we occasionally have ice. It is so nice to have something cool! Extras such as ice are paid for by contributions from all of us to the mess. Ginger ale and lime juice is also brought in from Hong Kong. Once a week we have a Laotian dinner and once a week a Chinese dinner, just to vary things. We can have eggs for breakfast and sometimes orange juice. Also toast and coffee. The coffee is terrible but condensed milk is available which helps to disguise the flavour of the coffee.

Actually, life here could be compared to living in a summer colony. The city is supposed to have some 25,000 people in it but it doesn't look very big. Much of the cooking is done outside. The Laotians are very friendly and it is perfectly safe to go anywhere, day or night. Walking here in the evening is just strolling in the country. Because there is no industry to speak of here, clothes do not get as dirty and the inconveniences are more like those to be found in a summer cottage colony.

When I arrived, 3 Film Board men were here taking pictures of the work of the Commission and other things in Indo-China. They are presently on a trip up to one of the fixed team sites. I believe they are quite pleased with the work they have done here. Perhaps you will be able to see the results when they get the film made. One very amusing thing happened, there was a church festival here and they wanted to get some sound effects from it. They borrowed a generator or something from the Americans here but had brought a great deal of other equipment with them. But they simply could not get it to work. The head priest heard about it and to their great surprise brought forth a generator and everything which they used to do recording work themselves. It worked perfectly and the film board got their sound effects. It is typical of this primitive country that they have mechanized transport and that the priests have modern sound equipment!