

NUMBER 170, 63 pages

4 September 2025

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# BISHOP MUSEUM OCCASIONAL PAPERS

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JOSEF SEDLACEK AND THE BISHOP MUSEUM IN NEW  
GUINEA – SELECTED CORRESPONDENCE, 1961–1971

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BISHOP MUSEUM PRESS  
HONOLULU

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Cover photo: Josef Sedlacek in the Bishop Museum entomology collection in 1967 (photo courtesy Bishop Museum Library and Archives).

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ISSN 0893-1348 (print)  
ISSN 2376-3191 (online)  
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## Josef Sedlacek and the Bishop Museum in New Guinea – Selected Correspondence, 1961–1971<sup>1</sup>

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### INTRODUCTION

The entomological collection of the Bishop Museum in Honolulu is among the largest in the United States, with holdings of over 15 million specimens. In addition to unduplicated historical collections from the Hawaiian Islands made in the late 19th century, the collection is also world renowned for its vast holdings of specimens from the Asia-Pacific region as a whole, with a particular emphasis on New Guinea. The acquisition of this huge body of material was largely driven by the efforts of Dr. Judson Linsley (“Lin”) Gressitt (1914–1982, Fig. 10), a coleopterist who for decades chaired the museum’s Department of Entomology. In the decades after World War II, Gressitt was able to secure funding from the military and other government sources to undertake comprehensive survey programs for ectoparasites, mosquitoes, and agriculturally important beetle groups throughout the Western Pacific and Southeast Asia. This involved contracting the services of a large number of professional insect collectors. Among these was Josef Sedlacek, who worked for the museum from 1961 to 1971, during a decade in which the museum’s entomology collection expanded at a remarkable rate.

The museum’s correspondence files in the Entomology section contain six thickly packed folders of letters sent to and received from Sedlacek and his wife Marie during these years, along with other correspondence from various other collaborators and museum staff, which provide an interesting insight into this period of intense field collecting, and corresponding rapid collection growth. Although the majority of the communications from Sedlacek are invoices for specimens collected, discussions of particular beetle species, or requests for supplies and funding to keep a newly developed research station at Wau operational, scattered throughout these files are also various interesting narrative letters describing some of the travels and activities that he, Marie, and their associates engaged in, particularly in what would later become the nation of Papua New Guinea. Whereas letters to his supervisor Gressitt largely concern the logistics of fielding biologists to far-flung locations, more descriptive and informal letters were addressed to Setsuko (“Sets”) Nakata (1930–1971), who served for many years as the executive assistant to Gressitt in the Department of Entomology. The excerpts below, while by no means comprehensive, serve to provide an insight into their lives, and the evolution of the entomology collection at Bishop Museum during this dynamic period.

The Sedlacek correspondence files are a complex archive that represent a product of their time and place. The excerpts from the letters presented are transcribed as they were originally written, with grammatical, punctuation, and spelling errors preserved. In some cases only portions of letters are quoted, since many alternate between fascinating

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1. Contribution no. 2025-004 to the Pacific Biological Survey.



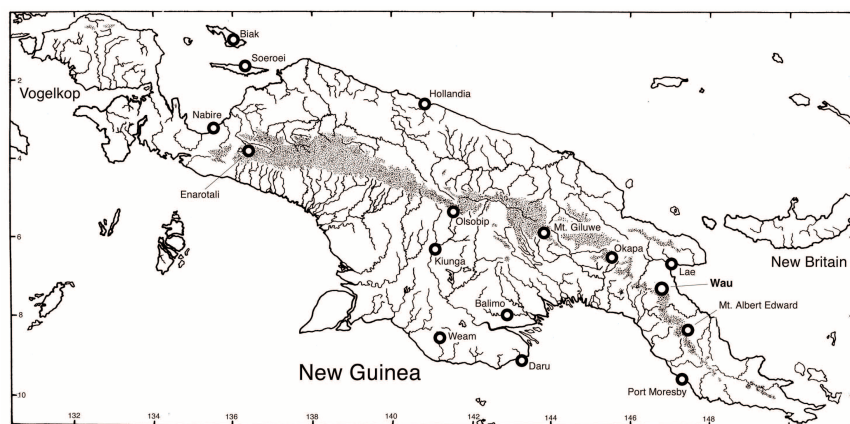
**Figure 1.** Marie and Josef Sedlacek photographed in the Department of Entomology at the Bishop Museum in 1967 (photo courtesy Bishop Museum Library and Archives).

descriptions of people and landscapes on one hand, and more mundane discussions regarding budgets and supplies on the other. In cases where portions of letters have been skipped over, the gaps are indicated by ellipses in square brackets [...]. In other cases where supplemental information is provided for clarity, such notes are also set within square brackets, to distinguish them from an actual use of parentheses in quoted material.

The letters quoted here also reflect the vernacular prevailing in 1960s New Guinea. In particular, the use of the term “boy” or “boi” to refer to local Papuan workers was typical at that time, but is viewed differently through the lens of present day social contexts. By all indications, Sedlacek respected his Papuan assistants and sought to make sure that their wages were fair and their working conditions reasonable, as indicated by his criticism of other interim managers at the Wau research station who did not uphold such standards during his absences. As such, his use of the term “bois” to refer to them does not appear to have been pejorative. Other abbreviations, acronyms, or local terms that may not be familiar to general readers are explained in the Glossary provided in Appendix 1.

Finally, it should be recalled that in the 1960s New Guinea there was no electronic communication except for radio, and that letters did not move at the speed they do today. It might take a week or two for a letter from Honolulu to arrive in Wau, and when it did arrive people might away in the field, so that an answer might not be immediately forthcoming as the letter was sent onward to wherever they might be, or held at Wau for their return. The reply would then also take a week or more to get back to Honolulu. This meant that directives from Gressitt to Sedlacek were not always immediately implemented, and urgent requests for supplies could take some time to be fulfilled. This of course created its





**Figure 2.** A reference map of New Guinea showing some of the localities mentioned in the letters quoted.

own set of complexities and occasional misunderstandings. A few representative examples of the actual letters that were examined for this study, which vary from typewritten to handwritten, may be found in Appendix 2.

Many other entomological colleagues worked in the field with the Sedlaceks at various times. Photographs of some have been kindly provided by Neal Evenhuis of the Bishop Museum (see Figs. 10–15), along with their vital dates, where known.

## BACKGROUND

Josef Sedlacek (simply known as “Joe” by most of those who worked with him) was born on 28 November 1913 in Poleňka, in what was at that time Czechoslovakia. He attended the Vrchlického R. Gymnasium in Klatovy from 1924–1932, and Charles University in Prague from 1932–1937, majoring in Czech and French literature. Following this he taught at various gymnasiums in Czechoslovakia from 1937–1949, before emigrating to Australia in April 1950, where he became a naturalized citizen. At some point prior to moving to Australia he married his wife, Marie Sedlacek, who was 10 years his junior. They had one son, Josef Henry Sedlacek, born in Australia in 1951. The Sedlaceks seem to have traveled as a family from 1950 to 1970 at least, and in correspondence Sedlacek refers to his son as “Junior.” Sedlacek was conversant in multiple languages, including Czech, French, English, German, Italian and Russian, and travelled widely from age 20 onwards, with visits to North Africa, Australia, India, Southeast Asia, and various Pacific islands in the period from 1934 to 1960, prior to his employment with the museum.

In Australia he worked from as a steelworker from 1950–1952, a cane cutter during 1952, and finally as a hydrographer from 1952–1957. In 1958 he moved to the United States, where he worked as a self-employed language teacher and translator, before

obtaining a job with the California Academy of Sciences in 1959. He was still working for this latter institution when he was offered a job at the Bishop Museum by Gressitt in April 1960, and sent to the Ross Sea region of Antarctica as part of the US Antarctic Research Program, including work with aerial insect traps attached to aircraft to assess the potential for long-distance insect dispersal (an example of one such trap is still preserved at the Bishop Museum).

When his aerial insect trapping contract ended, Sedlacek headed to New Caledonia, collecting again for the California Academy of Sciences, but in May 1961 the Bishop Museum offered him additional employment as a Field Entomologist in New Guinea, with an initial appointment for two years; as it developed, he would serve in this capacity for the next decade, eventually taking over day-to-day operations of the museum's newly established research station at Wau, in what is now northeastern Papua New Guinea.

### SELECTED CORRESPONDENCE

Sedlacek's initial impression of New Guinea was favorable.

**Josef Sedlacek to Setsuko Nakata, Bishop Museum, 12 July 1961, from Wau:**

*"Sorry to have kept you waiting for my expense account but the time flies so fast and we are very busy here. Besides, I lost full five days waiting for customs clearance and repair of the Landrover and when I finally started for Wau it took me 10 hours to get there from Lae as they forgot to repair points in the fuel pump.*

*We all like it here, the climate is very pleasant, mosquitoes scarce. Big trouble is with the mites – I have spent many sleepless scratching nights. General collecting was not so rewarding, yet. Malaise trap is very efficient, and light collecting is fine. Till now I have been handicapped by lack of transport, and good localities seem to be on the other side of the valley, days are often rainy. The new points for the fuel pump will arrive tomorrow, and then I will check the other side of the valley. Still we are getting from three to five thousand specimens a week [...]."*

After obtaining rather expensive repairs to the Land Rover, which had been improperly maintained in Lae, Sedlacek was finally able to explore further around Wau.

**Josef Sedlacek to J. Linsley Gressitt, 11 August 1961, from Wau:**

*"We were on two trips only with the landrover, first on the other side of the valley, that side sure will be much richer, and then followed the road behind our house as far as it goes, 2000 m, to Eddie Ck and then on foot till 2200 m. There the country has been deprived of all good forest since about 30 or 40 years because of goldmining. The new growth is hard to penetrate, collecting is poor, still interesting and most of the insects there were new to me."*

Sedlacek's wife Marie also enjoyed life in Wau, despite the rain.

**Marie Sedlacek to Nakata, 2 October 1961, from Wau:**

*"We like it here very much. Our only complaint is the rain – it hinders the collecting and drying. When we came here and I saw those two water collecting tanks as our only supply of water I was worried and rationed it as a precious stuff but now my only worry is that the constant overflow from the tanks does not take away all the soil from the garden. But*

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*even the rains are beautiful, descending like white veils into our valley, sometimes from several sides at once. And when the sun comes out the opposite range emerges from the mists with blue shadows in the valleys and ravines and fairy forms of klinky pines painting a delicate design on the carpet of jungle I feel I could stay here till the end of my life and I probably would if our son did not have schools. At the moment he is doing correspondence courses."*

The museum recognized the importance of Marie to the operation at Wau, and in October 1961 made her a Bishop Museum Fellow in Entomology, with a small annual stipend. Her subsequent letters to Sets would provide some of the most detailed accounts of the Sedlaceks' collecting forays over the next decade.

During this same period, Sedlacek recruited Australian Horace Wilford ["Horrie"] Clissold (1916–1993) as an animal trapper and skinner for an expanding ectoparasite project.

**Josef Sedlacek to Gressitt, 14 November 1961, from Wau:**

*"Yesterday I received your letter of 6 November where you mentioned you would prefer to get somebody from here or Australia for animal trapping and skinning. I went immediately on the trail of that naturalist-collector who visited me here in Wau some 2 months ago. We found his new whereabouts and visited him today. He is Mr. Horrie Clissold, about 40 years old, married, two small children, works in a plywood factory in Bulolo. Apparently he has a long experience in trapping and skinning and a very good knowledge of animal life and habits here on New Guinea. He also has several natives good in shooting, trapping and skinning. And – he seems to like that kind of work very much. He is willing to take the job full-time or part-time, maybe it would be possible to pay him per specimen?"*

Bishop Museum entomologist Lawrence ("Larry") Ward Quate (1925–2002) (Fig. 14), who was overseeing the museum's ectoparasite grants, had been collecting since October of 1961 (in company with his adventurous wife) in Netherlands New Guinea, comprising the western half of the island. In December of that year Quate made a quick one-week eastward trip to visit the newly established station at Wau. There he found the Sedlaceks already fully engaged and productive, and as a representative of the museum went forward with the formal hiring of Clissold.

**Quate to Nakata, 25 December 1961, from Hollandia:**

*"Last week we spent with the Sedlaceks at Wau. They are working very hard and enthusiastically. All of them enjoy it and they are getting a lot of fine specimens. They have two boys working for them, so I won't send our assistant to Wau.*

*I met Horace Clissold and hired him on a part time basis [...]. He is a husky Australian about 40 years old and has been in N.G. 16 years. He will work only when Josef is prepared to work over the animals and birds for ectos. Also, a limit of 30 birds per species and 50 mammals. Josef will examine for ecto's after they are sent to Wau from Bulolo. Few of each spp of animals will be skinned. Question now is: do all animal skins go to Amer. Mus.? What about new spp of animals, if any? He wants to work full time, but that is for Lin to decide.*



**Figure 3.** The town of Wau in the mid-1970s as seen from the slopes of Mt. Missim to the north. The airstrip is clearly evident on the left, while the small white building furthest up the slopes of Mt. Kaindi on the far upper right is part of the Wau research station, with the associated coffee plantations spreading out below it (Allen Allison photo).

*Sedlacek needs a good deal of equipment and supplies [...]. Supplies are hard to get at Wau and they seldom go to Lae, since it is nearly 100 miles by dirt road. Landrover is in bad condition and will probably prove expensive to maintain. Private garage is not satisfactory and N. Guinea Gold Co. gave us permission to use their garage facilities when own vehicle repairs permit. Permission requested of A.D.O. to also use Gov't. garage but he must write to his superiors, which he said he will do. New ADO hadn't heard of field station until we told him of it."*

In March 1962, Gressitt received a grant from the U.S. Army for additional ectoparasite work in Netherlands New Guinea, and Clissold was among the staff assigned to this project. This was a period in which Indonesian leader Sukarno was aggressively expanding his country's post-colonial boundaries. The Dutch still maintained tenuous control of western New Guinea, and it became a race to get the work done there before the Indonesians took over the province. Sedlacek was further hampered by a leg infection picked up on an earlier foray along the Bulldog Track to the southwest of Wau. Although armed confrontations were already developing between the Dutch and Indonesians in the Vogelkop Peninsula at the far western tip of the island, where Quate had already collected, Gressitt seemed to be sanguine about any possible dangers in the Dutch province even as tensions were ratcheting up.

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**Gressitt to Sedlacek, 30 March 1962, from Honolulu:**

*"I do not think there is any danger. If real war came, you could always walk to Telefomin and fly home from there. I think there is no trouble with people if your bird gun is broken down in rucksack when you meet new tribes [...]. We can omit westernmost parts, which may be the only ones where there will be trouble. Fortunately Maa and I worked at Fakfak, and Hardy and the Quates quite a bit on upper Vogelkop. In NNG (NC part) I have walked alone in places no white man had been, and found natives friendly."*

Gressitt's view of the escape options seems overly optimistic. Even now, walking to Telefomin from even the nearest major towns in former Netherlands New Guinea would be a formidable 200-mile trek across mountainous and poorly known country, and one that is not commonly attempted even by native Papuans today. That said, Gressitt himself, who was an indomitable field worker, probably could have done it, although it is not clear how many others could have.

As usual, Gressitt also had other projects running in parallel to the main objectives of the expedition.

**Gressitt to Josef Sedlacek, 11 May 1962, from Honolulu:**

*"Do you think Clissold expects to do some bird selling on the side? I do not think he should without our permission. Actually, the Honolulu Zoo is anxious to get live birds of paradise, and have discussed with me a plan whereby we allow him some time for it, and Zoo pays for his time and expenses, plus a bonus to C. for each bird, paid through us. The details would have to be discussed in Hollandia, as there are so many complications. I am told dealers cannot get permits to export live paradise birds from WNG, but our Zoo expects it can. Discuss this with Clissold if you wish [...]."*

Sedlacek's leg was healed by late May, and he was ready for new adventures.

**Josef Sedlacek to Nakata, 20 May 1962, from Wau:**

*"I feel very fine, my leg in normal shape after all the infection gone, and look very much toward going West. I hope to be there before Soekarno. He seems to be in a hurry and news about trouble in Dutch waters and landings and paratroop landings come now more and more often on the wireless."*

This new ectoparasite team did not include Quate, but was instead headed by Nixon Wilson (1930–2011, Fig. 12), a specialist in mites who had recently completed his Ph.D. at Purdue University, and included Sedlacek; Lawrence Richards, a vertebrate zoologist; Heinrich Holtmann, a German entomological collector who had previously worked for Gressitt in the Philippines; Clissold; and Clissold's Papuan mammal Skinner Bukam-Simasi, often referred to as "Bokum." Despite the increasingly unstable political and security situation, the team still proceeded to Netherlands New Guinea, and had spread out to sample multiple different areas at the point when the Dutch abruptly decided to evacuate the province, creating administrative chaos.

Because of this mounting social and political instability, the team in western New Guinea had a difficult time receiving and cashing the checks sent by Gressitt to support their efforts. Despite this, they continued making collections in remote and interesting

places. The problems involved with receiving funds eventually left Wilson, Sedlacek, Clissold, Bukam and a local Papuan hire named Peter stranded for two months in Enarotali, near the Paniai Lakes, due to a lack of both air transport and the money to pay for it. But with the Dutch departing, this situation could not last indefinitely.

**Nixon Wilson to Gressitt, 12 August 1962, from Enarotali:**

*"I have decided to send the others toward the Australian side while they still have enough money to pay their fares and also because Bukam must be back by 29 Aug. Also Mr. den Haan was here this weekend and he said the Dutch will turn over the government to Indonesia on or about 18 Sept. (under UN supervision). He advised us to be as close to an exit as possible at that time. If finances can be arranged I could work Nabire and Japen by myself or with Richards and Holtmann if they come then leave via Biak on or about the 18<sup>th</sup> for, I presume, Aust. New Guinea. This tentative plan all hinges on getting additional funds. Just now while typing this letter the police chief has come and told us his wife (who runs the hotel and fixes all meals) is closing the hotel to board as of the 15<sup>th</sup> Aug. He has agreed to take a personal check for all our remaining bills through that date. Since I will be in Kamu I have given him a signed blank check with the understanding that he will radio me the total of the bill and let Horrie fill in the figures after I have OKed it. This relieves the situation considerably and means when the Honolulu check clears I can spend that money on shipping freight at Nabire and Yapen."*

There were also concerns as to whether the specimens they were collecting would ever get back to the museum.

**Wilson to Gressitt, 23 August 1962, from Enarotali:**

*"I have asked Joe to fill you in on details since the last few letters I have written probably sound like a broken record – no money, still at Enarotali [...]."*

*In anticipation of future needs please send money to Nabire. Don't deposit it an account in Hollandia as it takes too long and is too difficult to get out. I don't know how best to send the money to Nabire but possibly as many small certified checks in US \$. I think US \$ safest as eventually the New Guinea fl will lose its value while they will always take US \$.*

*I think the U.N. will probably let us stay in N.G. since we are already here, however because of conditions all bills must be paid in advance and we will have to have cash readily available at all times and not reach such a position as we have been in the past 2 months at Enarotali.*

*I have sent one box of specimens to Honolulu via Biak and have heard nothing more. I have another crate ready to go which will contain all of our material (skins, ectos, insects) collected to date. I understand the freight offices in Biak and Hollandia are completely disorganized because of the evacuation, with freight overflowing into the lobbies, outside, etc. I am afraid that our first package has been lost and the second will be, therefore I am keeping the 2<sup>nd</sup> pkg. with me for awhile."*

Sedlacek provided a summary of the complications that ensued as they were caught up in the course of events.



**Josef Sedlacek to Gressitt, 27 August 1962, from Nabire:**

*“Just short story of recent weeks. On 13<sup>th</sup> we flew to Moanemani-Kamu V. as Nixon and Horrie finally got some money from Hollandia. Also we visited Itooda (nr Popisil) and returned on 20<sup>th</sup> as we got warning on radio about transport situation becoming worse every day with evacuation. As there was no chance of charter plane from Enarotali to Hollandia and no spare money and no transport to other places in highlands we flew on small (mission) plane to Nabire on 24<sup>th</sup> (4 of us). Nixon is still at Enarotali probably coming today. Holtman and Richards were already 5 days in Biak when by chance remark of a Dutch official we got news about their whereabouts [...]. We have no idea when there will be any transport to take us to Hollandia – although there are some rumors about a plane on 29<sup>th</sup> to Biak.*

*The collecting at Enarotali proved to be more interesting than I expected although the hills are quite monotonous. The walking is more pleasant than around Wau as there are not stinging plants, chiggers and death adder there.”*

Sedlacek decided that he had seen enough turmoil in western New Guinea, and prepared to head back to Wau.

