

# **The Lago Colony Legend**

**—Our Stories—  
III**

**Cover photo courtesy of A. S. MacNutt**

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## Dedication

This book, like the first, is dedicated to the thousands of multinational pioneers who arrived in Aruba as strangers. With an incredible "can-do" spirit, they came together forming a unique "Family" over the 60-plus years the Lago Refinery operated. To this day, these one-time neighbors connect across continents and around the globe through e-mail, phone calls, letters and especially Larry Riggs' *Lago Bulletin Board*, Dan Jensen's website "[www.lago-colony.com](http://www.lago-colony.com)" and the enduring *Aruba Chronicle*.

This book is especially dedicated to our father, James L Lopez, who spent 20 years gathering this information and more that we never will recover. Thanks, Pa.

## **Acknowledgements**

We wish to gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Dan Jensen, his son Paul and the website [www.lago-colony.com](http://www.lago-colony.com), without whose intervention and support this third volume of this series would not be possible. Dan has graciously allowed the use of stories submitted to his website allowing us to complete this “Our Stories” project. We wholeheartedly endorse his website and encourage you to go there for a visit: You will find a treasure trove of information from our collective “attics” that will jog long buried memories of your own.

We also thank those who took the time to submit their stories, making it possible for others to immerse themselves again, or for the first time, in that utopian life in the community we knew affectionately as Lago Colony.

We also acknowledge the invaluable assistance of Precision Printing in putting these books together and working with me, in particular, to eradicate typos and pesky passages that kept moving around between my house and the printer’s.

I apologize for the shortness of the stories. As I said before, it is a choice between finishing this project and spending 20 years like my father did chasing down people and plying them with 100 questions to jog their memories.

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# *Vignettes of The Class of '54*

Thanks to a compilation by Ray Burson

## **Richard (Beers) Alfaro**

Richard “Dick” Beers joined the class in seventh grade having come to Aruba from the Panama Canal Zone.

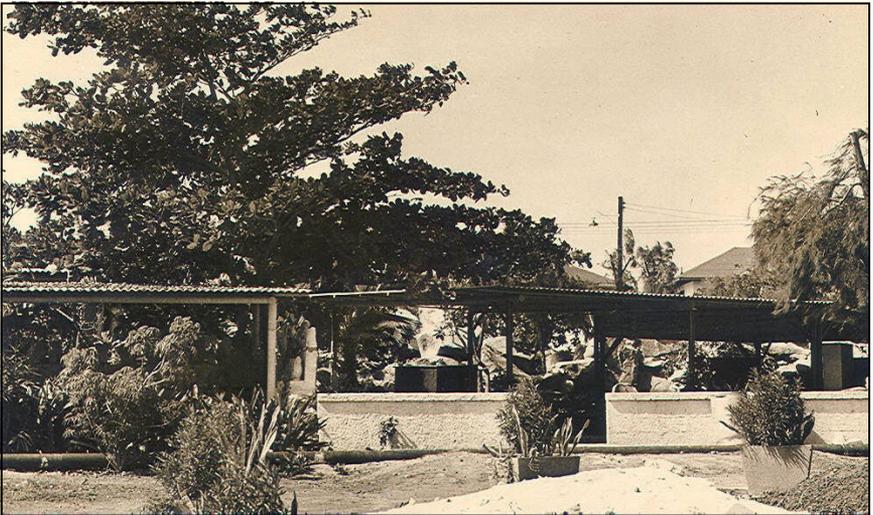
After high school he went to Notre Dame and graduated with a B.S. in Aeronautical Engineering in 1958. He then went to California where he worked in the aerospace industry. In 1972 he changed his career to computer technology and worked in Information Systems/Computer technology until 2002 when work dried up or moved overseas. His expertise is database administration and he is looking for part time work in the field as he does not want to be fully retired.

Dick has been married to his wife Carol since 1959 and they have three boys and six grandchildren, five boys and a girl. In 1979 Dick found out who his natural father was. He was able to meet him a few months before he passed away and decided, with the concurrence of the rest of the family, to change his name. Dick and Carol have been living in Colorado.



## Mary Louise Baker

Mary Baker attended the 5th grade with the class. Her father, Dr. George Baker was a physician who came to Lago with wife Dorothy and daughter Mary from Staten Island and worked on a one or two year contract. The family returned to New York in about 1950. Mary graduated from school in the U.S. and was eventually married.



Sunday School classrooms in grotto below Lago Community Church.

Photograph courtesy Don Blair.

## **David P. Barnes**

Dave came to Aruba from Tampico, Mexico in 1938. He was one of six Barnes children, the others being Mary Francis ('50), Jerry ('55), Frank ('58), Martha ('66) and Margy ('72).

Although he spent 11th grade in a stateside school, Dave came back to graduate with the class of '54. He then went on to Gettysburg College (B.A. 1958) and Penn State (B.S. in Meteorology). He married Jean in 1958 (They were later divorced). Three years in the Air Force followed and then he began a career with the National Weather Service in 1962.

Dave worked in a variety of positions with the Weather Service in the south and southeast U.S., eventually becoming Meteorologist in charge of the New Orleans Hurricane Warning and Forecast Office. He managed National Weather Service operations in Louisiana and much of the Gulf of Mexico for eight years, ('75-83). He left federal service in 1983 and went to work as chief meteorologist for New Orleans WWL-TV and Radio. He held that position until he began his deferred federal retirement in 1998.

Since 1984 Dave has also been a part-time consultant providing expert testimony for law firms and climatological studies for engineering companies in the fields of meteorology and oceanography. Dave and Hetty stay busy golfing, dancing, doing house and yard work and socializing at their local yacht club two blocks from their home in Slidell, LA. Dave has three children, David, Donald and Carla, and three grandchildren.

## **Shirley (Hewlett) Barton**

Being born in Aruba at about 10:00 am on December 31, 1935 was not only a significant time for Shirley and the Hewlett family, but it is also important in the history of the class of 1954. There were three mothers, Hewlett, Perkins and White who were due at the same time. The guys in the refinery had a pot going for the couple whose baby came closest to midnight. Shirley arrived too early and Janet was too late, but Peter Perkins appeared about two hours before midnight and the Perkins family won the pot. Shirley went on to attend Lago schools except for two years during WWII when she was in school in Texas and Louisiana.

She also took her freshman year at Our Lady of the Lake High School in San Antonio, TX. After graduation she married Bob Barton who was working for Corning Glass Co. Throughout his career they lived in New York, Delaware, North Carolina, Tennessee, New Jersey and Texas. They had three boys, Craig, Glenn and Ron Shirley and Bob were divorced in 1969. Shirley, the a single mom with custody of the children, went back to school, getting a BBA from Southwest Texas Sate University in 1979. She made a career in accounting and currently, enjoying (?) being semi-retired, has a small bookkeeping service. Shirley has five grandchildren to keep her busy, but also stays active as a chapter and district officer with Epsilon Sigma Alpha, a philanthropic sorority to which she has belonged since 1970.



# **The Charles “Chick” & Helen Berrisford Family**

Chick Berrisford was working as a carpenter for Shell Oil Company building service stations in New Jersey when he noticed a newspaper advertisement for overseas employment in Aruba. His boss thought it was a great opportunity especially since Shell was anticipating a layoff. He had no idea where Aruba was nor did it matter much, the pay was good and it would only be for 18 months. Chick hightailed it to the New York office where he filled out the necessary papers but had to lie about his age, he was not quite 21.

Within days he was on board a tanker headed for Aruba. Conditions were rough but being young and single he made do. Work with overtime kept everyone busy and made time pass quickly. He returned to the states for a year or so when the New York office called and asked if he would like to return. He returned in 1931 for a second time, I guess the smell of money was pretty strong considering the economics. He returned home at the end of his second contract with a few extra coins in his pocket. Sporting a new car, he happened upon a rather attractive lady whom he took for his wife in 1934.

Now, marriage changing his entire outlook, he decided to return to Aruba but had to lay a little ground work. Helen was told that the moon was always full and that you need only to reach out the window to pick your own banana. That clinched it. Chick left for the third time and Helen followed several months later in August 1934. They spent almost a year in various vacation housing before being assigned to bungalow #303 in 1935. Buddy was born just a month prior to their move which was just the first of the many complications that he would present.

Buddy's dad became interested in trains and he vaguely remembers a Lionel train and layout in the attic. Chick would take Buddy upstairs and use him as an excuse to play with his train (of course Buddy was not allowed near it). Sometime later Buddy's mom allowed as how the train was originally intended for him but he was deemed too young. It took a driver's license and maybe even working for Chicago Bridge before he was allowed to handle such a large and important piece of equipment. That train was under the Berrisford Christmas tree every year and to this day Christmas just isn't complete without a train under the tree.

About the last year in bungalow #303 John Pakozdi arrived in

Aruba and he and Chick built their own snipe in the garage and named it the BERPAK (BERrisford PAKozdi) which went on to win many races before being sold to probably Tom Tucker.

A sister, Ruth Ann, was born in bungalow #303 in 1939. There were complications and she had a stroke in 1940 leaving her paralyzed on the right side. She had open heart surgery in New York in 1946 which prolonged her life some 15 years. Helen spent a lot of time with Ruth Ann but still found time to serve in the community. The Berrisford's moved from #303 to #713 in 1940.<sup>1</sup> Dad had a slab poured for a patio, put a roof over it and continued this process for some 3-4 years until half the back yard was covered. We had the only house with a green painted lawn in the back yard, no mowing, just sweep.

Aruba was becoming a way of life and the colony offered a lot to choose from. Mom and Dad were members of the Golf Club, Dad played softball and bowled while Mom was active with the Community Church, Women's Club and was an avid bridge player. Dad particularly enjoyed working with the Bar B Q crew preparing for any and all the Lago Colony and Golf Club picnics. Ruth Ann was a Brownie and a Girl Scout and Buddy was in the Boy Scouts. Later he was in the Sea Scouts, developing a love for the water that he with him when upon leaving Aruba.

Buddy grew up in Bungalow #713: That was where he bought his first car with Lad Mingus, bought an Indian motorcycle and had a Cushman scooter ("souped up", it would do just under 60 mph).<sup>2</sup>

The elder Berrisford continued his interest in boats and when Buddy got interested in power boats he got into power boats also. He along with Skip Culver, Tommy Quinn, Ken Cutting and Dick Saunders decided that a dock below the cliff at Quinn's was the place. They built a substantial, two story boat dock with lockers, lifts, rails, etc and of course a party deck on the second level complete with cooler, bar and furnishings. Dad went into boating again and with the aid of Skip Culver they built two similar boats. Because there were five men involved in the dock, it was referred to as the 5th club. That didn't go over well with the women so, Quinn's Dock was less suggestive and would do just fine. Son Buddy got a lot of use and enjoyment out of that dock until 1954 when he left for college.

With one less family member, the Berrisford family moved to Bungalow #702 just up the road but within sight of the high school and bowling alley. Coming back for summer vacation it seemed to Buddy that the folks always had a new car ready for him to break-in properly (for which his Dad didn't have any great appreciation). His father really came around considering that he had whooped the daylights out of son Buddy for stealing his car while still in high school, saying Buddy would

never drive his car again.<sup>3</sup> It was during those summer and Christmas visits of Buddy's that there was talk of retirement. It was pretty apparent that this third contract was permanent. In 1960 the family moved to the new houses #1542 which over-looked the ocean and they loved it. Shortly after, Ruth Ann passed away, leaving a void in her Mom and Dad's lives. Chick retired in 1964 and settled outside Orlando in Goldenrod, Florida where they built their dream home.

Charles "Chick" Berrisford passed away in 1982 and his widow, Helen, is presently at Courtyard Gardens in Jupiter, FL only 10 minutes away from son Buddy. She is still going strong.

**Thanks to Buddy Berrisford for additional information.**

<sup>1</sup>*"This is the home I most remember," says oldest son, Buddy.*

<sup>2</sup>*My father had one of those Company two-wheeler Cushman's for awhile. It was monstrous and looked like a lot of iron capable of towing a boat it was so big.*

<sup>3</sup>*Buddy says he didn't get to drive again, including to his prom!*

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## **Robert L. “Bobby” Borbonus**

Bobby came to Aruba from Pennsylvania, entered the fourth grade and continued through the tenth grade. He graduated from Mt. St. Mary’s College in Emmitsburg, MD with a degree in business in 1958. He married Patti Pakozdi (’55) in 1959 and for the next twenty years was Director of Inventory Control for Popular Services Co., first in Rhode Island, then in New Jersey.

In September 1979 he went into business for himself in Aruba in wholesale and retail sporting goods and active sportswear. His base of operations was the Eagle Club Sport Shop with Jim Downey. Later Bob left the sporting goods business and went into the buying and selling of household goods from surplus inventories of U.S. east coast contacts to retailers in Aruba. He often split his time between the U.S. and Aruba. Bob and Patti had three children, sons Andy and Bob and daughter Kathy Loberg.

Bob experienced heart problems in his later years and died at his home in Oceanside, CA on March 9, 1996. He was preceded in death by his wife Patti who passed away on August 3, 1992. He was survived by his brother John (’53)(who later passed away) and his younger sister Kay (’56) who lives in California.



**H o o i b e r g**

## Peter Boros

Peter was in kindergarten and early grade school with the class of '54 but soon moved down to the class of '55. His father Lazlo was Hungarian and his mother Martha was from Hamburg, Germany.

He left Aruba in about the 8th grade and attended Georgia Military Academy where he roomed with former Lago students Richard Krottenauer and John Lecluse.

For his work career he became a tool and dye maker and worked for Martin Marietta in Orlando over 30 years.

He married Sarah and they had two daughters, Anita and Johanna and two grandchildren. They divorced after 30 years of marriage. Peter subsequently married Evanier. He lived in Winter Park, FL, outside of Orlando, near his mother's house. Years ago Peter told his classmate Bruce Keesler ('55) that he worked in the machine industry and led a very quiet life, going to work and coming home and watching TV. He died suddenly of a heart attack on June 22, 1995 at age 59, not long after his mother had passed away.



Charlie Drew aboard his boat *Patsy*, 1930's

Photograph courtesy Don Blair.

## **Russell D. Brook**

Born in Aruba, Russell would have been with the class of '53 had it not been for WWII. The family went back to the U.S after the February 1942 submarine attack on Lago Refinery because Russell's dad "Chief" Brook wanted to enlist. He was unsuccessful and went back to Aruba to resume his position as Chief of Police. The family stayed behind in Shreveport, Louisiana and Russell lost school time.

After high school Russell went into the Army and became a radar repairman with the signal corps. As a radar technician he participated in the last U.S. above ground nuclear bomb test in Nevada.

He then settled in San Francisco. When he was 27, he married Adele and they had two children, Kimberly Adele and Russell David. Russell later obtained an AA degree in electronic technology and worked several years for Federal Electric.

While with Federal he was contracted to NASA for the Apollo 10 and 11 missions. This took him to Goddard Space Center and Vandenberg AFB. He was in the Pacific aboard the USNS Huntsville for the Apollo 11 re-entry.

When there were layoffs in the electronics industry Russell would find other work. He was a bank manager, an undercover agent, and worked in a department store and once for the census bureau. He even had a stint as an ordinary seaman in 1963 aboard the Esso tanker "Hawaiian Standard." He worked 13 years with the National Semiconductor company before retiring at last early in 2003.

# **Ray H. Burson**

The day after Ray was born his dad left New Jersey on an oil tanker for Aruba and he and his mother soon followed. Ray graduated from Rutgers University with a BA degree in Journalism in 1958, and then from University of Missouri with an MA degree in English in 1960.

He met his wife Ruth in graduate school and they were married in Cali, Colombia in 1960. Ray taught and directed English courses in the Colombian-American cultural center in Cali for two years.

He did similar work teaching on a USAF contract at the Turkish Air Force Academy in Izmir. From 1964-65 he taught English at Brevard Junior College in North Carolina.

He then began his Foreign Service career with U.S. Information Agency cultural center programs in Colombia, Paraguay, Bolivia and Costa Rica. That was followed by a Washington assignment and again service overseas as Press Attaché and spokesman at American Embassies in Madrid and Copenhagen.

