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POPULAR MECHANICS

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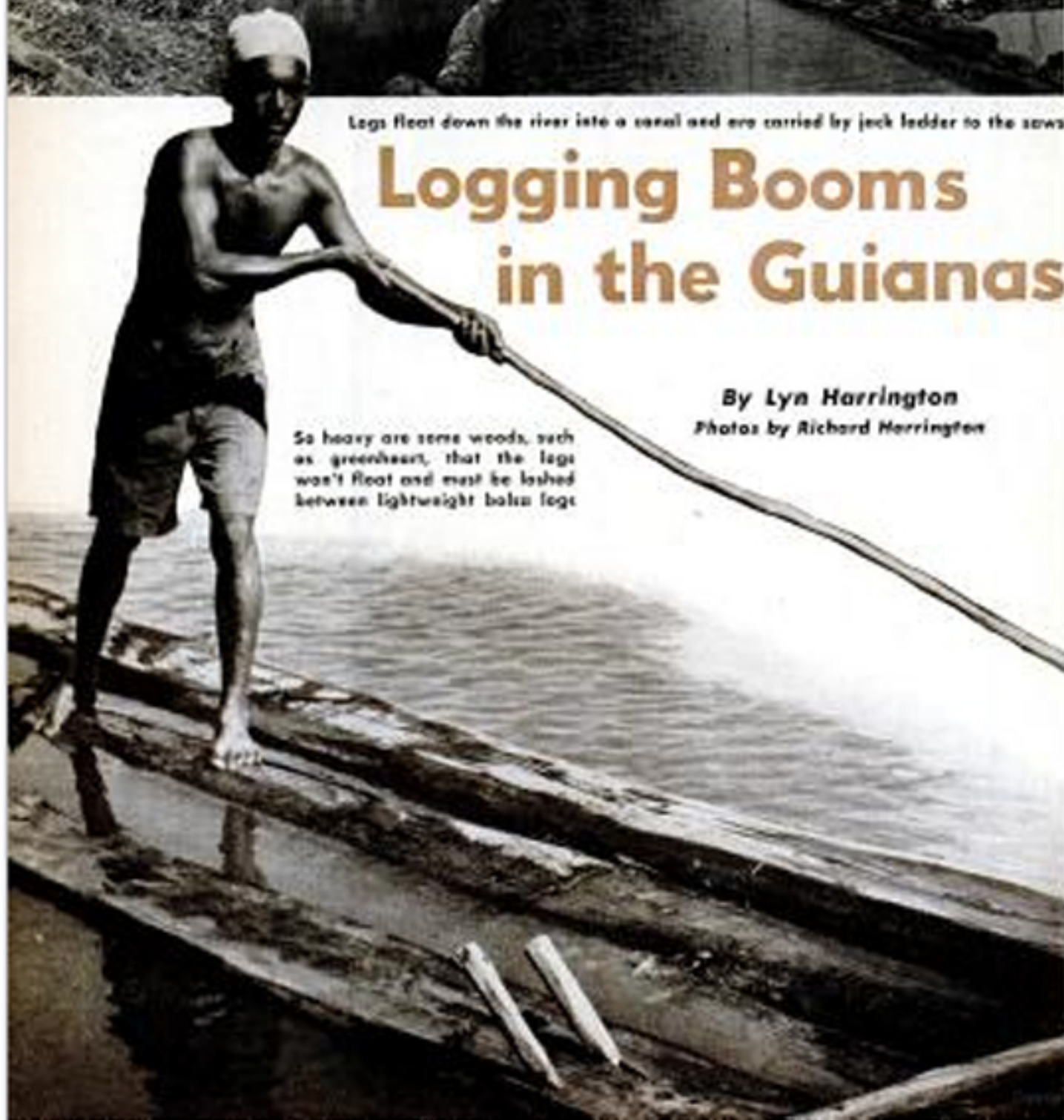
Logs float down the river into a canal and are carried by jacks to the saws

Logging Booms in the Guianas

By Lyn Harrington

Photos by Richard Harrington

So heavy are some woods, such as greenheart, that the logs won't float and must be lashed between lightweight balsa logs





Along the canal stretches a narrow-gauge railway on which logs are hauled to the mill by water buffalo

IN THE VAST, steaming jungles of Surinam and neighboring South American countries, large-scale logging is at last penetrating huge tracts of untouched timber.

