

[MONTHLY SERVICE BULLETIN
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DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND WILDLIFE

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FISHERIES DEPARTMENT, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

MONTHLY SERVICE BULLETIN

Vol. VI. No. 8.

August, 1957

STAFF NOTES

The Superintendent (Mr. A.J. Fraser) left Perth, on July 28, for Carnarvon, Onslow and Broome. While at Broome, Mr. Fraser will inspect the pearl culture beds at Augustus Island. He will return to Perth on August 15. Next month Mr. Fraser will attend the Bi-ennial Conference of Interstate Fauna Authorities, to be held in Sydney during the week commencing September 23.

The Supervising Inspector (Mr. J.E. Bramley), carried out a tour of inspection of the Bunbury district from July 24 to July 28.

Assistant Inspector D. Wright will be transferred to the research vessel "Lancelin" (vice Assistant Inspector S. LaRoche), for the duration of the current research programme at Shark Bay.

Assistant Inspector K.L. Brooks will relieve at Geraldton in lieu of Inspector Wright until the Abrolhos crayfish season ends on August 14.

Cadet Inspector K.R. Dickson will commence special leave, on August 18, to attend a fortnight's National Service training camp to be held at Nungarin.

Inspectors H.J. Murray, A.J. Bateman and A.K. Melsom will all commence annual leave this month -

Inspector Murray on August 19, and Inspectors Bateman and Melsom on August 26. During Inspector Melsom's absence, Relieving Inspector G.C. Jeffery will be in charge of the Fremantle district until September 15. He will then relieve in the Mandurah district while Inspector Green is on annual leave.

Officers expected to commence annual leave in September include the Superintendent, Inspectors N.E. McLaughlan and G.H. Lyon and Assistant Inspector R. McKay.

The Senior Inspector (Mr. J.E. Munro) will resume duty on August 12 after long service leave.

Congratulations are extended to Mr. and Mrs. Cherrington on the birth of a daughter, Doreen Ann, on August 1.

MOVEMENTS OF DEPARTMENTAL VESSELS

The Research Vessel "Lancelin" will leave Geraldton for Shark Bay early this month to resume scallop and prawn investigations and whale marking. She is not expected to return to Fremantle until October.

The p.v. "Silver Gull" shortly will undergo a complete refit to the hull and engine. This work will be carried out by the Harbour and Light Department at their boatshed in Fremantle.

The p.v. "Kooruldhoo" is expected in Fremantle late this month for her annual overhaul.

The third bondwood dinghy to be constructed under the supervision of Supervising Inspector J.E. Bramley was recently completed. This 13'6" boat has been handed over to Inspector Green for use in the Mandurah District.

The keel of the new patrol vessel has been laid by the Harbour and Light Department. The frames have been completed and work is reported as progressing steadily.

OBITUARY

We read with regret of the passing of Mr. Robert Moore, Managing Director of the Nor'-West Whaling Co., who died at his home in Mount Lawley on July 5, aged 76. To his widow and sons we extend our sincere sympathy.

WILD LIFE SHOWS.

The annual Wild Life Show, conducted under the auspices of the W.A. Naturalist's Club and the Gould League of Bird Lovers, will be held in the Perth Town Hall from September 9 to 14. This Department will again enter an exhibit.

Senior Inspector J.E. Munro will be in charge of the exhibit at the Town Hall, and will later take it to Kalgoorlie, as the Department has again agreed to participate in the Australian Inland Mission Show. It will be held in the Kalgoorlie Town Hall from September 24 to 27.

Additionally this year, at least part of the exhibit will be entered in the Mandurah Wild Life Show on September 18.

Any officers who have suitable items of interest which they are prepared to loan for inclusion in the exhibit are invited to contact Mr. A.J. Buchanan, of Head Office, as soon as possible.

GIANT PETRELS *

Due to an editorial error, the details of a giant petrel carrying F.I.D.S. band No. 52968 was omitted from the list of recoveries on page 110 of the previous issue of this Bulletin. It was this bird which was in the white phase and not that banded 10293 as previously shown.

Since the previous publication, two additional reports of recoveries have been received and are listed hereunder with the details of the previous omission.

