

## Introduction to Mary Clawson's

### *I Must See Turkey and Siam: A Woman in the Twentieth Century*

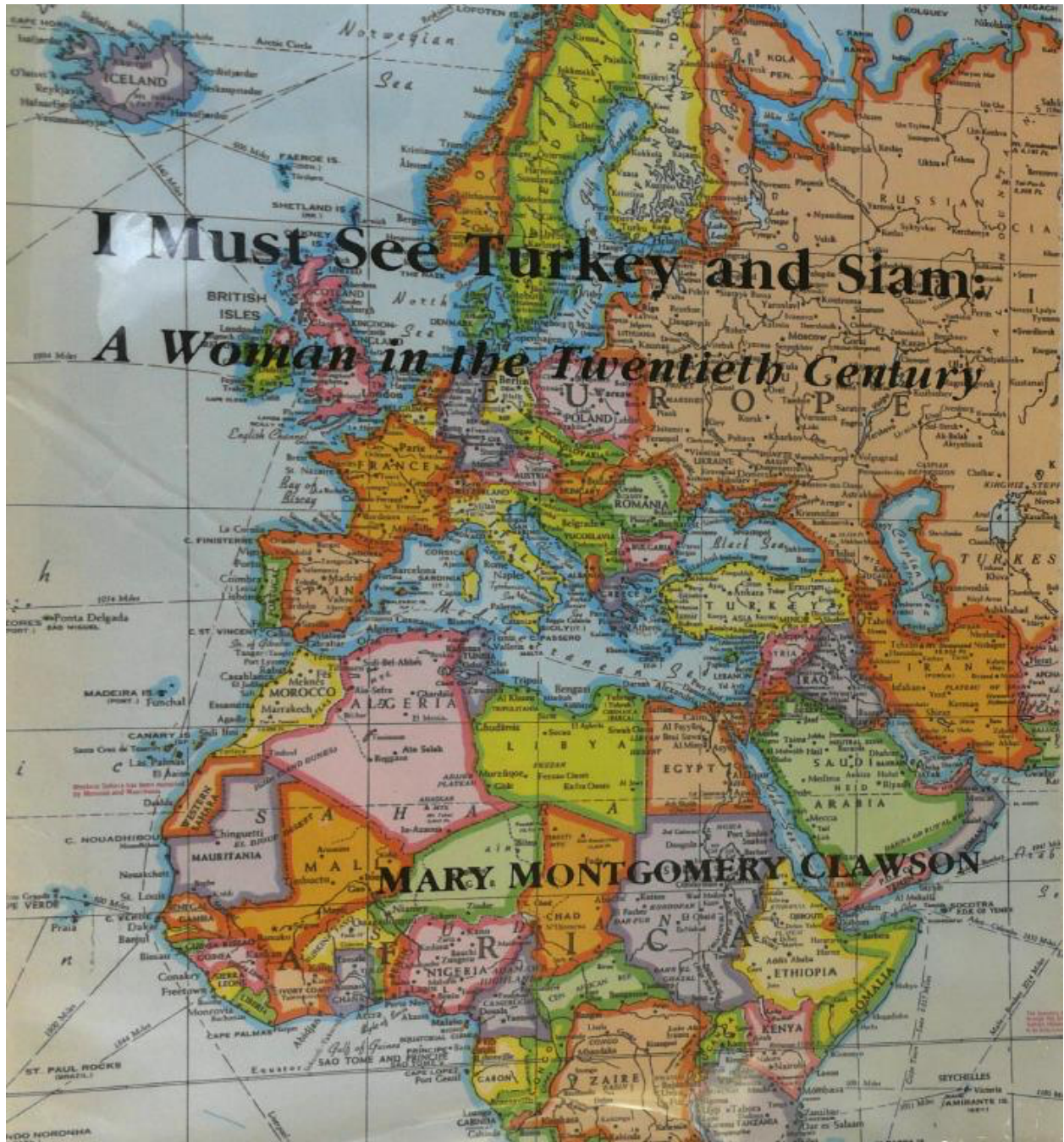
When I taught in the University of Maryland University College (UMUC) "Far East Division" in the early 1970s, Mary Clawson was already a legendary faculty member. Her love of difficult teaching assignments and travels around Vietnam, having volunteered to teach there, attracted a lot of attention. She was also the first female faculty member on annual contract.