Near Paramaribo, capital city of Surinam (Dutch Guiana), stands the country's first plywood factory, built in 1947. Each morning, trucks crammed with barefoot loggers roll into the forest over shell-paved roads. At the cutting site the workers select their trees and chop a bite in each tree at a point about eight feet from the ground. Into the crevices go poles on which to stand while cutting proceeds with two-man saws. As soon as a giant topples, other men set about removing the limbs and cutting the trunk into standard lengths.

Logs may be lashed into rafts and floated down the Surinam River, dragged out by shiny tractors and transferred to modern trucks for shipment to the mill, or finish the last leg of their trip behind the water buffalo which takes the place of a locomotive on the tract's narrow-gauge railway.

At the mill, squared logs from the forest are cut into timbers for construction purposes and round logs that are smooth and fairly even go under the veneer knife. The veneer emerges as long, thin peelings, about six feet wide and up to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick. Treated for termites, the sheets are next glued, pressed together into laminate and trimmed to proper size.

Six hundred men are employed at the factory, a modern plant similar to mills in other parts of the world except that it has

Pajama-clad worker chops a tree trunk into standard lengths. Tractors snake logs out of cutting area





Sections of log await their turn under the peeling knife. Ceres are used as fuel by the mill's steam plant

Rude platform is used to saw tree at proper height

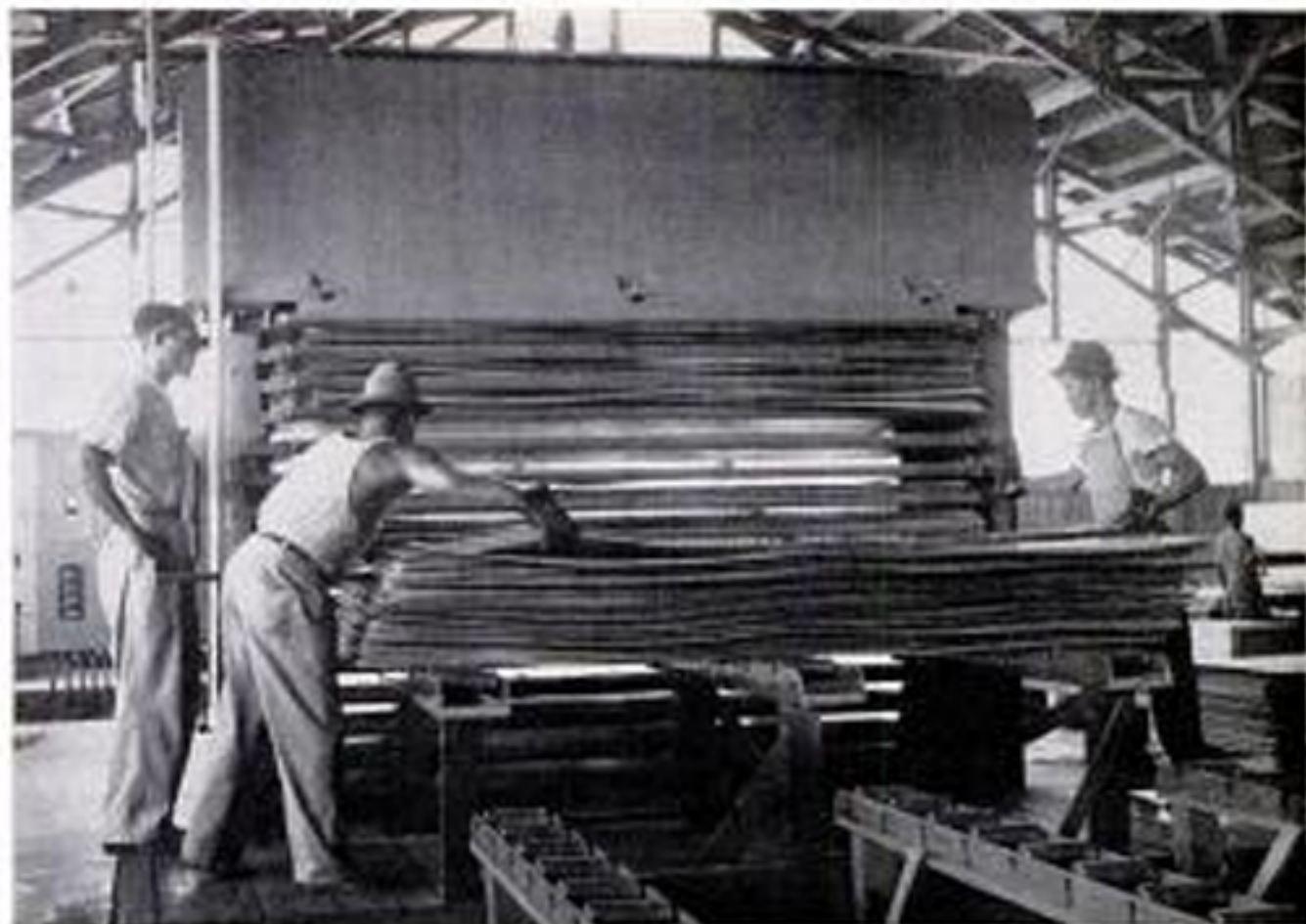


no walls; none are needed in this equatorial region. Power machinery (including power saws to fell the dense hardwood trees of the jungle), tractors and trucks combine to lower the cost of turning trees into lumber.

Only a few years ago the timber of the British and Dutch Guianas was considered almost worthless because of the high cost of removal. There was demand for a few types of valuable lumber, like mahogany, but the individual trees were scattered so sparsely about the jungle that removal cost was great. Besides, they were costly to cut and heavy to handle. Dutch Guiana exported almost no lumber; sole export of British Guiana was greenheart.