It is of interest to note that the petrel which had been recovered at Kwinana on June 22 and released at Fremantle on June 28, after having been banded by Dr. D.L. Serventy with A.N.A.R.E. band No. 10291, was recovered on the afternoon of June 29 at Point Peron by Mr. G. Coleman, of 56 Howick Street, Victoria Park. The bird was caught on a fishing line, the ring examined and the bird released again with the band still on it. It was last seen swimming out to sea.

Date Found	Place	F.I.D.S. Band No.	Remarks
24/6/57	Naval Base	52698	White-phase bird. Released at Fremantle on 28/6/57.
2/7/57	Geraldton	52568	Found dead.
23/7/57	Geraldton waters	52319	Alive but fatigued.

CRAYFISHING

In previous issues of this Bulletin, monthly production figures at the Abrolhos during 1957 have been compared with those of the previous year. A further table is re-produced on page 119 and although it will be seen that the June, 1957, catch was below that of 1956, the progressive total production this year is still well ahead of last year's.

Figures so far to hand indicate that for the twelve months ended June 30, 1957, the State production of crayfish exceeded 12,000,000 lb. The previous highest catch during a similar period was 10,529,539 lb. in 1955.

ABROLHOS CRAYFISHERY

AREA	JUNE, 1956			JUNE, 1957		
	No. of Men	Total Catch	Catch per Man	No. of Men	Total Catch	Catch per Man
		lb.	lb.		lb.	lb.
North Is.	33	46,304	1,403	22	22,053	1,002
Wallabi Is.	41	61,530	1,501	29	33,149	1,143
Easter Group	44	50,301	1,143	43	50,253	1,168
Southern Group	37	43,992	1,189	29	25,924	895
TOTAL	157	202,127	1,287	123	131,379	1,068

TOTAL FOR FOUR MONTHS 1956 .. 2,119,288 lb.

TOTAL FOR FOUR MONTHS 1957 .. 2,521,536 lb.

GENERAL FISHING

The figures hereunder show that while the salmon season has been exceptionally poor this year, the catch of tommy ruffs, a closely related species, has been good. Although the run of ruffs in the Fremantle district has been very poor, it has been offset by a great increase in the Albany district which has produced 706,901 lb. or approximately 80% of the catch so far this year.

When comparing the figures it should be remembered that almost all the annual catch of both species is taken in the first half of the year.

	<u>Salmon</u> lb.	<u>Tommy Ruff</u> lb.
Total Catch, 1956	4,821,941	767,407
Catch for 6 months ended June, 1957	3,524,061	873,746

LOSS OF THE "WATERWITCH"

On July 1, the 47' fishing boat "Waterwitch" licensed in the name of Mr. Frank Burton, of Geraldton, struck the Port Gregory reef and sank within seconds. Two of the crew members were asleep in their bunks at the time of the mishap, but they and the skipper, Mr. Joe Burton, were able to reach safety though not without first being extensively cut and bruised on the reef. When last licensed, her owner valued the "Waterwitch" at £5,000 and her gear at £500.

WHALING

Reports from Inspector B.A. Carmichael, of Albany, indicate that the Cheynes Beach Whaling Company expects to complete its quota of 120 whales before the end of this month. Inspector Carmichael advised that a whale, which had been killed near Albany

on July 8, was found to contain twin calves. This was the first record the Company had of twins occurring in whales and it is believed that the phenomenon of twins in humpbacks is rare. One of the whales caught towards the end of July was among the largest ever taken by this Company. It was a female over 45' in length, but unusually big in the body and the Company expected it to yield about 80 barrels of oil.

Assistant Inspector R. McKay, reporting from the Nor-West Whaling Company's Carnarvon Station, advised that up to July 31, 464 whales had been taken by that Company's chasers. As the first whale was only taken on June 12, the total was very satisfactory. Mr. McKay referred to the increased efficiency in handling the whales due to better techniques and equipment which had reduced the average flensing time of each whale from 30 minutes in June, to 24 minutes in July. The Company, he wrote, was carrying out experiments in the extraction of protein meal from the whale blood which was normally wasted. The Manager of the Station expected that techniques would be developed which would be incorporated as part of the usual procedure next year. Mr. McKay added that, while the small whales were in good condition, the majority of the large whales taken was on the thin side with poorer blubber and dry meat. Reports from the chasers indicated that a large number of smaller whales were moving up the coast, but only a few large size whales were accompanying them.

