

### Sights And Sounds Of International Oil Business

By Colleen Gregg - Victoria Branch March 17, 1999 Luncheon Meeting

You are sent to a "developing" African country to set up a regional petroleum geology project, with meetings scheduled at various locations throughout the country. While driving through the jungle, a group of armed men in dirty uniforms stops the car and orders you out. They surround you with their rifles pointed in your direction. They are angry. They are obviously poor. They are demanding money. What do you do, and what does this have to do with oil studies?

You go to a newly opened region in Russia to negotiate a joint study. There are doubts, misunderstandings, broken promises and histrionics. At the end of an exhausting but successful work week you are invited by the Russian team to the home of the leader. There you are indulged with vodka; freshly caught salmon and homemade caviar; more vodka; garden-grown veggies; and still more vodka. Hours of eating, toasting, drinking, singing, laughing and crying; opening up pathways of communication and sowing the seeds for future working relationships between Westerners and Russians. Truly amazing, and never dreamed possible just a decade earlier. And certainly not discussed in geology classes in universities where French and German were taught, not Russian.



*From one extreme to the other; Colleen Gregg pictured left, in the tropics (Nigeria) and pictured right, the arctic (frozen Sea of Okhotsk, Sakhalin, Russia) exemplifying the range of places the international oil industry spans.*

The various countries to which you are sent on business require knowledge of, preparation for, and decisions to be made regarding visas, transportation systems, accommodation, forms of payment, currencies, languages, customs, business ethics, health risks, political situations, etc. When we go to university and study to become geoscientists, we learn a lot about rocks, fossils, map-making, and how to look for oil and ore. But chances are we have not studied finance, business management or contract negotiation; we are not fluent in

other languages; we have not learned about cultures of the world or studied geography; or possibly have not ever traveled on our own. Once we embark upon our geoscience careers, there is a lot of potential for exploring the world, opening our horizons, making new friends, and having a multitude of experiences. This presentation offers a glimpse into the life of an international geologist, and shares the sights and sounds of some of the many places she has had the pleasure of visiting while on oil business.