



Members of Dr. Coman's party hauling in a fresh supply brought by Coast Guard cutter to a tiny tropical island 1,400 miles south of Honolulu.



Dr. Dana Coman of Johns Hopkins University, who is heading the expedition to Baker, Howland and Jarvis islands to survey their possibilities as stopping places for an air route between the United States and Australia.

Oasis for Pacific Fliers Found on Coman Voyage

**Baker Island an Ideal Link for Australia
Plane Route, Explorer Reports—Natural
Wonders of Place Described.**

Dr. Dana Coman of Johns Hopkins University, heading an expedition to study the marine life and vegetation of Baker, Howland and Jarvis Islands, United States Equatorial possessions, left Honolulu on July 24 on the schooner Kinkajou. The islands, 1,400 miles south of Hawaii, have been under survey since last March by the Department of Commerce as probable stops on a proposed airline linking Australia and the United States. En route to Jarvis Island, Dr. Coman tells of the expedition's experiences at Baker and Howland Islands, where two members of the party are now making surveys at each point.

By DR. DANA COMAN.

HONOLULU, Aug. 24.—In preparing our expedition experienced advisers had counseled us against attempting to land on ocean-beaten, tiny Baker Island. They told of smashing surf on treacherous reefs, shark-infested waters. Surf boats from other expeditions, they said, had been upset and smashed, the occupants narrowly averting serious injuries, even possible death.

So Baker Island became our most formidable hurdle. We tackled it first. Fourteen days out of Honolulu we hove into sight of its dazzling coral sands. It is only two miles long, only ten feet above sea level, flat and hard. Normally uninhabited and waterless, we found on it four Hawaiian youths from Honolulu who have been living there most of this year making meteorological observations for the Department of Commerce.

The lonely, sun-blistered island is a natural airport for land and amphibian planes. It could be used with very little expenditure.

Outside the reef the Pacific is too deep for any ship to anchor. About 200 yards from shore we put off for our first attempt at landing, which was creating excitement among the Hawaiian boys ashore. Six of Hawaii's most stalwart surf men were chosen from our crew, each grimly cloaked in navy life jackets. They waited with true expectancy for the perilous voyage through the foaming surf.

The waters were shark-infested, sure enough. Their swift dark bodies swarmed about our ship like evil shadows, persistent and brazen. Each Hawaiian took with him a keen knife. If the surf boat were upset there would be desperate hand-to-hand encounters.

We waited for a long swell. On its crest we shot forward our long, slim surf boat. It skimmed shoreward like a leaf. Soon, much sooner than we expected, it grounded on the loveliest, most inviting beach we had seen since leaving Waikiki.

Get a Cordial Welcome.

In a moment we were in the midst of a lively, cordial welcome from the Hawaiian boys, long isolated on the island. They clamored for news of the world, for news of Hawaii, of their homes. We had bundles of mail and newspapers for them, given to us by their relatives and friends in Honolulu. It was touching to see how affected the boys were at receiving this unexpected visit.

During that day we put ashore all the necessary camp and research equipment to be used by the two men chosen from my party to remain on the island for at least two months, making a study of landing and colonizing possibilities, gathering data on the natural resources and collecting material.

There is no high foliage and the island is overrun by the descendants of shipwrecked rats. Terns and booby birds make their special corner of the island a bedlam and the fragrance of the island is not that of violets. But compared to what we had been led to expect, the island has the makings of a little paradise.

We found at least one large intermittent fresh-water pool besides three brackish wells with water suitable for washing or gardening. The Hawaiian boys, in spite of

hardships, have done well with radishes and Chinese cabbage and lettuce, and are nursing thirsty coconut trees two and four feet high.

The entire centre of the island is a blaze of color with the vivid blossoming of the yellow ilima, portulaca vine and grasses.

The average wind is about seven miles an hour. This gentle breeze keeps the scorched island pleasantly cool. Rain falls invariably at dawn only. In one of the once or twice monthly squalls recently, the Hawaiian boys filled all their empty water drums and every other available receptacle in twenty minutes. The fall was at the rate of ten inches an hour—terrific rain that must be seen to be believed, reminding me of the cyclonic monsoons of the Bay of Bengal. I observed that this heavy rain made not the slightest impression upon the flat island. It quickly disappeared through the coral sand, so airplanes using the island in the future will never be bothered with boggy patches.