**Josef Sedlacek to Nakata, 27 August 1962, from Nabire:**

*“I left yesterday Nixon and others at Nabire and am heading home. You probably know our troubles on this expedition. First there was no money available (because of mail difficulties) and then there was no transport available because of full-scale evacuation. In desperation we took with Horrie Clissold the only available route, through Nabire again, this time I spend the time very profitably there and got fine lot of insects [...]. Clissold took Bokum (his Nabire skinner) across border as he did not get permission for him to stay any longer; I shall soon follow him and shall reach Wau, about 10 days after he arrived there. I was already once on my way out, but the plane stopped in Enarotali and Nixon trapped me there asking to return to Nabire and get some possible flight to new places from there. As we had no success I think there is not much sense to stay any longer in Nabire, where Heinrich collects and will collect for probably another 2 weeks yet. No planes to Waris also. Shall write to Lin more after my return.”*

Wilson provided Gressitt with a detailed assessment of the situation, including the ways in which project staff had finally been extracted from Enarotali. He also highlighted some aspects of Clissold's personality that would prove to be liabilities going forward.

**Wilson to Gressitt, 29 August 1962, from Enarotali:**

*“Joe, Horrie, Peter and Bukam left Sat. for Nabire with hopes of making connections all the way to Lae yesterday. I doubt if they did as plane service is very disrupted with the evacuation, etc. going on. They went by MAF to Nabire. They had only enough money to get as far as Hollandia providing they did not sleep in any hotels anywhere along the route. I gave them written permission to draw f1 1100.00 from my account in Hollandia to get them to Lae and Wau. I also gave them written permission to get this amount from Mr. den Haan in the event he had drawn out of my account to bring it to me as I had asked him to. Apparently he has as I received notice from the bank today that my balance was 0.*



*I felt it best to send Joe and Horrie back for several reasons. Because of the time factor for mail between here and Honolulu as well as the difficulty in drawing the money after it clears at the bank in Hollandia I could not see that our financial situation would get any better and thought it best to send them back while we still had a little money. Also Bukam must be returned and Horrie without Bukam is essentially useless as he does not skin and prepare specimens and this would throw the burden on Joe who does not like to do it and is much better at collecting insects. Also the past month Horrie has panicked completely over the situation here and his productivity in the field has fallen to almost 0 because of this. Also, Horrie twisted his hip and was largely bedfast for a week (while we were at Moanimani) and unable to do any amount of walking for 2-3 weeks. The Dr. diagnosed it as a bruised hip with a blood clot on it. My experience with blood clots is that they can be very dangerous if not fatal if they move to certain parts of the body. When he left here he was limping only slightly and I hope he follows up on this when he gets back and get a more thorough diagnosis. Joe is not too concerned with the situation here but did not desire to remain in Enarotali as he had collected it rather thoroughly in the last two months. I have several recommendations concerning future groupings of personnel, ectoparasite forms, etc. for work in NG however I shall save these until I see you.*

*I have just been interrupted and informed that a MAF and a MAS plane were coming in and heading for Nabire. I have sent both loaded with gear and with luck I should catch the twin for there tomorrow. The MAS pilot said he was taking Clissold and Bukam to Hollandia this afternoon. Also Richards and Holtmann with Joe and Peter are in Nabire. I charged both flights to Richards however the MAF pilot was somewhat reluctant to do this as everything is on a cash basis now in NG and he had been talking to Richards and said he had a little money. I will contact Joe tomorrow by radio and get him to wait until I get there. If he will stay and we can manage financially we can still have 2 teams here. It means either Richards or I will have to go with him as the zoologist. I will defer this decision until I have met with everybody.*

*I shudder when you mention that Richards has 300 pounds of gear. I hope most of this is expendable because it may have to be, of necessity. Joe and Horrie left all their gear with me except what they were carrying. Thus, I have sent 3 Cessna loads to Nabire and have a least one more plus myself. In addition, I have sold many items such as blankets, knives, flashlights, buckets to the natives [...].*

*"I am happy to hear the parcel of insects arrived safely. I had visions of their being lost since I had heard stories of the chaos at the freight offices in Hollandia and Biak. I have a larger wooden crate with insects, ectoparasites and about 200 mammal and bird skins. It includes almost everything we have collected to date. It has been ready to go for some time but I have hesitated to send it till I hear how the first box came through (also I did not have the money). I have sent it to Nabire with the other gear and will air freight it from there.*

*I talked to Rev. Troutman and he is only somewhat concerned and said that they as well as the other missionaries are going to stick it out. He said the native preachers assured him the natives will stay in line. Three days after he told me this 300 natives marched on the HPB demanding guns from the Dutch to fight the Indo. There have been several meetings since where the Dutch are trying to persuade the natives to take the change over peacefully. Similar groups of natives marched on Waghete and Moanimani. As rumors have it, during the change over the UN will not even send anybody to the central highlands but will concentrate in the bigger cities along the coast. The Dutch have appointed about 9 natives to take over the government in Enarotali. These are mostly local boys who have been to school in Hollandia.*

*After Nabire one team could probably go to Merauke and Tanah Merah. I spoke with the MAF pilot who is flying in there and he said everything was peaceful and the paratroopers have come into town and are living better than if they were in Indo.*

*Iraga is probably out as the natives are fighting and there has been some trouble with the American graves regist. team.*

*MAF has been chartered by the govt. to fly evacuees from the interior stations to air strips where they can be picked up by twins. TAA pilots are helping. Wed. the twin is chartered to take out European women and children from here. Tues. it is chartered to take out coastal Papuans who were working in the highlands. These are mostly police boys and the government is attempting to return all natives to their own villages. If I don't make Tues. or Weds. flights I probably will be here another week.*

*I hope to use the vacant houses in Nabire rather than the hotel. This will save considerably on expenses. The past week I have been cooking my own food and just paying my room here (f1.50). The food in the hotel is the largest part of the bill (f114.00). If Joe stays we probably will keep Peter. Some days he is good, other days Joe is ready to fire him. Certainly he is worthless for the zoological part. I have hired a local boy who seems to be OK and is certainly more versatile than Peter. He is also recommended as a cook, which if we cook out will leave us free of that chore. I sent him to Nabire today."*

Wilson finally joined the others in Nabire, by which time Sedlacek had returned to Wau.

### **Wilson to Nakata, 3 September 1962, from Nabire:**

*"I finally got out of Enarotali last Wednesday. The others left a week before and left all of their equipment with me. This left me with 800 lbs of gear and no money. This is after I sold some of it and abandoned some. I finally bummed a ride to Nabire, where Richards paid my fare. The Dutch were feeling rather sorry for me by this time and let me out of paying my hotel bill for the last week, as well as for my surplus baggage.*

*This past week Mr. den Haan finally brought the money from Hollandia from the checks sent from Honolulu 20 July. At present Larry Richards and I have about NNG f1 6000.00 between us. This is sufficient at present however guilders go fast here and I do not want to get caught like we did at Enarotali. Everything is on a cash basis here and we must have money in our pockets if we are to be able to move around. I realize the budget is probably "shot" for Neth. New Guinea this year, however since it appears we will not be able to work here after 1 Jan. (maybe 1 May) the extra expense may be worthwhile. This is a decision for you and Dr. Gressitt to make. I feel it is worth it since our past experience with Indonesia indicates these will be last specimens we get from here.*

*By the time you receive this Joe will be in Wau. Horrie and Bukam left for there last week. I explained in an earlier letter why Horrie went lame. Joe tried to work Waris in on his way back but the plane wasn't going for a week and he didn't want to wait around that long. I thought of still having 2 teams with the 4 of us but there were too many complications. Joe will get a day or two of collecting at Ifar.*

*Richards and Holtmann were on the verge of wanting to leave two days after they arrived at Nabire. I convinced them to stay at present but I am sure they are still giving it much thought. In the present situation things are difficult (especially transport) but not dangerous. There will probably be some Dutch here till 1 Jan. and I feel we can stay till then if conditions do not become any worse than they are at present. In the case Richards and Holtmann insist on leaving I will send them to Aust. New Guinea [...].*

*The vertebrate collecting is much better here than at Enarotali. It is unfortunate we could not have been stuck here for 2 months. I may stay an extra week here since it is so profitable. I have written the timber co. on Japen however have not heard back from them. I want to stay close to Biak till Oct. which is the month the U.N. forces arrive.*

*The boy Peter wanted to return to Hollandia so I sent him back. He was no good on vertebrates but fair on collecting insects. I have hired and brought a boy from Enarotali and hired another one here at Nabire. I pay them 1 fl a day plus food which they fix themselves. We eat at the hotel but live in a house which belongs to the MAS flying service. It gives us plenty of room to work but has no water or electricity."*

As it turned out, Nabire was an excellent base of operations.

**Wilson to Nakata, 9 September 1962, from Nabire:**

*"Collecting here is very good, with plenty of rats, bats, etc. Have collected almost no birds because mammals are so abundant!! We badly need bat nets since we have none."*

Even so, the situation was tenuous and unpredictable. But Wilson was determined to hang on as long as he could.

**Wilson to Nakata, 20 September 1962, from Nabire:**

*"I have no idea how long we will be in N.N.G. but we will try and stay as long as possible. I will be doing field work at least till January maybe longer."*

Gressitt for his part encouraged the group to remain until compelled to leave.

**Gressitt to Wilson, 28 September 1962, from Honolulu:**

*"As I wrote before I think it is essential that Richards and Holtmann remain with you unless some other plan seem very appropriate to you. Therefore, I should say that you should continue in the area as long as operations can be continued with reasonable effectiveness. I am sure we need to work more at low altitudes and on low hills near the coastal areas which should be reasonably accessible. Also, if you could get in to any mountains on the west side of Geelvink Bay, it would be very desirable because I believe the fauna is fairly different from the area you were in before [...].*

*The State Department has notified both the United Nations and the Indonesian Government of the existence of our party in Western New Guinea, with an explanation of the objectives, and request for cooperation."*

Gressitt, it seemed, had been everywhere in New Guinea, including Nabire, and also suggested areas near there to sample.

**Gressitt to Wilson, late September 1962, from Honolulu:**

*"If you still have some time in Nabire, I wonder if you have investigated the hills straight to the south along the main trail to Enarotali? One day I went some distance along that trail, and after five or six of the river, it started to go up quite steeply and I noticed a complete change in the vegetation, and a pretty striking changing of the insect fauna, too. I think if you have not already done it, it might be worthwhile to go up there and camp on the ridge for two or three nights so you can get some consecutive collecting in that envi-*

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*ronment. I do not know how well that would work with your trapping program, but certainly for Holtmann it would be extremely desirable, as there is probably quite a different fauna up there. The place I went could probably be reached in about 2 ½ hours of straight hiking, but would be necessary of course to take camping gear and food. I think, however, that it would be well worth a few days to do that."*

Having extracted himself from the turmoil of western New Guinea, Sedlacek reached Wau on 12 September 1962. He then mounted an expedition to New Britain, beginning in mid-October 1962. He was attempting, on the basis of Gressitt's encouragement, to reach Mt. Sinewit, reputedly the highest mountain on New Britain, which was thought to lie in a remote, poorly known, and uninhabited area of the Gazelle Peninsula west of Rabaul. This turned into an exercise in frustration, in part because they could not seem to locate the proper mountain.

**Josef Sedlacek to Gressitt, 9 October 1962, from the side of Mt. Sinewit:**

*"As you can see we have reached what is supposed to be Mt. Sinewit after so much trouble and frustration that it kept me angry for full one week. We started on Monday last week with 29 carriers and roamed the country for 3 days arriving finally to Upper Warangoi V., not to Mt. Sinewit, simply cheated by carriers who did not want to go too much uphill. Lodged finally at Riayt village we asked all local people about big mountain and all refused to acknowledge any knowledge of any high mountain near. In emergency I visited to Mr. Kuster at Illugi station and there I learnt that his bonboy went once near Mr. Sinewit, and good luck from a high place on the farm we have just a glimpse of high mountain, like mirage for 30 seconds. Again we went to the village and got luluai trapped. Of course at once everybody saw Mt. Sinewit, everybody, it was there before, but 20 of our carriers refused to go...Got 20 villagers plus old luluai – who I could not refuse. And again for 2¼ days we were pulling and pushing 20 specimens of the most disgusting bastards of Homo sapiens [...]. Lin, your idea to go slowly from Upper Warangoi V. with a lot of cutting and collecting is impossible to do with local/Baining natives. If I ever return here I shall return only if I get chance to get New Guinea natives in Rabaul as carriers. All farmers here use only New Guinea natives as labor."*

Gressitt, however, was sure that the mountain was out there somewhere.

**Gressitt to Josef Sedlacek, 24 October 1962, from Honolulu:**

*"I am glad you seem to be getting lined up well for the expedition. I am sorry if I did not tell you that I had flown very close to the summit of "Sinewit" once during a storm, from Jaquinet Bay to Rabaul. It was a very unfriendly looking peak, a broken and eroded volcanic crater, with huge rocks sticking up, but with vegetation in between. Unfortunately, as the weather was not good, the view was incomplete. And the plane was so rough, the view so brief, that I forgot to check the altitude. But anyway I had the impression it was much more than 5000 ft Also, that it was a long way from the Warangoi Valley and Gaulim [...]. I expect it will take a long time to break a trail and establish a camp, and then a lot more work all the way to the top of the mountain."*

A second letter further elaborates on the difficulties encountered on New Britain as Sedlacek's team continued to search for the mountain.

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**Josef Sedlacek to Nakata, 24 November 1962, from Rabaul:**

*"This is the most frustrating expedition I have ever had. We were on Mt. Sinewit, that elusive mountain, marked on maps by anything between 5000'-8000' All local authorities denied its existence, most of them denied existence of mountains at all in Gazelle Peninsula except the cliffs – far away isolated in West, which are supposed to be 5600'. Day before yesterday we were guest at District Commissioner who has been living here some 15 or 20 years. He bluntly said that all talk about mountains over 5000' (except "cliffs" in west) is nonsense. Well, we spoke with a pilot who crested often that vast uninhabited area and he is sure that there are mountains there, low in the center; high in south-east, sure above 7000' there. Can you imagine that all this area is only 40-50 miles far from Rabaul, one of the largest cities in the Pacific for 60 years? Well we got information from boss of Methodist Mission in Rabaul, that he himself crossed the ridge south of Gaulim at the elevation of 6000-6500' and big mountains towered above the ridge more than 1000'. We went on that ridge and got elevation of 900 m, climbed the mountain and found the highest spot to be 1200 m As the high elevation had the same vegetation and insects as the basecamp we left the mountain after 11 days stay. We were there alone as the native carriers are afraid of the mountain and deserted us straight away. To proceed deeper on ranges from Mt. Sinewit was thus impossible.*

*Here in Rabaul we studied all maps what we could discover and found on one of them there was a path before the war to the highest peak in southeast about 3 days hard walk from Upper Warangoi. Tomorrow morning we start for Illugi and try to get some carriers in villages near [...]. And so we are on a wild goose chase again. But I believe the mountain here to be at least 7000', and I hope we will be the first white people to climb the highest mountain on New Britain and to solve the greatest NB puzzle [...]. Although I swore to myself (and wrote to Lin) that I shall never use local carriers – I am forced to get them again. They are the laziest, most miserable and untrustworthy I ever met. Just this month a patrol officer nearly perished in Whiteman Range as he was deserted by all native carriers in the bush."*

Another letter from Sedlacek to Gressitt indicates that all of his travails eventually produced good results in the end.

**Josef Sedlacek to Gressitt, 10 January 1963, from Wau:**

*"We had very interesting collecting on the ridge below Mt. Sinewit. After the boys cut the trees we were getting beetles which came down with the vines, like Eupholus weevils, and then the catch was changing every few days as new kinds were coming on the fallen timber. We put bark on top of the stumps and found beetles hidden under it, or half cut bark from fig tree as trap for them. Otherwise collecting on the timber was quite difficult. The trees mostly fall down the steep slopes – the biggest weight of the branches which was almost always into the valley pulled them down there and getting to them was sometimes a mountaineering feat. This kind of collecting gave us ideas through. We shall use it here, cutting a path toward Mt. Missim which rises across the valley to a height of almost ten thousand feet. The natives love cutting trees, and are very good at it."*

Sedlacek also provided this final summation.

*"We are the third expedition in last 2 years who failed to find mountains on Gazelle Peninsula. The one before us were Danes, 1962. They were looking also in vain for that fabulous Mt. Sinewit. We went higher. The ridges south-east of Mt. Sinewit proved to be higher, we installed the camp at 1300 m and climbed to over 1400 m, on razor sharp ridges*

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*with no mammal life at all, couple of small birds only and insects rarer than in Australian mountains under snow in winter. And the weather! Rain and wind day and nights, all 4 N.G. boys we kept with us got sick so that 2 became useless and we sent them to warm places down to 500 m. In the only clear day I checked from a good lookout all the ranges near and far and I became nearly sure there really are not mountains on the Gazelle Peninsula over 1600 m And there is no special mountain fauna, at least nothing similar to the richness of N.G. mountain specialties. We spent 1 week on the ridge, on the return trip I collected for 1 week in Illugi, 230 m, quite fine and rich collecting, I regretted all those many days spent with that laziest lot looking for those mirage mountains with miles and miles on sterile ridges, acquiring all native diseases and civilized ulcers dealing with native and carrying Horrie in all that senseless discomfort."*

On modern maps, Mt. Sinewit is shown on the 1:100,000 Pondo sheet produced by the Royal Australian Survey Corps in 1976 as a summit on a ridge bounding the northwest side of the upper Mavelo River valley, in the interior of the Gazelle Peninsula. No spot elevation is given, but contours would indicate a height between 1,360 and 1,400 m, at coordinates 4°38'26"S, 151°58'11"E. Higher spot elevations up to 1,837 m (6,025 ft) are shown on an un-named summit further to the southeast in the Baining Mountains. On the subsequent 1:250,000 Gazelle sheet produced in 1979 by the Royal Australian Survey Corps, Mt. Sinewit is again shown in the same location as above, with a precise elevation of 1,399 m (4,589 ft) indicated. On this latter map taller but nameless summits are once more shown further to the southeast on Barurumea Ridge, rising as high as 2,063 m (6,767 ft), in the remote headwaters of the Warangoi River. This latter area is where Sedlacek and his party were searching for Mt. Sinewit, so ironically enough he may actually have reached the highest ridge on New Britain, but not Mt. Sinewit itself. These maps also indicate that Sedlacek was correct in his conclusions regarding the elevations he attained, with the highest ridges in the interior of the Gazelle Peninsula barely exceeding 2,000 m (= ca. 6,500 ft) in height, and no prominent peaks present.

During the time Sedlacek was flailing about in New Britain, the Bishop Museum ectoparasite team under Wilson had remained in western New Guinea against all odds. After several months at Nabire the team had accomplished what it could there, and near the end of 1962 they moved their base of operations to the vicinity of Soeroei on Japen island (modern Serui, Yapen), not far from a major airstrip on adjacent Biak Island that offered a means of quick exit from the region should circumstances dictate.

#### **Nakata to Josef Sedlacek, 20 October 1962, from Honolulu:**

*"Nixon is still in Neth. New Guinea (West New Guinea) and presently he is in Soeroei (Japen Island) care of Mr. Hanas. Unfortunately, his father died several weeks ago and we sent a cable which he did not get. Too bad – I do not know whether or not he will return or not – but although we are sorry for him, the N. Guinea expedition will fall to pieces without Nixon. We hope he will still carry on until the end of January."*

The team's proximity to Biak proved fortunate when Wilson contracted a serious case of hepatitis A in December and had to be brought back to the mainland United States for hospitalization. As Sets had predicted, in the absence of his leadership and regular communication, the team began to unravel. Richards seems to have been a difficult personality to deal with, and as Sets noted in another letter, Holtmann never communicated through letters or otherwise, so it was hard to know exactly what he was doing, although he seemed

to be a competent insect collector. Without Wilson to hold it together, the Western New Guinea project wound down in December 1962.

**Nakata to Josef Sedlacek, 6 December 1962, from Honolulu:**

*"As you know, Holtmann is leaving end of January – things have not been working out too well – personal difficulties and work of Holtmann and Richards (Vert. zoologist) who came after you left for Wau is poor. We are very much concerned about the whole matter. Nixon got hepatitis or some liver condition while in Seroei and had to rush back home to Honolulu. He went home to his mother to recuperate in the hospital (needs rest for about a month). Also, his father died while he was in Seroei. It is very unfortunate this happened, but it can't be helped. Nixon got good results during his stay in many West New Guinea localities. Hope he gets well soon."*

While in the eastern United States slowly recovering from hepatitis, Wilson still kept track of developments in Indonesia, and provided a suggestion to Gressitt as to where Sedlacek might be sent next.