The suggestion had been made, Mr. McKay said, that the larger whales were moving farther out to sea each year, and this year they were all having to be towed long distances to the Station.

OPEN SEASON FOR FINCHES

At its last meeting, the Fauna Protection Advisory Committee recommended that the usual open season for finches, from September 1 to December 31, should be proclaimed again this year. It is expected that the Committee's recommendations will be accepted.

Although unseasonal and heavy rains have been experienced this year in the Kimberley's normally "dry" season, which will undoubtedly delay nesting, it was considered that if the open season were also delayed, it would encourage the trapping and transport of birds during the hot weather and thus increase the mortality rate.

TROUT

Although stripping operations were successful at Pemberton this year, less fry than usual will be available for distribution. The first hatching trouble in over twenty years was experienced, through causes unknown, and many thousands of eggs died in the "green" stage (i.e. before they were eyed). This made necessary the cancelling of orders for ova received from Bendigo, Mt. Gambier and the South Australian Fly-fishers' Association totalling 150,000.

Distribution of fry will commence on August 8 when 40,000 will be brought to Perth and held in the recently completed holding pond at Craig's Lake, Kewdale. There will be no distribution at country centres this year, all purchasers will obtain their fish either at Pemberton or Perth. Fry will be sold at £10 per pound weight in plastic bags on which there will be £1 deposit.

The Superintendent (Mr. A.J. Fraser), the Clerk-in-Charge (Mr. B.R. Saville) and the Research Officer (Mr. B.K. Bowen) will attend the annual general meetings of the Pemberton-Warren Trout Acclimatisation Society and the Trout Acclimatisation Council of W.A. which are to be held in Pemberton on Saturday and Sunday, August 31 and September 1, respectively.

BROKE INLET

Inspector B.A. Carmichael, of Albany, reported that the bar at Broke Inlet (Brooke's Inlet) opened to the sea on July 26. By a previous proclamation, the Inlet will automatically be closed to the taking of all species of fish by means of fishing nets from seven days after the bar opened until May 31, 1958. In other words the Inlet will be closed to netting from August 2 to May 31, 1958, both days inclusive.

THE CLEARING HOUSE

New Hebrides Tuna Base, U.S. Outlet, Contracted by Japan

Establishment of a base in British-controlled New Hebrides Islands of the southwest Pacific, with a selling arrangement in the United States, was negotiated this spring by two Japanese firms, Nanyo Boeki K.K. and Daiichi Bussan K.K.

Initial operations are to be limited to eight clippers, but the Japanese anticipate substantial increase in importance of the base in succeeding seasons.

The New Hebrides base will be the second available to the Japanese in the mid-Pacific area where they had territorial dominance prior to World War II. A concession permits Japanese vessels to deliver their catches to the operation of the Van Camp Sea Food Co. in American Samoa.

It is understood that the Japanese companies negotiated the deal with a British company and an American firm, neither of which was named in the dispatch from Pacific Fisherman's editorial representative in Japan. It was understood, however, that the American company has a tuna cannery as well as a national distribution organization for frozen fish.

The British company is to build a cold storage in the New Hebrides, this work already being under contract to Kinoshita Kenetsu K.K. of Yaizu, Japan. The plant will have daily freezing capacity.

Two of the Japanese vessels will come from Yaizu, in Shizuoka Prefecture near the great tuna port of Shimizu; and six will come from ports in Wakayama Prefecture. They will fish with long-line gear

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primarily, but will undertake to use the live-bait method whenever possible in order to test its productivity under conditions in the area of the New Hebrides.

The two vessels from Yaizu were engaged in Albacore fishing near that port early in May and were not scheduled to depart for the New Hebrides until sometime in July. They are each of 80 tons gross and are owned by Showa Geyogyo K.K.

("Pacific Fisherman" - Portland, Ore. June, 1957)

Maasbanker by the Million-
Record Fish Harvest off Cape West Coast

In two weeks of fishing at the end of May and early June the fishing boats of the Cape West Coast probably equalled or even exceeded the 50,334 tons of maasbanker caught during the entire season last year. Deckloads again became a familiar sight as the boats wallowed up to factory jetties, disgorged their catches and then returned to the huge shoals only two to three hours run from the factories.