Excellent Spot for Stopover.

Without much effort this lonely island could be converted into a veritable equatorial paradise, a charming oasis for future air travelers to rest a while during their swift flight from America to Australia. Conservation of the terrific rains could be used for the encouragement of likely plant life.

A stroll along the shore is an eighth wonder. Your eyes and hands are busy finding the daintiest, most exquisitely patterned shells that astonishingly darted from us as we reached for them. Here was the chambered nautilus. Imagine how our hearts melted! Here Neptune's conch and the pure sheen of the pearl oyster in the ceaseless swelling waters on the reef, surging in and out of potholes, crevasses and among acres of painted coral heads.

Just beyond the tide, like tiny silver and beryl and sapphire jewels, transparent fish played.

Following my footsteps came Johnny, our Hawaiian bos'n, carrying his hand-throw net. Stealthily creeping, posing in a ludicrous bow-legged straddle, his arms grasping his net ready to fling, he would wait for unsuspecting fish to pass before him. Like a lariat, swift and precise, it would flash from his arms, spread and fall beneath the blue waters, ensnaring the fish.

Until we reached Baker Island, for fourteen days we had unsuccessfully tried to catch fish from the yacht. Now in an hour we could catch more than we could eat. Many of the strange fish reminded me of those large-mouthed, hard-eyed pink and gold striped fish of the great paintings of the Dutch still-life school.

The Hawaiian boys on the island had not seen a ship until we arrived. They invaded our trim Kinkajou, the same boat that made the famed Atlantic Circle voyage. They craved, of all things, a meal of onions and potatoes, but my cook, an ex-navy man, scoffed; boomed that he had something far better. His ice box yielded oranges and lemons and apples, luscious food the boys had not seen for at least six months.

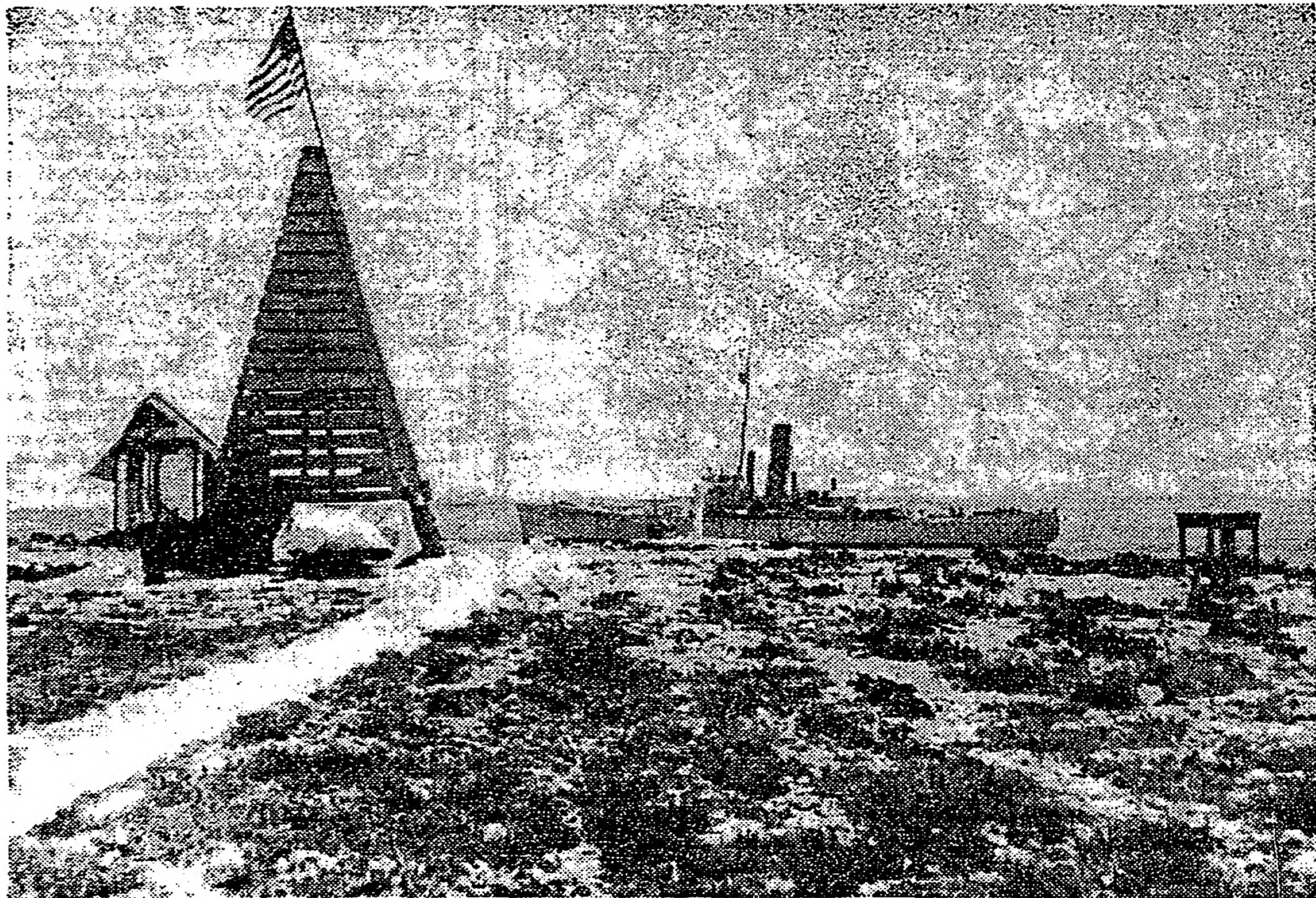
One of the boys almost broke down. He said, with native simplicity, "Oh, God is good to have sent you here."