**Wilson to Gressitt, 23 March 1963, from Kentucky:**

*"Have you ever considered sending a field party to Portuguese Timor? I mention this as it seems like the next most logical territory for Sukarno to take. I have recently read where Indonesian propaganda has accused the Portuguese of mistreating the natives, a few shots have been fired along the border and Portugal has increased its troops in the colony. Also Sukarno has the support of the precedent which was set when India took Goa, etc., from Portugal."*

*I am recovering slowly, but it is still necessary to rest every morning and afternoon [...]."*

Wilson would eventually recover and return to the Pacific, working at the Bishop Museum until 1969, before taking a position at the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Rapids, where he continued his career as a highly respected acarologist for another 30 years, making major contributions to the study of Lyme Disease transmission in the eastern United States.

After the misadventures of 1962 in western New Guinea and on New Britain, the Sedlaceks organized a trip to the central highlands of New Guinea in the summer of 1963, which proved far less stressful. Marie described their positive impressions.

**Marie Sedlacek to Nakata, 8 September 1963, from Wau:**

*"[...] what fascinated us here was the beauty of the savage world, though when you learn to know it, it does not seem so savage. Only uncivilized, emerging from the Stone Age with eyes wide open like a curious kitten. Very curious one! Everywhere we went, everywhere we stopped the natives swarmed around us, followed us, kept touching us and shaking hands with us that I felt both like Greta Garbo and Brigitte Bardot; Joe too. When I sat inside storing insects into boxes they looked at me through every window in the car, pressing their runny noses against the glass. I even dreamt about it; that I am washing the windows (as I very often had to) and that the faces are all the time pressed to the other side and I go around washing and washing, inside, outside – a never ending chore and the eyes looking at me in wide-eyed wonder and the noses beneath it. Another dream was that a wrinkled old grandma with sooty face and runny nose is trying to kiss my hand."*



[...] *It was very pleasant to collect in these higher elevations when the weather was nice, the air fresh and cool and the sun just warm, not reducing you to vapour like in the low tropics. However, the bigger part of our trip was rainy, we were wet and cold and could not believe any more that there is a place called Wau where it is always warm – never hot, never cold. The worst day we experienced was in Laiagam. We started on a sunny morning, climbing very slowly up a very steep slope, collecting while we went; when we reached the best part of the forest it started to drizzle, then pour and we had to turn back. The path became a slippery dip on most places or a sea of mud on the level ones. The ground is mostly clay there, the water never soaks into it, but remains on the surface and rushes in streams and waterfalls down the hill and you walk at the bottom of this stream, because that is what used to be the path and it is like walking on soap. We had soil behind our fingernails as we tried to cling to the slope searching with our feet for firmer support, and mud behind the ears as we slid, against our will, down the slope on our back. It would have been awful had it not been such crazy fun at times. It took us three hours to get down, the last half hour having walked in mud above our knees, and went under the shower in clothes first. That was the last time we went without raincoats in these parts. I got rheumatism into my ribcage and could not breathe much for several days but that was the only ailment that befell us on the whole trip.*

*We climbed Mt. Giluwe and you have to see it to believe it. Above the tree line, on top of the mountain, 11 thousand feet high there, is a vast countryside of rolling hills covered by pale brown grass. Innumerable little lakes lie in the valleys like opaque teardrops and dark forest absorbs the melancholy that lies on everything. Jagged forms of grey peaks that rise here and there only heighten the eerie atmosphere [...]. We slept in a hut at the edge of the forest. It looked like a dilapidated stable which the horses themselves built, and the weather wandered right through. wind, rain, cold. Luckily we had the large polyethylene sheet which we stretched inside as a ceiling and warm were our beds – ie. heaps of dried cut grass into which you sank and slept in warmth, feeling a bit like a horse but who cared.*

[...] *We slept in a similar way at Mt. Wilhelm lakes though we did not have any grass beneath us as it was drizzling constantly and we were very cold but did not mind as the scenery was so magnificent and the climb to the top such a unique experience. You climb up from the first lake along a foaming waterfall to a small plain and there in front of you lies another lake, the most beautiful we ever saw. Enclosed in sheer walls of grey rock that cut into the sky with its sharp teeth, it has a small meadow at the far end, gently sloping towards a grove of trees that huddle beneath the grey wall. A silver thread of a waterfall falls from the sky and feeds a small brook that winds through the meadow to the lake. Deep silence reigned over this enchanted beauty, I lingered looking back until I saw Joe and guide high above me crawling like ants up an almost perpendicular slope. They disappeared over the saddle and I was quite alone [...].*

[...] *We hope to return to the highlands. Roads are being built there that will open new places, also new airstrips were started... There are roads branching off from the main one that goes through the whole highlands and each one of them is an adventure – you do not know what you are going to find on it. When we set out for Tambul we had no idea a few miles from the main road from a high pass we shall look down at a vast valley and across it that mass of a mountain Mt. Giluwe, which looked far in Papua from the map. Or twenty minutes flight by Cessna from Goroka across bare, kunai covered hills we shall find vast expanses of country covered by jungle from horizon to horizon. Then there is one other mountain that lures with its vastness, Mt. Michael. And how many there are here not seen from the road where nobody collected yet. This is a wonderful island. Here you can still*

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*find what does not exist anywhere else on earth – the unknown, undiscovered. Though I was happy to come home again and though I know we won't get back to the Highlands so soon, if ever, I was still planning our second trip there as soon as we came back [...]."*

Gressitt was pleased with the high altitude collections the Sedlaceks obtained. He was also laying the groundwork for a trip to Okapa, a remote settlement on the south side of the central highlands, at the urging of Dr. D. Carlton Gajdusek (1923–2008), an American pediatrician and virologist who later won the 1976 Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine for his characterization of Kuru disease among the Fore peoples in that area. Because of other more pressing assignments from Gressitt, it would be a year before the Sedlaceks actually got there.

**Gressitt to Josef Sedlacek, 27 June 1963, from Honolulu:**

*"I am glad to hear about the very interesting events of your trip, and particularly interested to hear that you went up Mt. Giluwe. You may remember that I went up there and had some very interesting experiences.*

*You are to be congratulated for getting all the high altitude records for hispines. Obviously most of those will be new species. I believe I failed quite badly on those on Mt. Giluwe, although we did get a lot of interesting material at very high and at low altitudes. I wonder if Hardy was still the patrol officer at Tambul? He went up the other mountain with Peg and myself."*

*[...] Dr. Gajdusek is now passing through Honolulu, so there is apparently no particular point in your going by Okapa to see him. However, he is very anxious that we carry on field work in the general Kukukuku area, particularly the Okapa area. I will be writing to you further on this and you might let me know how soon you and Horrie could spend a considerable period in that area. Dr. Gajdusek will be away from New Guinea for a few months, and so you might want to postpone until after you return from Australia."*

In late 1963 Gressitt sent the Sedlaceks on a prolonged series of collecting expeditions to Australia, and then Portuguese Timor as suggested by Wilson. The planned itinerary was ambitious.

**Josef Sedlacek to Gressitt, 15 September 1963, from Wau:**

*"So. 3-10 Oct. Sydney – release of car, visa for Timor [...]. Then couple days collecting around Kosciuszko, and proceeding for about 3 weeks to W. A. collecting mostly close to the road. All November collecting in southern half of W. A., in December working mostly in Kimberlys and reach Darwin in time to get transport to Timor – about this I still do not have information – If allowed I intend to stay full month on Timor, return by end of January to Darwin, proceed south to Alice Springs and collect in Macdonnell Ranges and Mt. Olga-Ayers Rocks where recently permanent springs were discovered and some sort of road made. From there - if monsoon conditions permit – through Tennat Ck, Mt Isa to Townsville-Cooktown and ship the car from Cairns if any ship stop there or from Brisbane with a lot of rich collecting around Brisbane esp. The other possibility. Alice-Pt Augusta-Broken Hill-Dubbo and north to Brisbane. As you see Tasmania is omitted – it would be too early to go there for collecting in October. If you are really interested I can manage to go there probably in February."*

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The Sedlaceks arrived in Sydney by mid-September of 1963, and after a transcontinental collecting ramble were in Darwin by 10 December, preparing for the trip to Timor.

**Josef Sedlacek to Nakata, 10 December 1963, from Darwin:**

*"We arrived safely to Darwin after many very hot days and flat tyres, just in front of bigger rains that probably closed the roads from west for 4 months. Collecting better with coming wet.*

*In two hours we shall be on our flight to Timor; where we stay 2–4 weeks, depending on conditions there and the visas. As I wrote Lin, I visited Dr. Gross in Adelaide Museum. He returned I think last year from a collecting journey to Timor and he was very pessimistic about both the insect life and the living conditions there [...]."*

As it turned out, Timor was indeed a rather poor island for insect collecting.

**Josef Sedlacek to Gressitt, 31 December 1963, from Dili:**

*"This is our last day here, tomorrow we leave for Darwin, after 3 weeks collecting, mostly around Baucau, 1 day on higher plateaus south and ca 50–60 km from Baucau, in Dili, and around Ermera, 60 km south of Dili, 1100–1500 m. Politically conditions are far better than as pictured by Gross. Both Portuguese and natives are friendly, trouble is lack of transport and no forest left. I do not know how much time Gross spent here, I think 2 or 3 months, and he succeeded to visit many localities, still he most probably did not find any forest. The other bad circumstance was absolutely dry weather in first two weeks – very exceptional as dry weather never extends into December. Collecting has been much less interesting than on N. G. and no comparison to the richness there. Great luck for me that I saw Gross's collection from here, otherwise I would be utterly depressed [...]. Lin, I tried hard, but it is so difficult to strike it rich without finding the forest or natural conditions."*

A subsequent letter provided further perspective on this Portuguese colony.

**Josef Sedlacek to Gressitt, 7 January 1964, from Darwin:**

*"As I do not know where you are it will take probably some time before you get this letter. We collected on Timor 3 weeks and most of the details you know from my last letter from Dili. It is a really frustrating island and I very glad that Gross prepared me for it. Because of the dense population (more than a million on the Portuguese part) there are not even pockets of rainforest left (except perhaps in the south, out of access), open forest is mostly sterile eucalyptus, coffee plantations creep to the very top of ranges. We collected on 4 localities. Baucau, mostly 200–300 m, Dili - sea-level, Venilale – probably 600 m, Ermera 100–1500 m. Baucau was by far the richest. Main hindrance was lack of transport. Pity we went there under tourist label. Portuguese authorities would sure helped us a lot if we arrived as museum collectors. Gross was rather unfair in painting everything in black. Even fresh copies of Time were displayed on the counter of the government hotel in Dili, no police spying, no oppression of natives, natives Indians and Chinese often in high positions, in swimming pools whites and Timorese mixing together, the same with dancing and pictures. Nowhere else in the world I have seen such utter disregard of color and race differences. Of course most of native population are poor and have few goods of our civilization. But the same applies to Indonesia and India and much more to NG. No hunger and still no hard work."*

With the Sedlaceks now back in Australia, Gressitt instructed them to prepare for a trip to the Solomon Islands, where they would join up in Munda with Peter Shanahan (1941–2020, Fig. 13), a knowledgeable amateur naturalist and entomologist under contract to Gressitt, for further ectoparasite work. Another one of the museum's contract collectors, Ray Straatman, was also to meet them there at this same time, following a collecting expedition he had been sent on to New Caledonia. Gressitt had people going everywhere in the southwest Pacific, it seemed.

By early 1964 Sedlacek and his wife were back in Wau, preparing for the Solomons expedition. In contrast to Timor, the collecting at Wau turned out to be excellent, despite rainy weather.

**Marie Sedlacek to Nakata, 13 April 1964, from Wau:**

*"We were very busy since we returned from Australia. The night collecting was wonderful. Never before did we have so many good nights one after the other. The months before we returned from Australia were very wet (the previous two years we had historical droughts in January and February, and few insects).*

*The rains played havoc with our roads. Edie Creek road is torn down at Blue Point, the most breathtaking spot on it; it will be closed for many months, as part of the mountain hurtled down, hundreds of feet below. We wanted to go on a trip to Black Cat gap and stay there several nights at a place called House Copper but the road to the starting point is washed away, you can not tell where it was. Such are New Guinea roads."*

With Sedlacek gone for prolonged periods of time on far-flung collecting forays, Clissold had been left largely to his own devices following the New Britain trip, running an ectoparasite crew in the Trans-Fly region of south central New Guinea. This led to mounting concern regarding his approach to overseeing fieldwork, especially when left without oversight.

**Josef Sedlacek to Gressitt, 8 April 1964, from Wau:**

*"I wonder if it is reasonable to let him work alone without supervision. He likes too much comfortable sitting inside a house; he is untrustful and too much afraid of too many things – natives (he keeps light going all night on all camps, even in Wau in his house – pity he does not use Mercury Vapor Lamp). If camping in the bush he is all the time afraid that trees can fall. In our highest camp in NB he crawled out of his big tent night after night with any slight breeze and laid down blanket at my feet in front of my tent and spent thus the night shivering in drizzle, just because he imagined there were not so many trees around my tent."*

Clissold also began sending claims to Gressitt (who was at the time doing field work in Antarctica) for miscellaneous expenses, and then threatening to go to court if these were not paid. At this time he was basing his operations out of Daru, an island off the southern coast of New Guinea that served as a commercial fishery base near mouths of the Fly River delta. Here he contracted a severe case of prickly heat rash. In April 1964 he returned to the cooler climate of Wau for a month to let it abate while his crew of Papuans remained at Daru undertaking ectoparasite and insect collecting work. Clissold did not realize the Sedlacek was coming back to Wau from Australia at about this same time. When Sedlacek discovered Clissold hanging about at Wau rather than with his team in the Trans-Fly, he was infuriated.

**Josef Sedlacek to Gressitt, 8 April 1964, from Wau:**

*"I stressed to Horrie if it happened to me that my employer would desert his team which so necessarily needed the supervision and that for six weeks or even for months as was his intention before he got that letter of yours ordering him to return to his team – I would fire him on the spot and not give 3 month notice. And I asked him straight if he would not do the same. He avoided to reply, talking about other things [...]."*

In the meantime, Gressitt was also receiving complaints about the quality of Clissold's work from sources other than just Sedlacek. With Clissold allowing his Papuan collecting teams to work unsupervised in the bush of the remote Western District while he returned regularly to Wau, the handling of specimens and labels left much to be desired. This was to have serious consequences down the line.

**Gressitt to Horrie Clissold, 1 May 1964, from Honolulu:**

*"I'm sorry to say that we have gotten some adverse publicity that seems to refer to you. A zoologist who visited New Guinea a number of months ago has written an article referring to some sloppy work being done on ectoparasites, including the leaving around of unlabeled specimens and the mixing of live mammals in sacks. This may do us a great deal of damage and we shall have to rectify this situation immediately. I shall have to let you know what changes we plan to make. However, I trust you will see to it that this sort of activity does not continue any longer. We have been noticing many sorts of discrepancies in labeling which suggested both carelessness in labeling and the possibility of ectoparasites being mixed with hosts before they were killed and processed.*

*Parasites with inaccurate data are worse than useless because they create errors in the literature and spoil our objectives. This creates permanent problems for all future workers."*

Based on subsequent correspondence, Clissold (whose letters often lack dates) apparently never acknowledged receiving the above letter, but did write to Gressitt at about this same time outlining his activities and future plans. It seems that letters were crossing in the mail, and he was either unaware of Gressitt's concerns, or chose not to address them.

**Clissold to Gressitt, undated (probably late April 1964), from Wau:**

*"Your letter finally caught up with me in Daru. No I haven't given the Ag Dept any ticks and had no intention of doing so until seen by the Museum. After which if it was OK with you a few could be forwarded to John Egerton who has been really helpful. Their interest is on the ticks found on deer, pigs and other domestic animals. There is a slight panic in the Dept at the present concerning foot and mouth disease and rabies.*

*I believe from reports that the deer around Weam and Moorhead carry large numbers of ecto's, mainly ticks. Both of these areas are starting to dry up now and they should be alright by the time I return from Kiunga, Nomad and Lake Murray. They were far too wet in February, March and April, there being only a few square miles in which to collect.*

*The Western District is the most interesting area I have ever been in, something new almost every day. The vertebrates, although not great in number are of great interest in their relation to the Australian mainland.*

*Transportation is a problem. I only intended to spend two weeks in Balimo but ended up being there for a month owing to no aircraft due to rain closing the airstrip. I was going to Kiwai Island at the mouth of the Fly River for three weeks, but missed the boat by being stranded in Balimo.*

*The Government and private enterprise are very helpful whenever it is possible. Dr. Scragg the Director of Public Health has given me permission to draw on medical supplies in any area I'm in. Such things as alcohol, ether and cotton wool. I do have to buy at times cotton wool. I use so much that at times they can't supply all I want. I have let the medical assistant at Kiunga know what I'll need in that area and he'll have it waiting for me when I get there. This is quite a saving in air freight and original cost. I am also going to see the Treasury Dept about travelling on Gov charters. At present the airlines charge full fare on a fully paid Gov charter, which stinks. I made arrangements to see Newman (Director of Treas) and if I can't get anything from him will see the Administrator.*

*In the W. District I collected 801 ecto specimens and about 20,000 insects. The lamp trap was not effective at Balimo, or rather too effective. In a few minutes after dark the jar and the trap itself would be full of small swamp insects. There are countless millions coming out of the surrounding swamps at night. Most night the lights are put out, it is impossible to live with the insects if there is a light showing. I'm going to get Gov issue pressure lights, for in most places I will be able to get those, and for nothing.*

*Oriomo had a few rats, but Balimo almost none. This could be because of the vast number of snakes there. I've never seen a place like it for reptiles. I put a label on most but did not give them a number. The largest snake was 20' 5", the largest wallaby (I doubt the name) was just on 7' and the largest freshwater turtle 46 pounds. Balimo was a fantastic area for Hispines, and if the swamps had not been so high, allowing for more movement, we I'm sure would have got many more.*

*I'm flat out packing up everything to forward to the Museum. Don't like leaving a large collection like this laying around for too long.*

*Some of the specimens are not the best because of the extreme humidity and T. A. A. would not allow me to carry any ammunition on the aircraft, and I had to use far too heavy shot on the smaller species. Next week when I leave I'm hiding some in my luggage even if I go to goal for it.*

*While I'm in Wau packing up, and getting new supplies the Government in Daru are forwarding all my heavy gear and the boys by boat to Kiunga. The boys will collect insects wherever possible all the way up the Fly River whenever the boat pulls up. It takes a week by boat from Daru to Kiunga but as this will be for free and the Catalina costs so much it's a saving.*

*Bukam is here and will go back with me. He is the best insect collector I've seen and will mean I'll be able to spend more time on ecto's.*

*I may be able to get to Thursday Island for a month from Daru and as the boats going for repair travel empty the boys, the gear and myself will get a free passage both ways. There is nothing definite yet, it depends on if a boat is going at the right moment without wasting too much time.*

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*Thanks very much for the book on Hispines and congrats on an excellent work. It must have taken a lot of hours to prepare. I will now have an authority to compare any specimens I get with.*

*While in Wau I'm doing a little work on taking blood from live specimens in preparation for Dr. Gaydusek and am finding it very interesting indeed. As yet haven't heard from him. It was unfortunate about his accident here in Wau.*

*This forthcoming trip will be Kiunga then Nomad (a new patrol post N.W. of Mt. Bosavi), Lake Murray, Weam and Moorhead. Then if possible Kiwai Island."*

Gressitt followed up with another a week later.

**Gressitt to Clissold, 8 May 1964, from Honolulu:**

*"Thank you for your recent letter with information on future plans. We would prefer it if you would not try to take too much advantage of government transportation and government stores and equipment and personnel. We do not want to get the reputation of sponging off the government. I think it best if we only travel where travel is available and do not ask for special dispensation. Also, we should supply our own equipment so far as possible.*

*In case you did not get my previous letter, we have had a serious complaint about the scientific value of a lot of your work. This is concerned complaint about the delayed labeling of specimens, confusion of labels and mixing of live hosts before killing. When hosts of different species are put in the same bag before killing there is a re-opportunity for parasites to be temporarily exchanged. Many of the labels on your specimens have indicated they were from hosts which could not possibly be the natural hosts. Specimens with incorrect host information on them are more dangerous than a lack of specimens because they create mis-information which goes into the literature and confuses the issues and often makes for wrong scientific conclusions.*

*I have heard a rumor that you are thinking of going to Australia and going into business with one of your brothers. Possibly it would be a good idea to give this serious thought and possibly advance the date of this move. I would like to hear from you on this subject. As soon as Joe gets back from the Solomons it would be best if you spent the remaining time with him, as our original plan was to have an entomologist supervising the ectoparasite work which is really necessary."*

Gressitt had a new mosquito project starting up, which began competing with the ectoparasite work for overextended staff resources. He was also having increased misgivings about Clissold's operating style, and considering replacements.