From 1987 to 1991 he directed the USIA office of Foreign Media Reaction providing daily world press summaries for the President, Secretary of State and their senior staffs. His last assignment was Press Attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Canberra, Australia, 1991-94.

Now retired, Ray and Ruth live in Doniphan, MO and work with the local historical society, museum and library when they are not looking after the family farm. They have two children, Matt and Joyce, and one granddaughter.

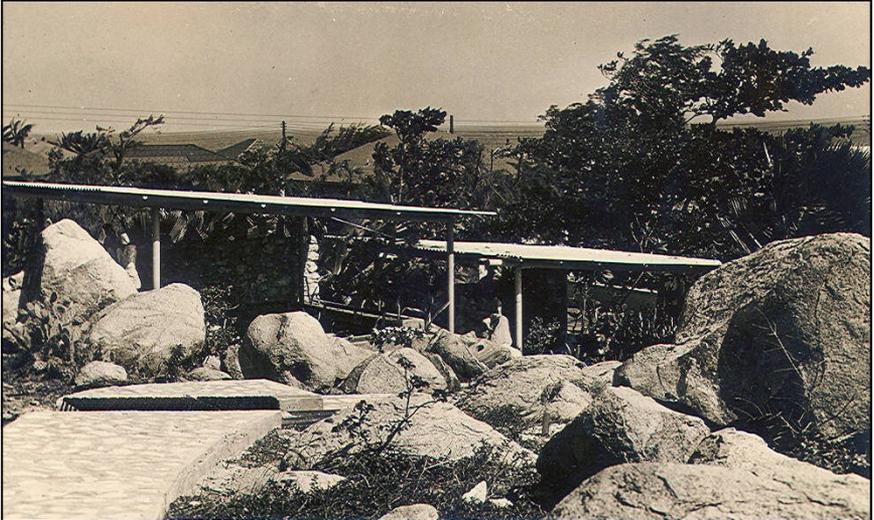


## **Kay (Norris) Carlin**

Born in Aruba, Kay was with the class of '54 through graduation. She went on to Duke University and received a B.A. in 1958. She had a career as an art teacher in junior and senior high schools in the San Diego, CA area.

In 1961 she married Larry Carlin in Aruba and they had three daughters, Kari Lynn, Tari Elizabeth and Keli Ann. When her kids were in school she went back to teaching and got a masters degree the same year her middle daughter got her B.A.

The Carlin's have nine grandchildren. Kay retired in 1996 but still works on an occasional basis at the high school from which she retired. Larry is also retired and both keep busy with gardening, working out at a local fitness center, family camping excursions, and occasional back-packing and other creative endeavors. Kay still finds some time for drawing and painting.



The steps down to the Sunday School classrooms in the grotto below the church. Date unknown.

Photograph courtesy Don Blair.

## Sharon Ann Carroll

Sharon left Wyoming for Aruba in 1943 and entered third grade. She was the fourth child, having three older brothers. Upon graduation she attended Barry College in Miami, FL and graduated in 1958 with a bachelor's degree in education.

She then joined the Dominican Order and became a nun. She taught for 37 years at the grade school level in schools throughout the United States, mainly in the southwest. Her last assignment, along with another nun, was to build a school in Salt Lake City. This they accomplished, and when she went to live her remaining years in Grand Junction, CO she left behind a beautiful school that had grades from kindergarten to the 7th grade.

It was in Salt Lake City that Sharon discovered she had cancer which plagued her for 15 years, the last five in Grand Junction where she passed away on June 4, 2001. She is survived by her older brothers Warren ('50), Joe ('51) and Neil ('55).



Fred Quiram sacked out in BQ 4, 1938.

Photograph courtesy Don Blair.

## Valerie Chandler

Born in England, Valerie came to Aruba before she was of school age. Her father was with the lake tanker fleet. She was with the class through the eighth grade and then her family moved back to England. Valerie was a cousin of classmate Jennifer Potts.



Lago Post Office call - 1938

Photograph courtesy Don Blair.

## Jean (Wubbold) Conte

“Beaner” Wubbold came from Virginia to Aruba in 1948 and attended school through the 7th grade. Her father was manager of the Esso Club and the family was in Aruba off and on between 1948 and 1952. Her brother Joe was in the class of ‘52.

After leaving Aruba she lived in Germany as a bride and later in northern Virginia. She and her husband Pat raised three boys and two girls and by 1993 had eight grandchildren. She lives in Vienna, VA and for many years worked as an RN at Fairfax Hospital specializing in gastroenterology.



Lago Dining Hall - 1938

Photograph courtesy Don Blair.

## **Miriam (Forbes) Csacek**

She was in grade school with the class of '54. Her parents were Oliver and Hazel and the family was from Wyoming. Her brother Forrest graduated in the class of 1945, her brother, Milton, was in the class of '48 and sister, Esther, was in the class of '55.



John Dascanio, Gene Williams and Bob Dascanio in area between lagoons.

Photo courtesy of Gene Williams.

## John Dascanio

John came to Aruba from New Jersey before he was of school age and left after 10th grade when his father went to Venezuela to establish a chemical company. He may not have completed high school in Aruba, but he made a lot of friends, including, apparently, Gene Williams.

John graduated from Georgia Tech and received a Master's degree from the University of Missouri, Kansas City. He had a career in the Army serving in the U.S., Europe, Okinawa, Korea and Vietnam. He and his wife Mary Sue had 5 children and numerous grandchildren.

After retiring at the rank of colonel in 1988 with 30 years of service, John went to work as Chief of Procurement Office, Teltara Inc., a government contractor in Scottsdale, AZ. John met Diane in 1993, following the divorce from his previous spouse, and they were married in 1995. In 2001 the couple began a two year mission with the Mormon Church in their New York City North Mission. John was the mission's fleet coordinator while Diane served as mission secretary. Their service ended in 2003 and they returned to Arizona.



The tug *Captain Rogers* upon running aground.

Photograph taken by and courtesy of Homer Waits.

## **The Featherston Twins: Richard and Robert**

The Featherston twins were born in Oklahoma but started school in Aruba. They were with the class through the 9th grade. They graduated from high school in Tulsa, OK and went into the Navy. During their Navy careers they went on USO tours with their very successful tap dancing routine. They were living together in Palm Springs, CA in 2001 but have since moved, leaving no forwarding address.



Cunucu house. (1938)

Photograph courtesy Don Blair.

## **Marion (Bruce) Fernando**

Marion came to Aruba from Scotland while still a pre-schooler. She graduated with the class of '54 and attended Duke University where she roomed with classmate Kay Norris. She received her B.A. from Duke in 1958 and a year later obtained an M.A.T. from Yeshiva University in New York. Her student teaching assignment was in the Bowery with a class full of street smart kids who, instead of eating her alive, were charmed by her gentle nature, her British accent and her beautiful eyes, making sure she was always treated with utmost respect.

She then taught English for a brief time in a public school in Florida but left to join her parents in Peterhead, Scotland. She had a short stint teaching in Scottish public schools but soon took a position teaching English to business majors in a private community college, which later included some administrative details.

Marion was diagnosed with terminal cancer in 1986 and died on April 16, 1987 at age 51.



Bachelor Quarters No. 4. (1938)

Photograph courtesy Don Blair.

## Robert Frye

Bob came from Tulsa, OK and was with the class in grades nine through eleven. Being the tallest boy in class, he played center on the basketball team. He then went back to the U.S. and graduated from Blackwell, OK high school. He is believed to be living in Perry, OK. .



The T-docks at Rodger's Beach, early 1940's.

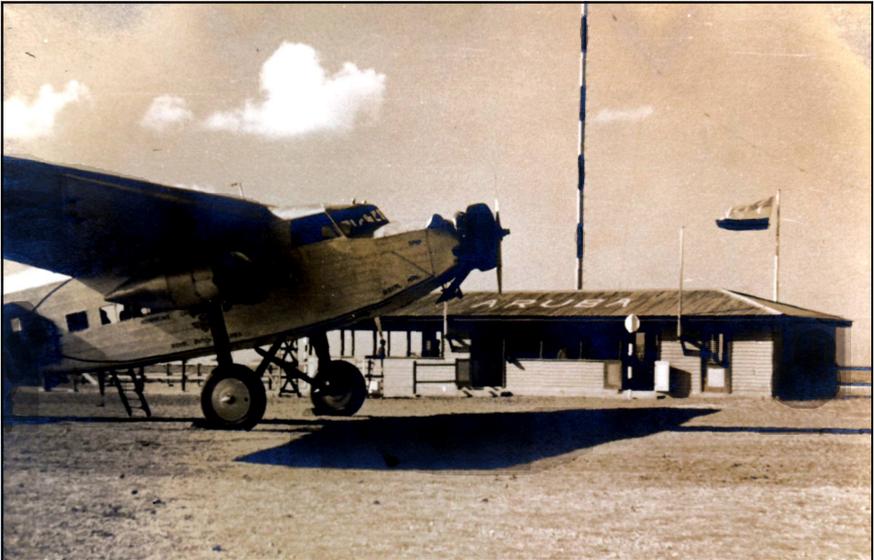
Photograph courtesy the Paria Allen Kent collection. Source unknown.

## **Robert Frank Gladman**

Bob came to Aruba from South Dakota at pre-school age and stayed through high school. He attended Oklahoma State University and received a BS in Marketing in 1959. He then went in the Navy and after his service he spent 12 years as a manager for Household Finance Corp. before going to work as a stockbroker for Dean Witter Reynolds in California.

During that time he married and had two children, Bryon and Heather and was divorced. He had custody of his children and in 1980 he married Nan Edge Ryman and moved as stock broker for Dean Witter to Sugarland, Texas. There were many commutes in to Houston. He has two children and two grandsons.

After divorcing Nan, Bob moved to Houston, TX where he continued to work as a stockbroker. He died of cancer there on Jan. 31, 1994 and was survived by his sister Shirley ('51), the two children and the two grandchildren.



KLM Fokker three-engine plane at Aruba airport (early 1940's). This is similar to the one Homer Waits came on in 1946.

**Photograph courtesy the Paria Allen Kent collection.**

## Donald Greene

Don was born in Aruba and stayed with the class through 8th grade. He then went to prep school in the U.S., was in the Army and in college in Boston and Arizona and received a B.A. in government, economics and math from the University of Arizona in 1963.

He married Evelyn in 1964 and they have a son, David, who lives in Albany. From 1963 to 1976, Don worked as a computer programmer in Albany, NY. He was also experimenting with small farming in Saratoga County, NY from 1968-73.

As for life after that, Don makes the following observation: “I think perhaps time ended in the late ‘70s, someplace around the attainment of age 40. I’ve trudged up some six or eight hundred mountains since then, apparently looking for something or other but arranging never to find it.” The Greene's currently live in North Creek, N.Y.

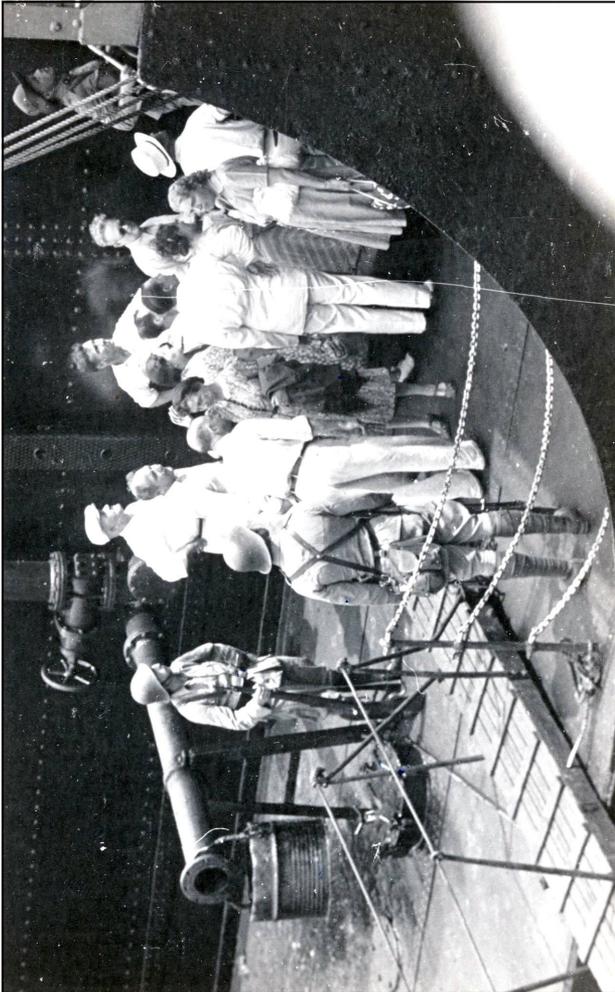


Aloe farm harvest & production, early 1940's.

Photograph courtesy the Paria Allen Kent collection. Source unknown.

## Beverly (Couch) Hamilton

Evelyn and Irby Couch came to Aruba in 1929 and stayed until 1942. Son Jack and daughter Beverly were born in Aruba, but Beverly, born in 1936 was only there long enough to attend first grade with the class of '54. Currently she lives in Sedona, AZ with her spouse Ulf.



Picture of German nationals boarding the ship *s/s Bachaquero* at the Lake Tanker dock during World War II. They were on their way to internment camp on Bonaire.

Photograph courtesy Paula (Morgan) Young, believed taken by Dick Saunders.

## **Julia (Judy Ballard) Johnson**

Born in Aruba, she was a classmate through the eighth grade. She left Aruba in 1950 and finished high school at Tudor Hall, Indianapolis, IN in 1954.

She then attended a business college in Evansville, IN and afterwards worked for two years with various companies in Caracas, Venezuela where she roomed with Xenia Schwartz ('51).

In 1962 she moved to New York and worked for American Home Products and several advertising agencies. Her spare time was spent with volunteer work at the New York Foundling Hospital and the New York School for the Deaf.

In 1965 she married Doug Johnson who was a Senior Vice President of McCann-Erickson, a world-wide advertising agency. In 1979 they moved to Indianapolis where Doug taught in the School of Business at Indiana University and wrote magazine articles.

After retirement Doug continued to write for "Indiana Business Magazine" and "Sporting Classics Magazine." Judy does volunteer work with her Neighborhood Ministry, Bible study groups and a Sunday school class.

## **Elna (Harris) King**

Born in Aruba, Elna attended Lago until the 8th grade when she went off to boarding school at St. Martin's Hall, Our Lady of the Lake, San Antonio, TX. She returned to Lago for the first semester of the 10th grade, but her father then retired.

The family moved to Corpus Christi, TX where Elna graduated from W.B. Ray High School. She married right out of high school and had four children, three boys and a girl. One child was killed in an automobile accident in 1975. Two of the children are chemists and the other one is an electrical engineer. She has three grandchildren, one girl and two boys. She is currently divorced.

Elna has an undergraduate degree in Computer Information Systems and an MBA with a specialty in computers. She was employed as a Computer Specialist for the HQ U.S. Army Medical Command, Fort Sam Houston, Texas in the Operations Directorate and retired at the end of 2003.



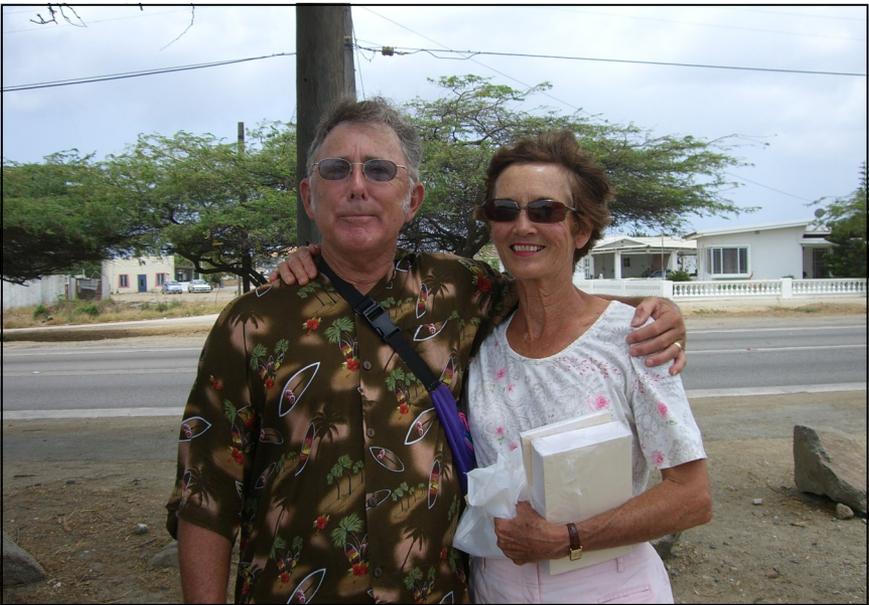
Tri-Motor plane taking off from Aruba.

