THE 1948 EXPEDITION TO TURKEY (EXP. # 1)

Compiled by H. V. HARLAN, July, 2014

A Reconstruction of Exp. # 1 (1948) from the papers Harlan published based on it.

Resources:

1. 1950. Adventure on Turkish exploration trip. Farmer Stockman. April. Need May edition.
2. 1950. Collection of crop plants in Turkey, 1948. Agronomy Journal 42: 258-259.
3. 1950. Collecting forage plants in Turkey. Journal of Range Management 3: 213-219.
4. 1950. The near east cattleman. Northwest Cattleman, April. **(Find SHS Cowboy)**
5. 1950. The wandering gardeners of Yusufeli. Seed World. April 12, 1950.
6. 1951. New grasses for old ranges. Journal of Range Management 4: 16-18.
7. 1951. New World crop plants in Asia Minor. Scientific Monthly 72: 87-89.
8. 1951. Anatomy of gene centers. American Naturalist 85: 97-103.
9. and R.P. Celarier. 1951. Some Asiatic bluestems in America. Proceedings 49th Annual Convention of the Association of Southern Agricultural Workers.

I have this publication.

Harlan, no doubt, began his expedition to Turkey in the spring of the year.

The purpose of the Expedition to Turkey was enunciated in “New Grasses or Old Ranges, Journal of Range Management, 1951: After stating one of the primary problems facing rangeland in the US (“millions of acres of abandoned farmland”, etc.) he says a word about King Ranch and Caucasian bluestem. Then he says: “King Ranch bluestem was introduced in this country by accident and was not discovered nor exploited for many years after its chance establishment in southern Texas. If such grasses can be found accidently, ‘what could we do on purpose?’ … “It seem absurd to suppose that of all the thousands of strains in this complex we have already come upon the types best suited to our purposes. If we are not so lucky, then strains and varieties of even greater value await us somewhere on the continent of Asia.” (6, pg 16)

Thus Dr. Harlan began organizing a trip to Turkey to collect range grasses. As he began looking for funding he went first to the USDA, for whom he was working. They had started a program of collecting seeds in foreign lands and his project fit right into their plans.

“The Division of Plant Exploration and Introduction of the Bureau of Plant Industry, Soils, and Agricultural Engineering (USDA) conducted several expeditions in foreign countries in 1947-

1948 to collect germ plasm of potential value to American agriculture. Portions of Mexico, Central and South America, India and the Near East were explored." (2, pg 258) The collecting program was being authorized and funded as "part of a National Cooperative project on introduction and testing made possible under the Research and Marketing Act of 1946." (2, pg 258-9)

Dr. Harlan was interested, first and foremost, in obtaining new varieties of forage grass. This is what he was working with in western Oklahoma, not melons and apricots. Grass. He was after grass. The barren plains of western Oklahoma desperately needed new forage grasses to support the burgeoning, post WW2, beef cattle industry. So, the USDA was very glad to see that the young Dr. Harlan was planning a collecting trip to Turkey in 1948. Indeed, Turkey was some kind of center of origin for many crops which were in use in the United States; so they agreed to finance his venture, providing he collect in every province of Turkey and collect every kind of seeds he could find. This changed Harlan's scope and agenda completely. But, he was simply glad to get an opportunity to get into the field after 5 years of toiling the hot sun of Woodward, Oklahoma.

"The author spent seven months conducting an exploration of Turkey which resulted in a sizable general collection (table 1)."

"The collecting work began in south Turkey along the Mediterranean coast because the season was most advanced there. We then worked the Aegean and Black Sea regions reaching the high mountains of the east in **August** and early September, which was the only time of year collections could be made there. Later we covered central Anatolia and made a quick trip to Syria and Iraq." (3, pg 213)

"Thrace in **June** is a lovely country endowed with the slow-moving, graceful, pastoral life of rural Europe two centuries ago." (3, pg 215) Thrace is, we think, in the northwestern region of Marmara. The boundaries of Turkey have been moving around throughout the last 10,000 years, so it is a bit unclear exactly what JRH was referring to in the above quote. The region of Thrace extends into modern day Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey. See map: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thrace#mediaviewer/File:Thrace_and_present-day_state_borderlines.png

"Having covered as best we could the southern and western coasts, we turned our attention to the northern Black Sea region and worked eastward toward the high eastern provinces which we wished to reach in **August**." (3, 215)

"We then worked the Aegean and Black Sea regions reaching the high mountains of the east in August and early September, which was the only time of year collections could be made there. Later we covered central Anatolia and made a quick trip to Syria and Iraq. The season of 1948 was unfortunately very cold, wet, and late. No seed had matured anywhere along the Mediterranean coast at the time I was there."

Not until I reached the Aegean coast in **May** did the season catch up with me so a few collections could be made

(Collecting Forage Plants in Turkey,)

The total duration of Exp. # 1 was 7 months, so let us approximate a schedule:

Depart April, 1948

April & May he traveled through southern Turkey, "along the Mediterranean coast because the season was most advanced there". In June he was in Thrace, on the north western region, around the Marmara Sea. He worked his way into the north and east during July & August. Then he could do the interior portions in September and October (7 months). I am thinking that he did not spend much time in Syria and Iraq, say November and he could return home in December. That is nine months away from home (April-December, 1948).

USDA Archives quotes Harlan from "Collecting Forage Crops in Turkey", page 217, in http://archive.org/stream/usda09unit/usda09unit_djvu.txt.

From what Harlan is saying, in 1948 much of the agricultural production in Turkey was still very much like subsistence farming. Well, the farmers produced products for sale and that was their occupation; but the technology they employed was very traditional. They had the plow and the scythe, but they stacked hay in top of their houses and went up there and threw it off for their animals in winter. Evidently there was a little irrigation, but it was mostly constructed and managed by individual farmers. Mass irrigation projects were not attempted in Turkey until the 1060's. (http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-13965.html) Beginning in the 1960's massive damming and irrigation projects were conducted by the central governments and the whole things entered the 20th century. Harlan was very fortunate to see traditional agriculture in practice.

I CHECKED A WEBSITE ON A&M AND IT SAID THAT DR. MILLER, HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT (WHICH DEPT?) QUIT HIS POSITION IN 1961 AND WENT TO ETHIOPIA TO BE DEPT. CHAIR AT THE UNIV. THEY WERE SPONSORING. SEE: http://agecon.okstate.edu/files/history-book-3.pdf Dr. Miller went to Ethiopia in 1961. Some other names were given, but they were in Ag. Econ.

I ALSO SENT AN EMAIL TO GREG FREY TO SEE IF HE HAS THE MAY 1951 ISSUE OF FARMER STOCKMAN. SEE: http://southwestfarmpress.com/contact

I CAN'T SEEM TO GET JSTOR TO PUT SCIENTIFIC MONTHLY Vol. 72, No. 2, Feb., 1951, ON MY SHELF.

Harlan, after his tour of Turkey, continued on to make brief stoppoffs in Syria, Iraq and Lebanon, The estimated time of return to Woodward would be September or October, 1948, but we really don't know.