**Gressitt to Josef Sedlacek, 8 May 1964, from Honolulu:**

*"I have heard again from Horrie Clissold – quite a long an informative letter. There is frequent mention of getting free transportation, free equipment and this and that, so I am writing to Horrie that we do not like to have him taking too much advantage of the government and government officials. I am still not telling him that he is going to be fired but I am giving him a second warning and suggesting that the arrangement had better not go on too much longer.*



*We have received financial support now for extensive work on mosquitoes, particularly in the New Guinea area. This means that we shall slightly reduce our emphasis on ectoparasites and greatly increase our emphasis on mosquitoes. Please make all effort you can to collect reared mosquitoes and preserve all stages in alcohol, as well as fresh pinning adults on minuten pins [...].*

*I am still waiting for your comments on whether you think Peter is better equipped for ectoparasite work or for insect collecting. If you think he is qualified and reliable enough, we might consider him as Horrie's successor. In any case, he will have to do some of the mosquito collecting. Probably, we shall send the mosquito specialist to New Guinea before very long, but in any case all the field men should participate in this program, particularly when they are going to places which we may not be able to visit again [...].*

Sedlacek had been sent to the Solomons for the summer, where he was mostly out of contact, so Clissold was communicating directly with Gressitt, explaining his actions, outlining some of the difficulties of operating in the remote Trans-Fly area, and asking for guidance on where he should concentrate his activities. He also continued to seek support and supplies from government officials, despite Gressitt's clear instructions not to do so.

**Clissold to Gressitt, 17 May 1964, from Port Moresby:**

*"I received your letter of 8<sup>th</sup> May yesterday the 16<sup>th</sup>, in it you also mention another letter which to date I have not received. Was it sent to Wau or Daru?"*

*You cannot have received a letter I posted in Balimo about the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> of March, in it was included a T. A. A. map with suggested areas to visit either in the Western District or Gulf District whichever you decided. I had been awaiting a reply to see whether to remain in the W. District or ship the heavy gear to Kerema. I had the chance of getting the gear and two boys to D'Alberts by boat so took it when I didn't hear from you, knowing you wanted work done around Kiunga and Lake Murray. The situation should be easier now that the wet season is finishing and the elections are over, although transport is always difficult there.*

*I suggested seeing the Treasury Department for they pay full charter rates and the aircraft is only half full and the T. A. A. charged me, when they found out I was an American museum field worker, full price for gear and passage. They were then getting it both ways and it smells. I was fortunate to get the heavy gear on a boat going direct to Daru but they would not carry passengers, they were carrying petrol. This is the case in almost every boat going to Daru and a lot going to Kerema and Kikori too.*

*Without a little help from the Health Department we would often be short in the field. As you know ether or ethyl acetate and alcohol has to be specially packed to travel in an aircraft. That is in a bottle packed in sawdust in a tin, the tin then soldered down and put in a strong box, which is nailed down. By the time you finish with one gallon of ethyl acetate it is a very large and heavy crate. And mostly you can only get small amounts of acetate anyway, although I order it from time to time. The cost to transport alcohol in two or three gallon lots would be very high indeed. After this stuff is packed you have to get the D. D. A.'s permission to load it on the plane, then sometimes the Captain will not carry it, which happened to me once.*

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*Referring to the mix up in ectoparasites. I put every specimen in a separate bag, and never do I include two specimens in the same bag, even those of the same species, as I find even in the same species that the male will carry different ecto's to the female on occasion. After the specimen has been examined the labels are written out and is entered on the forms. That is done straight away and I am very particular about it. The specimen is then placed back in the bag out of which it came with the label to await skinning. In the afternoon the bag is turned inside out and well and truly washed, and is only used once before washing. The only weakness in the system is when I'm in the field and the native is still skinning and not under direct supervision, and as I usually check on my return there cannot be many that are wrongly labeled. I've told them time and time again to work one specimen at a time. Even the best of them will work perfectly for six days and then do nothing on the seventh and that includes Bukam. Bukam by the way is seriously ill in hospital and is not with me and probably will never be much good again. There is something wrong with his stomach.*

*I know what ecto's come off which specimens and I'd certainly know if a rodentia comasoid appeared on a bird specimen. The Psitta family of birds do carry a comasoid which is similar to those on rats but your people would know that.*

*If you would give me the numbers of the specimens which are wrong I will check on my field books. I keep a full list of every ectoparasite of every specimen and do my own determination of that specimen while it is being packed. That way we have a safety if a package goes astray.*

*As far as the rumor of going into business with my brother, I haven't thought of that or to my memory mentioned it for years, but we are leaving Wau on the 7<sup>th</sup> December; we can't leave before then because of Barry's (the eldest boy) school exams, which he must complete to go to high school in Australia. So if I can work the extra month in November I'd be thankful. I have enjoyed working for the Museum and have learned a lot but it is disruptive to family life and I have changed my glasses three times in two years, which the Dr's put down to long hours on a microscope.*

*The main reason for going back to the W. District after not hearing from you was the fact that a large expedition would cost a fantastic price and area is by far the worst in N. G. and nobody seemed to want to do it. It is nothing but heat, humidity and rain. Another reason I returned to Wau, apart from picking up Bukam, packing up all the stuff for the Museum and replenishing supplies was the fact I was covered from head to foot in heat rash some of which was infected. I was advised to either get medical attention, which meant staying in Daru, or going to a cooler climate for a while. I am now well and have a special soap which I hope will be effective on my return there tomorrow.*

*I'm writing this in Moresby as I only got this letter the afternoon before I left the next morning.*

*When I finish in the Western District do you want me to ship all the gear back to Wau or is Joe going to Kerema in which case I could ship it to there via Moresby by boat. There is very few if any boats that go to Kerema from Daru, they usually go Daru-Moresby direct."*



**Figure 4.** The “old lab” at Wau, where much of the specimen processing work was done during Sedlacek’s tenure at the station (Allen Allison photo).

From May through July of 1964 the Sedlaceks remained in the Solomons, collecting hispine beetles and mosquitoes for Gressitt throughout that archipelago, but at that time of year the area did not prove overly productive.

**Josef Sedlacek to Gressitt, 28 May 1964, from Honiara:**

*“Insect collecting is very poor as this is clearly very pronounced dry autumn season here, just as in North Queensland or all over Australia. Had I knew this before it is so bad I would have postponed my visit until September: Gizo was still better; but in May Christobal and Guadalcanal are practically without any variety of insects [...]. I would much prefer to come in the spring (September). In any case, we shall finish Malaita with Ray and then if no letter comes from you proceed to Ysabel by the end of June [...].”*

He also offered his opinion of Clissold’s work ethic.

*Those news about Horrie’s poor work were shock to me. I had no illusions about him since N. Britain, I knew that he is the greatest hoax and phony I ever met, lazy, afraid, always full of plans which never come true but I stressed to him so often and strongly the necessity of accurate data and I was sure Nixon did the same that I did not suspect he would be careless in that. The hell, I never saw him busy in those two years when he has been with the Museum. He almost never left the house or the camp, never skinned a single specimen, just checked his usual 6 or 7 specimens for parasites, sometimes 2 or 3 only and that was all. Marie just told me that Horrie said that one of his natives brought by him from Wau to Daru knows how to check animals for parasites and write labels. And so I get the whole*

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*picture clear. Apparently he intended to let the boys in Daru work on vertebrate and ectoparasite work on their own for many months (he mentioned to Marie that he will stay several months in Wau with Bukam working on Nematodes), and if – as originally planned – both me and Marie were already on Solomons before his arrival at Wau – to just live quietly in Wau with the Museum thinking all the time he is in Daru. Apparently you sent him a letter to go to Kiunga as he left on the 18<sup>th</sup>. I suggest that the Museum should be very careful with all of the specimens from Daru between April 9 and May 20 when he was absent from Daru. Horrie also confided to Marie just before he left his new plans for Daru and Kiunga – we will send natives by planes to all airstrips and stations and missions around and they will bring the specimens to him to Kiunga or Daru. Did you stress to him that it may be necessary to supervise the native assistants closely?”*

Meanwhile, having been given only vague instructions from Gressitt as to where to head next, Clissold made his way into the savannahs of southern New Guinea, nearly on the border with what had now become a province of Indonesia, and heading toward Rouku (which he spelled “Rauku”).

**Clissold to Gressitt, 14 June 1964, from Weam via Daru:**

*“I’m at Weam which is a new station a couple of miles from the border level with Merauke. It’s a poor area for insects. I’m leaving tomorrow for Palmer. This is plains country with area of often stunted forest. The best results for insects come from the light and then not a great deal [...].*

*When I came in I was off loaded at Daru, thank heaven, for T. A. A. have ceased their service to Kiunga, and the only way of getting there now is by boat if and when they run or by a Cessna aircraft which runs only once a week and is full both ways with Admin cargo and passengers. I enquired about a charter but the cost would have been ridiculous, and anyway there was no plane. There is only one Cessna stationed in the W. District and is on full Admin charters.*

*I would suggest that any future expedition coming here come with an open mind on where it is going and take the opportunities as they present themselves. I’ve been lucky at present and haven’t wasted time anywhere, such as sitting on airstrips or wharfs waiting for a vehicle that never comes. I was fortunate to get the gear and natives on a boat to Weam a day after I got to Daru, it took five days to get here. The transport to Rauku is arranged, but from Rauku out is not definite, but no doubt something will turn up.*

*I intend, again depending on transport to spend two weeks at Lake Murray, and two weeks at either Kiwai Island or Bamu, which ever is easiest to get to at the time. I believe Lake Murray is a good area for insects from all reports.”*

Clissold eventually received some instructions from Sedlacek (in a letter that apparently has not been preserved) to the effect that he should try to reach the area around Kiunga, well upstream on the Fly River. This was not an easy place to get to, and with Sedlacek still mostly out of contact in the Solomons, and Gressitt having departed on a trip to England, Clissold, now at Rouku on the Moorhead River, reached out to Sets for further instructions.

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**Clissold to Nakata, from Rouku** (not dated, but certainly mid-July 1964 based on Clissold label data from this locale):

*"I have a letter from Joe Sedlacek in which he suggests I do certain areas, one being Kiunga. This area is hard to get into. There is only one Cessna aircraft a week and that an Admin charter and always full both ways. T. A. A. used to run a Catalina to here but now do not, so the only way to get there and out is to charter an aircraft. This would cost 22 pounds an hour and the round trip is five hours. That would make the two trips over 200 pounds, and at the present time you just could not get an aircraft anyway, it is fully taken up with government work. I could go on to Lake Murray by Catalina, that would cost about 80 pounds return trip from Daru. There is no airstrip at Lake Murray and to get to Kiunga from the lake you have to go down river for four hours by boat to a mission airfield and the charter aircraft never land there and you would be very lucky indeed to get to Kiunga from there. Here at Rouku as at Weam Admin charters often go one way or the other empty and I can hop on one for only a very small charge.*

*Joe also suggested Daru and Kerema. These would be alright as the cost would be small. Kerema may be a little trouble as the boats to Daru usually return straight to Port Moresby. There is an occasional one that returns to Moresby via Kerema. I did intend spending a couple of weeks at Kiwai Island in the mouth of the Fly River. This would cost very little and should be interesting in insects being of the coast.*

*I'm writing to you as I believe Dr. Gressitt is in England, and I wouldn't know his address.*

*This area of the Western District is very much like Australia, all open plains and light forest country with not a hill or mountain for hundreds of miles. The insects are not in numbers like the jungle country but are interesting.*

*Could you please let me know as soon as possible on the Kiunga-Lake Murray question."*

It does not appear that Clissold himself ever reached Kiunga, and it is not clear if his arrangement to have some of his crew taken there by boat ever materialized. Instead, it seems that he returned to Daru after collecting at Rouku. Ironically, although Kiunga was difficult to reach in 1964, it later became the logistics hub for the Ok Tedi mine in the mountains to the north, and the busiest airstrip in far western Papua New Guinea by the early 1980s.

During this same period in mid-1964, Pauahi Hall was nearing completion on the Bishop Museum campus, with move-in by the entomology department scheduled for late summer. Occupied by this task, Gressitt was now letting Sedlacek set his own field schedule, but anxious to know where he was going next. Okapa and then the Huon Peninsula were both suggested. Returning to New Guinea from the Solomons at the start of August, Sedlacek finally organized the delayed trip to Okapa, in the Eastern Highlands. A bit of negotiation was required when they arrived, because their sponsor Dr. Gajdusek, whom the Sedlaceks were supposed to meet there, was apparently viewed with ambivalence by the local officials, who felt his medical research work brought too many unwanted visitors to the area. In the end, however, things worked out well.

**Josef Sedlacek to J Gressitt, 8 September 1964, from Wau:**

*"Dr. Gajdusek did not come to Okapa, and the welcome from Dr. Hornabrook on our arrival was anything but warm. He almost tried to persuade us to turn straight back and*

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*warned us that the District Officer will not give us any help, it would be better to avoid him. We assured him that we do not need any assistance, just suggestion where is some accessible forest. Over a cup of tea I learnt that he is a bit of amateur entomologist and we became fast very good friends. He confided to us that too many visitors come to Okapa, esp. from US (Gajdusek is to blame) and that most of them are real pests, that our arrival was timed most unfortunately as there was still in Okapa a team of student birdwatchers from some US university, supposed to leave tomorrow, god bless them, they were molesting the Authorities all the time and ADO is sick and tired of them. And then the Doctor offered us his grass house 11 miles behind Okapa, near Purosa, very good base for our work. All collecting was done between 1750–2250 m, and quite rich it was.”*

After this trip, Sedlacek returned again to Wau, concentrating on research station operations and insect rearing through the remainder of that year and into 1965. At the same time, the problems with improperly labeled specimens collected by Clissold’s unsupervised Papuan survey crew operating in the Fly River area while Clissold himself repeatedly returned to Wau became painfully evident once again. Gressitt was quite displeased, and terminated Clissold in October.

**Gressitt to Clissold, 27 October 1964, from Honolulu:**

*“We have just been going over a manuscript that partially concerns your collections. We are absolutely frustrated because we are finding that the data on many of the parasites does not coincide with the data for the host. This should indicate to you that a lot of the material that you have collected is really scientifically worthless and is causing us a great deal of trouble and embarrassment. How is it possible that the parasites were collected at different time and place from the hosts? This indicates that a lot of the data must have been written down on the forms long after the things were collected or were based on information from the natives. They were not correct or accurate.*

*This is a very serious matter and I think we are being very generous for having given you a long notice of termination date and not cancelling your pay for a longer period during which your work was negative or very ineffective.”*

The museum’s new New Guinea mosquito project was now running in tandem with the ectoparasite work there, putting added pressure on everyone. During this period Gressitt’s letters became more demanding and critical.

**Gressitt to Josef Sedlacek on 12 February 1965, from Honolulu:**

*“The recent accounts you submitted confirm my remarks on your driving. It is evident that a great deal of money has already been spent on repair of the clutch and that you do not understand properly how to use it. Please give serious thought to this matter, because we cannot go on spending so much money for repairs.*

*Also, I think you have misunderstood the clothing allowance. This was based on the assumption of full time field work and also of using heavy leather boots and long trousers. The objective was to prevent injuries, infected sores, and such things. It is quite possible that if you had been wearing heavy leather boots, you would not have broken your foot as you did last year. Also, since in the future a great deal of time is to be spent on the rearing of insects, and mounting, you will not be doing full time field work. For these reasons, I think we should discount most of the allowance for this year, considering that we paid more last year than was warranted with the type of field clothing you have been buying.*



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*Setsuko will write you more in detail on some aspects of the account. Also, the expenditures on the buildings should not have been put on the museum account. I said that you could send them to Setsuko but I did not mean that they should go on the regular account, as I have to pay those items."*

Sedlacek spent much of 1965 working on the Wau field station, coordinating logistics for Gressitt's other collectors, and rearing out beetles and mosquitoes. He undertook only one major field expedition during this period, a trip to Gailala country of the Owen Stanley Range.

**Marie Sedlacek to Nakata, 22 January 1966, from Wau:**

*"We made only one bigger trip – to Mt. Albert Edward, collecting on the endless grassy plains above ten thousand feet; we crossed the range to Longai, in a lost Gailala valley where I was the first white woman that ever came there as the surprised Catholic priest informed me. He founded the mission there and has lived for sixteen years, slowly getting the people out of their isolation. A track has been cut, along which we came on steep slopes high above the river by which an airstrip in Woitape may be reached in a couple of days. For three years they are building an airstrip – cutting the top of a mountain. In another two years it may be finished if too many sing-sings and festivities, to which these people are addicted, do not interfere too often. The take-off will be formidable; the plane will drive down the slope, after take-off it will have to turn immediately right to avoid hitting the mountain opposite, across the narrow valley. If it does not take off in time it will hurtle into the river several hundred feet below, between the edge of the airfield end and the bottom of the river there is an almost perpendicular drop. If we go to Mt. Albert Edward in the future we shall use this strip."*

Starting in February 1966 the Sedlaceks took an extended leave, as was allowed by their contract. This simply turned into another collecting trip, as they headed to Laos and adjacent parts of Asia, working part of the time with one of Gressitt's colleagues, Belgian beetle collector Jacques A. Rondon. The agenda was, as usual, ambitious.

**Josef Sedlacek to Gressitt, 13 December 1965, from Wau:**

*"Approximate travel schedule. Leaving Wau approx. March 1<sup>st</sup> [...] collect in Malaya for cca 10 days, finish collecting in Thai and Laos by the end of April, 2 weeks in Sikkim, then we shall spend 3 weeks in Afghanistan and Iran and cca 4 months in Europe, or 2 weeks more if I get to Poland to study the Lycid-types, end of October in New York and some 2-3 weeks for other museums and California, most probably Dec. 1<sup>st</sup> in Hawaii."*

Of the time away, five months would be paid by the museum as use of aggregate vacation accrued over the years and for new field collecting, while the remainder would be taken as leave without pay. Gressitt was also setting the Sedlaceks up with contacts in Asia.

**Gressitt to Josef Sedlacek, 27 December 1965, from Honolulu:**

*"Mr. J. Rondon, the Belgian Consul in Vientiane, will be happy to see you there. He will probably send one of his top collectors to take you somewhere in the field. They speak French, of course. Rondon will be leaving Laos sometime in April, so it would be well if you could get there before the end of March. I suggest you advise him of your arrival time. His address is B. P. 33, Vientiane, Laos."*



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The Sedlaceks departed Wau in late February 1966, leaving Peter Shanahan, who ran the neighboring coffee plantation, in charge of the Wau station.

**Josef Sedlacek to Gressitt, 3 March 1966, from Sydney:**

*"We left Wau on 27<sup>th</sup> and the same day met Mrs. Gressitt in Brisbane. Peter is now in charge of the Station and our 5 native assistants. I gave him full instructions what to do and how and also showed him where all the collecting and mounting gear is being kept."*

Unfortunately, the Laotian portion of the trip did not work out, since it was contingent in part on obtaining transport on U. S. military aircraft supporting the ongoing Vietnam War effort. As it developed, the military was not interested in giving free air lifts to a foreign national.

**Josef Sedlacek to Gressitt, 3 April 1966, from Bangkok:**

*"We cut short our stay in Laos, as there was not much sense to stay there. All the collecting parties were hard to locate and contact, as they move from place to place – some on bicycle. M. Rondon suggested to contact the only one which was practical to contact, provided I got a seat on US military planes. I did not get a permission for that – probably due to my Australian status and especially not having any recommendation or introduction letter from the Museum – or you. Pity. We must not overlook in future this. Also, M. Rondon was stressing that all the parties are well trained, and it would be practically no sense to spend a month trying to catch up with them somewhere. I saw results of a weekly catch. As March is still a poor month, it was not rich."*

The Sedlaceks proceeded onward through Asia to Europe, and then returned to the United States, arriving in New York on 30 November 1966. They proceeded to Honolulu, where Josef spent the first half of 1967 working at the Bishop Museum studying lycid beetles from New Guinea, under an NSF grant awarded to Gressitt. The couple departed on 24 July, but rather than proceeding directly back to Wau, they were routed through Fiji, the New Hebrides (modern Vanuatu), and New Caledonia for additional beetle collecting. Sedlacek had apparently injured his back near the end of this stay in Honolulu, which gave him trouble on the initial flight to Fiji.

**Josef Sedlacek to Nakata, 25 July 1967, from Nadi:**

*"Hard to believe it is only 12 hours since we left Honolulu. I was rather miserable - 6½ hours in the air proved rather too much. But it is over; I got 2 hours of sleep in this hotel and I think I am better than any day last week. I am taking a rest today, there is nothing else to do at Nadi, no forest, no trees, no insects. I shall write all the postponed letters and get in bushfitting conditions, tomorrow we move east [...]. Sets, it was a nice time we both had in the Museum, very pleasant and also profitable, both for our knowledge and for our work in Wau. I also understand better the problems of a fast growing museum."*

Sedlacek also wrote to Gressitt, noting that his back injury was limiting his activity, and that because it was the end of the dry season on Viti Levu, the collecting was not that great.



Fig. 5. Local Papuan staff working in the lab at Wau (Allen Allison photo).