Photograph courtesy of J L Lopez family.

## Nancy Koopman

Born in Aruba, Nancy went to Florida after graduation and after college was working there for KLM at the Miami airport in 1960. She later married Gerry Krullaars, had two children, Michele and Kevin, and lived with her family in Aruba for 8 years until 1970 when she moved with her children to Brielle in the southern part of Holland and at some point was divorced. She spent a number of years looking after her mother who passed away not long ago. Her sister Loesje (\*56) lived nearby at that time. Nancy did charity work with the Old Age Peoples Home, looked after four grandchildren and enjoyed biking, tennis and squash. <sup>1</sup>

*<sup>1</sup>Nancy has passed away since this was written... Loesje now lives in Aruba. See picture of her and me taken in Aruba in June of 2006. She used to be my babysitter when I was little. At the time of the picture, I hadn't seen her in over 50 years.*



Vic Lopez & Lulu Koopman, June 21, 2006.

Photo courtesy Vic Lopez.

## **John Lecluse**

Born in Aruba, John was with the class in grade school, but at one point his parents sent him off to boarding school in Holland and then to Georgia Military Academy. There he roomed with former Lago students Richard Krottenauer ('55) and Peter Boros.

He then attended Georgetown University and met his wife, Rosemary, a Registered Nurse. They were married in 1960 and had four children, Johnny, Michael, Tim and Jacqueline.

John first worked for a brokerage company and then for a management consultant firm. He was next employed by Monroe Calculators and in 1968 was sent to their subsidiary in the Netherlands. After Monroe was taken over by Litton Industries, John moved over to Wang Computers. He set up their operations in the Netherlands, United Kingdom and the Middle East.

John then opened his own import-export business in computers and telecom equipment. He became ill in 1988 and had major surgery which brought about retirement at age 52.

Since 1996, he and his wife Rosemary spend their summers in the Netherlands visiting their children and five grand-children and the winters at their condo in Florida where they enjoy playing golf, tennis and going to the beach.

## **Nancy MacEachern**

Her family ties to Aruba go back further than anybody's. Her grandfather on her mother's side, George Hopkins, was a doctor for the Dutch government as early as 1909 and is credited with bringing the first automobile to Aruba in 1915.

Born in Aruba, Nancy left during grade school as her father was assigned first to New York and then to Creole in Venezuela. The family, which also included older brother Don ('50) and younger sister Vivian ('55), returned to Aruba in 1948 and Nancy attended seventh through 9th grades. She finished high school in the U.S.A.

She attended the University of Miami and South Dade Community College, both in Florida. In 1956 she was back in Aruba working with the new government hotel and in the export-import business. She then spent a year living in Holland and learning Dutch before coming back to join the staff at the Aruba Caribbean Hotel/Casino.

In 1964 she married into one of the old Aruban families (Henriquez) and lived four years in the States while her husband was with an electrical construction company. They had a son, Hanslee.

They were separated in 1972 and later divorced. Nancy went with her son to California and worked in real estate and attended Santa Monica College. From 1984 to '87 she was at Stanford (where her son had a scholarship) and wore three hats, anxious parent, brain crushed student and tired employee of the university. The windy '90s drove her back to Aruba where remodeling the family house has kept her busy. Nancy's unfinished masterpiece keeps her in hardware stores, painting walls and getting to the beach only once a month. A visit to California every few months keeps her half sane.

## **Aileen (McReynolds) McAdams**

Aileen was a Lago student for a time in elementary school (recorded in 5th grade) and then again in senior high school and graduated with the class. She then went to Western College for Women in Oxford, OH and received an M.A. in Home Economics in 1958.

After graduation Aileen worked as a buyer in one of Cincinnati's department stores and later was a research analyst and became an executive in 1967.

She married Jim McAdams in December 1970 and they spent their honeymoon in Vail, CO. In June 1974 she was operated on for cancer and on May 3, 1976 she died at University Hospital in Columbus, OH.

Aileen's mother, Lotje, was Lago High School secretary in 1954 and later wrote this about her daughter: "I would like to say that in Aileen's short life time, she never gave us any cause for sorrow. After she stopped work and was married, she and I had some great times together. We would shop and visit antique stores and interior decorator stores (her joy) or go to garden shows, while Jim was at his office. We were really like good friends or sisters. To Mac, she was his joy. She was a lot like him, I think." Aileen and Mac are buried in Worthington.



## **Odis “Lad” Mingus**

Born in Florida, Lad came to Aruba at a pre-school age. After graduation he went to the University of Texas and received a bachelor's degree in 1958.

He then was a U.S. Navy pilot for four years, ending his tour in Spain. After studying at the University of Madrid he went to California and worked for Bank of America in San Francisco until 1967.

He then returned to the University of Texas for law school and graduated in 1969. In 1973 he moved to St. Croix, VI with wife Ann (Nixon '57) and her daughter Shannon. They lived across the street from Danny Jensen ('58) and Lad and Danny started a hardware store together.

Lad left to become an Assistant Attorney General for the Virgin Islands. He was a prosecutor for two years and then entered private practice.

In 1983 he sold the practice and began working as a financial consultant for Merrill Lynch. He started practicing law again in 1990 and was a trial attorney until he retired in December 2001.

In 1974 Lad and Ann divorced and he married Mary Cavanaugh in 1976. They adopted two Korean babies, Mia and Marisa, in 1980 and 1982 respectively. In January 2002 the couple separated and filed for divorce and Lad left St. Croix for Texas where he went through mediation training. Since then he has been mediating cases. He was subsequently married to Nan (Edge) Ryman.

## **Arthur “Clyde” Miller**

Clyde was born in the “old” Lago Hospital on February 1, 1936 and attended Lago Community School with the class of ‘54 up through the seventh grade and then was with the class of ‘55. Some early schooling, however, was in the U.S, due to WWII. When Gladys Miller was expecting her second child she and Clyde sailed from Aruba on June 18, 1941. With U-boats roaming the Caribbean, it was almost two years before they were able to return to the island.

In December 1954 Bill Miller retired and the family moved to Santos, Brazil where Bill worked for Hydrocarbon Research Co. for the next two years. During that time Clyde taught Conversational English in a local English language school.

The family returned to Baytown, TX in 1956 and Clyde went to work as an Instrument Electrician for Brown & Root and eventually retired from the company.

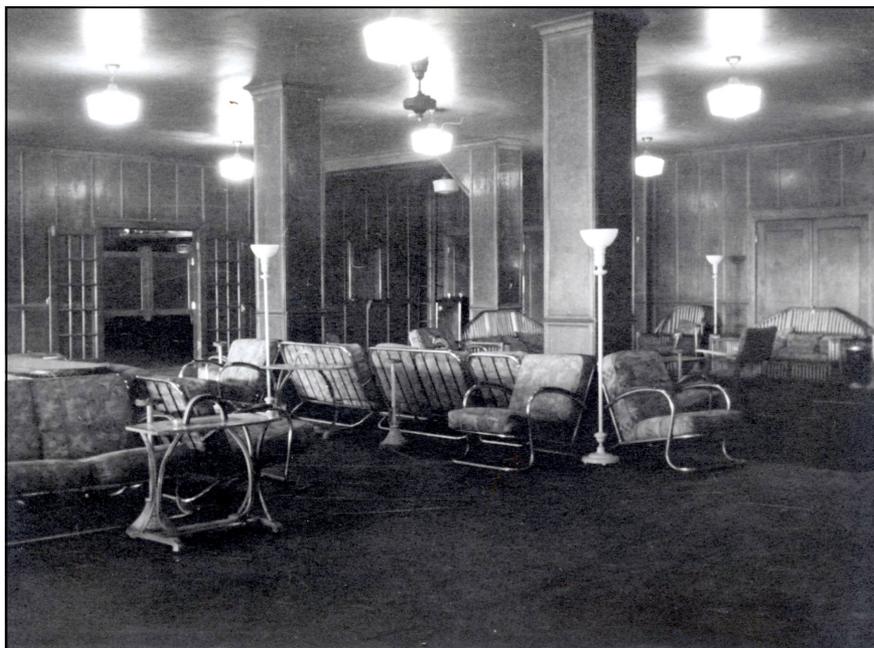
Clyde passed away on December 5, 2001 at a healthcare facility in Spring, TX after having a stroke. He is survived by his sister Billie Sue (‘59), two sons, William Neal and Arthur Clyde Jr., and four grandsons, all of Houston, TX.



## William W. “Billy” Moore

He came from Texas and joined the class in the fourth grade. After Aruba he spent his life as a commercial painter working in various states including nine years on the Palos Verde nuclear reactor in Arizona.

In 1979 he hosted a reunion for the class of ‘54 in Flagstaff, AZ. He was estranged from his family for a number of years and passed away in a hospital in North Carolina on July 17, 2000. His wife Donna, whom he met when she was a nurse at Lago Hospital, and son William Jr. reside in Phoenix. Bill also had a daughter named Candida. An older brother, Bob (‘48), lives in the San Diego area.



Lobby of the Esso Club, early 1940's.

Photograph courtesy the Paria Allen Kent collection. Source unknown.

## Stanley M. Norcom

He came to Aruba in time to enter the second grade. His older brother Bob was in the class of '52 and his younger brother Warren was with the class of '56.

After graduation he attended Oklahoma State University and received a B.S. in Geology in 1958 and went to work for Sunray D-X Oil Co. in Albuquerque, NM. From 1960 until February '62 Stan was in the Army with the U.S. Corps of Engineers in Vicksburg, MS and then went back to Sunray. He stayed with them until 1969, first in Oklahoma, then in Louisiana and finally in Texas.

After his career at Sunray, he became a consulting geologist in Oklahoma City and later in Edmond. Stan and Donna Jean, an Idaho native, were married in 1979. They have three children, Glenn, Wayne and Valerie. He still does some consulting work in oil and gas exploration. His other interests are in photography, lately digital photo repair, and backpacking in the high country of Colorado.



Plane identified as probably Charlie Drew's, circa 1940

Photograph courtesy the Paria Allen Kent collection. Source unknown.

## Peter Perkins

He was born in Aruba on December 31, 1935 to Frank and Fran Perkins and returned to the states (Elizabeth, New Jersey) in about 1948 while he was still in grade school. The family spent time at Cold Spring, NY where Fran Perkins' father had a nice spacious home in the country with pool and tennis court.

At some point he was a student at Dartmouth and later MIT where Dick Greene ('52) saw him in the late 1950s. He had a younger brother, David ('56), and a sister named Wendy. He was last reported living in Texas.

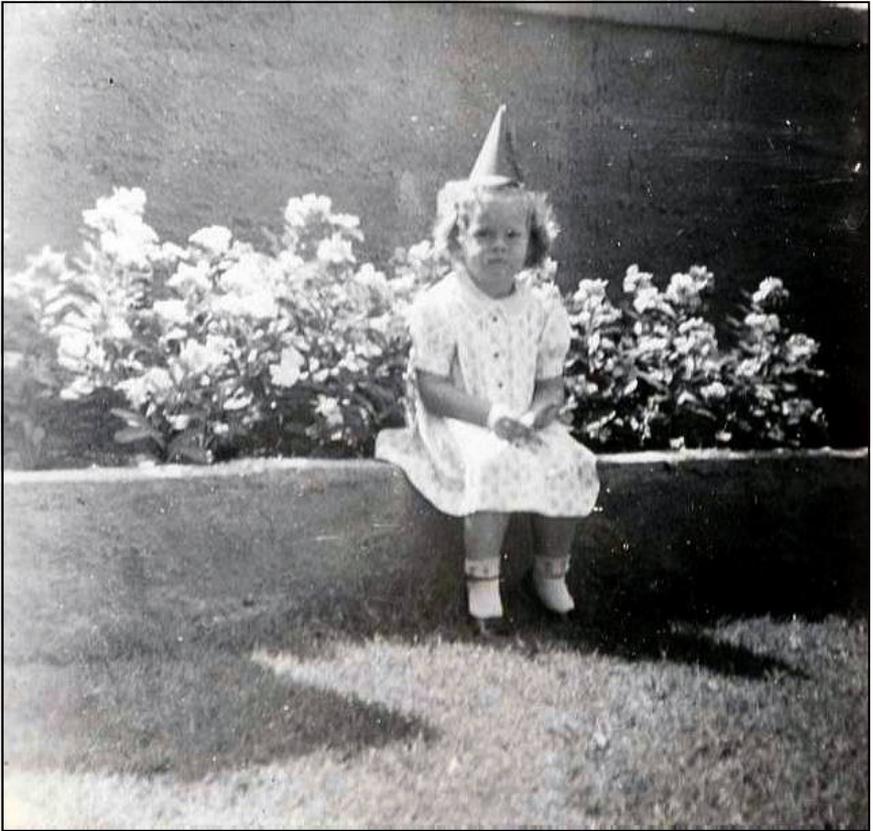


Lago Community Church, 5-corners, and Rodger's Beach view..

Photograph courtesy the Paria Allen Kent collection. Source unknown.

## Jennifer Potts

She came to Aruba from England. Her father was in the Marine Department. She was with the class in grade school, recorded as in the fifth grade, but by seventh grade she and her family had returned to England. Jennifer was a cousin of classmate Valerie Chandler.



Joan Haggerty.

Photograph courtesy the James L Lopez family. Source unknown.

## **Janet (White) Powell**

Janet's family came to Aruba in 1931 and she was born there in 1936. Although she graduated with the class of '53, Janet went through school with the class of '54 and was sixth grade valedictorian.

She graduated from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX and while there met her husband John. They were married in the Lago Community Church in 1958. They have a daughter whose daughter is their only grandchild and a son who was newly married in 2001.

John was initially a Methodist minister and later became a farmer. He was also a farm and properties manager. They have lived in Princeton, NJ since 1958.

Janet was a library assistant, and then worked with infants and toddlers for years. She moonlighted with Educational Testing Service, writing test items for the College Board and other exams and received an M. S - Ed. degree from Trenton State in the mid-80's. She's also written for children's workbooks and course manuals.

Her parents, Reuben and Betty White, left Lago for Florida in 1962 and both passed away in the 1990s. Janet's brother, Bill ('57), and his wife live in Dallas.

## James Neal Rae

Neal was born in Aruba and was in the class of '54 as a junior and also as a senior. He learned to fly at the Aruba Flying Club and soloed while still in high school. After graduation he attended Embry Riddle School of Aviation in Miami, FL and became an airplane mechanic.

He joined the U.S. Army in 1956 and was with the Army Aviation Board in a helicopter test and evaluation unit. In 1959 and 1960 he worked in Colombia as a helicopter mechanic.

In 1958 he married Mitsy Jackson and they had two sons, Scott and Carl. Neal and Mitsy spent the majority of their married years in California where Neal was a maintenance mechanic for Mattel Toys and for a time Chief Steward for the local of the United Rubber Workers Union. Neal took early retirement in 1981 and died in Casper, WY in January 1983.



School bus driver and his family (1940).

Photograph courtesy J L Lopez family. Photographer unknown.

## **Continuation:<sup>1</sup>**

### **Mitsy (Jackson) Rae**

Mitsy came from Texas in 1947 and joined the class of '54 in the fifth grade. She received B.S. and R.N. degrees from the University of Texas in 1958 and married Neal Rae.

Mitsy and Neil had two sons, Scott and Carl. They were divorced in 1979.

Mitsy remained active in nursing, working through a dialysis nurses' registry and going to a variety of hospitals in Los Angeles County. Mitsy worked in Saudi Arabia as head nurse in a dialysis unit at a hospital in Jeddah in 1992-94.