In 1973, I accepted a position on UMUC's home campus in College Park recruiting new overseas faculty and learned just how unusual Mary's appointment was. In the recruiting guidelines I found a passage that read, "UMUC does not intend to send female faculty overseas to teach on military bases or in war zones." The quote is from memory, but it is pretty close. Obviously, someone had decided to ignore this guideline and hire Mary Clawson in the late 1960s. I took the passage to my boss, UMUC Dean, Mason G. (Bob) Daly, and together we agreed to expunge it from the recruiting guidelines.

Mary held a doctorate in international relations from U.C. Berkley, and she was approved to teach a wide range of courses in government and history, thus a problem solver for Area Directors trying to meet a variety of student needs on small bases. Her assignments spread around the world, from Goose Bay Labrador in the Atlantic Division to Germany, Italy, Turkey, Morocco, Spain and Ethiopia in the European Division. On the Asian side of the world, she taught in Vietnam, Thailand, Laos, Taiwan and Japan.

Mary kept a travel diary and when she retired from Maryland wrote a book about her adventures, *I Must See Turkey and Siam: A Woman in the Twentieth Century*. She surely would have contributed to the OMA Memoirs Project had she lived, and it seems worthwhile to add a few passages from her book here, ones that suggest her adventurous spirit and love of travel. While visiting Boston, I went to the Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University, where I scanned excerpts from a copy of Mary's book, held in a special section devoted to women who broke barriers in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Julian S. Jones



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CHAPTER

## *University College, University of Maryland: Atlantic Division*

The University of Maryland, University College held its first university classes in Europe in Berlin, Frankfurt, Heidelberg, Munich, Nurnberg and Wiesbaden, Germany on October 31, 1949. Since that first evening, "Marylanders" have been on active duty wherever the U.S. Armed Forces have been stationed in Europe, Africa, the Near East and Asia. When I first applied for a job with University College, I saw in the entrance hall a large map declaring: "The Sun Never Sets on the University of Maryland." Nothing could have appealed to me more.

When I joined the program there were classes in over 130 centers in 12 countries. The University of Maryland's experience in taking the classroom to the student overseas has been described as the "educational phenomenon of the age". And the Maryland experience led the way. Other American universities began to offer complementary educational opportunities to service men and women overseas, and the armed forces of other countries have initiated similar educational programs.

For me, the program represented the opportunity for a new life, and a chance to teach and to travel, both of which I dearly love. First stop—Labrador.

### **Labrador**

I landed finally at Goose Bay, Labrador, in mid-afternoon of an early August day, 1969. The air was clear, cool, around the middle fifties.

There were four or five thousand people in and around Goose Bay; close as it is geographically to the States, it is remote. Mail can take anywhere from two days (a record) to six weeks (slow but not a record). Television was canned and brought to the base weeks late. In my barracks the television set was in an upstairs common room. There was never more than one in a building, if there was even one.

The base is surrounded by mountains, called by the unfortunate name of Mealy. The sunsets were magnificent, gray, black and pinks to reds. The sunrises are equally beautiful, so I've been told.

The mountains isolate the base. When I was there at Goose Bay there was a grand total of about 140 miles of dirt road around, plus paved roads on base and into Happy Valley. Then forests stretch and stretch out into the Canadian wilderness. Ships get into Goose Bay from June until some time in November. The rest of the time anything or anybody gets there by air, weather permitting. As I write this, the U.S. has long ago given this base back to the Canadians, so few, if any, U.S. citizens live there.

The result of the remoteness in Goose when I was there was a great feeling of relaxation. So mail doesn't come, who cares? So textbooks from Maryland don't arrive on time and may not arrive until the course is over. No one, including me, worried.