**Josef Sedlacek to Gressitt, 25 July 1967, from Nadi:**

*"Hard to imagine that this hour yesterday I was still sitting in the Museum. The flight was almost too much for me but in the earliest morning I get a few hours of good sleep here, then wrote a longer letter with some instructions to Sets and afternoon tried carefully my first collecting near the river [...].*

*Well, I would not be writing you a letter so soon after a letter to Sets, but I came back a bit tired, arranged some transport for future and went straight to bed but all the servants [sic] gathered under my window and talk lustily as only Indians manage. So what else can I do - it was only 8 PM. About the transport. We still have 5 days (if lucky - we are still on waiting list for Vila) and I am not fit for strenuous walk, handling luggage and such and the country close around to Nadi - well you know it. So we hired a taxi to go slowly around the island and stop wherever good locality. We shall pay L 6 a day and the driver will be with us the whole day. We start tomorrow morning. I think this is the easiest and safest way for me and the price seems reasonable.*

*Of course I hope to be in different condition in the N. Hebrides and shall not need this kind of arrangement. It is clearly in middle of dry and winter here, grasses are tall and dry. Coleoptera scarce, but flies and Hymenoptera all right. So it may not be so bad after all. Some of the shrubs and trees what I can find here have buds or even just start to spread new leaves, probably we are at the end of the poorest time of the year."*

The Sedlaceks spent only a week in Fiji and were in the New Hebrides by 5 August. Sedlacek's back was still bothering him, although this did not stop him from collecting, the results being better than in Fiji.



**Figure 6.** József Szent-Iványi (left), Josef Sedlacek (in car), J. Linsley Gressitt (right of Joe), and three other unidentified colleagues pose by the Wau station's Toyota Land Cruiser, ca. 1968. The Toyota proved to be a far more reliable vehicle than the balky Land Rover, which was originally purchased for the research station, the latter developing constant mechanical problems that were expensive to fix (Phil Colman photo).

### Josef Sedlacek to Nakata, 5 August 1967, from Port Vila

*"In one hour we shall be on our way to the island of Epi. We shall concentrate our work on 2 central islands. Epi and Ambrym - with possible visits to Malekula & Tongariki. That again depends on available boats and weather.*

*As I imagined we are approaching better insect season and the collecting here is more rewarding than week ago on Fiji. Yesterday we got some 25 Coleopt. families in a full day collecting - not bad for winter season. Phasmids are mostly immature, the colourful sp. living on Pandanus the most aggressive of all Phasmids I ever met, shooting its protective liquid on you on a slightest disturbance and for quite a distance (that I shall measure). Have you any leaf insects from Fiji? Marie got one - immature! Ask Dr. Gressitt if I can send Embioptera straight through to Dr. Ross. I got some on N. Hebrides.*

*I am still a bit crippled, cannot run (but I didn't need that so far) and as I can walk only in a rather stiff position I feel always rather tired after full day in the forest. But do not worry, I am very careful - I want to get OK as soon as possible. I returned again to sleeping on the floor - the soft beds in hotels were only making my condition worse."*

During the Sedlaceks' prolonged absence from Wau, Gressitt had made several visits, overseeing installation of a water system for the station, and undertaking collecting expeditions to the central highlands. Although interim station operations were initially overseen by Peter Shanahan, he found Gressitt difficult to work for and resigned in June 1966. G. Allan ["Al"] Samuelson (1933–present), a coleopterist at the Bishop Museum, was then sent to Wau from Hawaii along with his family to keep things running, although his children caused problems.

The Samuelsons were on a fixed duration appointment but showed no indications of wanting to leave when it terminated, until Gressitt was compelled to order them to depart in the latter half of 1967. For the remainder of that year the station was managed by Ray Straatman, a lepidopterist working for Gressitt on a geometrid moth project. Others also at the station during this period were József ["Joe"] Szent-Iványi (1910–1988, Fig. 6), a Hungarian entomologist from an aristocratic background who with his wife Maria had emigrated to Australia in 1950 to avoid the Russian occupation of eastern Europe, and who was working on a partially self-funded birdwing butterfly conservation project; and Phil Colman (Fig. 7), an Australian invertebrate zoologist working for the ectoparasite project. Gressitt mailed the Sedlaceks at Port Vila about funding and changes in staffing.

**Gressitt to Josef Sedlacek, 30 August 1967, from Honolulu:**

*"We are apparently receiving continuation of our New Guinea beetle project. We are not going to get a full approval we requested, so work on Lepidoptera will be very restricted. There will probably be money to employ Joe Szent-Ivany for half the year, and for only part of next year for Straatman and Colman. I am urging the latter to go back to school, and offer him a part-time job sorting beetles since we cannot employ a full-time replacement for Samuelson. Samuelson already returned from New Guinea and is on the mainland, going to Purdue University. I hope that collecting is good and that your back has completely recovered."*

Sets provided the Sedlaceks with further details on the entomological staff downsizing at the museum, which included the departure of heteropterist Peter Ashlock, who went to the University of Kansas, and dipterist Carl Yoshimoto, who headed to England. She also sent fond recollections of their recent visit.

**Setsuo Nakata to Marie and Josef Sedlacek, August 1967 (no day specified), from Honolulu:**

*"Thank you for your nice long letter and postcard from Nadi, Fiji. I hope both of you are feeling all right after such a long journey from Hawaii. How is the collecting in New Hebrides? Hope you are finding it both interesting and profitable...The Samuelsons returned last week. He will be going to Purdue University and has been accepted with a good traineeship. They were so reluctant to leave Wau - it must be a beautiful and wonderful place to stay (though primitive) [...]. Carl Yoshimoto left for British Museum to spend one year there, and Pete Ashlock leaves on 18th so we really will be deserted here. Not so lively as when you were both here. Marie and Joe, it was such a pleasure for me and for the rest of us here to have you in Honolulu for 7 and a half months. I am so glad and grateful to both of you for working so hard and accomplishing so much of the sorting of the Diptera and Coleoptera. I do hope that the experiences you have gained here was rewarding. You both added so much life to the department and I shall never forget your delightful parties as well as your sumptuous dinners and favors. Thank you so much, and I hope I'll meet you here again."*

Back in the New Hebrides, the Sedlaceks were finding it challenging, and sometimes hazardous, to move among the islands within the archipelago, and the working conditions there were primitive. A raggedly hand-written letter from Ambrym (Fig. 17), which was added to multiple times as expected ships kept failing to arrive, provides a stark illustration of the difficulties involved in the field work that built the museum's entomology collections.

**Josef Sedlacek to Nakata, 4 Sept 1967, from Ambrym:**

*"As you guess - we were interrupted by a message to get ready to embark the boat in a bay 45 minutes far from here in 1 ½ hour time. Good luck we transferred Malaise trap close to our place. Well, we caught the boat in time - and as the sea was too rough tried landing on a tiny island halfway to Ambrym and when we tried at 5 AM in total darkness and even rougher sea to embark the boat with us sank in great waves. It was ugly feeling in the dark and in the roaring waves, swimming and gripping tightly to our bags (and money and glasses) (you can imagine me swimming backstroke in the furious sea holding collected material on my chest - but that might be fiction). Although we got alright out of it, only tarps and hat lost and apparently my wristwatch will be a total loss (waterproof - but somehow got soaked by marine water). We reached Ambrym the same day - only natives here and a Tahitian. Our hut has a floor and roof and as local natives are very curious there is no privacy, except later evening when darkness descend with ghosts (debil-debils). This is a rather strange island, all volcanic, even more restricted in kinds of vegetation than Epi (insects follow poor vegetation). I would have preferred to leave for Malekula after only a week of stay here - but no ships or boats stop here. The one which was supposed to come here Sept. 1<sup>st</sup> is still nowhere in sight.*

*By the way, the first two pages went down in the sea with us and our luggage - that's why the poor appearance.*

*Both English and French authorities at plantation here are most friendly and helpful, also all natives are friendly; but they plant only taro and maniok and cooking bananas and in the native store has practically only boyfish, kerosine and rice. It rains every day, all our belongings getting mouldier every day except insects - those we dry all evenings above kerosine lamp. Mosquitoes are not too troublesome in the forest, very bad in the house (with no walls they have quite a comfortable access to us) - by blessed luck the native store kept one lonely mosquito net - probably for a native missionary - so we bought it and sleep sound ever after. Sleeping on hard floors is very good for my back - I am absolutely fit, better than ever in Honolulu - I need only insects to be 100%. Sleeping on the floor has some drawbacks too - we got worms in our feet - I think I killed them already, opening the wounds and heating them harshly. Rats and crabs are our constant night sharers of the house - rats are okay, but crabs rattle too much.*

*Light collecting is monotonous - from my experiences in the museum I try hard not to send you thousands of the same tiny flies, Ipids, Nitidulids & Staphylinids and select carefully. We did not get of course any mail since 2 weeks ago and also could not send you a letter. It will go from Malekula. Looking forward to Malekula - let's hope a boat will come and will be able to approach the island. By the way the volcano on our island has become very active, even more the volcano which soars straight from the sea some 3 miles from us. Day before yesterday it opened 3 more craters - the smoke is more impressive than any hydrogen bomb explosion and the rumbling is most exhilarating.*

*5.IX.67. Early, early morning. The sea is empty. No got ship, no got nothing. An excannibal here owns a radio and lets it explode at 5 AM every morning. The box howls till 5.45 and then the excannibal falls asleep again. Of course it is only my rough estimate of time - my waterproof watch keeping still plenty of sea inside. But when those howls stop the day start to break. Anyway it is in pidgeon so we are getting thus our refreshing lessons. Of course I am writing this under full native watch and survey. This all island consists of volcanic ashes and rocks and there is no running water whatsoever. But there is a dugout deep waterhole just in the back of our house - village washing and social place and part*



*of our house mosquito supply. We discovered a big seepage of water 1 mile from here in the ashes in forest and so most late afternoons just before dark we are getting our lonely wash there and a good drink...I have two wishes only. More varied insects, less rain, dozen bananas or kaukau for change and ship to take us to Malekula - and of course - less mosquitoes.*

*Sunny day today, I think the boat will come, and then everything is O.K.*

*I succeeded to reach high and deep inland, pandanus, freycinetia, tree ferns and 2 kinds of treeshrub - very strange and one beetle only. Strange, the coast is richer by far than sterile inland - contrary to all my previous experiences.*

*Later - Sets, dear, can you find this island on a map? No ship can find it!*

*Still later - (famous last words). We put some letters in bottles and casted on the sea. Our volcano, that one which is north of waterhole, becomes quite active, ashes are starting to fall on the village - and still no ship on the horizon. You were all so nice in the Museum."*

The Sedlaceks finally escaped Ambrym and made their way to Malekula. The collecting here was better, and despite their recent difficulties they decided to stay a bit longer in the New Hebrides.

#### **Josef Sedlacek to Gressitt, Sept 1967, from Malekula:**

*"Finally we got out of Ambrym. The island was disappointing, composed utterly from volcanic ashes and lava rocks with correspondingly monotonous very poor vegetation related insect paucity.*

*First impressions from Malekula refreshing. We are prolonging our stay on N. Hebrides by 2 weeks (I am under impression that you fully agree). We shall divide our stay on Malekula evenly between South and North.*

*My back is back to normal and I am absolutely fit for collecting."*

The couple departed the New Hebrides for good in late September 1967, and arrived in New Caledonia on 2 October. Collecting was more rewarding there, but weather and terrain proved challenging.

#### **Josef Sedlacek to Gressitt, 20 October 1967, from Nouméa:**

*"We stayed on Malekula one more week and arrived Noumea on Oct. 2. Many thanks for your letters - I could not reply the one from 11 October as we descended from Mt Koghi at 5PM, went to the tent for geologists, ate, packed our equipment and at midnight straight were departing on native bus for Mt Panier.*

*Malekula proved to be much more interesting, vegetation and insects more varied, for the first time in a long time I felt almost satisfied on this trip. Variation in species or forming new forms on different islands by far less conspicuous than on Solomons [...]. Sweeping still poor (due to season or is that like that the whole year through?). N. Caledonia exciting. As we had to wait for bus connection to North and for a tent we went to Koghi (rather Dr Cocherau took us there) and on first day collecting I got most probably 2 new family records for N.C. - Lycid and Propalticidae. Of course I was very thrilled with Lycid - still*

*have just one specimen - I will try hard to get more concentrating on proper humid places. It took us night and day to get 40 km close to starting point for a path to Mt Panier. The day we started we broke camp at 1360m with carriers so exhausted by climbing and chilly rain that I myself brought them water for tea. The rain, better say drizzle, was continuous the whole day next day and the guide did not dare lead me to the summit - sure quite near. I tried alone but there were so many paths from wild pigs and deer that it was clearly to risky and probably dangerous and I gave up. The third day the weather without change and hope, continuous drizzle, everything soaked, no possibility of sweeping and carriers very miserable, 2 of 3 sick. So reluctantly we went down, doing the only possible collecting. water pools, hispines, rotten logs [...]. Later we tried other mountain also on NE coast and got very interesting lot just below 1000 m (one beetle I cannot place to any family, it puzzles me). Clearly sweeping here is by far richer than on N.H. - or is it that the spring arrived?*

*Dr. Cocherau is most helpful. The natives are everywhere most friendly and obliging. Except carriers to Mt Panier we do not employ any native, the wages are too high, carriers 500 francs per day (\$5.70) and food. We did not take carriers for the other mountains.*

*Got also letter from Geoff. he is very busy with his exams but would like very much to take us for collecting to Bunya Mts after Nov 16<sup>th</sup>. That may just fit as we shall leave Noumea on 3<sup>rd</sup> and I want to check some NG Lycid types in Sydney and have to see a doctor. What day will be left we shall use for collecting. Also we might see two old collectors from south and central Queensland - re their collections - esp. how carefully they are labeled. Most probably we shall reach Wau beginning of December."*

The Sedlaceks finally arrived back in Wau on the first of December. It had been quite the transit from Honolulu to New Guinea. They found the Wau station, which now included an adjacent property known as Sigi's, in a state of disorder, and also raised concerns to Gressitt about the ectoparasite team shooting birds of paradise.

#### **Josef Sedlacek to Gressitt, 4 December 1967, from Wau:**

*"We arrived in Moresby on 30<sup>th</sup>, Wau 1<sup>st</sup>...Collecting on NC was good, there might be some 10000 specimens in those few cardboard boxes and yet I did not take any species in too great numbers and took with us Australian stuff to be mounted here - interesting material. Mostly from localities we have not yet in collections. I got free transport to all localities (of course we pay Geoff the gas and accommodations in the Bunya Mountains) and we should get more material in future from 60 miles inland west of Rockhampton as we instructed one good collector how to collect and store small insects. I should send him some showy Lucanids, Cetoniids, Dynastids from here but I think if he sends a lot of good material I shall send him more of showy material later from my collection. By the way, I am sure we got on NC more Coleoptera sp. then we have so far in Museum from all expeditions put together.*

*We shall try to sort all material mounted in Wau at least to families in all orders that you can handle it easily in Honolulu (Marie will take full care of flies). And I shall start to train boys to sort alcohol material we did not sort on Hebrides and Caledonia as we were short of vials.*

*I found more than 100 rat traps scattered over all garden and at Sigi's. In some of them were skeletons, in others rotten rats and other animals [...]. Behind the lab stands 10 gallon*



*plastic bucket filled till overflowing with snakes, small animals, bats and birds including very conspicuously on top birds of paradise. It is a very strange mixture of NG fauna in formaldehyde, some 40 lbs of it. Since when and why we keep b.o.p. in formaldehyde and mixed with snakes and rats. And next to this bucket is a 4 gallon drum half fill with formaldehyde with parts of rotting snake out of fluid. Ray says the museum has a low reputation on NG. Just imagine what a reputation we the Museum would suffer if some big boss from Moresby or Wommersly or Van Duseen happen to visit the Station, took nice walk through the garden littered by traps with rotting animals, relaxed for a very very short while in summerhouse then just from human curiosity opened buckets and drums, then hurried to toilets which was until yesterday quite dirty and is partially broken. Just when we arrived Ray got parcels sent by ecto team so badly wrapped that birds were almost falling out, b.o.p. included. Ray is worried. He says he advised the team not to shoot any b.o.p. but clearly not much changed. The team returns to Wau on 21<sup>st</sup>, I shall discuss all this then."*

On the positive side, the Papuan staff at the station seemed pleased that the Sedlaceks had finally returned, since they had a reputation as good people to work for. On the negative side, Marie found the housing areas to be a mess and that many things were missing, with cups being particularly difficult to replace.

**Marie Sedlacek to Nakata, 22 January 1968, from Wau:**

*"I was very surprised when soon after we came back, the bois came to me and told me how happy they are that we are back. None of them knew us but they told me that our old bois used to tell them that we are very good masters, Tawi calling Joe 'My Father'. I expected just the opposite, since we heard from Ray that Al was very permissive to the bois, always asking first whether they would like to do this or that and that the bois often told him No. Joe just assigns the tasks without inquiring about their wishes. The bois said that the Samuelsons were not good masters. They did not give the bois more food, as I used to, and they also did not give them any clothing at all. Mena complained that sometimes, he was not paid overtime. When I asked Tawi, he said that he himself was. The bois wages were not raised at all during the time we were away, until Ray doubled them. We also learned that Ampan did not steal anything as Al wrote, but that he went away, because he did not like to work for the Samuelsons (Tawi told us). After we returned Mena came and wanted to work for us. However, Ray said he must not be taken back, since he refused to go to Bulldog Road. We think that if they were handled properly and justly they would not have refused, it was not so much the bois fault as their masters that morale and discipline was so low but we cannot take Mena back, though he was an honest worker when we were here, since Ray is absolutely against it. We may take him back after Ray leaves."*

*It is a pity to lose bois which were trained. If the offence is grave that is another matter but in this case it was not quite their fault. They were not given warm clothing, sometimes, when they went to the mountains, they were not given additional food as they used to before and the behavior of the boss, or as they say in pidgin, master, was such that it encouraged their refusing to do what they did not like to do, the outcome was predictable. They are simple people and they have simple ideas about master. He is an authority and he has to be obeyed. If you are chummy with them and do not have authority, you are not master and they do not obey you."*

*We found the house very dirty, our things scattered, wardrobes moved either to the lab or the guest house, tables gone. I still did not find 4 blankets. No cups except for 6 mocca cups. None of the stores had any so far so I had to write to Australia for them and I left*

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*here more than a dozen cups. The curtains and covers for the settees were so dirty that they cannot be washed and I shall have to buy new ones. Other things are missing. I did not expect to find everything as I left it but I would expect that people at least replace the more valuable things. I left it here for their convenience, I do not want rewards or thanks just consideration that they leave things here when they leave. Of course I do not know who to blame for the disappearance of these things. Samuelsons kept his smoke in one bedroom and I found several decomposed rats among Shirley's cupboard. Room still smells badly [...].*

*Sets, we are lacking some essential equipment. There are no scissors here, the ecto team was using my scissors which I left here and they are all rusty now. We have few good tweezers, there was only one butterfly net here, luckily we brought two with us. No beating sheets, no collecting belts, all Malaise traps torn. I bought some material in Sydney for beating sheets so I will make some, only I don't know what to start first - everything is urgent. However I organized the lab a bit now, some shelves will be needed there though. I will try to make whatever I can as the carpenter charges terrible price. The garage and other stores are also organized to that extent that there is definitely room for everything and not like when we came that you could find anything scattered anywhere.*

*If I sound a bit negative and pessimistic, just forgive me. I shall gradually be getting more cheerful as the things will be improving. Actually it is better now. The bois work with much more zeal, Phil works, Ray works on geometrids, and I know where is what. Only the thinking back made me morose."*

Gressitt agreed with the Sedlaceks' assessment regarding the run down condition that the station had fallen into under these interim managers, and provided some funding to get it back in order.

#### **Gressitt to Josef Sedlacek, 1 February 1968, from Honolulu:**

*"I know there are lots of unfortunate things about the station. I think I warned you not to expect just what you left. But I was worried most about the trees you planted, thinking that Samuelson boy would have damaged some. You must have heard he is very destructive. I worried about sending them there from the beginning, but we had little choice. About inside of the house, I didn't know much, as I did not stay there last year, and was hardly in the house at all. I can't imagine what happened to all your cups, unless that kid just broke them. He was always doing something. I was amazed the way he came into the lab and punched our boys, etc. I had to order Samuelsons to keep their kids out of the lab. I know lots of things were done wrong. As I said, I had to order them away from Wau, when we realized they were making no plans to leave, long after we made it clear that his pay was stopping end August, so they missed last chance to leave by ship and get to univ. for fall semester. We even tried to book them on that ship (Canberra), but it was already full. They should have planned months before, but we finally realized they did not intend to leave (very naïve; and queer reasoning).*

*I am afraid Ray paid entirely too little attention to station, grounds, work effectiveness, etc. I was disturbed because Ray and Phil never seemed inclined to go to work on time. I think partly they got used to easy hours because Joe Szent-Ivany worked in lower house (or they all more or less did). The reasons given were partly because S- was working on the carpentry in the lab so long; but also the children were mentioned – go into lab too much.*

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*I never really learned why Ampan left. When I asked, S- was not clear. He left me to assume that A- might have made some advance toward Shirley. I don't know.*

*[...] I enclose A\$100 to re-establish my account with you, for purchase of items, and repairs, for my property. Please buy some practical, economical cups, dishes, etc. to have on hand, to use if you wish, and to have available for extra visitors in other houses when needed. This in addition to what you may buy for yourself (to be packed up next time you depart for long period), if that house is to be occupied by others. In future, if key is left with anyone on your departure, that person must be responsible, and sign for anything removed from house. That could not be done when all the lab equipment was in the house. When we were there Wilkes used to walk into house without even knocking, and not tell us what he was taking out! Samuelson is not to be blamed for everything.*

*[...] I think I agree with your policies with boys. The main question is whether they are happy and work hard, and want to stay with us. I think we should hire Mena back; and Spanis too. We tried to treat the boys the same way you did – giving them extra food, clothing, etc."*

Work in New Guinea was also becoming progressively more regulated, and permits for transport of specimens were becoming correspondingly complicated.