She became a grandmother in 1995 while living in California. In 1996 she moved to Cody, WY and worked at the Big Horn Dialysis Center. The following year found her at a dialysis center in a large hospital in Kearny, NE, near her son Carl and her three grandchildren.

In 1999 she took up work at a nursing home in Kearney, NE. After 44 years working as a nurse, she retired on December 30, 2001 and settled in Danbury, NE only five miles from her grandchildren: She enjoys being a "hands-on" grandma.

*<sup>1</sup>For the rest of this story, see also "The Lago Colony Legend—Our Stories-II." She may be a grandma, but she'll always be that 16 year old girl in her picture there in my mind.*

## Jim Riggs

He was a classmate in grade school but left Lago in the sixth grade and went into the Aruba Dutch school system when his parents separated. Jim has two brothers, Larry ('56) and Bob ('58).

He left the island in 1951 and graduated from a Benedictine high school in the U.S. in 1953. He later took business education courses at the Universities of Illinois and Minnesota and the University of Utrecht in Holland. From 1954 to 1957 he was in the U.S. Air Force as an Air Sea Rescue/Airborne communications specialist. Assignments included Korea and the U.S.

He married in 1955 and he and his wife Mitzi had three boys and two girls. They currently have eight grandchildren. From 1957 to 1963 he was a computer specialist with Remington Rand and worked in Europe for three years. From 1963 to 1985 he was a computer engineer with Control Data Corp. His assignments carried him to Europe and the Middle and Far East. Jim was then Central Regional Sales Manager for computer products for Dysan Corp. until 1993. From 1993 until his retirement in February 2003 he was Sales Manager, Computer Systems Division, Bell Microproducts, San Jose, CA.



Gloria Hudson, early '40's  
Photo courtesy Eveland collection.

## Phyllis “Bootsie” Rutherford

All that is available is the nickname and the fact that she was for a time a grade school member of the class of '54.



This photo and the one on page opposite show ships lined up outside the reef in 1940 before the invasion of Holland.

## Nan (Edge) Ryman

Nan came to Aruba from Texas and entered 10th grade. After graduation from Lago High she attended the University of Houston, receiving an undergraduate degree in elementary education and then a graduate degree in Guidance and Counseling.

She taught five years at Sweeny Elementary School in Sweeny, TX and then for 17 years was Sweeny High School Freshman/Senior Counselor. Nan retired in 1992 and was then a flight attendant for American Airlines for six months.

She married Norman Ryman (deceased 1972) and they had four children, Sharon, Andra, Todd and Dwayne. She was married briefly to Bob Gladman in 1980. Nan then married Lad Mingus and the couple resides in Boerne, TX.



Photograph is stitched together from two photos courtesy the Paria Allen Kent collection. The resulting photograph was split in half to fit on these two pages.

## **Pat (Eperon) Sainthouse**

Pat arrived in Aruba from England as a pre-schooler and stayed through the 11th grade.

She finished her education at a business college in England and worked as a secretary in real estate, publishing and many other fields.

She married Ian in 1958 and they have two sons, Paul and John, two granddaughters and a grandson. Pat and Ian have traveled the world on holiday, taking two African Safaris, visiting Aruba twice, the Seychelles, Tobago, Barbados and many places in the U.S. However, since the start of 2003 Pat has not been able to travel far due to arthritis in the hip.

Pat and Ian currently live in Bedfordshire, England. Pat's sister, Anne ('60), lives not far away in London.



Lago Colony in the early 1940's.

**Photograph courtesy the Paria Allen Kent collection.**

## **Nancy (Chippendale) Teagle**

Nancy came to Aruba from Massachusetts while still a pre-schooler and stayed through the ninth grade before going to school in the U.S and graduating from a prep school in New York City.

She went to Endicott College in Boston and then back to “the Big Apple” to start a career. She spent 26 years in all kinds of jobs: Retail, manufacturing, architectural consulting (mainly doing personnel work).

After a brief marriage in 1958, Nancy remained single until 1982. This time it was to a former Lago student, Lenny Teagle ('49). They took a three-month around the world honeymoon trip and then retired to Lake San Marcos, CA.

The couple came out of retirement in 1987 to create INSTAsign, a commercial sign shop. Nancy and Lenny retired again in 1999 and have since traveled extensively, including China, South Africa (twice as they won business class plane tickets for the second trip), most of Western Europe, Tahiti and the U.S., including Hawaii and Alaska.



**H o o i b e r g**

## **Francoise (Mertens) Van der Kerchow**

Francoise was in grade school with the class as recorded in the 1946 “Ink Spots”, but at some point went back to Europe and lived in Belgium. In the late 1950s she married and went to live in the Belgian Congo. Her parents were Theresa “Kikerie” and Antoine Mertens. She also has a younger sister named Jacqueline.



Sketch of B W “Bernie” Furstenuau by M. John ten Houte de Lange

From April 1950 issue *The I. S. A. Bulletin*.

## **Dirk van der Linden**

Dirk, born July 19, 1936 in Dubbeldam, Netherlands, came to Aruba in 1938. The van der Lindens first lived in Lago Heights, then moved into the Colony, Bungalow #132 on the “five corners.”

He was an outstanding tennis player in high school and played in college. He attended Alabama and LSU before finishing his studies at the University of California. There he met his wife Ginger, a California native born on the Stanford campus where her dad was head of the classics department. They have two children, Jon Victor and Katrina.

Although Dirk worked as a psychologist at various teaching and research jobs, tennis was Dirk’s true vocation. He was a college men’s tennis coach and country club director/head teaching pro. The sport has allowed him to live and coach top tennis talent many years in such diverse locations as San Francisco, Paris, Vienna, Amsterdam, Munich and other cities.

Foreign languages have been a recent passion for Dirk and he has done some language studying, teaching and translating. Currently the van der Lindens are living in Berlin but they come back to the U.S. frequently to visit their children, two granddaughters and a grandson in the San Francisco area and Dirk’s sister, Cisca (’57), who lives in Florida.



## **John P. "Jack" Wiley**

He arrived in Aruba in 1946 in time for the fourth grade and stayed through the eighth grade. His family, including younger sisters Henrietta "Sis" ('56) and Adelaide "Dumpsy" ('58), then went back to the U.S. where he graduated from high school.

He received a B.S. degree in Political Science from Fordham University in 1958 and soon embarked on a career in journalism. He worked on a local paper first, and then a weekly and later went with the UPI wire service. Jack then went into magazine writing with "Physics Today", "Natural History" and "FDA Consumer."

In the early 1970s he began writing for "Smithsonian Magazine" and eventually was on the editorial board. His column, "Phenomena, Notes and Comments" became standard fare in the Smithsonian Magazine's monthly editions.

In 1961 Jack married Barbara and they had four children, John F., Peter C., Catherine Anne and James P. They were later divorced.

Jack retired after 42 years on newspapers and magazines and while his "health was not so hot," he loved the classic role of spoiling grandchildren. He spent time at minor league baseball games and around the water on Chesapeake Bay (no spear fishing).

Jack Wiley passed away on February 22, 2004. He had had several heart attacks over a long period of time.



## **Continuation:<sup>1</sup>**

### **Dr. Eugene Williams**

Although he was only in the class the last half of the fourth and all of the fifth grades, Eugene has fond memories of that time and he and his wife Beverly have been to many Aruba reunions. His father was a doctor at the Lago Community Hospital in 1946 and '47. Gene attended sixth and seventh grades in San Jose and Glendale, CA, spent 8th and 9th grades at Campus High School, Kalamazoo, MI, 10th and 11th grades at South Lake High School, St. Clair Shores, MI and graduated from Mackenzie High School in Detroit, MI.

He graduated from the University of Michigan with a B.S. in 1958 and an M.D. in 1962. Following that he interned at Harper Hospital in Detroit.

He spent 1963-66 as a Captain in the U.S. Army Medical Corps in Germany. He next did his residency in internal medicine at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit. He was a staff physician at the hospital from 1969-71 and then entered private practice in Dearborn, MI for eight years.

In 1979 he went back on the staff of Ford Hospital as a primary care internist in their satellite clinic, "Fairlane Clinic" in Dearborn. He married Beverly Sharon in 1958 and they have two sons, Eugene II and Laurence and four grandsons and one granddaughter.

Beverly suffered a severe stroke in March 2002 which affected her right arm and leg and ability to speak and, to some extent, to comprehend. She has recovered the use of her right leg so that she can walk with a cane and some ability to speak but is still impaired.

<sup>1</sup>*For the rest of this story, see also "The Lago Colony Legend—Our Stories-II."*-----

## Pat Woodrow

The only information currently available on Pat, according to Ray Burson, is that she attended the fifth grade in Aruba with the class of '54.



Ray Burson, shown in this photo, says, "I am amazed that you came up with this picture! It shows the best catch I ever made, two grouper, one 20 lbs and the other 25 lbs. They were caught off Colorado Point the first time I ever went out there in the early 1950s. I was with the great adult spearfishermen, Cal Rimmer and Mike Hagendoorn. I believe I was the first Lago High kid to go off the point."

Photograph courtesy MLK collection.

# The Andy & Bess Anderson Story

Mr. and Mrs. George A. "Andy" and Bess Anderson and their two girls, Millie (15) and Loreen arrived in Aruba June of 1949 from Long Beach, California. Millie recalls that she wept all the way across the country at having to go to some rock in the middle of some water, accusing her parents of "ruining" her life."<sup>1</sup> It took about 48 hours to realize that this was the best thing that ever happened to her. They began life in Aruba at Colorado Point.<sup>2</sup> After 18 months, they moved to bungalow 613. Millie graduated in 1952. Her parents and Loreen moved to bungalow 471 and then to the New Houses, Bungalow 1533, where they lived until 1965, when her father retired. He was a machinist in M&C.

Recounted by Millie Anderson.

<sup>1</sup> *I suppose I felt the same way when I had to go away to school and we left Colombia. - During the summer when the teenage kids were home from the States, we'd go to the movies one night and have a "platter" party at someone's house the next night. Gloria Joplin, over from Aruba to visit someone, taught me how to "two step" when I was 13.*

<sup>2</sup> *They must have stayed in the Quonset huts. We stayed in them for awhile once when our bungalow was being renovated.*

# **The Jan & Henrietta van der Biest Beaujon Family Story**

As an Aruba family, and many of the Beaujon family members worked for Lago. Jan's grandfather, Captain Beaujon was very instrumental in getting the early pioneers to select Aruba for an oil trans-shipment port.

Richard Beaujon lives in Aruba and his father, J. Beaujon worked for Lago as did other members of his family.

Rudy Beaujon is another member of the family Beaujon. He worked with Dan Jensen's dad, Paul Jensen, in the Instrument Department.<sup>1</sup> He worked at Lago a long time, but left to go live in the USA. He was married to Sally McNeal Waite Funk, they have two children. Sarah Jane Logan Beaujon married to Harold Conrad Fleischer, III and living in Staunton, VA. The second child Jonathan Andrew Beaujon married Cheryl Ann Maria Barnhart, living in Rockville, MD. Rudy passed away on Feb. 12 1972.

My father's name is Jan van der Biest Beaujon. He married Henrietta Ismay B. de Veer. My father worked at Lago in the Electrical Department and left to work at to Electra (which later became Elmar). My father passed away in 1962 and mother in Jan. 2002.

Richard Johannes Beaujon (Richard's grandfather), known as Captain Beaujon, a pilot at Lago in 1927, is the man that guided Mr. John Oswald Boyd, William Clark and Robert Rodger, of the British Equatorial Oil Company, to Aruba. These three were met by Dudu Eman and John G. Eman (who were before-hand informed by Capt. Beaujon what these three English gentlemen were looking for). They had been in Curacao looking for a good place for bunkering oil tankers, but most of the good bays in Curacao were already taken by Shell and the other bays were too small. They settled on Aruba as the site.

On September 13, 1924 the first tanker, the "Inverampton," arrived with oil out of Venezuela for Lago Oil and Transport Company (they had bought out the British Equatorial Oil Company). Capt Rodger stayed in Aruba until about 1939. He was a good friend of Capt. Beaujon.

**Information supplied by Richard Beaujon.**

<sup>1</sup> Presumably, he also worked with my dad, James L. "Jimmy" Lopez.

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## **The Wim Brinkman & Family Story**

As told by Yvonne van der Putten-Brinkman

My Dad, Wim Brinkman, was locally hired and started working with Lago in March 1951. He was one of a few Dutch Marines whom after their military duty (my Dad's in Curacao) did not move back to Holland (because they had met a local girl and were already married or engaged to be married like my parents) and found work with Lago. I was born in the Lago Hospital in 1956.

He started as a Lago police man. During the years he climbed in ranks and eventually became management. That gave us "the right" to go live in the colony. This was possible for local hired management personnel since 1971/1972. So we moved from the "outside" to the "inside" and I must say "we" were very happy: Beach nearby, Esso Club with the bowling alleys and the movie theatre. You know the very nice amenities of living in the colony! "We" were my 2 brothers, my 2 sisters and me.

We moved in to bungalow 346 and lived there from 1972 till 1974 when we moved to bungalow 1531, where we lived till September 1985 when my parents left the island and moved to Holland after the closing of Lago. My Dad retired after 34 years with Lago and his last function was Safety coordinator (head of the police, fire and safety department).

I must say that it was very sad for us "kids", because we had had such a nice childhood there and our cheap vacation address wasn't there anymore! So many memories: summer-recreational program was a blast, the bowling alleys at the Esso Club were our hangout; or the soda bar or at the beach snack bar where my brother had worked in the weekends; sailing the sunfishes and playing boat tag. A few of the best times were when all the American kids came back on school vacations. No worries, only fun!

A little story: One year, during spring-break, there was a small accident with the Amstel 'beer-boat' that delivered beer to Aruba from Curacao. It had gotten engine trouble right after passing Seroe Colorado point and 'docked' the boat on the reef right behind the main-office (Indian Head). The Captain and his personnel had left the ship and it was just sitting there waiting to be unloaded. We saw our chance: with our sunfishes we sailed out and loaded them up and stocked up on beer for spring-break. The sunfishes were like submarines and sailing back from the reef you had to turn so often. We unloaded at the pier at one of the bungalows by the water, loaded the cars and stashed our loot in the

garage of one of the empty bungalows. There we shared it and everyone had a small stock. It was all very exciting for as long as we got away with it, because you can imagine that the owner of the beer would not let that happen. Quickly there was a security patrol and we were not able to 'shop' anymore. It was fun and exciting while it lasted.

We were Esso Club members so we used the facilities there and had a good time. We also were able to use the Lago Hospital. I don't have any pictures from that, but it was good to see them on Dan Jensen's [www.lago-colony.com](http://www.lago-colony.com) website and show my husband and daughter what I was always trying to explain to them. I left Aruba in 1979 to study and moved back in 1991 and am still living here. I live in Alto Vista and every time we drive 'up' to San Nicolas, towards the Colony, I feel like I am going home.

*Dan Jensen makes the following comments: I remember Mr. Brinkman when he patrolled in the Colony and I drove without a license, as I am sure did a lot of the guys my age (who probably also remember him). We were always trying to avoid him and the rest of the policemen. I know he gave me a few tickets and I ran from him a few times, past the Dog Graves and up and around Colorado Point. I really liked Yvonne's story about the "Amstel Beer Boat," sounds to me like there was always something to do in Lago Colony, even after I left.*

# The Louis Newell Crippen Story

"Louie" was born September 30, 1916 in Okmulgee, Oklahoma. In January 1936 he arrived in Aruba and joined the Instrument Department. Chairman of the Housing Committee of the Instrument Society of Aruba 1949-1950, he was a charter member of the Section.

He handled the Office Machines Section at one time and tales he tells of what happened in that part of the building makes everyone wish they were back in the good old days. Louie worked through most of the jobs in the department and in 1949 was transferred to the M & C Administration and later to the Transportation Department.

Since 1939 "Crip" has been Golf Champion of Aruba **four** times. He still thinks there is room for improvement because he took lessons this year while he was on vacation in the United States.