My students were highly motivated. Many, as I feared, didn't have too good a background, but they came on time and were attentive. Moreover they were interested, studied hard, and we had excellent conversations. I insisted (though Maryland might not have approved and I'm almost certain the military wouldn't have) that no ranks be used. In Goose, women were permitted to take classes so I had some Happy Valley teachers. Students then in 1969 answered to and called themselves Mr., Mrs., Ms., Miss. I was Dr. Clawson. I wasn't about to try to have a private or sergeant intimidated by the opinions of a major or lieutenant colonel.

During the term break the trip up the northern Labrador coast was without question the best boat trip I had had up until then and it remains a highlight. That coast is bleak, grim, deserted, magnificent with about six outposts on inlets—outposts as remote as any in this world of instant communication I should think. Our ship, the *Bonavista*, was 1100 tons—not huge. I was the only American the whole time, though we kept dropping and picking up passengers. There wasn't an American on the whole coast as far as I knew. Not that there were more than 1,500 people at the outside, and this over 500 miles of coast.

It was definitely brisk on deck. I wore a lamb's wool hat, a parka and boots the entire six days when outside—boots all the time, inside and outside. Thank heaven for them; they were really comfortable and warm. My stateroom was luxury—two bunks, but I was the only one in it—two windows, not portholes, washbasin and bunk along by a window. It only cost \$10 more each way than the first class cabins which were a disaster—four bunks, mostly filled, no room for all four to stand at once and one porthole for the whole thing. God bless the acquaintance who told me to get deluxe. I'd never have thought of it. First class on the *Bonavista* is less than steerage (not tourist—steerage) on any other ship I've

seen. And as for second class on the *Bonavista*, let us draw a curtain. Eskimos and Indians take it, and a few innocent tourists—the latter transfer immediately if there's room.

We stopped at least once every one of the six days. At some settlements there were docks, but at most of them we had to get into shore by boats. So we traipsed down the gangplank and jumped onto the boat, me gingerly, believe me, with my arthritic left leg swollen to a large size, cane clutched in hand. At one settlement, Hopedale, the officers on ship grinned and said the only way to get shore was to get on a rope and be lowered as the freight is. I said, "Okay. How do I get on it?" I had to have ropes tied around me and strict instructions not to wriggle. I looked a bit like a cow in thick trousers—lambskin hat, parka, boots, and gloves. A young man, 24 or so, and a Canadian girl who worked on base, who were my friends on ship, got pale—especially Valmarie, the Canadian girl, but if I did it, they had to and I was on the rope and on the way down before they could protest. It was a bit tricky, especially with my knee. The officer in charge of us cautioned, "Just don't let go, whatever you do." We didn't. We got back on the ship the same way. We got lowered by the rope not onto shore but onto a rocking barge-like affair and then to a fancy slippery ladder up to a dock of sorts. The whole procedure was interesting.

We docked at Rigolet, Makkovik, Postville, Hopedale, Davis Inlet and Nain going in reverse order on the way back. Each one is very different and each is unique to the Labrador coast. Rigolet is the southernmost post where Eskimos live—Makkovik is also mostly Eskimo, with some native Labradorians (a breed all to themselves, mostly mixed with Eskimo); Postville is native Labradorians, all Pentecostal; Hopedale is again Eskimo; Davis Inlet, Indian; and Nain, Eskimo. All the Indians are Catholic and all the Eskimos, on the coast at least, are Moravian. They do not mix in any way.

Because the coast is so remote, the great majority of the inhabitants are related in some way—not the Indians, however; they may be related to one another fairly closely, but not to the Eskimos and the Labradorians. The latter two intermarry quite a bit. There are some Scots and English up there; they're chiefly the result of the British equivalent to the Peace Corps and some are working as nurses or teachers.

My friend Rory explained that all up and down the Labrador coast dog teams used to be the only way to get around for six or seven months of the year so everyone had about eight huskies. When I was there about half the people had skiddoos or ski mobiles. The skiddoos don't have to be fed, but on the other hand they do break down and no parts are available, so there you are. I've been

told the skiddoos won out despite the mechanical problems. You must have either huskies or skiddoos, if for nothing else but to get firewood, unless you're been judicious enough to cut plenty for the winter. Few native Labradorians do that, much less the Indians—maybe some Eskimos do.