**Gressitt to Josef Sedlacek, 8 February 1968, from Honolulu:**

*"I have just read the letter from you and Ray of 31 January and Ray's of the same date. The news about the holding up of the vertebrate specimens in Sydney is very disturbing. After the very long delay in Lae, I thought that all the red tape was over. I have written a note to the customs agents in Sydney, but I do not know whether it will satisfy them or not. I cannot understand why it should be passing through customs in Sydney since it is in transit for Honolulu. I suggest that the skins which Abid is drawing now should be sent as before in parcel post packages. Then, at least they will not be all in one shipment that might be held up somewhere for a long time [...]. Of course the future people that come will have to stop in Moresby and get their permits first thing."*

None of this was stopping the collecting efforts, with a crew now being sent to Bougainville, headed by Ray Straatman, accompanied by Abid Beg Mirza, a contract entomologist from Pakistan.

**Josef Sedlacek to Gressitt, 13 February 1968, from Wau:**

*"Abid is a very sympathetic young man, also more experienced now with the bois and I think he will not have any difficulty on Bougainville in handling them. The bois are too well aware I would sack them straight on their return if they try to repeat some tricks from past. And they know very well their wages are far above normal wages."*

Sedlacek then came down with a case of malaria, a common problem in New Guinea. Given his years of field work in the region, it was amazing it had not happened to him sooner.



**Figure 7.** Joseph Sedlacek (left), Marie Sedlacek (center) and Phil Colman (right) grapple with a python on the grounds of the Wau research station in March 1967. Although Joe seems to have the head well in hand, the snake has wrapped itself tightly around Phil's leg. Presumably he was extricated (photo courtesy Phil Colman).

**Josef Sedlacek to Gressitt, 27 February 1968, from Wau:**

*"It suits me to keep Phil here a bit longer. I have been rather sick for 2 weeks (with no effect on my working hours) and my fevers went so high over the weekend and on Monday that yesterday I almost could not stand and today I used our precious rare visit by Bulolo doctor - there is no doctor in Wau - and went to hospital. Well, I have got malaria and doctor thinks it is a very severe case, that I might be taken to Bulolo hospital. What bad luck I have had in those last 7½ months. On top of that I got just letter from our son that he has got malaria! And yet we used tablets [...]."*

Permit issues were also coming in to better focus in conversations with local officials, with birds of paradise being the issue.

**Josef Sedlacek to Gressitt, 18 March 1968, from Wau:**

*"I discussed with Phil our vertebrate collecting permit difficulties. Actually permit is necessary only for protected animals (b.o.p. and a couple others). The trouble started apparently with our teams shooting in last year b.o.p. and displaying them in public both in field and on the Station. Ray tried to phone Anderson last Saturday before departure to Bougainville - but could not contact him as government officials do not work on Saturdays."*

The Andersen in question was Dr. J. Anderson, the chief administrator of the Department of Animal Husbandry for the Territory of Papua and New Guinea. Failing to obtain the proper permits from his office in Port Moresby resulted in serious consequences when the museum's team reached Bougainville.

**Ray Straatman to Gressitt, 28 March 1968, from Tinputz, Bougainville:**

*"We arrived in Kieta after having difficulties regarding transport of our eqt. I stayed in Rabaul for a few days, keeping in touch with Lae to check the arrival of our items. Much arrears in cargo transport, all resulting from these horrible and silly strikes by both Post and Airlines in Australia, effects of which even now are felt everywhere. Anyway upon arrival in Kieta reported to Mr. Wiltshire, A.D.C. Of course informed him, as well as other local authorities, about our coming, purpose and programme. Was VERY helpful. The day we were all waiting for transport to first mountain village, arrived a long telegram from Administrator, requesting us to LEAVE Kieta and also saying that for at least 12 months no collecting can be done in South nor centre of the island [...].*

*We were then suggested to move North, to TINPUTZ. A ship was leaving only one hour after receiving this embarrassing message so you can imagine our rush to get everything aboard. At Tinputz local A.D.O. was already informed about the whole business [...]. Our movements have even here been very restricted. Each move to other village or mountain must be approved by local A.D.O. who then personally sends a message to local village Councillor [...].*

*Collecting was done as far as possible in very difficult conditions, we have worked flat out, day and night. All of us. Opening tracks to mountain forests, etc. Too long to tell here. Will be mentioned in our reports. ECTO collecting most difficult ever experienced anywhere. Few mammals, few birds, most WITHOUT parasites. Berlese funnel remained practically empty, insect collecting locally to be called good...*

*Now, after 6 weeks continuously working, back in Tinputz [...]. For this move we MUST wait approval from District Commissioner in Sohano, we suggested WAKANAI to proceed from there to top of Mt. BALBI (8,570 ft). No reply yet. Hope we make it. Otherwise, I suggest that, in case have to leave Bougainville, we go for a few weeks to New Ireland. Hope you agree.*

*Now I have not been sitting still regarding other important problems. Include therefore copies of letters from Conroy and Chief of Customs as well as from Anderson. Nothing really to worry about. I don't see why Abid should go from here to Moresby, too far, too expensive. Anderson knows we are here, better finish the job, and then clear the whole silly permit matter up in Moresby. Can Joe do something about it? After all in his position he should also try [...].*

*You ask the highest altitude we have been so far...don't be upset, only 1460 meters, highest peak in our area. In 200 traps set there, a forest where nobody was before, ONE rat came to the very different baits Abid had prepared. I can assure you Abid really works hard. So far results frustrating.*

*So you know that in spite of all my writing, because of continuous change in legislation and application of rules, Abid has NO permit as of yet [...]. Yes, the situation is very embarrassing. I suggest that from now on EACH person coming here to work for B. Museum should present himself PERSONALLY WITH OFFICIAL CREDENTIALS from you or Dr.*

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*Force to Conroy. And that trips must be better coordinated before the start. Best would be to draw up a scheme, plan of operation for the current year, send copies to all authorities concerned and ask for written approval from Moresby. This will not only ensure avoiding unpleasant surprises but also efficient and sometimes necessary cooperation from Govt. authorities. I'm afraid that Joe Sedl. does not always agree and thinks you "can just go ahead and collect, without contacting anyone," now times have changed and this is not possible.*

*I am sorry to bother you with such a long letter but it is more than time that things must be said the way they are and not the way we wish them to be. Wishful thinking is not helpful to our cause. Also the policy in WAU should be changed.*

*It would be very helpful to invite local official people to have a look around our lab, even in case there is not much to show. A certain, reduced collection of specimens, both vertebrate and invertebrate can be prepared and kept for showing purposes.*

*I know that Joe and Marie work flat out and that visitors are sometimes coming at inconvenient times, but this I feel is something we must do. Unfortunately we can only improve our situation but hardly worsen it."*

The Wau station had steadily increased its footprint and land holdings, with expansion of an arboretum that grew host trees for beetle rearing projects, and the daily operation of the facility had turned into a correspondingly larger amount of work. The Sedlaceks were largely covering this on their own, with Phil Colman having found alternate employment with Fred A. Bianchi (1906–2000), an entomologist with Hawaii Sugar Planters' Association who had been sent to New Guinea in search of natural enemies to control the sugarcane weevil, and Straatman having been sacked by Gressitt in early May after the debacle on Bougainville, his compromised relations with the territorial authorities now being seen as a liability. In early 1968 the Sedlaceks also had to accommodate a visit by Gressitt, and Taiwanese entomologist Tsing-chao (T.C.) Maa (1910–1992, Fig. 11) who had been involved in ectoparasite work with Gressitt since the 1950s. They were making a quick trip to Mt. Ialibu, near Mt. Giluwe.

#### **Marie Sedlacek to Nakata, 2 May 1968, from Wau:**

*"Phil started work for Mr. Bianchi from middle of April, and I had to take over his duties, which for the start was quite a handful combined with mine. On top of it Dr. Gressitt was here (I am happy I learned to know Mr. Maa - he gave us your regards) which involved more work with taking care of them and supplies for expeditions. Sets, you have no idea what work this station involves, with so many bois, so many acres, so many houses and visitors, on top of the work we are supposed to do, the office work and hundred other little things that come up. I do not spend any time with household, my houseboi does everything and the cooking for just two of us is very simple (not so when even one guest is involved, especially Dr. Gressitt to who I want to counterbalance the hardships of expeditions). He works so hard, does not spare himself and he would neglect himself if we did not take some care of him [...]."*

Gressitt was also starting to realize that there were limits to how far the station could expand and still maintain its scientific productivity, and that just running the place meant that Sedlacek could not devote enough time to grant-funded beetle projects.



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**Gressitt to Marie Sedlacek, 6 June 1968, from Honolulu:**

*"I was just about to write you that we might have to dismiss more than one boy because the field station expenses are running too high. Although I'm interested in expanding the property further, I'm worried about the extra work in developing the land for a larger arboretum. This is not only from the standpoint of boy's wages, but also from the standpoint of Joe's time. I'm afraid now that the supervision of the boys is taking too much of his time so that he has not been able to devote enough to the work on chrysomelids and lysids. That, after all, is the most important even though the long term goals of developing the arboretum are extremely important also.*

*As to adding another room on to the lab I am somewhat hesitant. I would worry about cutting off light to the other side. Also, there is the question of limitation of funds. My suggestion earlier was to erect a simple corrugated iron roof on a frame of poles between the drying house and the garage so that the boys can do skinning out there. I think it would be too bad to make a rather cheap addition to the lab, whereas just a roof between the garage and drying house would not look so bad. Perhaps plastic sheets could be used if necessary for front or back wall when it is windy or rainy."*

Although reduced funding no longer allowed for major expeditions as in the recent past, the Sedlaceks were still able to undertake shorter trips within eastern New Guinea. They did not seem to be having any trouble with officials or permits.

**Marie Sedlacek to Nakata, 11 June 1968, from Wau:**

*"We made a short expedition in mid-May to Mt. Glendako and found a new *Gymnopholus* again (besides several other new beetles). The mountains on New Guinea are simply fantastic. This was not such a high mountain, just over nine thousand feet, and not isolated either; very near Mt. Otto where collecting was already done. New Guinea is otherwise changing. Instead of the old wriggling road with charming section but so difficult to drive on, there is new one (built by Dillingham) which gives you a smooth driving but, oh, so spoils the countryside. Well you cannot have everything. The old grass skirts are disappearing and you see more and more women in dirty cotton dresses. They should acquaint the natives first with soap and then with our dresses."*

The Dillingham company that had built the new road was based in Honolulu, having also excavated the Ala Wai Canal behind Waikiki Beach, and people at the Bishop Museum were familiar with them. The Pacific was a geographically vast but socially small world.

**Nakata to Marie and Josef Sedlacek, 20 June 1968, from Honolulu:**

*"I am glad to hear that you were able to go on short expeditions out of the station to collect more specimens. When you spoke of the road up the mountains and mentioned Dillingham it reminded me to tell you that our new staff accountant worked for that corporation in New Guinea and New Britain before he joined our staff. He knows precisely what roads you went on. In fact he wondered how the situation was there.*

*It is wonderful that the station is collecting rents and for sale of coffee beans - we really need that source of income for our funds here in grants are very limited."*

With the Sedlaceks busy at the station, Abid was being sent around to various sites in eastern New Guinea. Gressitt had provided a wish list of localities to be reached, not all of which were familiar to Sedlacek.



**Josef Sedlacek to Gressitt, 25 June 1968, from Wau:**

*“Abid returned well satisfied from 15 days on Bulldog - good results and no trouble. He was very keen to start straight away for Albert Edward but postponed the expedition as he has good chances to charter a plane for less than half in middle of July (ADC's son needs some hundred flight hours to get a commercial license). In the meantime Abid will collect on Shungol. Where is Mt. Dayman? And what about if Abid works on Mt St. Mary instead of Albert Edward - St Mary is apparently very easy to climb (a day trip from Woiwape) and I have impression that Archbold did not touch it at all.”*

The negotiations for reduced rate air charters apparently worked out, and Sedlacek himself, having recovered from malaria, was making plans to try and take advantage of them. The museum was still doing an extensive amount of collecting in New Guinea in spite of reduced budgets. Sedlacek was also finally able to start turning his attention more to the grant-funded beetle research work that the museum was paying him for, even though much of his time still ended up being diverted into running the research station.

**Josef Sedlacek to Gressitt, 6 July 1968, from Wau:**

*“News in short. Bianchi still waiting for a plane to take him to Popondetta. Abid has been promised the low coast charter for Tuesday - if weather improves. Joe settling down and both he and Maria like it here [...].*

*“You are right - we must concentrate on work required by the grants, and as soon as the weather clears I shall go with Joe and Noel up to Kaindi and try to get results. Of course it would be nice to spend some days on St Mary, but Abid will spend several weeks there and will bring some insect material too, esp. *Gymnopholus*. Still - after I succeed with *Eumolpines* and other work I would like to use the lower rate charter (maybe Mt Simpson or Suckling?).*

*Yes, I drastically reduced the number of bois, we do not need them now after that crash cleaning and planting has been basically accomplished - and it was rather a strain on me to supervise so many bois simultaneously on several jobs and often in different parts of the properties and still try to get on in my work. That does not mean that I have not much work now - you know that - but finally I can concentrate.”*

Gressitt visited the station in early September, but even he was not immune to occasional bouts of tropical illness.

**Marie Sedlacek to Nakata, 12 September 1968, from Wau:**

*“Dr. Gressitt has been very ill since he arrived last Sunday when he got up. He is better now, but I think he is not yet strong enough for work and I hope he will have rest when he comes to Honolulu. He stayed with us while he was ill and two days ago he moved to the apartment under the middle house where the Szent-Ivany's live. The apartment was just finished and looks very nice, with two bedrooms, little kitchen, living room, shower, all self-contained.”*

Despite everyone's best efforts, by the fall of 1968 the Wau station was coming under increasing financial stress, due to a declining amount of grant funding from the military and the National Institute of Health. Gressitt reluctantly called for significant austerity measures to be put in place.

**Gressitt to Josef Sedlacek, 19 October 1968, from Honolulu:**

*"Things are getting bleaker and bleaker here at Bishop Museum and our entomological projects are greatly affected by the drastic budget-cuts and funding restrictions. The granting agencies have been imposed a severe cut which in turn must be handed down to the grantees, that is, to Bishop Museum and other institutions. We thus have no alternative but to curtail our activities, lay off some personnel here in Honolulu, and minimize all expenses abroad. It is most regretful that the financial situation is getting worse each day but we shall have to face it boldly - - we all hope that things will improve for the better, but at this moment we can't predict the uncertain future.*

*We now have word on next year's grants, and the news is very distressing and bad. Great reductions are necessary. There will be very little money for paying the boys. We shall let you know more specifically as soon as we can, but it may have to be cut to 3 or so. Only selective mounting should be done, so we can know roughly what has been collected, and what remains to be mounted. Perhaps a square piece of green paper could be added below bottom label, to indicate that there are more specimens of the series unmounted for same locality. Of course, it might be necessary to nearly eliminate the mounting and labeling at Wau, and only select material for the groups under active study. Please may I have your comments on this."*

A subsequent letter further reiterated the dire fiscal circumstances of the museum and the Wau station, and the tenuous situation in regard to even the Sedlaceks' salaries.

**Gressitt to Josef Sedlacek, 29 October 1968, from Honolulu:**

*"The station simply has to be self-supporting unless we get new grants - unlikely just now. It is the Museum which is in dire financial position. This month and next six (6) people in this department are being terminated. We were only able to keep your salary on by budgeting nothing for operation of the station. The mosquito grant is the only one which is not suffering tremendously at this time. I already lost my artist and technician. There is only a student (who knows very few families) sorting Col. for a few hours on week-ends. (Thus you can understand why we have to get everything from Wau and Taipei already in unit-boxes now). Yet, the foreign expenditures on the mosquito grant are again restricted for next year. Thus, each item has to be approved by special request at the time concerned. Thus still no assurance of paying Joe Jr during vacation. But we may learn soon. They would not approve our request for all items at once a few weeks ago. This even applies to Marie's pay, although more chance of that being approved, because already started, and she is already there, etc."*

In early 1969, the mosquito grant was the only major project happening at Wau, with dipterist Wallace ["Wally"] Allan Steffan (1934–2016, Fig. 15) coordinating activities from the museum side in Honolulu, and expatriate Russian dipterist Nikolas Vladimirovich Dobrotvorskyy (1903–1981) (Fig. 14) in New Guinea overseeing the field work. The project included plans for additional work in the far eastern end of New Guinea, where the museum's collectors had not spent much time up to now.

**Josef Sedlacek to Gressitt, 29 January 1969, from Wau:**

*"As you probably know Marie and Junior will work jointly with Dobrotvorski in Milne-Bay area and Popondetta. Wally mentions it would be good if I can go with them. As Szent-Ivany can take care of the Station for those 2 weeks and as I doubt much collecting done*

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*for the Museum in both areas (I had less than a week in Popondetta, never in Milne-Bay - only Ray and Peter could have done some collecting there) and as this might be my rare opportunity for expedition this year - I would enjoy joining. They will probably charter to plane to Milne-Bay - I shall see if I can squeeze in. Sorry could not write sooner this, Wally's suggestion came yesterday. I think expenses should be the main factor [...]."*

It is not clear from subsequent correspondence if Sedlacek actually went to Milne Bay. Field work was also being done in the vicinity of Wau, although the Mt. Kaindi road used to access higher elevation field sites had once again been cut by a major landslide, a typical problem in New Guinea. This road was also used by botanists from the herbarium at Lae, and when the head of that institution, John Wommersly, visited Wau, he rendered a pessimistic assessment, relayed to Gressitt by Sedlacek.

**Josef Sedlacek to Gressitt, 8 February 1969, from Wau:**

*"Wommerslys enjoy the stay in Wau, looked yesterday at Kaindi road and think it will be almost impossible to restore the road to the same places. They think parts of the road must be shifted, and the road rebuild - it might take many weeks. I write you this so that you know it will be necessary to postpone by several weeks the Bulldog Rd project. The road disappeared so completely in places that it is dangerous even to walk to Edie."*

Gressitt, meanwhile, in his tireless pursuit of funding, had new projects brewing.

**Gressitt to Josef Sedlacek, 19 March 1969, from Honolulu:**

*"It seems likely that we will send out a young chap to work on the National Geographic Expedition and also on the USDA chrysomelid project which I may have mentioned to you. The latter involves working on the biology, mainly at higher altitudes. We have also invited Abid to come back, but the date of his return has not yet been decided yet. I have discussed some plans with Wally Steffan and we may wish you to go to the Fly River for awhile [...]."*

Gressitt, who had a deep knowledge of the country, also suggested alternatives to the washed out Mt. Kaindi road for access to areas on the south side of the mountains, although as usual in New Guinea it was a matter of determining where trails actually existed, since even today there is no road that crosses the mountains from north to south, and the maps were uncertain at best.

**Gressitt to Josef Sedlacek, 15 April 1969, from Honolulu:**

*"I believe I suggested that you try to find a trail extending southeast from Wau without using the Bulldog Rd. Certainly there must be some shorter route. The former servant at the lower house, Kai, lives in a village near the Papua border a little east of the Bulldog Rd. He never used the Bulldog Rd. in going home, but a trail that starts right from Wau. He said it was quicker. I was going to go with him once as he said there was a high mountain near his village. I think by asking around you can find out where that village would be and make use of that trail at least for a start. It may go up that ridge which Peter was working and on which I believe now is a new village that you see very clearly from the top of Kaindi. On the other hand, I got the impression that it went largely along valleys so it may not be on the ridge. Actually, I think it is the route that the former ADO took and I think a copy of the map he gave me is in the map file in the lab. Thus I do not think the state of the Edie Creek Rd. has much to do with plans for our expedition."*

Sedlacek and his crew did eventually make their way along Bulldog Road, which had been built in World War II as a track to get troops over the mountains. They reached the basin of the Lakekamu River, but it was not easy going.

