What was an old "Dirt Dauber" like me doing in a Civil Engineering course? All around me sat those slide-rule types awaiting the first equation to be uttered by the professor. Those were my first thoughts as I joined Purdue's Professor Robert Miles' course in Photo Interpretation for Engineering Uses. Much to my surprise and delight the Professor came to talk about soils and how to use aerial photos to help identify them.

For the next sixteen weeks we spent four hours a week pouring over stereo pairs from all over the world. From Alaska to Africa with a generous sprinkling of mid-west USA photos, we gazed in 3-D wonder at the regional landform of our planet.

We talked about and actually used a Kelch Plotter one night. Although it was only an introduction, it is amazing what precision the science of Photogrammetry has to offer. We actually measured the height of fence posts from aerial photos!

We talked about all the different kinds of exotic remote sensing devices that are the big thing today. Each of us was given a photo made from radar images taken over the Jackson Hole country of Wyoming. Black-tail Butte, the town of Jackson, and even Jenny Lake were all there. The picture could have been made in total darkness or even through 10,000 feet of clouds! Radar is its own source of energy for "taking pictures".

The major part of the course was spent identifying landscapes and interpreting what we saw as to the type of soil material in the area. Professor Miles showed us how to analyze the terrain, classify the drainage patterns,