Attend a Native Feast.

That night, in gratitude, the Hawaiians invited us ashore to a luau, or native feast. They waded out into pools on the reefs and with their short hand spears quickly caught red snapper and squid. The squid they pounded with a rock upon rock, pounding it tender and tasty. Then they mixed poi, the staple native food of the Pacific races.

Venus glowed down upon us. The Southern Cross flickered into brightness. It was the strangest meal I had eaten in years. The boys were silent, except for spasmodic, nervous laughter. That is

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Times Wide World Photo.

STARS AND STRIPES FLY AGAIN ON JARVIS ISLAND.

The United States Coast Guard cutter Utasca, stationed at Honolulu, is shown off the Jarvis Island, in mid-Pacific, where the Aviation Bureau of the Department of Commerce is erecting a meteorological research station to make weather records for future airline to the Antipodes. This is the first time the United States flag has flown here since 1880.

COMAN SPOTS OASIS FOR PACIFIC FLYING

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all they could do: laugh at the great surprise we had given them.

They were grateful that I was leaving two of my men to live with them. Noticing that they had supplies of only the plainest foods, like bully beef and flour, I left them a collection of extras, like canned fruits and soups.

We set off as the moon came up. The boys waded out on the reef up to their armpits, their wet, brown bodies glistening in the moonlight. It was an unforgettable experience. They sang us native songs of farewell, sincere and passionate. Long their voices echoed out across the water to us. We could do nothing but appreciate it in a moving silence.

Howland Island, sixty miles away, and similar in all respects to Baker, was our next stop.

At our approach the Hawaiian boys on the island raced down to the beach, sat huddled in expectation as they watched us make our way through the rough surf over the reef. They had not seen other men for at least three months.

The poor, lonely youngsters said: "We didn't know who you were and we didn't care. We just hoped that you would not go away. It was worth getting stung by sea urchins to help you land."

Howland is less attractive than Baker. Black coral terraces above the narrow strip of beach make it somber.

The establishment of a camp on Howland for another two of my men was merely a repetition of the routine on Baker. But on Howland we set up a radio transmitting and receiving station, with which I will maintain contact with the men until I return for them early in October, when their scientific explorations for me will be complete.

Upon leaving Howland for Jarvis, 1,300 miles to the east right along the Equator, we moved in the doldrums. Not a breath of wind, the sea like oil, the heat oppressive. We stripped down to loin cloths, welcomed the occasional squalls of rain. In them we stood on deck, soaped ourselves, thus having the first fresh-water baths since leaving Honolulu.

A strange sight this, ten bronzed men on deck in mid-Pacific, lathering up and laughing like so many kids.

Today we are midway between Howland and Jarvis. Moving entirely under sail, we should reach Jarvis within ten days.