**Marie Sedlacek to Nakata, 31 May 1969, from Wau:**

*"We crossed the Owen Stanley range on the Bulldog road and got down to the Eloa river where another path joins. We shall explore this one in a couple of weeks, I have not been on mountain expedition for a year and was worried about my fitness before we started, but I seem more fit than ever. The road is no road at all and sometimes there is no path either. You have to climb over logs, big stones that the rains of the quarter century washed down. In some places the going is precarious - just a few inches wide rim hanging above deep ravine or big cracks as part of the steep slope is slowly detaching and will eventually fall into valley below. We had quite good weather on the way there but the last day when we were returning it was raining solidly most of the seven hours we walked. As we started from elevation of 2,800 meters it was very cold and unpleasant but nothing new to us. On almost every trip in the past we had a day or more like that!"*

*The collecting was good, but mosquitoes scarce. What is most beautiful is the highest part of Bulldog road. There moss covers everything, beautiful rhododendrons were flowering everywhere, red and pink and white and the orchids! Joe junior brought scores to Wau and we may have now one of the best collections of mountain orchids in New Guinea.*

*The bois feet suffered very much during this trip. They have many sores from sharp stones, thorny plants and rough path. On our return we decided to buy them shoes for the next trip, canvas keds. I hope they will last. They cost one dollar sixty each so it will not be a big expense and will pay big in the long run. I had to make the bois to bath their feet and apply antibiotic cream every day since we came, and that is expensive. Their sores are infected and they would not have been able to walk more with them. I need socks urgently. The bois will use Joe's for the next trip but since there are eight of them we need sixteen pair of sox at least eight for night as it is very cold in the heights and eight for day. This exhausts most of our socks. I wonder if you could send some as soon as possible or if Dr. Gressitt could take a few more pairs with him, some strong ones. There are no suitable socks for sale here [...]."*

The expedition to the Fly River country also materialized, and Sedlacek finally got to Kiunga, which Clissold had failed to reach five years earlier. However, the collecting was not spectacular.

**Josef Sedlacek to Gressitt, 2 August 1969, from Kiunga:**

*"Locality is generally very poor on insects (including spiders as Janos will tell you), still I succeeded to locate some tiny areas where the catch is decent, even quite good for Cerambycidae - a lot of species not to be found around Lae. Rattan and palm are as dead as ferns, 3 Hispines only on them and no other insects, both secondary and primary forest almost devoid of life, no beetles, no Hymenoptera, no flies, even spiders few. Yet I succeeded to get in one day collecting 78 species of Cerambycidae.*

*Kiunga is only 30 m above sea, this is rainy season now, but the weather is fair and we can collect full day most of the time. After inquiries about Lake Murray, I do not think it would be worthwhile to charter the plane there, little forest, mostly marshes, station and village 4-5 hours by boat from airstrip, elevation 25-30 m. Instead, we shall try more*

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*localities in the foothills and if possible go higher. Next week we shall move 20 miles north from here to a Mission St., after that we shall go by ship down to D'Albertis Junction and upstream Alice R. with several day stop at one mission there, then to the foothills at Ningiri, from there either by charter to Olsobip, or on foot. Possibility was hinted to us we might get helicopter lift to one of copper company isolated stations up to 5000'. This sounds very exciting - if it realizes better not to be optimistic.*

*[...] How is Bulldog, how is Wilhelm and also send us news from Sepik. What is Abid's program? And the bois in Wau? Have you taken any boi with you? Mena would be the best, quite good collector."*

The copper prospect Sedlacek mentioned would later become the giant Ok Tedi mine. And getting to Olsobip, in the upper basin of the Fly River, turned out to be an adventure, as well as a journey into the past.

### **Josef Sedlacek to Nakata, 1 September 1969, from Wau:**

*"We are back from the Fly River expedition, We spent there six weeks in two localities. Kiunga 30 meters above sea level and Olsobip, where we went from 460 meters to 1,150 on a track to Telefomin from which we were about two days walk. For travelling, it is not an easy part of the New Guinea because it is so remote. It took us 10 days after we asked for plane to get from Kiunga to Olsobip, partly because of bad weather and partly because planes are so scarce in this part. There are no regular schedules and only government charters come there irregularly from Daru which is over two hours by plane. The airstrips in the upper Fly are usually small valleys encircled by high mountains and covered by clouds so that the pilot has to make several tries often to get there. The way to Olsobip by air is through a fantastic gorge. After that endless, jungle covered plain the plane flies through a pass in the mountains into a long curving valley. We had dense clouds on our left but the valley was clear and I breathed a sigh of relief because on our first trip we did try we did not find even the mountains. The pilot made me rather mad though, as he constantly looked to the left into the dense clouds, instead of watching where he was driving and we had steep mountains on both sides. Suddenly he veered off sharply to the left into the dense clouds. There was a tunnel-like opening in the clouds and we could see like disjointed pieces of jigsaw puzzle shreds of steep slopes with dense forest. The pilot said happily: We made it, this is the gap to Olsobip. The clouds thinned out and we could see sharp ridges on the sides and beneath us the Fly River wild and churning in a deep canyon which had vertical sides more than 100 feet high and was only a few feet wide. We landed in a small pleasant valley and as the plane piloted to the side of the airstrip, over the noise of the engines we heard terrific roar of human yells and saw an avalanche of natives running toward the airplane. Some of them were naked bedecked in phallocrypt only. It was a scene which I thought only the early explorers witnessed but, here in this valley planes do not come often and so they still merit in the eyes of the natives such enthusiastic welcome."*

Marie provided additional perspectives from the trip, particularly on how the underlying geology could have a marked effect on insect diversity.

### **Marie Sedlacek to Nakata, 23 September 1969, from Wau:**

*"It was so wonderful on the Fly, just the mosquitoes and flies to worry about. And there were so few flies and also insects, but Joe found some clearings and they were rich. The season was wet and cold. It did not seem so to us but the local people complained that they do not like the cold weather and looked forward to hot and dry [...]."*

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*We had rather interesting experience. The day we went from Olsobip along the Telefomin track we climbed to one thousand meters and went for some time along a ridge. Limestone glimmered through a maze of roots on the path, moss covered trunks of trees and was hanging from the branches. Everything was damp, but no water anywhere, it all soaks through the limestone and disappears underground. In mid-afternoon, we descended down to a small creek and as we started to climb up there was a startling change in the surroundings. Instead of bare roots on sand there was grass on the path and much higher profusion of plants, pandanus ferns and freycinetia climbing onto branches and orchids in profusion and many other whose name I do not know. It was such a sudden and startling change, a jungle compared to the stark mountain forest we just left behind a minute ago, and the forest was buzzing with insects. I got more of them in the first ten minutes than I got in the whole preceding part of the day. Though geographically it looked the same, the same ridge up and down, geologically it was so different at least on the surface, and this caused such a change in the plant life that you felt as if someone dropped you from a mountaintop into a valley with a thud."*

Gressitt had meanwhile obtained a new grant to study chrysomelid beetles on a global basis, and plans were being laid for a major, worldwide collecting effort. The Sedlaceks had intended take their accumulated leave days and vacation in the United States, but now their trip began to morph into a much grander expedition.

**Josef Sedlacek to Gressitt, 19 December 1969, from Wau:**

*"Re your offer we would be willing to collect in South America and Africa. We intended to return here from our US leave via S. America and Easter I. Of course that we planned as sightseeing travel with a few days off collecting along the road. This would be a very different matter. If on salary that will change in fulltime collecting expedition with carefully selected, characteristic and promising localities, cutting the stay in cities to bare minimum necessary. Also the season must be taken very much in account. I remember what a failure was L. A. museum expedition to Brazil! I gather from your letter that you were considering only several months expedition. That would be too much hurry, too much traveling. I think rather waste of money. I suggest 9 full months expedition. Then we can really cover all necessary and most desirable areas: Colombia, both sides of Andes, altiplano, reach Chile and Argentina in early spring, collecting cca 1 month in Paraguay and Brasil, reach Dakar in November, 1 month collecting in West Africa early summer in Angola, South Africa, Mozambique, January and February in Tanganyika, Kenya, Uganda, Abyssinia, then off to Madagascar for 2-3 weeks."*

Gressitt took Sedlacek's advice in regard to a longer expedition, and plans were put in place for someone else to run the station at Wau for much of 1970.

**Josef Sedlacek to Gressitt, 9 March 1970, from Wau:**

*"Our son left yesterday for his second university year now we are rather busy to prepare the Station for easy take-over. And looking with great gusto towards our leave after 3½ years. Second leave in 9 years, hard to believe. We shall land in Honolulu on 26<sup>th</sup> March. Can you book for us the YMCA?"*

The Sedlaceks passed only briefly through Honolulu, missing Gressitt who was on travel elsewhere, and continuing onward to San Francisco, where they spent time arranging all the necessary visas for the countries to be visited. It was a vast paper chase, with some of

the visas available only from consulates in Washington, DC. In order not to waste the trip a transcontinental collecting foray was organized from California to the East Coast and back, including Arizona and Florida.

**Josef Sedlacek to Gressitt, 30 April 1970, from San Francisco:**

*"I hope this will reach Honolulu on or before your arrival (May 4<sup>th</sup> I was told). So far we have been relaxing and preparing for the great travelling, studying possible localities, geography, plant cover, transport facilities, Spanish and getting information about visas (we shall need at least 30 of them). Some of the visas we can only get in Washington, some later along the route.*

*Most probably we shall omit some of the countries originally planned to avoid days lost in land and departing and cost of hotel accommodation in cities - as most of them apparently match Moresby hotels in prices and this would soon land us in poverty.*

*We are leaving San Francisco Monday night, shall spend more days in Arizona and Florida, reaching Washington DC after May 20<sup>th</sup>, and San Francisco again after June 20<sup>th</sup>. Visa procedures will keep us in San F. more than a week (some countries require special medical examinations) [...]. There are some difficulties in obtaining permission for collecting in some of Central and South American countries. Lets hope this will not spread to more of them this year. I heard several of them are contemplating some idiotic prohibitions."*

By late June the logistics were in place, and Roland Force, Director of the Bishop Museum, provided the terms of reference for the grand expedition.

**Roland Force to Josef Sedlacek, 19 June 1970, from Honolulu:**

*"We have now been able to solicit a little more outside interest in the trip for which you have been planning. As a result of this, Dr. Gressitt has prevailed upon me to increase the commitment for the nine-month trip from \$10,000 to \$12,000.*

*A nine-month expedition (commencing 1 July 1970 in South America and Africa, on half-salary, as already arranged [...]. Certain groups will be transferred in full or in part to outsiders helping to support the cost of the expedition. With a few exceptions, these will be primarily insects associated with plants, with fresh-water and with caves and similar environments [...]. Time-period: Approximately 1 July to about late October 1970, South America, November to end of March 1971 in Africa."*

As alluded to by Force, in order to secure additional funding for this effort, Gressitt had sent a solicitation to top entomologists in the United States offering to collect groups of their particular interest in return for financial support.

**Gressitt to Paul Hurd (California Academy of Sciences), 29 June 1970, from Honolulu:**

*"Our expert collectors from our New Guinea field station, Josef and Marie Sedlacek, are about to commence a nine-month collecting trip in parts of South America and Africa. The main objective is to obtain chrysomelids including host data and some larvae, for the project on world genera of chrysomelids, which G. A. Samuelson and I are starting. Since the museum does not have enough funds to cover the cost of the trip, we are making arrangements with a few other museums and individuals to take over certain limited groups of*



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*insects, in whole or in part, against a contribution to the trip, depending on the arrangement to be made."*

This solicitation was also sent out to other active entomologists in the United States, including Evert Schlinger, George Edmunds, G. Gorton Linsley (Gressitt's cousin) and C.P. Alexander, among others. The author's father was also among these, offering 8 cents per specimen for water bug species other than those commonly found in lowland ponds and rice paddies. Gressitt took him up on it. Many of the resulting collections were sent to Taipei for mounting and labeling, under supervision of Maa, since the labor costs were cheaper there.

A steady stream of packages full of specimens began coming into the museum as the Sedlaceks collected their way through Latin America. Meanwhile, the Wau research station was, for a change, also running well in their absence.

**Nakata to Marie and Josef Sedlacek, 22 September 1970, from Honolulu:**

*"I am glad to know that all is well, except for your bout with dysentery, and that your collecting has been interesting and rewarding. We have received parcel #4 containing specimens from Colombia and Brazil in very good condition. The plants were fine and so were the insects [...]. The parcel from Costa Rica has not arrived - actually it is too soon as it is coming by surface mail. I am sure in due course it will arrive here.*

*"The station is in wonderful shape at the present time according to word received here. On his trip to Garaina Abid fell and bruised himself - luckily no broken bones. He is well now. Dr. Radovsky is there now so soon they will both collect ectoparasites in full swing."*

The Brazilian portion of the trip was particularly successful, with good support from local counterparts.

**Josef Sedlacek to J Gressitt, 19 November 1970, from Rio de Janeiro:**

*"You must excuse us for not writing sooner, but we have been all the time in such a hurry - this is short, too much of it lost I trying to get off the airports and out of these endless sprawling cities. Forests are always so far away!*

*We arrived here last night straight from Sao Paolo Museum Station at Boracea (cca 100 km - hours from S.P.). Tonite we move out of Rio to the north - return here after tomorrow and on 22<sup>nd</sup> we shall land in Johannesburg (meeting Junior again after 9 months!). Its raining non-stop, so we most probably shall not see nothing of the famous beauty of Rio. What a shame, what a bad luck. We planned to come here a day earlier, but collecting at Boracea was quite good - so we postponed Rio by 1 day - and they tell us it was a glorious day the whole day yesterday. Maybe I rather exaggerate collecting and miss sight-seeing almost totally!*

*[...] The people in Zoological Dpt. in Sao Paolo were very, very helpful. They gave us car with driver to take us for collecting in botanical gardens and then again to their station 3 hours drive of Sao Paolo."*

By contrast, collecting in Africa turned out to be far more challenging. Sedlacek provided a summary of his experience's there in a letter to Gressitt some three months later.

**Josef Sedlacek to Gressitt, 10 February 1971, from Addis Ababa:**

*"Summing up collecting in Africa. Without private transport collecting in most parts of Africa – esp. in dry season – would be very frustrating. That we found both in Tanzania and Kenya. As we were rather short of money and car-rent is very expensive here we tried to manage without, on localities where plane brought us or where we could go in native buses. Most of the countries are parched. In northern half of Kenya the drought is so bad that even camels die. No insects on grasses at all, and only a few on acacias [...] of course I knew that we shall reach East Africa in dry season. But we had ticket to Uganda and planned to spend most of our time there, collecting on the slopes of "mountains of moon" and in rain forests near Congo border. Instead, we got stuck in Mwanza on shores of Lake Victoria as all flights were stopped to Uganda because of the revolution there. So we flew to Nairobi [...]. On Kilimanjaro we got more rain and snow than we asked for; drizzle and rain almost non-stop for 5 days, snow fell and remained a full day at 4100 m; Junior climbed to the top anyway (without guide that we could not afford) [...]. The best collecting in Africa we had in Rhodesia and in the Transvaal along Mozambique border; we did not go to Mozambique as they charge too much for visa; also Zambia is much more expensive than Rhodesia, so we cut short our stay there. To be quite blunt, we got the impression that all these new black African nations just try to milk the tourists [...]. In this aspect Madagascar was most refreshing – no racism, no bleeding tourists white [...]. Ethiopia is also affected by drought, and most of the country is rather dangerous to strangers and also difficult to reach [...]."*

By April 1971 the Sedlaceks were in Australia, on their way to back to Wau.

**Marie Sedlacek to Nakata, 13 April 1971, from Sydney:**

*"So we have completed the circle and are back in Sydney, where we waited anxiously last year for our visa to the USA. We shall stay here until we get all our ailments and infirmities straightened out and fixed. By that time we shall be several hundred dollars poorer and a few doctors here richer. All my life, I had teeth immune to any decay and now the dentist told me I need 16 fillings, which she proceeds to stuff into my teeth now. I was going to her even during the 4 days Australian Easter holidays, when no one moves a finger in this country, but she lost her beloved brother 2 weeks ago and was willing to work in the hope that it will help her forget her sorrow. So she kept grinding and filling my teeth, while talking about suffering and death, and sometimes I felt like being on the cross [...]."*

*It is so strange to be again in a country where everything is so familiar to us, where everybody speaks English and where frustrations and exasperations are eliminated, because we know where to go, how to get and what to expect in all situations. After being so much in the air (we had exactly 50 takeoffs and landings on this trip) I do not try to fasten my seat belt anymore, when the train or bus starts to move, but still get the elated feeling when I see a plane roaring above us: the vision of an unknown country and the thrill of going there. We of course got tired at times by the constant moving, but it amazes me how we adjusted to gypsy life, how we dealt with all the frustrations, that would have blackened other people's day (and ours before too) with absolute equanimity: cannot be done; very well, what's the alternative. Though the going was tough, strenuous and tiring most of the time we were not sick almost at all, and even during the worst days of my dysentery I was still collecting fully and traveling in the rickety bus across the Altiplano. It is as if we wound up our spirit at the beginning of the trip and it kept us going until the end."*



**Figure 8.** The “new lab” at the Wau Ecology Institute in early 1970s. This building was constructed the year after the Sedlaceks made their final departure from Wau (Allen Allison photo).

During the time the Sedlaceks were away, the station at Wau had been reorganized under a new management structure as the Wau Research Institute, run by Gressitt, and affiliated with, but financially separate from, the Bishop Museum. As a result of this reorganization the Sedlaceks were no longer employees of the museum, and a new contract needed to be negotiated for their compensation, which caused frictions. For one thing, health insurance was no longer provided. In addition, the original contract stipulated that when it terminated the Sedlaceks would be given paid passage back to San Francisco, where they had begun their New Guinea adventure a decade ago. The new contract being proposed contained no such provisions, and with the old contract being terminated, the museum claimed it was no longer responsible for covering such passage. This would become a major point of contention.

During this same period, Sets Nakata unexpectedly died from a rapidly advancing cancer, leaving a major gap in administration and corporate memory at the museum. The Sedlaceks were now dealing with Gressitt's new administrative assistant Carol Higa [née Nakashige], whom they had met during their stay at the museum in 1967. Carol, however, was preparing to go on maternity leave, further complicating administrative continuity, while Gressitt was already moving aggressively to transfer his grant funds into the new institute, including those which supported the Sedlaceks.

**Marie Sedlacek to Carol Higa, 25 April 1971, from Brisbane:**

*“With great shock and sadness we received the news that Sets died. We never knew she was in hospital and therefore it was even harder to comprehend, than for all of you in the museum, who at least had some forewarning. I know, Carol, your life now must be more difficult with all that responsibility and work thrust upon you so suddenly.”*

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**Higa to Marie and Josef Sedlacek, 12 May 1971, from Honolulu:**

*"Sets death has left a terrible void in the department and the Museum. It is not necessary for me to tell you what an enormous asset she was to the Department and especially to Dr. Gressitt who depended upon her presence each day. I shall surely miss her, as she was certainly a dear friend whose friendship I valued very much.*

*There is so much she took care of. I do not know if I will be able to do as much as she did. Wish me luck [...].*

*Dr. Gressitt hasn't mentioned to me yet whether you have accepted his contract under the Wau Ecology Institute. He jumped the gun and already had me transfer the grant funds we had available for Joe under the New Guinea Coleoptera & Lepidoptera studies to the Institute. You've been with the Station for a long time and would be a shame for you not to return there, but only on terms and conditions you would agree to. I trust you will weigh the pros and cons and come to a careful and wise decision."*

The terms in the new contract being offered by Gressitt were not acceptable to the Sedlaceks, so they decided to depart Wau for Australia. After a decade of helping develop the research station, Sedlacek still had an attachment to Wau, but he and Marie had decided to move on.

**Josef Sedlacek to Higa, 31 July 1971, from Wau:**

*"It is still nice here, its winter and cool now; the trees I planted years ago grew by several feet or yards again and start to form botanical garden. Pity, all 5 ponds were left to dry completely out, all those great water lilies - we had them in seven kinds and seven colors - perished, just as those big tame golden fish. Those were eaten by natives; we are still getting all the time letters from scientists who were guests on the Station years ago - all seem that they really enjoyed the stay here and the hospitality of the Station, all cherish the best memories. Did we mention to you that we were offered job in Entomology in Florida last year before we left Wau and they even kept it for months. They promised job to Marie too it was really hard decision not to take it and settle down. Once more we choose work on new continents and insecure future.*

*Well, this is our last stay on New Guinea. Marie might take teaching job in Australia till the time Junior is ready for postgraduate studies in US and then she will finally complete her studies, finish that last semester on San Francisco State College. As we are all US residents it should not be too difficult to get then a teaching job there.*

*Carol, we thank you for all what you do or try to do for us. It is so nice to know that somebody there is interested in workers in the field and tries to help. After Sets tragic death you are the only one left who cares. Many thanks."*

Before leaving Wau, however, the Sedlaceks insisted that the Museum honor the conditions of their current contract, including money to cover passage back to the United States. Gressitt, who was short on funds for his new institute, was adamantly against this, so the two parties were at an impasse. To resolve the situation, the Bishop Museum director, Roland Force, ended up making a trip all the way to Wau to sort things out.