Fishermen and factory operators with years of experience of St. Helena Bay and the unpredictable movements of its fish described the run as phenomenal. Echo recordings taken by some boats show shoals up to 16 miles long of fat, firm fish in excellent condition.

The larger boats took 200 and more tons in one net; when they had filled to capacity, other craft would come alongside and brail until they were full. In this way up to three boats have taken their catch from one net.

It has been echo fishing all the way. According to fishermen the shoals have moved three to five fathoms below the surface. "It would be difficult, if not impossible to find these fish without the aid of echo sounders," one jubilant fisherman told the South African Shipping News and Fishing Industry Review. "But since the rush on echo sounders last year, almost every boat in the St. Helena Bay area has one of these

instruments. The few without them have had to cruise around waiting for netloads beyond the capacity of one boat."

The outstanding success of the echo sounder in Cape waters has stimulated Walvis Bay interest in the instrument. The firm, K.F. Albrecht & Co. (South Africa) (Pty.) Ltd. which sold the Elac Echomat echo recorder almost by the dozen last year reports that some 150 of these instruments have been installed in Cape and Walvis Bay boats. More than 100 Echomats are now almost standard equipment aboard the shoal fishing boats of St. Helena Bay.

Large Craft

Seeking and netting the St. Helena Bay maasbanker are more than 200 boats with Echomats and also instruments by Kelvin and Hughes, Atlas, Bendix, Marconi, Simrad and others. Many to-day are large craft of 60 ft. and longer able to lift more than 100 tons of fish at a time. One boat, the new Spes Bona II of 63 ft. brought in a catch of 135 tons and in one week landed 581 tons to earn nearly £30,000 for its skipper and crew.

The shoals were found early in the second half of May. For ten days boats ran to and from them and factories worked 24 hours a day to process the catches which still piled up in the fish bins.

Then a gale struck the coast on May 30. For four days the boats were unable to move out although several factories took advantage of the break to process the accumulated piles. With the return of calm weather, the boats went out again. The fish were still there and frenzied catching started once more.

Fishing has carried on day and night. With echo sounders, there is no need to wait for the moon and several boats have been making two trips a day to the shoals.

For fishermen and factory operators, the run is a new high point in season which, from its start, has shown considerably more promise than sad 1956.

In the first three months of the year, pilchard catches have been reasonably good although at times boats have had to travel nearly 100 miles to the south to make catches from shoals in False Bay. Figures for the month of April, however, showed a slight drop on those for the previous three months and there was some concern that the months of May, June and July might bring a heavy drop similar to that suffered last season.

Through the months January to May, the maasbanker catches have been small. The huge run in the critical month has, therefore, come as a boon to an industry which was becoming worried over the near disappearance of one of its two most important fish species.

There Last Season

It is the theory of some fishermen and factory operators that this maasbanker run might have been there for catching in past seasons but was not seen because the boats were not fitted with echo sounders.

Whatever the theories, the fish are there and in almost unbelievable quantities. They are also in such good condition that the discharge pumps can work almost uninterrupted and there are few holdups in the plant.

Unfortunately, with the smaller intake during the previous season, some factories have not been working to full capacity and one or more reduction plants in the fish meal sections had been idle for several months. These had to be brought into operation again before the 15 factories in the Cape West Coast could reach their total fish meal plant capacity for some 250 tons of raw fish an hour. But within a few days all West Coast factories were working to top capacity and bags of meal were piling up in the storehouses.

Marketing Problem

This sudden increase in production must also create a marketing problem for the South African Fish Meal Producers Association. In recent years the fish meal industry of the Union and South West Africa has had little difficulty selling its meal at a good

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price on overseas markets. But a reasonable level of production through the year enabled meal to be sent abroad in a steady flow.

With the production of all factories pooled in the Association, the tendency has been to export meal from Walvis Bay and supply much of the Cape production to the South African market. The maasbanker run may create a healthy export surplus in the Cape and this will have to be stored until the Association is able to ship it abroad.

The canneries are also busy and are taking full advantage of the good quality fish.