Somewhere in the last five or ten years "Crip" took up chicken ranching as a hobby. Every day at four o'clock he dashes out to the "farm", pets his chickens on the head, counts the eggs and the enormous amount of money that rolls in **daily**. He then uncovers that set of golf clubs that he, hides among the feed bags and sneaks over for a round of golf before dark. How he gets away with that long story he gives out about working so hard every night I surely don't know.

From an article by W. A. F. Koopman in the April 1950 issue *The I. S. A. Bulletin*.



## **The Tres Dunlap Story**

As told by Tres Dunlap

Tres Dunlap was born in Aruba on June 5, 1942. I graduated from Lago High in 1960. First I went to UNC in Chapel Hill, NC then to FSU for an MBA. Left Aruba in 1963 after my father, “Cornie” retired. Worked in Saudi Arabia for ARAMCO for 22 years. He continued his diving in the Red Sea.

Last house in colony was 1554 – near to Steve Ballard and Garth Fuller. Married Sandra F. Evans in 1964. Her father, Walter R. Evans was an engineer with Lago – not Reverend Evans. She actually worked for my father during one of the summers as his secretary. Joe Van Ogtrop and I were SCUBA instructors in the Summer Program under Jim Downey.

Started spear fishing when I was 10 years old – used straightened coat hanger shafts which were propelled from a sleeve of bamboo with inner tube tire rubber attached. Victims at the “Baby Lagoon” were usually sardines and a small black fish that populated everything (doctor fish, I think).

The largest fish I ever speared was the Jew Fish that Joe and I speared – interesting story: We were down with tanks at the very tip of the cross currents at Colorado Point in about 100+ feet of water. I saw the Jew Fish in the distance and tried to point him out to Joe, but he was so large that Joe couldn’t differentiate him from the huge boulders in the area. I finally swam over to him and shot him - all hell broke loose – he broke my spear right at the head which turned out to be very useful later. He swam into a cave where we repeatedly shot him with the headless spear until both Joe and I ran out of air. We went back to shore and retrieved new tanks and went back out to the cave, halfway expecting the Jew Fish to be gone. But, he wasn’t. In fact, he was partially floating on his side bumping the top of the cave. We shot him and hauled him into shore where we placed him on top of Downey’s jeep and paraded him around town. Wish we had saved his jaw.

Next “biggie” was a 16 pound spiny lobster – most will say I am full of it, but it was that big, and if I can find the picture, I will send it to Dan Jensen’s website later.

The dumbest thing I ever did was retrieving a spear off the Colorado Point. Ed Gruenberg and I were diving with twin steel tanks (the kind with strap-in harnesses and corrugated rubber hoses on the regulators). I shot at a snapper that was way back under a rock shelf. To get a grip on

the spear which was stuck, I had to squeeze into the crevasse. Unfortunately, my tanks were running out, and the bottom of the tanks, while sliding forward past the ceiling easily, got stuck while attempting to back out - couldn't turn - was stuck. We usually communicated with each other by rapping on our tanks with our speargun handles, and then continue to communicate with crude hand signs. I rapped for Ed to come to my rescue, but no response, and time was of the essence. I had to unstrap my harness in order to back out, all the time being worried about my air. Fortunately, I heard the "clank clank" from Ed's signal and his hands on my ankles pulling me out (Dumb! - really don't know how some of us survived).

The second dumbest thing I ever did was to string a triggerfish around my waist by running the wire through his eyes since I couldn't find his small gill splits - he latched onto my side with a very painful furry. Third - shot a huge leopard ray at the second drop-off - went for the "kill shot" which resulted in a lost speargun. I wanted to display my overall stupidity. Have thought about it many times since - what if it was a kill shot - what was I going to do with a giant leopard ray anyway.

The most captivating memory was a blacktip shark that zoomed within inches of Joe Van Ogtrop, taking a snapper that Joe speared. The snapper was thrashing between Joe's gun and his spear which was stuck in the coral. Joe was attempting to dislodge his spear at the time and did not see the shark. It happened so fast.

The most unusual fish I speared was a Tarpon - never saw one again in all the years of spearfishing in Aruba. Saw a ling once, but couldn't get near it to take a shot.

The biggest thing I saw was a hammerhead shark (again at Colorado Point). I would estimate it to be 15 ft. It just swam by and never deviated from its course, which was a good thing because towards the end of our spearfishing careers in Aruba, sharks at Colorado point were starting to take some of our fish. The interesting tactic was their coming to the surface and circling closer and closer; some even seemed to arch up and scoot in as if attacking.

## **The Frederick & Vera Eaton Story**

Fred Eaton was born in Warren, Pennsylvania, in April 1908 and spent all his years through high school in Warren. He entered Allegheny College in Meadville, PA, in September of 1924 graduating with a B.S. in Chemistry in 1928. In 1929 he began postgraduate studies at MIT and received his Master's in Chemical Engineering Practice in June 1931.

Fred was born into the oil industry (his father managed a small refinery in Warren, and the family even had a few wells on their property that didn't produce a whole lot of crude). During the tough times of the 1930's Fred had a series of jobs like dismantling an old refinery, teaching a college night course in oil refining, and operating a cracking unit at a refining company in Eldred, PA. Finally, in January of 1935, he became a caseworker for the Pennsylvania State Emergency Relief Board. He had a few interesting stories about that period in his life.

After a brief stint, again as a chemist, for Pure Oil in Illinois, he got an offer from Standard Oil of New Jersey to go to Aruba. He signed an 18-month contract and departed for Aruba as a chemist in December of 1935 at a salary of \$175 per month.

On his first "furlough" in 1937, he proposed to Vera Van Arsdale from Castile, New York (whom he had known for at least 11 years). She was a kindergarten teacher who graduated from Oberlin Kindergarten Training School at Oberlin College in Ohio. Vera and her parents sailed on a tanker from Boston at the beginning of February 1938. The tanker docked in Aruba on February 9, and Vera and Fred were married at the home of Dr. James and Katherine Reid on Feb. 10th. Their first bungalow was #212.

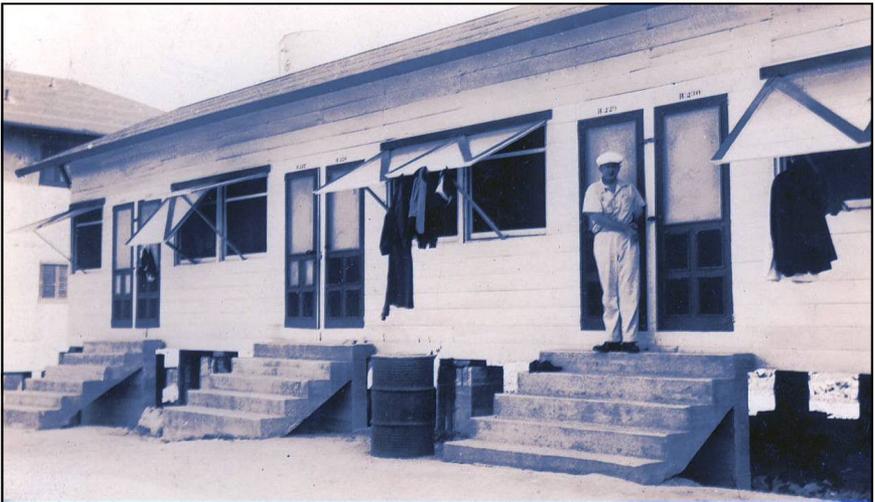
Daughter Alice was born in Aruba in May 1939, as was daughter Susan in November 1941. When the submarine attacked Aruba in February of 1942, the Eaton's were living in Bungalow #12 on the water so close to the refinery that it was eventually torn down to build Lago's second power plant. Fred always had stories about that night such as knocking out street lights, gathering at the church, and so on. In 1942, the family went on its regular vacation to the States, and Vera and the girls didn't return until late 1943. Children weren't allowed to return until the greatest danger was over.

The Eaton's moved to Bungalow #416 and remained there until Fred retired in 1964. Close neighbors were the Rosborough's, Schoonmaker's, Daly's, Chapman's, Wiley's, Roby's, and others who changed over the years.

In 1948, Fred was put in charge of the "knock" (or octane testing) lab, where he remained for ten years. At that point, he was assigned to special instrumentation, charged with researching and then installing chromatographs for chromatographic analyses.

Perhaps the Eaton's, especially Fred, are best remembered for all the extracurricular activities they enjoyed. Fred was active on the School Board, active in the church (among other things, he fixed and maintained the church organ) and, of course, he fixed radios and record players (in his garage) for many colony residents. Vera taught Sunday school and Girl Scouts. Some of you readers may remember the many Canteen dances they chaperoned.

Fred and Vera retired to Winter Haven, FL, in August 1964. In 1992, they moved to Peoria, IL, where they lived close to daughter Alice and her husband, Kyle Spitzer (also, of course, raised in Aruba). Fred died in April 1995 and Vera in July 1995.



Bob Denton at the sheepsheds, 1940.

Photograph courtesy the Paria Allen Kent collection.

# The George Echelson Family Story

Our family lived at Bungalow #146 from approx. 1954 to 1965. Mom's name was Martha and my father's name was George. They had two sons, Douglas and I (Duncan).

We lived on the same street from 1946 to 1965. Originally we lived in Bungalow #144 and moved to 146 when I was about 9 or 10. 146 had a slight view of the ocean, so it was considered a better house.

As for Bungalow #144, I mainly remember the wonderful sea grape tree. I spent many young hours climbing that tree and gorging on seagrapes.<sup>1</sup>

George Echelson, was a mechanical engineer turned automation engineer. I believe that he was involved in helping to automate the refining facilities. I have always imagined that he finally automated himself into early retirement.

Father retired somewhere around 1965-66. He worked for JG White and Kellogg, etc. after his time in Aruba. He finally retired to Dallas and died in 1984.

My mother, Martha, was involved in the Junior Esso Club for many years. In addition, she was involved in many plays in the colony. She loved to sketch, paint in oils and write poetry. Martha suffered a stroke in 1997 and died in 2001.

My brother, Doug, was a Down's child who always lived at home and was taken care of by Martha until she became unable in 1997. After a heat stroke and a number of problems with his esophagus he died in early 2000 at the age of 54.

<sup>1</sup>*I remember stuffing myself with seagrapes from a tree in the Meisenheimer's back yard when they lived next door to us. My aunt Phyllis and uncle Shep Semmens and family lived there before the Meisenheimers.*

## The Sidney George “Sid” & Annie Faunce Family Story

Sid Faunce was born in Thibodeaux, LA and in 1927 married Annie Songy of Ama (a suburb of New Orleans). He was employed with the PanAm Oil Refinery in Destrehan, LA when he accepted a more lucrative position with Standard Oil in Aruba.<sup>1</sup>

He went to Aruba in 1929 as a First Class Machinist. By 1936, when the living conditions improved in the Lago Colony, Annie joined him there. Sid resigned a couple of times in the early years and traveled back to the States, but always came back. He spent his career in the mechanical department ending as a zone foreman in Catalytic and Light Ends. The last two bungalows the Faunce family occupied were #348 and finally #351. Only one of their five children (Margie) was born in Aruba. The other four, Sidney, Patsy, Richard and Albert (Tinker) were born in New Orleans. All of his children did however grow up from infancy in Aruba. The only exception was the one year following the WWII submarine attack. Annie sailed home with the children while Sid remained in Aruba.<sup>2</sup>

Sid finally retired to New Orleans in 1957. Sid passed on in 1982 and Annie followed in 1993.

<sup>1</sup> His son recalls his dad chuckling as he recounted the fact that he beefed up his credentials to get a better position during this job transition.-----

<sup>2</sup> Mom was just telling me the Faunces lived across the alley from us when we were in Bungalow #510. She said that looking over their fence she could see some of my dad's tools in the yard. The Quiram's apparently also lived behind us there and their father put in a 6 ft. fence to keep us from throwing rocks at his girls. Mom was happy when my brothers built a fort, thinking we'd be home more. She didn't know that forts were made for attacking. She spent more time peacemaking than she intended.

# **The William E. and Roberta W. Fremgen Story**

**As told by Steve Fremgen.**

My parents were William E. Fremgen and Roberta W. Fremgen, and they arrived in Aruba in August of 1944. Both have now passed away and I do so wish that I had been able to glean more of the details before they were gone.

Their first bungalow was #212 (before I was born), near the barber shop. Later, they had moved to Bungalow #47 by the time that I was born in February of 1946. We had many Dutch neighbors, and as a toddler I began to speak Dutch much more than I spoke English, which confounded my mother (I must have done that on purpose!). My dad worked in TSD initially.<sup>1</sup>

For some reason, my father left Lago about 1949 and we moved to Brownsville, Texas (my brother Eric was born there January 1950) for a petrochemical project, but we returned to Lago in 1950. By now, since we had left, we had no bungalow and had to live in the Colorado Point apartments for a while. When Bungalow 29 became available about 1951 (dates are fuzzy, but it had to be in that time frame), we moved into that house on the lower road.

Bungalow #29 was ok when we first moved in, but with the renovations that followed, we ended up with a beautiful huge patio and large gardens, all protected with a high privacy wall. That was a tropical haven, and we loved that house. Later on, the company started to tear down all the houses in the median on the lower road, and soon we were the last house remaining. I do not know if pressure was being forced on my dad to move from there, but in 1961 we moved to Bungalow #1578, the last one out on the last row of the "New Houses". My brother Stuart was born in Oct. 1961 when we were in Bungalow #1578. In the interim, dad had moved from TSD and had been manager of the acid plant. (sulfuric acid was used as a catalyst in one step of the refining process) In 1964, dad accepted the position of manager of the Exxon affiliate Intercol, and managed the refinery in Cartagena, Colombia.

In 1966 we returned to Lago once more, but by this time I had been going away to college for a few years, and later that year I entered the USMC. In 1967 when I visited, the folks were living in Bungalow #1521 (Rosborough's old house as I remember it), and that had a view towards the little lagoon and Venezuela. Pretty gardens and location

made that house a nice place.

My folks left finally in 1968. I still have my dad's old office name plate: "Process Foreman." I know that he was instrumental in replacing 8 of the old style furnaces with the late model ones (no longer there) that Howe-Baker built in the 60s. When dad left Lago, he went to work for Howe-Baker in Tyler Texas and was a project manager for many refinery units that were built internationally. Dad passed away in Tyler in 1989. Mom passed away earlier that same year of cancer.

It is hard to look back at the wonderful years there at Lago and remember all the friends, and put so few words down which describe that time. Many friends with whom I shared all the memories are still with me frequently in my thoughts. The times out on the reefs that I spent spearfishing and scuba diving are real parts of me, and even enter into my dreams today.

We all shared life experiences that made us more than friends; we are today part of an extended family with whom we share friendships and memories. I think that is why we feel that need to seek out those who understand our own feelings about that time of our lives at Lago.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*"The old TSD list that Vicky Brown supplied shows all of the hire dates and bungalows from that time. I have a copy of that list if you would like it," advises Steve.*

<sup>2</sup>*Sounds familiar. See what my father said about Lago friendships in the front of Volume I "The Lago Colony Legend—Our Stories."*-----

## **The Gibbons Family Story**

As told by Ted Gibbons

I arrived in Aruba in 1940 after traveling to Curacao on board a passenger ship the *SS Rotorua* with my mother and sisters, Audrey and Elizabeth. We sailed from Southampton England, and didn't know if we would be able to complete our trip as the ship was torpedoed 3 days out, but didn't sink and we were able to continue our trip on one engine. Naturally the convoy we were with continued on and we continued our journey without any other ships escorting us. Arriving in Curacao we then boarded a 3 engine plane which looked like the Wright brothers had built and continued our trip to Aruba.