**Josef Sedlacek to Higa, 24 October 1971, from Wau:**

*"Dr. Force was very nice (what a difference compared to Dr. Gressitt), acknowledged our 10 years of good work on Station, agreed to pay us all return fare to place where we were originally hired (San Francisco) and also refund us what was unjustly deducted from our expense account by Dr. Gressitt [...].*

*Before Dr. Force came we had a meeting with Dr. Gressitt in presence of Labor Officer. What a strange character Dr. Gressitt is. In front of Labor Officer he claimed that I was hired on bloated salary, he lied that Museum picked me up in San Francisco when I was without any job (I worked with Cal. Ac of Sc.), he threatened that Museum will take care that we shall be deprived of US residenceship, proclaimed that we are not worth to be employed as we do not speak English [...] there is something not normal with that man.*

*When our claims were fully acknowledged by Dr. Force I suggested that Museum let us leave straight away – there are not many people who could stand 10 years of having to deal with a man of Gressitt's character and charm (Dr. Tigner could not stand it anymore after just 8 months); Dr. Force asked us to stay here 6 weeks more to finish work on the arboretum. And so we are leaving in cca two weeks time. What a wonderful break. Bulolo Forestry was trying to get me to work for them as entomologist – it would be very refreshing to work in good decent human relationship again, just as it was at CAS but I must get rid of that nasty aftertaste of our what I hope was last personal dealing with Dr. Gressitt. Bulolo is only 13 miles from Wau! In any case they will keep the position for me and I might come back to NG to work with great gusto again sometime next year – of course to Bulolo, not Wau.*

*[...] Life is wonderful again. We plan even to buy a house in Brisbane to have home – our own house and home again after so many years."*

With the Sedlaceks gone, Gressitt took an increasingly direct role in the operations and oversight of what was now the Wau Ecology Institute. Over the next decade it would effectively become his second home, with he and his wife spending up 10 months in New Guinea during certain years. In the following decade the institute would continue to provide a base of operations for numerous biologists studying the biota of New Guinea, until Gressitt and his wife were both killed in a commercial airline accident in China in April 1982. With Gressitt gone, the Institute made a subsequent transition to local oversight in the late 1980s, and finally ceased operations in 2011.

The Sedlaceks departed Wau for good in November 1971, settling in Brisbane, Australia. The last letter in the Bishop Museum file is dated 26 June 1972, and indicates that the museum was gradually processing the material collected during their most recent trips to South America and Africa, but that a great reduction in federal grants had cut staffing and slowed this process. The last item in the file is a postcard from 31 December 1981 indicating the Sedlaceks were living in Atherton, Queensland. Josef Sedlacek died in a grassland fire in Australia in 1994, at the age of 81, survived by Marie and Josef Jr. It does not appear that he ever returned to New Guinea, or the United States.

As a result of the extensive field work undertaken by Josef and Marie Sedlacek and colleagues during their years in New Guinea and adjacent areas (see Appendix 3), the Bishop Museum grew from a small regional collection in the 1940s to become the fifth largest entomology collection in the United States by the 1980s, and by far the largest for the Pacific region, with holdings of over 15 million specimens. It still provides an unpar-



alleled resource for the study of the Pacific and tropical Asian arthropod faunas, and is utilized by researchers throughout the world on a regular basis. In that regard, the legacy of the Sedlaceks, and all the other collectors that Gressitt sent to the far corners of the Indo-Pacific in the decades following World War II, still lives on today. It was an unique and dynamic era in Pacific entomology.

As a closing passage, it seems suitable to provide an excerpt from a letter by Marie to Sets as the Sedlaceks departed Honolulu to began their final museum-funded trip to South America and Africa in 1970.

**Marie Sedlacek to Nakata, 29 April 1970, from San Francisco:**

*“We had a very smooth flight from Honolulu [...]. With mixed feelings we followed the now familiar landmarks passing below us after take off: the museum, the wharf, the Waikiki with Punchbowl already in the distance and Diamond Head just below us and then the diminishing coastline, until it vanished, obscured by clouds [...]. But looking down, I realized that we may never see Honolulu again, never see the museum, and we became devoted to it and proud that we contribute to its greatness, even though we were small and played unimportant part compared to other distinguished members of this great institution. Our stay in Honolulu was always happy, because everybody was so nice to us.”*



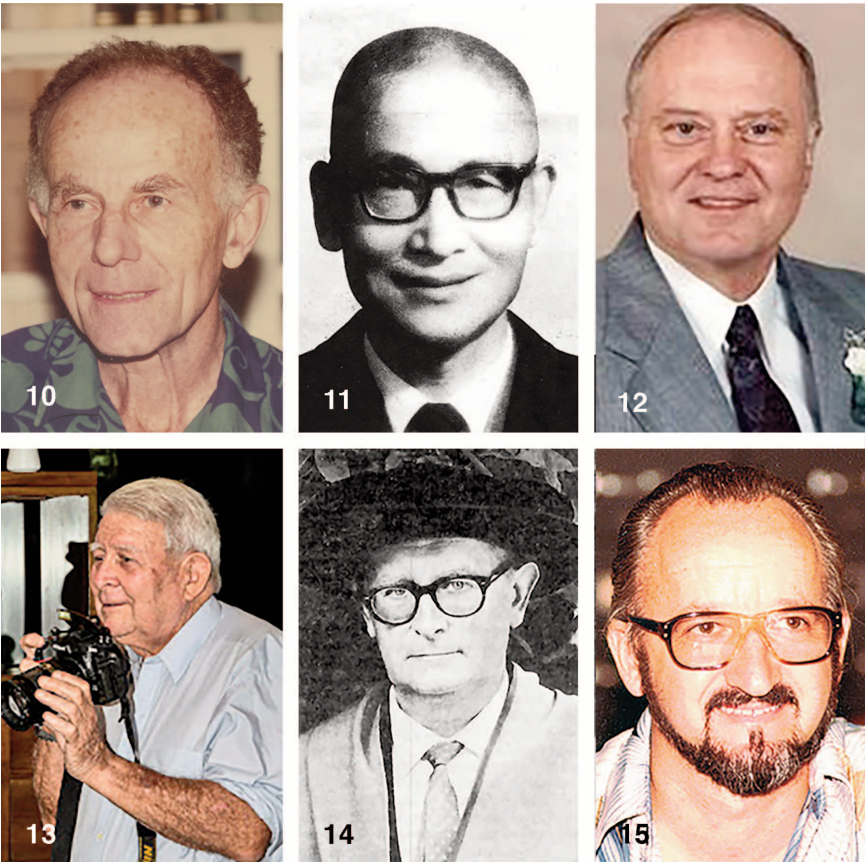
**Figure 9.** Hispine beetle specimens collected by Josef Sedlacek and described as new species by J.L. Gressitt, held in the Bishop Museum entomology collection in Honolulu. Many additional new species remain to be named in the material collected by Sedlacek, his wife Marie, and other collectors associated with the museum’s New Guinea research station at Wau (Dan Polhemus photo).



### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author thanks Dr. Allen Allison of the Bishop Museum, who provided photographs of the research station at Wau and its environs, and Dr. Dan Bickel of the Australian Museum, who located Phil Colman and was able to obtain from him photographs of individuals engaged in activities in and around Wau. Finally, particular thanks are due to Dr. Neal Evenhuis of the Bishop Museum, who initially suggested to the author that he examine the museum's correspondence files related to Josef Sedlacek, and the other Bishop Museum entomologists who worked with him during the 1960s. They revealed a fascinating chapter in the history of Pacific science, and the stories behind the specimens.

It is further recognized that our understanding of history is not necessarily what really happened, it is simply what was written down. The chronology described here was the product of complex and multifaceted interactions among many individuals, and although the author has attempted to describe events as they seem to have unfolded, others may have different, and equally valid, recollections.



**Figures 10–15.** Photographs of some of the individuals mentioned in the foregoing account (courtesy Neal Evenhuis). **10.** Judson Linsley (Lin) Gressitt; **11.** Tsing-chao (T. C.) Maa; **12.** Nixon Wilson; **13.** Peter Shanahan; **14.** Nikolas Vladimir Dobrotworsky; **15.** Wallace (Wally) Allan Steffan.

## APPENDIX 1 - EXAMPLES OF SEDLACEK LETTERS

The images below provide examples of the letters from Josef and Marie Sedlacek that were examined in the course of this study. Both were prolific correspondents, and good typists, so if a typewriter was available they would use it (Fig. 16). As a result, the majority of their letters are relatively easy to read and decipher. When in more remote field localities, however, they resorted to longhand scripts, which sometimes require more care in interpretation. Some of these latter letters also suffered from the exigencies of operating in basic surroundings under tropical conditions, including one shown here (Fig. 17) which was immersed in the ocean during a boat mishap in the New Hebrides (modern Vanuatu).

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on soap. We had soil behind our fingernail as we tried to cling to the slope searching with our feet for firmer support, and mud behind the ears as we slid, against our will, down the slope on our back. It would have been awful had it not been such a crazy fun at times. It took us three hours to get down the last half hour having walked in mud above our knees, and went under the shower in clothes first. That was the last time we went without raincoats in these parts. I got rheumatism into my ribcage and could not breathe much for several days but that was the only ailment that befell us on the whole trip.

We climbed Mt. Giluwe and you have to see it to believe it above the tree line, on top of the mountain, 11 thousand feet high there is a vast country side of gently rolling hills covered by pale brown grass. Innumerable little lakes lie in the valleys like opaque teardrops and dark forest absorbs the melancholy that lies on everything. Jagged forms of grey peaks that rise here and there only heighten the eerie atmosphere. We did not sink into any depression and melancholy though our heads were low. The grasses were full of insects, the edge and inside of the forest and we did not have even time to climb the highest peak. We slept in a hut at the edge of the forest. It looked like a dilapidated stable which the horses themselves built, and the weather wandered right through: wind, rain, cold. Luckily we had the large polyethylene sheet which we stretched inside as a ceiling and warm were our beds - ie. heaps of dried cut grass into which you sank and slept in warmth, feeling a bit like a horse but who cared.

We slept in a similar way at Mt. Wilhelm lakes though we did not have any grass beneath us as it was drizzling constantly and we were very cold but did not mind as the scenery was so magnificent and the climb to the top such an unique experience. You climb up from the first lake along a foaming waterfall to a small plain and there in front of you lies another lake, the most beautiful we ever saw. Enclosed in sheer walls of grey rock that cut into the sky with its sharp teeth, it has a small meadow at the far end, gently sloping towards a grove of trees that huddle beneath the grey wall. A silver thread of a waterfall falls from the sky and feeds a small brook that winds through the meadow to the lake. Deep silence reigned over this enchanted beauty, I lingered looking back until I saw you high above me crawling like ants up an almost perpendicular slope. They disappeared over the saddle and I was quite alone. The lake was smaller and smaller every time I looked back just a speck of blueness chipped off the sky - it seemed to me when I stood at the saddle. The path wound through low grass now along a narrow ridge. The slope was disappearing grey fog below and I was glad I did not see the depths. I was quite alone, Jose with the native maybe one hour before me. Now and then I saw their footmarks on the muddy spots of the path a reassuring reassurance that I did not lose my way. I went and did not know the time, how long I am going and how long I have to go, down into the gullies and up again when avoiding some peak or across huge slabs of stone searching on the other side where the path goes on. Cold wind was blowing fog from the depths below giving me icy wet slaps. The path disappeared on a stony slope, where only small cairns showed the way. I should have been worried, cold and miserable, but I felt happiness and peace and nearness to God that I feel when I am alone high in the misty hills.

Figure 16. An excerpt from a typed letter by Marie Sedlacek, typical of those she sent over the years to Setsuko Nakata at the Bishop Museum. Typed letters such as this constitute the majority of the Sedlacek correspondence, and are relatively easy to interpret.



To Ambrym, 4. IX. 67 5  
 As you guess - we were interrupted by a message to get ready for the boat in a bay 45 minutes  
 far from here in 1 1/2 hour time. Good luck we transferred Malakasi to the boat  
 place. Well we caught the boat in time - and as the sea was too rough tried to land on  
 a tiny island halfway to Ambrym and when we tried at 5 AM in total darkness and ter-  
 rorful sea to embark the boat with us ~~was~~ sank in great waves. It was a  
 feeling in the dark and in those roaring waves, swimming and clinging tightly to  
 our ~~own~~ <sup>bags</sup> ~~things~~ (and money and glasses) (You can imagine me swimming  
 backstroke in the furious sea holding collected material on my chest - but that might be  
 fiction). After all we got all right out of it, only tongue and hat lost and apparently  
 my wristwatch will be a total lot (waterproof - but somehow got soaked by marine water -). We reached  
 Ambrym the same day - only natives here and a Tahitian. Our hat has floor and roof  
 and as local natives are very very curious there is no privacy, except late evening when darkness  
 descend with efforts ("debile-debile"). This is rather strange island, all volcanic, even more  
 enriched in kinds of vegetation than Epi (here follow poor vegetation). I would have preferred  
 to leave for Malekula after only a week of stay here - but no ship or boat stop here. The one which  
 was supposed to come here Sept. 1st is still nowhere in sight.  
 By the way the first 2 pages went down in the sea with us & our luggage - that's why  
 they are gone.  
 Both English & French authorities & planters are most friendly & helpful, also all natives are  
 friendly; but there they plant only yams and manioc and cooking bananas and in the native store  
 has practically only, boy fish, kumara and rice. It rains every day, all our belongings getting  
 mouldy every day & kept insects - there we dry all evenings above pressure lamp. Mosquitoes  
 not too troublesome in the forest, very bad in the "house" (with no walls they have quite a comfortable  
 access to us - by blessed luck the native there kept one lonely mosquito - not - probably for a minute  
 missionary - so we forget it and sleep soundly after. Sleeping on hard floor is very good for  
 my back - I am absolutely fit, better than ever in Honolulu - I need only insects to be 100%.  
 Sleeping on the floor has some drawbacks too - we got worms in our feet - I think I killed them  
 already, opening the wounds and treating them harshly. Rabid crabs are our constant nightsharers of the house.  
 Light catching is monotonous - from my experiences in the museum I try hard not too find you  
 thousands of same tiny flies, lizards, Nidulidius & Shaggy birds and select carefully.  
 We did not get of course any mail since 2 weeks ago and also could not ~~send~~ you a letter  
 It will go from Malekula. Looking forward Malakasi - let's hope a boat will come  
 and will be able to approach the island. By the way the volcano on our island has  
 become very active even more the volcano which soars straight from the sea some 3 miles  
 from us. Day before yesterday it opened 3 more craters - the smoke is more impressive than  
 any hydrogren bomb explosion and the rumbling is most exhilarating.  
~~Regard~~ <sup>Regard</sup> to Carol. How are they. Please, tell her to keep her <sup>finger</sup> <sup>quint</sup>  
 Please write me Sent 1 tang's & Wittmer's (Cankandias) addresses.  
 Our October adun: ~~the~~ 7.5. poste restante Noumea, New Caledonia. J.S.

**Figure 17.** A hand-written letter sent by Joseph Sedlacek from Ambrym Island, in the New Hebrides. This correspondence was produced in the field under difficult conditions, and as noted in the middle of the page, survived the capsizing of a small boat in which the Sedlaceks were riding. Although more difficult to decipher than the typed letters, the script is nonetheless intelligible upon closer examination, provided one is familiar with local geographic names.

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## APPENDIX 2 - GLOSSARY

The following is a list of abbreviations and words used in the letters quoted above, which may not be familiar to general readers lacking background on New Guinea and adjacent countries.

A.D.C.	Australian District Commissioner, a high ranking official responsible for overseeing local government and administration in a specific district of pre-independence Papua New Guinea; these districts were roughly equivalent to the modern provinces of that country.
A.D.O.	Australian District Officer, a travelling representative of the Australian government in pre-independence Papua New Guinea. Also referred to as Patrol Officers or “kiaps,” the latter from the Papuan word for police, they had wide-ranging authority, playing a role in law enforcement, resolution of tribal disputes, and promoting education and social welfare. Their patrol reports were often the primary source of information for the Australian authorities regarding the numbers and locations of villages, their tribal affiliations, and their reactions to outsiders.
b.o.p.	Bird of paradise.
HPB	<i>Hoofd Plaatselijk Bestuur</i> , the head of an administrative district in Dutch New Guinea.
Luluai	Village head man.
MAF	Mission Aviation Fellowship, an aviation consortium jointly serving missions of various denominations in New Guinea. During the 1960s these mission aircraft were for the most part small, 4-seat, single engine types, primarily the Cessna 180 and 185, as well as the Cessna 182 and the Piper Pacer.
MAS	Melanesian Air Services, a short-lived private aviation service in Dutch New Guinea that operated out of Hollandia from January to September of 1962. The company flew a pair of Cessna 185 aircraft, one of which was damaged beyond repair when it hit a tree during a landing mishap at Moelia (modern Mulia) in the central mountains in June 1962. Therefore, only a single MAS aircraft was still operational when the Bishop Museum team began work in Dutch New Guinea in August 1962.
NB	New Britain.
NC	North central New Guinea.
NNG	Netherlands New Guinea.
TAA	Trans-Australia Airlines, renamed Australian Airlines in 1986, was one of two major Australian domestic airlines in the early twentieth century, operating from 1946 until its merger with Qantas in 1992. The airline grew rapidly, and by the late 1960s had an extensive network of routes within Australia, as well as flights from Darwin to Baucau in Portuguese Timor, and a well-developed internal network within Australian-administered eastern New Guinea. The airline also ran limited service to Dutch New Guinea, with flights to Hollandia (now Jayapura), but their route maps from the 1960s do not indicate any wider service in the western half of the island.
WNG	Western New Guinea, formerly under Dutch administration.

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**APPENDIX 3 - SEDLACEK COLLECTIONS TIMELINE, 1961–1971**


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The following list provides a general overview of the areas in which Josef Sedlacek and his family were undertaking entomological collections in period from January 1961 to October 1971 inclusive, based on information gleaned from correspondence and collection labels. This list is not necessarily complete, because certain collecting forays may not have been specifically discussed in letters, and not all of the labels on the 15 million insect specimens in the Bishop Museum have been comprehensively examined for Sedlacek localities. In particular, certain additional countries not listed here may have been visited during the final circum-global trip from April 1970 to March 1971. Similarly, certain short duration collecting sites within what is now Papua New Guinea may also have been overlooked.

**1961**

July–December	Papua New Guinea (Wau)
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**1962**

January–May	Papua New Guinea (Wau)
June–August	Dutch New Guinea (Hollandia, Enarotali, Nabire)
September	Papua New Guinea (Wau)
October–November	New Britain (Rabaul, Gazelle Peninsula)
December	Papua New Guinea (Wau)

**1963**

January–April	Papua New Guinea (Wau)
May–September	Papua New Guinea (Mt. Hagen, Tomba Pass, Wabag, Tambul, Mt. Giluwe, Yaibos, Lake Sirunki, Laiagam, Kepilam, Goroka, Karimui, Mt. Wilhelm, Popondetta)
October–December	Australia (Sydney, Canberra, Adelaide, Perth, Darwin)
December	Portuguese Timor (Dili, Baucau, Ermera)

**1964**

January	Australia (Darwin)
February–April	Papua New Guinea (Wau)
May–July	Solomon Islands (Guadalcanal, Gizo, San Christobal, Malaita, Santa Isabel)
August–December	Papua New Guinea (Wau, Okapa)

**1966**

January–February	Papua New Guinea (Wau, Mt. Albert Edward)
March–November	Malaysia, Thailand, Laos, Europe
December	Hawaii (Bishop Museum)

**1967**

July–November	Fiji, New Hebrides (Port Vila, Ambrym, Malekula), New Caledonia
December	Papua New Guinea (Wau)

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**1968**

January–December	Papua New Guinea (Wau, Mt. Glendaco)
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**1969**

January–April	Papua New Guinea (Wau)
May	Papua New Guinea (Bulldog Track, Lakekamu Basin)
June, July	Papua New Guinea (Wau)
August	Papua New Guinea (Kiunga, Olsobip)
September–December	Papua New Guinea (Wau)

**1970**

January–March	Papua New Guinea (Wau)
April–November	USA (Arizona, Florida), Guatemala, Costa Rica, Colombia, Brazil

**1971**

January–March	Senegal, Tanzania, Kenya, Rhodesia, Zambia, South Africa, Madagascar
April	Australia
May–October	Papua New Guinea (Wau)