With the world lumber shortage came a demand for other kinds of South American lumber. Today, heavy woods like purpleheart, brownheart, ironheart and greenheart are being exported. "Kankantry" (a type of cottonwood), crabwood (a type of mahogany), "bassara locus," "crappo," cedar, "pisie," "wana," banak and "copie" are being shipped abroad.

Greenheart has long been popular in dock construction and in shipyards. A very tough hardwood, it resists marine borers and has outlasted steel in underwater construction. Greenheart is so heavy it will not float. In order to raft one of the logs, it must be lashed between two lightweight



Adhesive and sheets of veneer are shoved into press where they will be stamped into plywood for use abroad

logs, such as balsa, to keep it from sinking.

Balsa came into general use along with the model-airplane fad, and even went into real airplanes. It is still a valued export of tropical South America.

Another forest product of the Guianas is balata—raw rubber from the milky sap of the bullet tree. The trees are tapped to produce a gallon per day per tree—about five pounds of balata. The sap is poured into a big wooden tray, where it gradually thickens into a tough layer that is peeled off and folded like oxhide for shipment. Balata is used in the manufacture of golf balls and machine belting, though synthetic rubber is cutting into its market.

But as the demand for rubber slows, the need for lumber increases as the other nations of the world consume their timber resources. Valuable timber covers much of the Guianas; Surinam, a country about the size of Wisconsin, is forested from the savannas which border the coastal plain south to the mountains of Brazil.

Holland buys a large part of the lumber output of its colony and the United States is another good customer, particularly for veneers. Spurred by the demands of the world's builders, the Guianas are importing northern machinery and expanding operations to answer the call for more lumber. Here in the rainy tropics may be the great timberlands of tomorrow. ★ ★ ★

Sheets of crude balata rubber are loaded into plane