The northern lights from the deck of the *Bonavista* just after we left Nain were amazing. Several officers said, "These are the best we have seen them in a year." The lights stretched across the sky in a wide arc, covering about three-quarters of the sky and were green, white, gold, with a bit of pink. They danced, changed and seemed to have depth. There was a large section of lights at the base that was in the shape of a crown, beautiful and odd. Even the purser was excited. He told me "It's a famous shape but one doesn't see it too often. The lights change all the time. You see them best when it's clear after a cold day. January and February are the good times for them and the farther north you are, the better they tend to be." When I saw them we were just outside Nain, the farthest point we went.

Toward the end of that term in Goose Bay, I received my assignment with the Far East Division where I was slated to go the coming fall. I was really pleased as I was to go to Vietnam. Not for anything would I have had my colleagues say: "Now we have a woman resident lecturer (I was the first full-time one in the Far East), and she does not have to go to Vietnam, so one of us may have to go twice." I was determined to show the men that what they could do, so could I. At the time my age just didn't occur to me.

### South Vietnam

We got off the plane in Saigon (now of course Ho Chi Minh City), John Mack with us, as those going to Vietnam needed special briefing. Before I got to the run-down looking Tan Son Nhut Airport I had taken off my hose and off they stayed until I returned to Tokyo. The heat was overpowering. Before we even entered the building we saw about twenty or so young boys (they looked like Cub Scouts to me) sitting around in uniforms with guns. I was appalled—those babies. Did they fight in the jungles? They did. John hastened us through customs, telling us firmly, "Hang on to your bags. Don't let anyone touch them and keep your eyes

open at all times. These people will steal you blind." "These people" mostly understood English and were those we were theoretically "protecting."

Then it was time for us to separate, to go to our various posts—one colleague, who had his Ph.D. in English, and I went to Phan Rang, four or five went to Cam Ranh Bay, a large base, at least three or more to Danang, a post everyone dreaded as it was the dividing point between North and South Vietnam—from there the road went on to Hanoi, the capital of the North, where Ho Chi Minh, once beloved by most Vietnamese, was the leader of the North. In my opinion, shared by many others, if the French and later the U.S. had allowed Ho Chi Minh to govern, Vietnam would have been united peacefully and the whole dreadful war averted. It was not to be.

I flew to Phan Rang in a small plane holding just six people. It was only a short flight of 17.5 miles. The pilot was a colonel with a Ph.D. in history from Princeton. He let me sit next to him as we flew into the Phan Rang Airport. I don't think I have ever been as astonished in my life as I was landing in Phan Rang. Here we were in the midst of a wet, tropical jungle country and Phan Rang looked for all the world as if it were Albuquerque, New Mexico. It was a beautiful, barren landscape, surrounded by mountains; my astonishment was profound. The colonel laughed at me when he saw my face: "Yes, it isn't what you expected, I'm guessing. Phan Rang is unique in Vietnam." When I told him it reminded me of Albuquerque, he looked thoughtful for a moment and then said: "You're right. But just over there is the South China Sea; we're at sea level and the jungles are all around us." They certainly were as I was to discover in my trips to Cam Rahn Bay and other parts of the country.

The education officer on this Air Force base, a young lieutenant, came up to meet me, and took me to my quarters. I was put in a trailer, all to myself, surrounded by trailers occupied by majors and lieutenant colonels, as that was the rank on my I.D. card. I had also been given another card in Saigon. This card said that "Mary Clawson has the rank of major or lieutenant colonel and is to be treated as such as a prisoner of war." I was never to find out how that meant I'd have been treated and have always been curious. We had been cautioned in Saigon by John: "Be sure you have this card with you at all times. I mean that," he told us firmly.

My trailer was adequate as it had some closet space, room for my books, a small radio, and of course a refrigerator and a small bathroom, and good lighting. I had barely sat down when Dick, my colleague, came over from across the road

to greet me. He had come the day before for some reason I can't remember. To my surprise, I confess, Dick was already terrified. He told me: "My trailer is next to the base chaplain's. I'm glad as I intend to go to church every Sunday we're here. I don't want to die." I confess that that aspect of Phan Rang hadn't even occurred to me. Dick told me: "Look under your bed and you'll see what I mean." I did and there was a flak jacket and a helmet to wear in case we were bombed. I found these objects interesting and put them on to see if they fit. They did, though it was hot with them on and I promptly put them back under the bed. I remember telling Dick: "Well, so what if our base is bombed. Our chances of being hit seem to me remote."