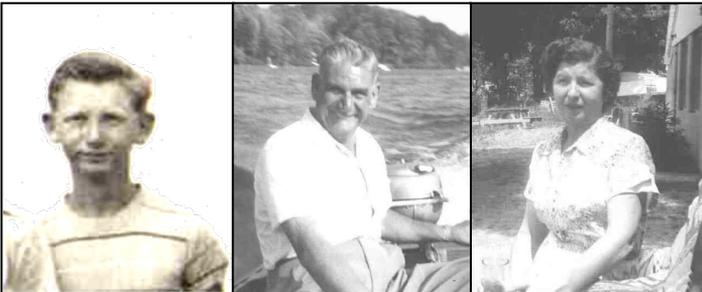
Our first house in Aruba was Bungalow #476 located on the last row of houses. Behind our house were the large white fuel storage tanks. Directly across the street from us were the Aulow's, then Walter's, and further down the street was one of my graduating classmates Johnny Hagendoorn. Just up the street from us were the Morris's, and I often bowled against Larry but can't remember what bowling team he was on, but do know he was the manager and set up the bowling teams. Our second house was just two houses up the street at Bungalow #480 with a concrete block wall all around and a large patio. It was previously occupied by the Hawthorns. From this house we made our final move to Bungalow #516 up on the hill close to the hospital.

My father was the dry-dock supervisor, and he and his crew were responsible for keeping the shuttle tankers in service. During the submarine attack when some of the tankers were torpedoed, the *Pedernales* was hit but didn't sink and floated down just off shore from Oranjestad. After the ship had burned out, my father and his crew cut the ship in two pieces, then towed the two sections to the dry-dock and rejoined them with steel plates and structural steel. The ship was then towed to the states where it was rebuilt.

I left Aruba after graduating in 1950 and my mother and father left a couple of years later as dad had a massive heart attack and had to take a medical retirement.

My sister Audrey stayed in Aruba awhile longer as she married Gene Molzer while in Aruba, and he was the manager of the New Esso Club.

I used to play a lot of golf while in Aruba and some of the best and most memorable rounds I ever played were with Bill Helwig, the Burbage twins, Bob Norcom and Al Leak.



Ted Gibbons, his father and his mother.

Photographs courtesy Ted Gibbons.

# **The Frank & Gladys Gladman Family Story**

As related by Shirley Gladman Ruff

Doesn't seem that it is possible that it has been over 40 years since the graduation of the Class of 1951. Dragging out the 1951 school annual didn't help Shirley remember which one she was in the picture until she remembered that along with Kathleen Spitz she was the tallest girl in the class.

Her father arrived in Aruba in September of 1939. Shirley, brother Bob and their mom arrived in May of 1940. As she recalls, we arrived on the Esso Aruba the same day Holland was invaded by Germany. They lived in Lago Heights until there was a vacancy in the colony and then moved to Bungalow #49. The Gladman family lived next to the Armstrong's. Later they moved to Bungalow #339 and then next door to #341 where they spent many years.

They were three days out of New York going back to Aruba on December 7, 1941. the day Pearl Harbor was bombed. Shirley can remember her father talking about the Santa Rosa (of the Grace Line) making the trip in record time. They were in Aruba for the duration of the war. Etched in Shirley's memory is the night the lake tankers were torpedoed outside the reef and all of the many torpedoed at that time.

She remembers Miss Parham in the third grade and those infernal flashcards to help us learn the multiplication tables; Miss Olson in the fourth grade; having trouble with penmanship then. She still thinks Mildred Wright was the Class of 51's 6th grade teacher. Nor will she ever forget Maude Thomas and how she made the students keep their fingernails short for typing. She made good typists of them. And then there was Miss Stadleman and all of the lines they had to memorize from the "Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner" and how she had them write the Iliad and Odyssey in modern terms.

Shirley left Aruba in 1948 and finished the last two years of high school and graduated in Springer, New Mexico where she lived with cousins. Jim (her husband, Jim Ruff) enrolled in medical school the fall of 1955. She worked at a bank while he was in school in Kirksville, Missouri. He did his internship in Lamed, Kansas and then back to New Mexico they came. Socorro to be exact and still there. Their daughter, Lauren Lee, was from there in 1961.

Brother Bob stayed with the folks in Aruba and graduated in 1954. How he loved softball. Went to Eastern New Mexico University in

Portales, New Mexico on a scholarship. Graduated with a degree in Business. Graduated June 2, married June 4, and started working at Clovis Air Force Base on June 6.

Gladys and Frank Gladman retired and moved to Amarillo in 1959. That is just 365 miles from Socorro so had lots of family visits. Shirley moved them over to Socorro in 1982 and had the horrible task of having to put them into the local nursing home. Gladys passed away in 1984. Just a little short of being 80, Frank had been physically incapacitated by a massive stroke in 1974 and he spent the last 5½ years of his life at Good Samaritan Village. He passed away Oct. 1988.

Shirley's husband, Jim Ruff, passed away very suddenly on March 5, 1987. At 56 years old, he had a massive heart attack. "Being a country doctor takes its toll and I guess I feel much cheated by life. We had talked about what we would do when he retired and what we would do on our 50th wedding anniversary. I was left with shattered dreams. I have been the director at the Socorro Senior Center since then and it has been good for me," commented Shirley.

Her daughter moved back to Socorro two years ago. She graduated from Southern Illinois University in 1985 and is graduate admissions officer at New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology here in Socorro. It is nice to have family in the same town.

## **MEMORIES**

- Do you remember the strike when they took a bunch of us out of school and we worked down in the refinery?
- Do you remember the old ESSO Club and the open air movies? That was lots of fun.



## **The Francis & “Kay” Griffin Family Story**

Francis Edward Griffin was born May 1907 and Catherine "Kay" Edwina Morrissey February 1908 in the small southern Massachusetts town of Somerset. Somerset is a bedroom community across the Taunton River from Fall River, MA and about 20 miles east of Providence, RI. Initially, commuters took the trolley and the railroad to Fall River. As cars became more affordable and roads more conducive, they were used to commute to Providence. With modern superhighways they even commute to Boston.

Frank's grandfather worked for the "railroad" and the Griffin house was only about a block and a half from the Somerset Village Station. Frank's grandfather started as a Conductor riding the trains to/from Boston daily and finally becoming a bridge-tender. He worked on the bridge over the Taunton River, about ¼ mile south of Somerset Village Station. Frank's son, Bob, didn't get to know his grandfather who passed away in 1938. Bob did get to know his Grandmother Griffin though and his Aunt Eleanor and uncles, Neal and Harry.

Kay's father was a janitor at the Somerset High School. The high school, located several blocks from his home at first, was eventually was centralized further south in town. Bob spent time with them while attending part of 5th Grade in Somerset. He also spent time with them while attending Junior and Senior High School at a Preparatory School in South Byfield, MA. Bob also spent vacations other than Christmas and summer with the Morrissey family in Somerset.

Frank and Kay Morrissey attended Somerset High School. At the same time but in different classes were Neal Griffin, Bill Egan, Tom Egan and Marjorie (Egan) Proterra. Following high school, Frank attended Wentworth Institute (similar to a Junior College today) in Boston, graduating with a 2-year degree in Chemistry. Thereafter he joined New England Oil Company in Fall River, subsequently transferring to New Haven, CT as a Chemist in the laboratory. At the same time Kay went to school at Katherine Gibbs in Fall River, earning a secretarial degree. After graduation she worked for Mount Hope Power Generation Plant in Somerset.

While in New Haven Frank learned of the opportunity to go to Aruba. New England Oil was affiliated with Standard Oil of Indiana, the

company involved in the start-up of Lago. His application was accepted and he went to Aruba in 1929. Of course, given the level of travel, communications and world knowledge existing at the time, that was like going to the edge of the world. Dad originally roomed in the Bachelor's Quarters with G. L. (Lou) MacNutt, beginning a friendship lasting until they both died in their 90's.

In 1933 or 1934 it was evident that Lago was going to last, providing Frank his best career option with the world economic situation what it was, he made the decision to return to Somerset and marry his childhood sweetheart, Catherine "Kay" Morrissey. They moved into Bungalow #126. In December of 1935, due to citizenship problems, limited hospital capability and a difficult pregnancy, Kay came back to the States to give birth to a son, Robert Griffin. His mom joking he was a pain from day one, Bob was born in August of 1936 in Truesdale Catholic Hospital, Fall River, MA. When he was about six weeks old they returned to Aruba on the *s/s J. A. Mowinkle*. A lady later described that voyage, noting that Bob was a handful. Nevertheless life progressed for the Griffin family in Aruba.

Frank had originally started in the Laboratory in Lago and then moved to the Pressure Stills. He eventually went to Light Oils and then into management moving up to Process Superintendent, then General Superintendent and finally General Manager. The upwardly mobile Griffin's moved from Bungalow #126 to #72. Finally around 1950 they moved to Bungalow #287, next door to Casa Grande. The Charles Smith family was next door in #285.

Mom was not a "club" person or "sports" person, preferring to be involved in helping many of the younger men and ladies. It seemed like there were always bachelors, teachers, service men and the like around. I remember well during the War making weekly runs to the various searchlight and gun emplacements delivering pies, cakes, cupcakes etc.

We frequently picked up Scottish, then American and finally young Dutch Marines at the Savaneta Camp after Sunday Mass and brought them back to the Colony for a swim and then a good home cooked Sunday meal. Young Bob was in seventh heaven being amongst these "soldiers".<sup>1</sup>

*<sup>1</sup> I remember a guy named Beirne we befriended and who came back for visits. Only recently I learned he was in Aruba for just two months. Fascinating that I remember him after scant exposure over 50 years ago.*

About the time that Frank decided that Lago was a viable living he enticed his old "baseball" buddies from High School to join him. Bill Egan and Bob's Uncle Neal were first followed later by Tom Egan. Marjorie Egan came down to visit and Joe Proterra fell in love and proposed. Bob remembers being the "ring boy" in that wedding in 1939.

In a similar manner Neal Griffin met and fell in love with Mary, daughter of Stuart Harrison. They too were married in Aruba but left before the War to go to the Dutch East Indies in Palembang. That tour was short lived due to the War and they returned. They left Aruba in the late 40's for Billings, Montana. After Billings, Neal was in the Belot Refinery in Havana, then in Rio de Janeiro with Esso Brasileiro and finally with Creole Petroleum in Caracas. It is believed Bill Egan and Joe Proterra and Marjorie spent almost all their careers in Aruba with Joe spending some time on short term assignments in Europe before finally retiring.

In 1959 Frank was offered the position of General Refinery Manager for the National Iranian Oil Company refinery in Abadan.<sup>2</sup>

In 1957 the premier of Iran Mossadegh (who was a radical pro-Russian person) was overthrown (supposedly with the help of our CIA) and the Shah was put on the throne. AIOC (Anglo-Iranian Oil Company) was nationalized by Mossadegh in 1952 and taken from what was to become British Petroleum.

It was again allowed to reopen (as NIOC or National Iranian Oil Company) being operated by a consortium of Western Oil Companies (IOE&PC or Iranian Oil Exploration and Producing Company). For instance, when Dad was there his boss was from Royal Dutch Shell, the production fields were headed up by a man from Texaco and in Dad's refinery his secretary was from Shell, his finance man from BP and his Administrative Assistant from Standard Oil of Ohio etc. etc. The Shah had also contractually required that all the senior IOE&PC Western Officials have an Iranian Deputy. Hence, in Frank's office there were three desks: One for him, one for his Iranian Deputy and one for a Savak (Iranian CIA/FBI) Colonel. The Savak Colonel was to "protect" Iran's assets and quite frankly keep the lid on the situation. In their front yard one could look across the Shatt al Arab River which neither the Iranians or Iraqis could decide where the line between the countries was. The Iranians claimed all the way to the Iraqi shore and vice versa. Son Bob can clearly remember staring at Iraqi howitzers that only needed the pull

*<sup>2</sup> This was the same time my father transferred from Barrancabermeja, Colombia to Agha Jari, Iran where I visited summers while attending high school Stateside.*

of a lanyard to land some darn big shells in the front yard. He visited Abadan after his last year in College and once while in the Navy.<sup>3,4</sup>

In 1962 Frank accepted a position with Esso Petroleum in London. He was Vice President and Manufacturing Director for the British affiliate of Exxon and, as such was in charge of three refineries in Fawley (Southampton), Milford Haven (Wales) and at Whitegate in Cobh, Ireland. Kay the meantime had become ill with hepatitis while in Iran and was spending a lot of time in the States.<sup>5</sup> In the meantime, son

Bob met his wife-to-be in Puerto Rico while in the Navy. They were married in San Juan in 1964 and they too moved to CT (Stamford) in August 1964 and Bob went to work for Esso International in their Tanker Department. Their first daughter, Michele, was born in Stamford and of course the grandparents went crazy.

Frank in the meantime had returned to work part-time as a Consultant for the International Executive Service Corps. This Group still exists today and is for lack of a better term the Executive Peace Corps. Frank was responsible for evaluating situations in the Middle East to determine if they were worthy of support and the sending of volunteers to assist. It involved a lot of travel but, his main interest with the interface he dealt with many Middle Eastern leaders of business and the IESC Staff itself which was headed up by Frank Pace (ex Secretary of the Army under Eisenhower) and the Chairman of IESC's Board was

<sup>3</sup> *This is what started the Iran-Iraq war: Iran seized an island in the "no-man's-land" that Iraq claimed. While the Iranians had Abadan in firing range of Iraq, the Iraqis had a similarly situated chemical plant at Bashira. We apparently sided with Sadaam Hussein against Iran in this war and subsequently with Iran when Sadaam Hussein became intolerable.*

<sup>4</sup> *Bob adds that "the Iraqi Consul General to Iran at the time Dad was there was Tariq Aziz. You may remember he was recently Deputy Prime Minister for Saddam Hussein and is being prosecuted now. He is a Christian and quite a nice person actually." We met at a Christmas Cocktail Party in 1961."*

<sup>5</sup> *Bob interjects: "She never said anything to us but, I have always suspected she knew there was something more serious wrong from maybe 1960 onwards. Nevertheless, she had convinced Dad to build a "retirement home" in Newtown, CT and then further convinced him to retire to enjoy it in 1964."*

(footnotes cont'd next page)

David Rockefeller of Chase Manhattan Bank.<sup>6</sup>

But he did not welcome retirement as a single person. Late in 1966 he called Bob in San Juan and said that he was considering going to London to try and convince a lady to become his second wife. It was a lady that both he and Kay had known while they were in London as she was a Administrative Assistant to another of Esso Petroleum's Vice Presidents. Donny and Frank were married in January of 1967. Frank's son Bob was his Best Man.

After leaving IESC Frank also did some consulting with American Independent Oil (Aminoil) which is a Kuwait Company with production

and refining capacity in Kuwait. He worked at that until finally retiring from all activities in the early 80's. In the meantime Frank and Donny had a boy in 1979, giving Bob a half brother.<sup>7</sup>

Dad finally passed away four years ago and ironically it was caused by a fall. It is a marvel all the sicknesses he had where there were only marginal medical facilities available and all the rinky dink airlines he flew on without problem only to slip on a step in a small town in NC and fall and hit his head and bleed to death because he was on blood thinners and the bleeding could not be stopped. He was well into his 90s though and had been married twice in excess of 30 years each and was happy with his life, his sons and all the good things he did for so many.

After leaving Aruba Queen Juliana of the Netherlands made him a Knight in the House of Oranje Nassau as thanks for his efforts in building employee housing in San Nicolas, work with the Seaman's Club in San Nicholas and general support of the Government of Aruba. He and Governor Do Kwartz were very close friends and remained so in retirement with each visiting the other in their respective homes in Holland and the USA.

<sup>6</sup>*Bob reports: " I got antsy in the Fall of 1965 and accepted a position back in Puerto Rico with Sea-Land Service Inc. We moved back to the island in October 1965. Mom and Dad came to visit at Christmas time and Mom had dramatically gone downhill in the three months we had been gone. She was so bad that they had to cut their stay in San Juan short and then right after January 1 the fateful call from my Dad came that I had better rush to Danbury CT if I wanted to say goodbye to Mom. Ann (my wife) and I left Michele with Ann's Mother and rushed up and barely did get our goodbyes in. It was sad for both of them and us. Mom had so wanted Dad to retire and enjoy living in comfort of the good old US of A and I think Dad had welcomed the idea too."*

(footnotes cont'd next page)

<sup>7</sup>*~~"My two daughters have an uncle younger than they are."~~ exclaims Bob.*

Some biodata by Ray Burson with additional material supplied by Robert "Bob" Griffin.

## The Ed Holland Family Arrival Story



Frank Griffin at an Aruba reunion party.

