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Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall today announced he has appointed H. Rex Lee, veteran career specialist on American Indians and dependent peoples, as Governor of American Samoa.

Secretary Udall also announced that Air Force Maj. Eric J. Scanlan, whose family has lived in American Samoa for three generations, is returning to his home islands to be Government Secretary. The post is similar to that of a lieutenant governor.

Since 1950 Mr. Lee has been associate commissioner and deputy commissioner of the Interior Department's Bureau of Indian Affairs. From 1946 to 1950 he was assistant director of the Department's Office of Territories. During that period he played a key role in arranging the transfer of American Samoa from Navy jurisdiction to civilian administration under the Office of Territories.

The territory has a population of slightly more than 20,000. It is an underdeveloped area, and the Polynesian inhabitants face social, political and economic problems.

Secretary Udall said Mr. Lee was drafted for the Governorship because of his unique experience and long familiarity in helping to solve just such problems among dependent groups.

One of Mr. Lee's major assignments will be the preparation for the South Pacific Commission conference in American Samoa in July 1962. It will be the first time the conference, scheduled every three years, will be staged at a site under United States jurisdiction. The commission membership includes the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, France, Australia and New Zealand. It advises and assists the participating governments in promoting the economic and social welfare and advancement of the South Pacific peoples. International interest in the South Pacific is growing, and world attention will be focused on United States policies and programs in American Samoa.

Mr. Lee was born April 8, 1910, in Rigby, Idaho. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. Hyrum Lee, still live in Rigby. He attended the public schools of Jefferson County, Idaho, and received a Bachelor of Science degree in agricultural economics from the University of Idaho in 1936.

From June 1936, to July 1937, he worked as an economist with the Department of Agriculture's Resettlement Administration in Moscow, Idaho. Then he joined the University of Idaho Extension service and served a year as assistant county agent in Pocatello.

From November 1938 to June 1946, he held important posts with the War Relocation Authority, relocating Japanese Americans during World War II. His service include heading the Division of Relocation and Evacuee Property.

In 1946 he transferred to the Interior Department as assistant chief of the Office of Territories. In 1949 he was a consultant on loan to the United Nations, and spent three months traveling in the Near East, conferring with Arab and Israeli leaders to assist Arab refugees displaced by the Israeli-Arab war.

Mr. Lee married Miss Lillian Carlson of Pocatello, Idaho, in Seattle, Washington, in 1937. They have

three daughters and two sons: Sherry, 21; Dixie, 19; Linda, 18; Duane, 14, and Carlson, 11. The Lees live at Fairfax, Va. Their new home will be the Governor's quarters in Pago Pago.

Major Scanlan, a career military officer, was reared in American Samoa. He is the great grandson of a Boston Irishman who emigrated to the islands and married a Polynesian. Major Scanlan's blood quantum is about 40 percent Samoan.

He was born May 31, 1919 in New Zealand. The family returned to Samoa before his second birthday. He attended elementary school in the Territory, and began his high school education. In 1937 he moved to New York City to live with relatives and complete his education.

Maj. Scanlan entered active duty September 12, 1940, with the combat engineers of New York's Twenty-Seventh Division. The Division was shipped to Hawaii shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

In October 1942, he returned to the States to Officer Candidate School at the Engineer Center at Fort Belvoir, Va., and received his second lieutenant's commission three months later.

He returned to the Pacific Theater in November 1943, with an aviation engineer battalion. As executive officer of a combat construction company, he served in the New Guinea and Philippines operations. After V-J Day he was rotated back to New York. In May 1946, he transferred to Geiger Field, Spokane, Washington, where he spent five years in military police and counter-intelligence assignments.

In December 1951, Scanlan was transferred to Castle Air Force Base near Fresno, Calif., as assistant provost marshal of the base. A year later he was sent to Nouasseur Air Depot, near Casablanca, French Morrocco, as assistant provost marshal.

He captained a prize-winning rifle and pistol team and personally posted the highest scores in North African competition for both rifle and pistol competition.

He was promoted to provost marshal of Orly Air Base, Paris, France, in June 1955, and served there until August 1958. He won a commendation medal for smashing a black market ring in Paris.

During his tours in Africa and France he studied under the University of Maryland's overseas college program, and in 1958 completed his course at the university' s campus in College Park, Md. He was graduated summa cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts degree in military science. During all five years of enrollment, he was on the University Dean's honor list annually. General Lauris Norstad, Supreme Allied Commander of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, presented him with an outstanding scholarship certificate.

After graduation he was transferred to his present assignment as assistant provost marshal of McGuire Air Force Base near Trenton, New Jersey. He was promoted to major in December 1960.

He married Miss Marian Elizabeth Currey of St. John, New Brunswick, in 1946. They have a son, David, aged 12, and a 9-month-old daughter, Reinnette.

Scanlan, an avid outdoorsman, sails, swims, golfs, hunts and fishes