("The South African Shipping News and Fishing Industry Review" Cape Town June, 1957.)

New Plastic Mats Stop Top Ice Melting

A waterproof plastic insulated mat that is placed over the top ice in fishboat holds, and which cuts down the melting rate of the ice considerably, is being marketed by Scott Plastic Products, Victoria.

The mats have been tested in actual fishing operations, and have been proven highly successful.

Called "Scotty Ice Savers", the tough and flexible mats are made in one size - 4'x3'. They will not deteriorate or rot, and will not carry bacteria. They are very light and easy to stow, and are easily cleaned by hosing.

The mats are modern, scientifically-designed insulation, and are the answer to an old problem.

("Western Fisheries" Vancouver, B.C. May, 1957.)

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Russia Refuses to Have Foreign Observers
On Their Antarctic Whale Factory-Ships

Russia has refused to allow foreign observers on her whaling ships, and her action has jeopardised the effective functioning of the International Whaling Convention.

The Russians failed to attend a Whaling Convention special meeting called March 20 in Oslo. Representatives of the United Kingdom, Netherlands, Japan and Norway attended the conference, but Russia sent a note saying she could not attend.

The desire to have neutral observers on board whale factory-ships is a matter of urgency to the Norwegians, who say that it would insure fair play under the rules of the International Whaling Convention. Opposition by Russia has in the past prevented the permission of neutral observers on Antarctic whaling ships.

The refusal of the Russians to attend the March 20 conference was not unexpected.

An example of why the Norwegians mistrust the observance of the rules of the Convention by Russia was provided by a Norwegian captain who returned after a month in the Antarctic. He stated that the Russian whaling fleet arrived with 18 catcher boats, compared to 15 last season. The Norwegians, British and South Africans had agreed among themselves to limit their fleets to 12 catcher boats each. The augmented fleet of catcher boats attached to the Russian fleet will probably ensure them the largest individual fleet catch.

Meanwhile, the production of whale and sperm oil for the 1956 to 1957 season by the Norwegian fleet increased 30% over the previous season. Production amounted to 953,273 barrels, compared to 783,658 barrels during the last season.

An owner of a Norwegian fleet told a press conference that there are still plenty of whales in the Antarctic, particularly finback whales. Previous

to the opening of the 1956-1957 season, the fleet owner had taken the lead in expressing pessimistic views on the future of international cooperation in whaling. In fact he had recommended withdrawal of Norway from the International Whaling Convention. At the press conference in March, however, the owner said that he was "hopeful" that nations would cooperate in whaling.

("Western Fisheries" Vancouver, B.C. May, 1957.)

Whaling

Japanese Expansion Worries Western Interests

The Antarctic whaling season ended this year on March 16, having lasted for 69 days. This was 9 days longer than the preceding year, despite the fact that the quota had been reduced by 500 blue whale units to a figure of 14,500. The actual catch slightly exceeded this, being 14,734 blue whale units. During the season 225 catchers were employed, and their average rate of catching, therefore, works out at 0.95 blue whale units per day, a decrease of about 4 per cent compared with the previous season's figures.

The provisional total of whale oil production reported by each expedition is given in the accompanying table; totals are expressed in thousands of barrels of whale oil, a barrel being equal to one-sixth of a ton. By way of comparison, the figures for the two preceding seasons are also given.

As can be seen from these figures, the total catch for the Norwegian expeditions is substantially higher than last year, whereas that for the other western countries, and for the Japanese, is, on average, correspondingly reduced.

About half the total catch was taken in the previously protected Pacific area, which is now open for whaling for a trial period of 3 years; it does not necessarily follow from this that the baleen whales are less scarce here than elsewhere, as it is probable that a large number of expeditions took the opportunity of sampling the new area.

This year, for the first time, no less than five Japanese expeditions took part in the season's operations, and it is easy to surmise that there will be further expansion in this industry in Japan in the years to come. It will be realised that last year the sale of Chr. Salvesen's floating factory ship Southern Venturer to a Japanese company failed to be completed only as a result of the intervention of the Japanese Government, in refusing the release of the necessary sterling. It would be rash to assume that we have heard the last of this deal. During the last year or two, the Norwegian industry has not disguised its apprehension at the very rapid growth in the Japanese participation, though in Great Britain the trend seems to have caused much less interest. The reasons for the Japanese optimism, which is in such sharp contrast to the pessimistic views held in the West, are not far to seek.

