

To start our trapping in Nebaj was<sup>as</sup> complicated as going thru customs. First, we had to get permission from the Chief of the Village who had to consult with his advisors. Then, we had to have a policeman go with us to the area we wanted to trap. Then, we had to procure permission from the owner of the land. The natives who actually farm the land have no say in the matter—they are subjects of the land owners. This smacks of the old feudal system or even communism. The poor natives are really taking a beating in Guatemala and reforms are necessary if they ever reach a stable economy and society. Their police force consists of the first man that can grab a billy-club. All the natives carry machettes for protection—the law enforcement officers a mere billy-club. The Mayor, I noticed, had a machette lying on his desk within easy reach.

Every letter I write carries a Merry X'mas to all.

Love,  
James.

P.S. After working this area, expect to return to Huehustenango and then go to Chemal which will put me at about 13,000 feet; then, south toward Quezaltenango and possibly even to Champerico—if time permits. I intend to return to Guatemala City Jan. 1st., if I can get out of the north side of these mountains. It rained yesterday which means land slides and road repairs before the routes are opened again. All road repairs are done by humans with a grubbing hoe type tool. Tell Hector that my Spanish in Nebaj is useless. Give the children an extra hug, and tell them I am thinking of them every minute of the day. Tell Jay that today 35 vultures fed on a carcass of an armadillo which was tossed a distance from the car about 30 feet. Did this carcass disappear in a hurry? When I get home will show you a movie of the feast.

*Nebaj, Guatemala*

*Dec. 16, 1954*

*Peromyscus, Sigmodon, Reithrodontomys from damp meadows. Peromyscus from edge of dense growth of shrubs. Black and turkey vultures located armadillo carcass 2 minutes after being placed in field. Opossum from water trail on shrubby slope associated with a spring.*