Photograph courtesy the Moritz collection.

# **The Eleanore and Eugene Holzer Family Story**

Eleanore (Ellie) A. and Eugene (Gene) Holzer arrived in Aruba on January 26, 1956. Susan Leslie was born in the Lago Hospital on December 22, 1957, and Gregory Andrew was born in the Lago Hospital on May 26, 1959. Gene was assigned to the Process Engineering group of TSD. They left Aruba in June 1962 on a transfer to Creole, New York. They returned to Aruba in November 1966. Gene was then assigned to the HDS project. They left Aruba in June 1973 on a transfer to the Benecia Refinery in California.

**From information provided by Gene Holzer**

# The Jan Koster Story

As told by Jan Koster

One evening I went to see my friend Jan de Boer. I had not been there for some time. He asked me if I had seen the ad in the paper where they were asking for tradesmen to go to work in Aruba. Jan told me that he had written. They looked up the fourteen day old paper for me and I decided that I may as well try also. However, there was one big obstacle. The application and also the resume of credentials had to be done in English. Here is where the better education of the family upstairs came in. I believe that Sis's<sup>1</sup> brother Jo did the job and it must have been a good one. Although I did not have much hope I decided I may as well start to study English. I did not have any trouble finding teachers. Everybody jumped in. The son of our family doctor gave me a book called *The White Monkey*, by John Galsworthy to read. What an optimist! However, once started I enjoyed the study and I worked hard.

A couple of weeks went by and still no word. Then, one evening when I came home, I found the family waiting with a very important looking letter. It said, in English, that I was expected to come to the employment office and meet a Mr. Shelton: He was here from New York to interview people for the job in Aruba. I tell you, I slept very little that night. When I came to the office the following morning there



Mr. Jansen received me very cordially. For a while we talked in English about my background.

Aruba Flying Club PT-19 over Lago Colony.  
Photograph courtesy J L Lopez family. Photographer unknown.

Then he turned to Dutch and went over the letters of recommendation he had received. There was one he questioned me in particular about. Yes, you guessed it---the yacht builder's: I had trained as a blacksmith and worked at a yacht works making fittings for the boats. The yacht builders were a class by themselves and had no use for us iron workers. I did not like to go to the place where we were supposed to eat our lunch and the other smiths went home for lunch. So I always stayed by my self at our place of work. One day the owner himself found me there and I was told to go and eat with the others. I told him that I could not see why, and he left it at that. But a few days later he came back. We had an argument and almost a fight. He fired me on the spot. I am telling this detail because it almost prevented me from obtaining the most important job of my life.

Mr. Jansen turned to me and asked if I was a communist. I told him I was not. I also told him that I might fly off the handle sometimes, but that if I was treated right I would give them no difficulties. He looked at me and told me to go to the company's doctor right away and then come back to him. Back in his office he told me that in fourteen days I would go to Aruba.

Well, I had to tell somebody right away. I went to see my Aunt Willy who lived in The Hague. I had dinner there and of course talked about my early days.

When I came home with the news it was received with mixed feelings, but we all realized that this would be my big opportunity. A couple of weeks of hectic preparation began. Everybody chipped in. Our family doctor who had been a ship's doctor on ships going to the tropics brought me an entire tropical outfit including a pith helmet. Later it proved to be of no use where I went, but what did I know.

## **ON THE SEA TO ARUBA**

Now the time came to say goodbye to my family and friends. It was March 7, 1933. I had decided that I did not want anybody to see me off at the train station. There I met another fellow whom I knew from going to English lessons. He was also one of the lucky ones on his way to Aruba. His name was Jan Ouwejan. Together we went to Antwerp and found the way to our ship. It was the *Ingrid Horn*, a rather small **German** ship. It was mainly a freighter, but it had first class accommodations for about twenty passengers. I am not sure now, but I believe that all my fellow passengers were also going to Aruba. We sailed that night. Jan Ouwejan and I had gotten a cabin together. We waited until the ship was underway before we got into our bunks. It had been an exciting and tiring day so we both slept well.

~~--- Leaving Antwerp, in order to reach the open sea, a ship has to go down the Schelds River and though a part of Holland. But when we~~

woke up the next morning, boy it was rough. We were both very seasick and did not even try to get up for two days. When the weather improved somewhat, we managed to wash and shave. We were hungry and after something to eat we started to feel better. Although Jan Ouwejan proved to be a rather dull person, I was kind of lucky to have him as a roommate.

Most of our fellow passengers were a rather rowdy bunch. Almost all of them had been away from Holland before. Some of them had worked in the East Indies and some of them had worked for the Shell Company in Curacao. There was a lot of heavy drinking going on and although we were tolerated, we did not belong.

When we came further south, the weather became beautiful and the ocean very calm. A kind of swimming pool was rigged up for us. It was a large wooden box lined with canvas on the inside. Every morning it was filled with seawater and in the evening it was emptied and cleaned. We had a lot of fun there. Still it was the object of an almost serious accident. One of the hard drinking fellows decided one evening that he needed to take a dip before going to bed. He had forgotten that the pool was empty and dived right in. He was a sight to see the next day. He was very lucky that he did not break his neck. More about him later.

Boy the food we got aboard that ship: All kinds of things that I had never tasted before. We all learned to say "mahlzeit."

The officers of the ship were very correct and I would say almost militaristic. I should mention that this was the time when Hitler became very powerful in Germany. One day we were invited to watch a ceremony where the German national flag came down and the so-called new flag with the swastika was hoisted. We Dutchmen did not pay much attention, but later I came to realize what a significant moment in history I had watched.

Aside from looking at the Azores from a distance, we did not see any land until we reached the West Indies, better known as The Antilles. Our first stop was to be the island of Barbados. As we were told that it would be possible to catch a shark there, I got permission from the first engineer to go down in the workshop and make a big fish hook. We obtained a large piece of rope and a hunk of meat from the cook and when we entered the harbor of Barbados we started to fish. Sorry to say nothing came of it. The sharks just were not interested. As our ship was mainly a freighter it depended on how much they had to do as to how long we could remain in port. However, we had sufficient time to have a look at an entirely new world for me of strange people, strange fruits and strange flowers. I remember that we stopped at a place where shelled coconuts were spread out in the sun over a huge area. Our next stop was Port of Spain on the island of Trinidad. I do not remember much about

it.

The next and last stop before Aruba was La Guira, Venezuela. We were told that we would be there all day. We had heard about Caracas, the capital of Venezuela. Some of us decided that we may as well go and have a look there. At that time the highway which now leads to the mile-high city did not exist. We went by a small-track railroad which wound through the tropical jungle. It was an exciting and beautiful trip. We met some colorful and interesting people, natives of the country and homey folks. They had with them live chickens, some pigs and one had a large snake in a basket. Although we could not converse with them, I remember a huge square with a statue of Simon Bolivar, the liberator of much of South America. We did not have much time before we had to go and catch the train which took us back to the harbor.

### **ARRIVAL IN ARUBA**

In the morning of the 28th we arrived in the harbor of Oranjestad, the capital of Aruba. At that time the island was still under the Dutch flag. A company representative was there to meet us. He took us to the other end of the island where the refinery of the Lago Oil and Transport Company was located.

### **HOME IS BQ**

We were shown around a bit and then taken to the bachelor quarters. At that time there were six quarters and some of us were taken to each one of them. I do not remember the number of my quarter. I was not too happy with my roommate. It was the same fellow who had dived into the empty swimming pool.

Let me tell you a little about these quarters. They were two-story buildings. There were no windows in them, just louvers and screens, so that the trade wind could blow freely through them, which made them very comfortable most of the time. Between each two rooms was a bathroom, so there were four persons to a shower. We also had washing facilities in our room.

### **THREE KINDS OF WATER**

Soon we found out that all the drinking water as far as the Company was concerned, had to be imported. Tankers with drinking water would come in and leave filled with oil. We actually had three kinds of water. There was seawater for the toilet, well water for the shower, which was not recommended for drinking, and then drinking water. There were water coolers on each floor of the bachelor quarters. There was also one faucet with fresh water outside of each quarter for washing our hair. I do not know how true it was, but we were told that using well water would make you lose your hair. As I had quite a bit of hair to lose I washed my hair in well water.

## **THE DINING HALL**

We all ate at the dining hall, which was open twenty-four hours a day. This was because the oil refinery operates continuously. It did not take us long to find out that you could go there any time of the day. The food was excellent. It was cooked by French cooks and served by Chinese. Our rooms were kept clean and our beds were made by Chinese also. We soon learned that giving them a small tip at the end of the month to those people would improve their service.

## **THE CONTRACT**

Now let me tell you about the contract I had signed with the Company. To begin with I would be paid 1.40 guilders/hr. The work week was six days of eight hours. Yes, we had to work a full day on Saturday also. After the first year of work I would get fourteen days of local leave. All this was a tremendous improvement over what I had ever received in Holland. If I did not want to stay, but could stick it out for eighteen months the company would pay my transportation back to Holland. After two years I would be granted another fourteen days vacation. At the end of three years I would get sixty days vacation plus transportation and travel time.

It sounded wonderful to me. So, on March 29, after a good breakfast I found my way to the blacksmith shop. I was the only one of the Dutchmen who would work there. Although I probably looked a little strange in my new, much too warm coveralls, I was well received by my new boss. His name was Bob Harrison and he was from Scotland. There were three more smiths, a German, an Italian and an American. To make a long story short, from the beginning I did very well. Of course in the beginning I still had my difficulties with the language. But, after all, I did not come to talk, but to work. Our helpers were all black. Sometimes the job would take as many as three helpers, and sometimes just one. We used air hammers instead of steam. These blacks were very good hammer machinists. I never had any trouble getting along with them. Pretty soon they would do anything to make my job as easy as possible. I was not boasting when I say that as far as Bob Harrison was concerned I was number one. When it was time for him to go on home furlough he recommended me to take over his job. So, way ahead of the others I became General Foreman of the Blacksmith shop.

But I soon found out that I still had a lot to learn. I had to make reports and also had to attend meetings on planning and safety. I am sure that the other fellows had some fun at the way I expressed myself. Still, all in all, I do not think I did too badly. But I was glad when Bob came back and I could go back to work again.

## **“GOVERNMENT JOBS”**

A lot of that was going on at Lago. Oh yes, the big shots were in it

also. So I was picked to do most of that kind of work. I made several nice fences and gates for the big shots and also was asked to make iron work for some grave yards. I never asked any questions because it was none of my business and I loved the work.

### **MY LIFE AWAY FROM THE JOB**

To begin with, I had made arrangements so that part of my wages would be sent to my parents. I also started a little account for myself in Holland. After we arrived we met other Dutch people who had come before us. I got acquainted with Toon Gongriep, a machinist. As we both did not like our roommates, we went to the Personnel Office together and were allowed to change and have a room together. Soon Toon and I became good friends. He was engaged and was saving his money to get married, as soon as he was assigned a bungalow in what was called The Colony. We did not have much money to spend and kept away from those who spent their money drinking and gambling. We both liked to swim and there was ample opportunity for that. Don't get the idea that all of our fellow workers were drinkers and gamblers, but there was a lot of that going on.

It did not take long for us to discover that there were two double tennis courts which were also lighted so that you could play at night. We went to the movies often and bought magazines in order to improve our English. One day we met a fellow at the tennis courts who took an interest in us and taught us how to play the game with very good results. I would have my name in the Pan Aruban, the weekly paper of our Colony, as an upcoming champ. Sorry but it did not last. Soon our main and only big expenses were to have our rackets restrung and buying new balls. There was so much salt in the air that none lasted very long.

### **OUR FELLOW WORKERS**

Although there were other nationalities present, the Americans were dominant. Lower as well as higher management were all American. For a long time there was little contact between us and the Americans. There was a reason for this. There were two different payrolls, a dollar and a guilder payroll. We started at 1.40 guilders/hr and soon were up to 1.95 guilders/hr. The dollar at that time was worth 2.50 guilders and the Americans doing the same job we did received 1.04 dollars per hour. Our wages were still below what they were making. Not going into detail, there were still a lot of other benefits going with the dollar payroll that we were not entitled to.

We did not grumble, and most of us were not even aware of the differences, but as more and more workers came from Holland, the others probably felt, and justly so, that they were there to take their jobs. I had a taste of this difficulty one day. The blacksmith shop was part of a large building where all metal crafts were under one roof. Except for the

roof, the building was open on all sides. It did not rain often in Aruba, but when it rained, it poured. That day it rained so much that the place around my anvil was in a pool of water. I looked around and found a board to stand on. No sooner had I taken it than a fellow came over and claimed that it was his board. We quarreled and he invited me to come to the lighthouse to fight it out. I did not want to back out, so I told him I would be there. I went, but he never showed up: Lucky for me, because he probably would have made mincemeat out of me. He was about twice as heavy as I was. When I went to him the next morning to tell him that I had been there he just laughed it off. He probably figured that the long walk to the lighthouse had been sufficient punishment.

I think it was sometime in 1934 that President Franklin Roosevelt decided to take the dollar off the gold standard. As far as the guilder was concerned, it went from 2.50 to 1.85 in value. Now we were making more than our fellow American Workers. The Company figured that the best way to remedy this situation was to give us a cut in wages. This met with heavy opposition, not only from the Dutch, but also from all others who were on the guilder payroll. The Dutch Government became involved. In the end we were all put on the dollar payroll. This was a big improvement because in this way we also became entitled to all other privileges. The one exception was that the Americans were granted home furlough every eighteen months and we had to stay three years.

## **ATHLETICS**

The Americans tried to get us interested in baseball, but we preferred to play soccer. We had a kind of soccer team. Alas, at the corner of the playing field there was a tavern, owned by a Dutchman. We would start with eleven men, but after half time intermission, you never knew how many would show up again.

## **MY FIRST FURLOUGH**

I went back to Holland on the Esso den Haag, an 18 day trip from Aruba to Rotterdam. I got married to Sis and returned to Aruba by way of New York, crossing the Atlantic on the "Staatendam", the flagship of the Holland-American Line. After a stay in New York City we went to Boston and caught the tanker "Drake" to Aruba.

There was somebody to meet us and we were taken to Bungalow 193. I got word that Bob Harrison had left the morning we came in, so I was expected to be on the job and take over the shop again. Not much time for me to make Sis comfortable. There was so much new for her to get accustomed to.

## **PROMOTION**

I was happy at my job and when Bob came back I went back to work. As far as I was concerned things could remain that way until I was ready to retire. But, alas, they had other plans for me. One day, not long

after Bob came back, I was called into the office and was told that I would be transferred to a supervisory position in the, of all things, Carpenter and Painting Department. My Foreman would be Mr. Turner. I had met this gentleman before in connection with a job we had to do for him. Sorry to say, but it was a question of not liking each other from the beginning. As I always have been someone who likes to work with my hands, I hated to leave my job in the first place. Mr. Turner did not make it any easier to accept my new position. From the beginning I got the idea that he would like to get rid of me as soon as possible. I was put to work checking paint gangs over a very large territory. All I had to do was sign time cards, order materials and move crews from one place to another. I could not quit. We were expecting our first baby. I decided to stick it out and at least finish my contract.

### **MR. CHIPPENDALE**

I was usually able to pick up a ride home at noon. One day I was very late, missed my ride and was walking home, when a car stopped. It was Mr. Chippendale, the head of Maintenance and Construction Department. He knew me because he talked to me once while visiting the blacksmith shop. He asked me how I was doing. I told him not so good. I told him that at the present my job consisted of seventy percent walking from one place to another. Also, although I was now a supervisor, I still had to punch a time clock. Mr. Chippendale listened, but did not say anything. A few days later Mr. Turner came to tell me that I would be allowed to use my own car on the job. Also, that I did not have to punch a time card any more and would be put on the private payroll. This was a big improvement for me.

### **OWNING A CAR**

The trouble was that as yet I had never owned a car and did not know how to drive one. With the help of a friend I went out and bought a cheap second-hand car. He also taught me how to drive. The morning of the day I had to go for my drivers' test I made a wrong move and drove the car right over a water line and into a ditch. That caused trouble for me with the Company police, and their chief was a big, cowboy like fellow who felt very important. When I told him that I was just learning and had to go for my license that afternoon, he had a good laugh. But he sent the boys to get my car out of the ditch, gave me one of his big cigars and let me go. That afternoon I got my drivers license. From then on things were better for me and I did have more time for learning. Mr. Turner did not bother with me any more, at least not for the time being.