TABLE
Provisional Figures of Whale Oil Production for 1956/1957
Season, Compared with Previous Years

Expedition	Season (1,000's of barrels of whale oil)			Remarks
	1956/57	1955/56	1954/55	
"Southern Harvester"	103	154	107	
"Southern Venturer"	101	120	89	
"Balaena"	102	70	149	
"Abraham Larsen"	81	81	82	
"Kosmos III")	256	182	175	
"Kosmos IV")				
"Thorshammer")	263	242	218	
"Thorshavet")				
"Thorshordi")				
"Sir James Clark Ross"	99	55	65	
"Norhval"	111	68	85	
"Pelagos"	82	74	80	
"Sudevoy"	45	33	44	
"Willem Barendsz"	66	85	54	To March 2 only
"Kinjyo Maru"	75	69	69	
"Nisshin Maru"	115	151	124	
"Tonan Maru"	90	119	122	
"Matsushima Maru"	64	-	-	New expedi- tion
"Kyokuyo Maru 2"	75	-	-	Previously "Olympic Challenger"

Figures for the Russian Expedition (factory ship "Slava")
have not yet been received.

Japan, in the first place, unlike her Western competitors enjoys a huge home market for whale meat for human consumption; in the second place, the rates of pay for whalers of all grades, from mess boy to gunner, are far below the comparable figures now firmly established in the West. A gunner, for example, may be paid for a season's work no more than one tenth of the amount received by his opposite number in the West.

But it is the demand for whale meat that is likely to assure the Japanese industry many years of prosperity ahead. Much the greater part of the oil extracted from a whale comes from the blubber, the extraction rate from the meat being much lower. In factory ships of the West all the whale meat goes into the cookers along with the blubber for the extraction of its oil content. What is left over is then dried and finally, after several further processes, bagged up and sold as fertiliser and for animal feeding. From the point of view of maximum utilisation of the whale's carcass, this process is less efficient than the direct consumption of the meat; and from an economic standpoint it is obviously less profitable.

No longer profitable

The conclusion to be drawn from all this is simple enough. If, as seems probable, the stocks of whales in the Antarctic continue to decline, a day will come when the mounting of a floating factory expedition and its operation for the short Antarctic season will no longer provide a reasonable margin of profit. However, this situation will be reached in the West before the East. Those who deplore this trend, and believe that something should be done about it, might consider one remedy - namely, to eat whale meat.

"World Fishing"

London

June, 1957.)

Pet Foods will Soon Come in QF Packs

Scottish east coast fish trade firms are showing an interest in pet foods, a number of which are in process of being developed as packed produce. The basic ingredient would be fish offal, with lower-priced fish and other ingredients incorporated as the market permitted.

This expansion of interests is in keeping with the growth of the pet food trade, which is already taking substantial quantities of lower-priced fish, and the desire on the part of the trade firms to extend their field of operation more fully, so that they are not completely dependent on table uses.

("The Fishing News" London June 7, 1957.)

Portuguese Favour Sardine Controls

The Portuguese sardine-fishing shipowners in their report for 1956, recommend that present restrictions on the expansion of the sardine fishing fleet be maintained; that old boats be withdrawn; and that a fund be formed to compensate owners who withdraw dangerously small and un-economic boats.

They also recommend that those who wish to replace or modernise their boats should be encouraged to do so, says an economic report on Portugal, issued by the Board of Trade in London.

During the year, 93,172 metric tons of sardines were caught, an increase of 9,205 m.t. on 1955; 48,295 m.t. were sent for canning and the remainder consumed locally.

("The Fishing News" London June 7, 1957.)

Japanese to Develop Thailand Fishing Base

A new fishing base will be constructed on Terutea Island, off the western coast of South Thailand, with the help of the Japanese Overseas Fishery Cooperative Association. A group of Japanese headed by the chairman of the Cooperative Association were expected to survey the possibilities of developing new fishery resources, construction of a fishing base to accommodate 100 fishing vessels, and facilities for cold storage, processing, and canning.

("Pacific Fisherman" Portland, Ore. April, 1957)