Dick found my attitude impossible to understand and told me so. He was so frightened he didn't leave base once the entire time we were there. He's an intelligent, interesting man, but not endowed with much courage. He'd probably have gone to pieces if he had had to fight in the jungle. Dick took me up a gentle hill, about a quarter of a mile from our trailers, to have dinner in the mess hall. That's where we had to walk every day, three times a day, if we wanted breakfast, lunch, dinner. Fortunately the monsoon season wasn't due until about the time we were leaving, or that climb might have proved interesting.

Dead silence prevailed for a moment or so after I entered the diningroom. It didn't occur to me at the time that my sex was the reason. The people who served food, however, were all attractive Vietnamese girls and I was immediately surrounded by them asking all kinds of questions. The first and by far the most important question was: "How old are you?" I learned promptly that my age was the chief matter of importance about me, the second was my height. I told the first person to ask: "I'm 60 years old." Exclamations came from all around—60! No one could believe it. That was always the most fascinating thing about me in Vietnam—to Vietnamese of both sexes, but especially to the women. The next exclamation was about my height... no one asked how tall I was in meters, just amazement was expressed. The third question was again the same: married, baby-san? Fortunately I had pictures of my children with me—at that time I didn't have Laura as a grandchild. Only then could I sit down and order a meal.

I find it difficult myself to believe but until I came to Phan Rang I had never eaten a pizza—hadn't even known what one was. I ordered one and was delighted with it, but it was so huge, I wrapped what I hadn't eaten in paper napkins and brought it back to my trailer to put in the fridge. As a snack after I was in bed at night, I had a piece of cold pizza and a drink of bourbon and water. It was delicious.

My classes started the next evening, at seven o'clock in Phan Rang as opposed to six-thirty everywhere else, in order to give the men who had been doing all sorts of things—from clerical work to flying helicopters over the jungle—time to get dinner. I spent the day exploring the base, first the library, as always. There was a good looking, fortyish or so librarian there, who told me her name was Joan and also explained: "We're the only round-eyed women on this base except for the six doughnut dollies." Again, I learned new phrases. "Round-eyed?" She laughed and said: "You haven't been in this part of the world very long, have you? Round-eyed means Western as opposed to slant-eyed which means Vietnamese." Joan also told me she rarely ate up the hill at the mess hall as she preferred to eat in a side room in the library or in her own trailer, which was close by. Later I learned she was having an affair with one of the lieutenant colonels and they usually ate together. When I moaned that I'd love company, she told me she would have breakfast with me on Sunday, it was then Thursday. She had been in Phan Rang about a year and planned to stay another year. Joan also said: "The doughnut dollies have their own quarters, very elegant ones, over there," pointing to a part of the base not far from the mess hall.

"What are doughnut dollies?" I asked next in all innocence. Again Joan laughed at me: "They're the Red Cross girls, usually 22 to 24 or so, who entertain the enlisted men during the day, playing cribbage, scrabble, dominoes, all kinds of games with them and also handing out doughnuts and coffee. They're picked to be attractive, resourceful and fun, to bring some Western influence to the men. Most of them are having affairs with the full colonels and the colonels and the girls all eat together in the doughnut dollies' quarters." I learned she was correct. I never saw a colonel in the mess hall and never was invited to the "doughnut dollies" quarters so have no idea what they looked like. Thinking back, I don't remember meeting any of those girls.

It was getting dark as I walked from my trailer to my classroom in another trailer, a few U.S. blocks away. I had American history that night and a large class, meaning about 25 men. They were the usual mixture of white and black men, mostly sergeants, some lieutenants and two attractive captains who seemed to be friends, one very blond, the other very black. They were attentive and seemed to be interested and eager for homework even. I was a bit surprised as I knew that most of them, at least, had plenty to do during the day. In the library there had been a Xerox machine and I had run off assignment schedules which the men seemed pleased to have.

As the class ended, I realized my stupidity. It was pitch black outside and my trailer was some distance away. I wasn't a bit sure how to get back, and for some

reason I hesitated to ask one of my students. I finally arrived "home," after falling down one hillock. The next day I found I did have a flashlight and its battery was working, so I was always sure to have it with me.

The next day the major who had the trailer next to me did speak. He said: "I notice you're leaving your door open often. Don't do that. It's dangerous."

"Dangerous?" I exclaimed.

"Yes, cobras sleep under the trailers, you know, and one might come in and get under your bed."

**Trips off base.** I think I was the only Marylander who made trips off base. If I wasn't the only one, I certainly made the most frequent trips of any of us, that term or any other. My most frequent trip was to Cam Ranh Bay, not far from Phan Rang. I went there five times from Phan Rang, three times by means of a truck. The other times I went by helicopter.

Everyone was so surprised that I wanted to get off base, that I had no trouble. I could manage to get a ride just by asking any student who was an officer; my helicopter captains delighted in either taking me themselves or finding someone who would. Swede managed to negotiate my last ride before I left. I learned that it had become a base game to see if there were any place I wouldn't go. There wasn't, as a matter of fact; I was in South Vietnam. I was interested to see what was happening and what the country looked like.

I became familiar with helicopters, learned to bend over from the wind of the planes and get into them as fast as I could. They can be a problem. I made only one trip to Dalat but it's engraved on my mind. Dalat is 5,600 feet high and was a vacation spot for both South and North Vietnamese. In that beautiful city a truce was declared. My helicopter captain students took me there early one morning. We touched the trees coming down in the cool morning air, landing on a lovely spot surrounded by the forest, where I can still hear the birds singing and feel the cool breeze. Someone had brought coffee in a thermos and we all had some. I was actually shivering and one of the men put a sweater around my shoulders! The only time I needed anything to warm me in Vietnam. My students had corralled a Vietnamese who spoke English to take me around and we had a proper breakfast in a hotel by the edge of the large lake in Dalat. I treated the students and guide to an excellent lunch at a French restaurant overlooking a ravine.

## Nha Trang: A Memorable Trip

In the middle of breakfast, the town began to be blasted; there was shelling all around us. We got under the tables, I being sure I had my coffee with me and hoped the shelling would stop soon. It lasted quite a long time or so it seemed to me... perhaps half an hour. Finally, it stopped and Joe told me: "We can get out from under this now." I was more than ready, but then we got the bad news we were on red alert. That meant no driving was permitted. I had wanted to go further up the coast and then back to Phan Rang by dark. Joe swore when he heard the news, telling me: "I want to get back, or do something." He gave me a look and that was all I needed: "Could we drive up the coast toward Tue Hua?" I asked.

"Well... are you sure you want to do that?" he replied. "We're on red alert and I'll catch it if we get caught, but I'd like to do it if you're willing."

I was more than willing. It was against the rules, but a memorable drive. The country side was beautiful and quiet as could be. The only people we saw were a few men, or boys really, riding water buffaloes in what was left of the rice fields. The hills were covered with grass, palm trees, flowers and absolute quiet reigned. We got to the edge of Tue Hua—50 miles of slow driving—when Joe looked at his watch: "We'd better get back before I'm caught. This is dangerous, you know, but you don't seem a bit alarmed."

"I'm not," I told him truthfully. "It's lovely driving in this quiet." "Well, it just might not be quiet all the time," Joe told me truthfully. "We're turning around here. I hope that red alert is taken away soon. I want to get back before too late on Monday."

I gasped and said: "Oh, ye gods. I have a class Monday night. Will we make it?" Joe looked thoughtful, telling me: "It will be against all regulations if we take off in the morning, but I'm willing if you are. It's only 50 miles."

I certainly was and told him so emphatically. We left the next day at a time in the morning Joe figured no one would catch us. I'm not a bit sure how he managed to do it, but we got off when no one was looking, and went on our way to Phan Rang, and home. Once in Phan Rang, Joe took me to my trailer