### **RICKIE, OUR FIRST DAUGHTER**

I do not remember how long we had to wait, but we knew that we were entitled to a larger house because of the birth of Rickie. Then one day we had a very pleasant surprise. Word came that we were to move to Bungalow #251. Oh Boy, one of the choice locations in the Colony.

It was right at the seashore with a beautiful view across the lagoon and at the sea, only a few minutes away from two beautiful beaches.

The birth of Inez followed. At the beginning of World War II I was drafted into the Dutch Army in Aruba. I continued working at Lago during the day and reported to Army duty at night. I did that for one year, until Lago managed to get me excused from Army duty.

# **The Elspeth Laurenson Family Story**

**As told by Karen Clubb**

My mothers name was Elspeth Valerie Laurenson. She moved out to Aruba in 1947 at the age of 8 years old and stayed until she was 15 years old in the Colony, then returned with her mother and father to England because my Grandmother was very sick.

My Grandfather was a sea captain and worked on the oil tankers (Lake Tankers). His name was Francis (Frank) Sinclair Laurenson, a Shetland Islander by birth. My grandmother was called Esther Dale Laurenson, originally from North Sheilds in England.

My dear mother, Elspeth, died in 1993 and I only have the vaguest of memories about her stories of being a child and growing up in Aruba (I have two of her year books from Lago High, and one very precious handmade basket from Aruba). I live in Shetland - the farthest north Scottish island of the UK, and I hope to visit Aruba someday to see the island so far away that my mother knew so well and loved so much.

# The Bill & Pauline “Bud” Learned Story

In 1937 Bill and Bud (Pauline) Learned were living in Port Washington, Long Island. Bill was working for the WPA but knew there was a better life out there somewhere. He saw an ad for employment in some place called “Aruba” with Standard Oil. He followed up on it and, shortly thereafter, he went to Aruba with the family following in a few months, traveling the 13 days on a tanker.

After a few temporary houses, we settled into our first real home in Aruba, Bungalow #346. We all took to the Aruban lifestyle and enjoyed many trips around the island on weekends. Picnics on Palm Beach, driving every back road we could find, BA beach, the little lagoon, going to the top of Colorado Point to get a better look at Venezuela and so much more.

Both Bill & Bud enjoyed working with Don Schlageter on the Pan Aruban (Bud pounding away on a very old Underwood) and finding friends to play bridge with. These were the friends that became like an extended family to us. Shortly before the attack, we moved to #635, up on the hill where Bud was hoping for a glimpse of the Caribbean Sea from her living room. Following the attack, Bill stayed in Aruba while his family went to Florida on a ship to Maracaibo along with other families that

After a year, with the return of the Tulsa, Oklahoma, we moved by an ice plant in Louisiana with Standard Oil. While we loved it, in January, 1945 Bill was transferred to the Technical Service Department. The ice plant and the oil rig belonging were sold



Elsbeth Laurenson, 1954  
Pan-O-Ram Yearbook.  
Photograph courtesy Karen Clubb

return, Bill transferred to Tulsa and Bill decided to return to Aruba and in the Technical Service Department. The ice plant and the oil rig belonging were sold

It was wonderful when we moved into Bungalow #346. However, since the war, no matter, since the cook, was usually on the committee organizing the Club or playing

with our friends. We had the numbers on it were, everyone called it the Pan-O-Ram. Bud, a fabulous bridge player, was found on some functions at the Golf Club.

Son                      Bob

graduated in 1948 and

went to Colorado School of Mines. Daughter Dotty graduated in 1952. Bill and Bud retired in 1960 and went to Santa Barbara, CA. They both decided it was too cold and moved to Florida after 1 year. Bill died in 1977 and Bud died in 1988. They both thought that the smartest decision they ever made was to take the offer from Standard Oil in 1937 and move to Paradise.

**As told by Dotty (Learned) Dill**

# The Bryan McCall Family Story

As told by Bryan McCall.

My father, Captain McCall, was in command of the lake tanker *s/s Pedernales* when she was torpedoed, along with the *s/s Oranjestad* (Capt. Morgan--father of Pauline & Bill Morgan) by U-156 Feb. 16 1942. The *Oranjestad* sank at anchor - Capt. Morgan was rescued from the sea - and the *Pedernales* broke her moorings. Her back was broken, and she drifted seaward--later to be taken in tow and beached near Savaneta. My father and surviving crew members were later picked up drifting in a lifeboat. The midships section of the vessel was cut away and the remaining bow and stern sections were towed to dry-dock in San Nicholas and then joined. My father sailed the much shortened ship to a shipyard in Baltimore where a new centre section was inserted. The re-built *Pedernales* returned to service in Aruba.

Another lake tanker of World War II interest was *s/s Bachaquero*. She had the distinction of being the first ever Landing Ship Tank -- LST110-- sailing as *H.M.S. Bachaquero* and took part in the 1942 landings at Madagascar, landings in North Africa & also Normandy. She was released by the Admiralty in 1955--re-converted to an oil tanker and joined the lake fleet in Aruba.



The Esso Club the day after the fire.

Photograph courtesy J L Lopez family. Source unknown.

# The William "Bill" McMaster Family Story

As told by Bill McMaster

I cannot say the exact date when my family first arrived in Aruba and those who could have told me have now unfortunately passed on.

However I can say that my father commenced working for Lago Shipping Company in June 1927, though it is possible that he was in the Caribbean area before that date.

Both my parents came from a small peninsula on the East Coast of Northern Ireland, called Islandmagee. At that time every eldest male son inherited the family farm at Islandmagee and it was left for the younger siblings to seek their fortunes elsewhere. The majority tended towards seafaring and at this time, most British ships had at least one crewmember from that place sailing onboard, as in that period during and after the great depression, making a living on the land and indeed elsewhere was very difficult.

My grandfather was a shipmaster, as was his father before him, and had been born on the small family farm. My grandmother, in addition to raising the inevitable children who arrived regularly after his vacations (11 times), worked this farm: Cows for milk & butter, hens for eggs & eating, and a large vegetable garden for all the family. It is also possible that adult relatives helped, or casual outside labor was hired, as necessary for plowing and cutting grass and making hay for winter cattle feed. Undoubtedly all of the growing children helped with the chores as much as they could, both before and after school and during the school holidays.

My grandfather served in a foreign going sailing vessel as Chief Mate from 1887 and then Captain between 1891 until 1893. One of my aunts described how the family existed in those days before social security, during his long periods away at sea.

This sailing ship, the *Braque Polly Woodside*, the 1885 product of another Belfast shipyard, sailed around the world. Its voyages took it from Europe to the West coast of South America on the nitrate trade, to Australia and New Zealand for grain and wool. In 1904 it then was sold to New Zealand then Australian owners before finally being used as a coaling hulk, then in 1922 being left to rot, falling victim to the onslaught of the steamship. **H o o i b e r g**

Much later it was recognized as one of the last vessels of its type and was extensively rebuilt and brought back from a decaying hulk in 1987 and is now on permanent display in a park beside the Yarrow River in Melbourne, Australia.

A small history of my grandfather, during his time onboard, including pictures, is included in a book entitled "The Braque Polly Woodside (Rona)" by Vin Darroch, an Australian, who was involved in collecting information on the ship and also involved in its reconstruction.

The more famous Belfast shipyard of Harland & Wolff in 1925 received its first order to build four shallow draft tankers from Lago Shipping Co. These ships and sixteen subsequent orders that were built at that shipyard were originally managed and crews supplied by Andrew Weir of Glasgow. With new ships coming off the slipway, crews were needed and I can only assume that is how my Father went to Venezuela. Bearing in mind at this time certificated captains sailed as AB's and ordinary seamen were unable to get positions on ships.

Islandmagee was also a place where everyone was related to everyone else, and the news would spread rapidly by word of mouth, of the opportunities to be had in the West Indies.

At one time the following people from Islandmagee worked there and were my father's cousins; Capt. Jimmy Kerr, Tom Mann, Capt. Hugh Jackson, Samuel M. Kane. Captain John Kane also from the same place was not a relation.

My parents married in 1932 and soon after, my mother moved to Maracaibo, where I was born in 1935. *[This life at sea may also explain why Bill, too, followed in his father's footsteps and chose seafaring as a career.]*

## **GOING TO ARUBA**

During a vacation home to Ireland in late 1937, my mother again found herself pregnant but remained there until after the birth of my sister in April 1938. I do not know why she remained there until December that year but I now write with certainty, because on December 23rd. 1938 the Shaw Savill & Albion Line twin screw steamer, the *s/s Tamaroa* sailed from Southampton. Amongst those shown in the passenger list are Mrs. A. A. McMaster, Master William McMaster and Miss Pamela McMaster. All were scheduled to disembark at Curacao. This vessel a 12,500 gross ton mail steamer, called at Curacao, and then transited the Panama Canal on its way to New Zealand. What date we arrived at Willemstad, Curaçao and how and when we were transported to Aruba I cannot say, but certainly sometime in early January 1939.

We lived in Bungalow #717 from then until our departure from Aruba late 1944 after my dad was killed following a collision between

his ship, the *Punta Gorda* and the *s/s Ampetco* on September 20th.

I know we left the "Rock" by a KLM flight on 11.10.1944 on aircraft PJ- AKA, with Pilot - te Koller, Co-pilot - unnamed, Engineer – Weststrate, Wireless operator - Welschen, calling at Port au Prince, Camaguey and thence to Miami.

### **PADDY YOUNG**

Another relative - this time of my mothers, though by marriage, was James (Paddy) Young - Norman & Kenneth's father. He was third engineer on one of the "lakers", torpedoed on 14th February. A non-swimmer and a very brave man, he gave his lifejacket to the Chief Engineer, who also a non-swimmer, when they abandoned ship. He managed to survive although badly burnt. He never returned to the fleet, but when recovered from his wounds, worked for the marine department within the harbor. Because of shore based work he was a frequent visitor to our bungalow. He taught my sister and I to swim, gave me extra tutoring in math to try and improve my grades – he probably did not realize how difficult a task he was letting himself in for. He also had the unenviable task of telling me that my Dad had been killed in September 1944.

### **BACK TO NORTHERN IRELAND**

Even after we returned to Northern Ireland, during his vacations home, he took time to take me shooting: ducks in the winter, rabbits and pigeons during summer ones and fishing. He also took me to watch the Ulster Grand Prix motor races and motorcycle TT races whenever possible. My Mother, sister and I owe him a great debt of gratitude for the kindness he showed to our family.

### **LIFE IN ARUBA**

My days in Aruba were some of the happiest of my life: A tropical island paradise, with no winter weather, an ideal place for children with few natural hazards. At first, free from the horrors of war that was beginning to ravage Europe at that time.

It was a time of long summer holidays spent at the beach, complete with swimsuit and towel and the ever essential book of club tickets for drinks and ice cream at the Esso Club, with non-stop swimming, diving from the "T" dock into the warm tropical waters, protected by a lagoon and shark nets. Of finding the body of a shark on the reef: A very sobering moment.

### **MEMORIES**

- However, there were incidents: Fractures to left collar bone, right collar bone and right wrist. All this happened in quick succession causing my mother, anxiously, to ask a doctor at the hospital if I suffered from brittle bones. He replied "No – just unlucky". A little

while later I was almost even more unlucky.

- When in a temporary house, ours being painted, I ran from behind the school bus (I was coming home at lunchtime) and was struck by a passing car. This time, undamaged but obviously in shock, I freed myself from the front of the car, sprinted across the road, up the steps, through the kitchen, past my startled mother, into the bedroom and under the bed. The unknown driver (his quick braking saved my life) rushed after me into the kitchen, breathlessly asking mom "had she seen a little boy run past", a quick explanation then both adults following me into the bedroom, finding me under the bed. Although a good story now, it could have ended more seriously.
- I remember Christmas parties at the Marine Club, with a large decorated tree, a real Santa with gaily-wrapped presents for every child.
- And then in February 1942, of watching the night sky, red with burning oil from tankers that had been torpedoed at the reef, and going to the top of the hill overlooking the church to see the cause. My father's cousin Samuel M. Kane being one of those lost when the *s/s San Nicholas* was torpedoed in the chaos.
- Later after the islands defenses were bolstered by the arrival of American forces, my sister and I, joining other young school friends and going up to the army camp early Saturday and Sunday mornings and inserting our selves, nonchalantly into the chow line for breakfast. And of begging shoulder badges and equipment from the ever patient and congenial friendly soldiers.
- I can remember only one of my teachers: Miss Myrtle Parham being the one who sticks in my memory and strangely enough, the teacher sitting at the back of that classroom photograph of the third grade, taken in 1944.

## **LIFE AFTER ARUBA**

Since our departure, I have been back to the island many times. The first time I returned was in November 1953 during my first year at sea when we called at San Nicholas to load a cargo of oil for Europe. In 1957 I was there many times and again in 1972. The last time being in 1993 when the refinery was being re-commissioned and operated by Coastal.

# **The Claud and Lon Moyer Stories**

*As told by Bill Moyer*

There were three brothers, Clyde, Claud, and Lon, who came to Aruba (in that order). Clyde was working in a small refinery in Arkansas City, Kansas, in 1928, when a friend saw an ad in a paper. The two of them applied, were accepted. Clyde loved Aruba and working in the refinery and spent 32 years there. In 1932 he persuaded my mother, Margaret, to marry him and join him.

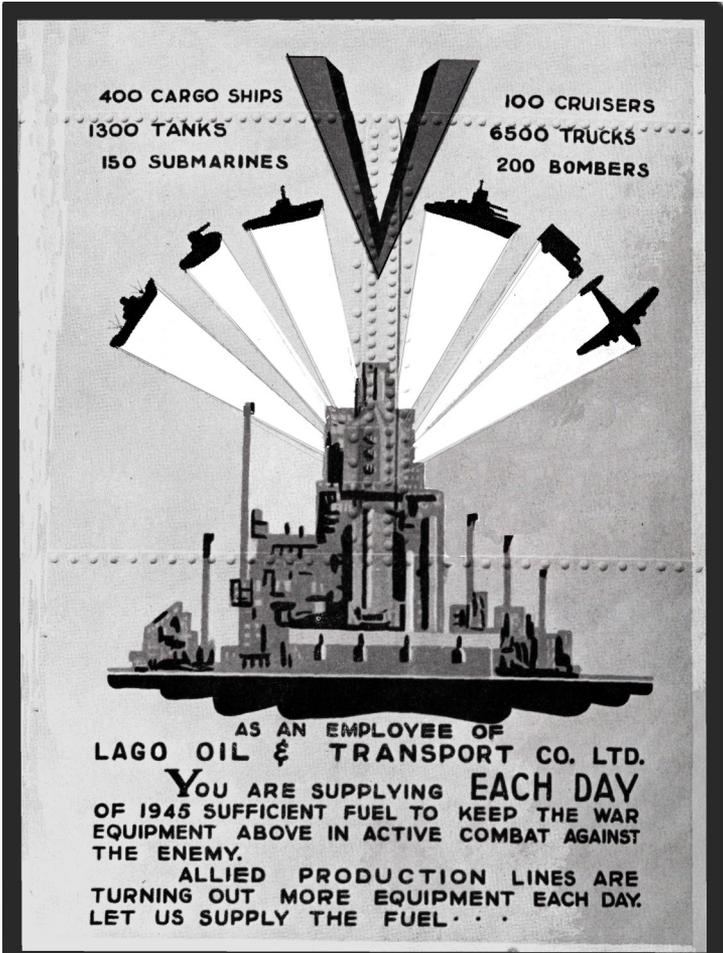
Shortly after that, Claud Moyer, who had a Ford agency in Sarcouxie, Missouri, came to Aruba with his wife Ula (nicknamed "Suze"). Claud was the oldest of seven Moyer children born in Missouri and Oklahoma, Clyde was the youngest. Claud liked working in the refinery but was an entrepreneur at heart: He brought the first popcorn machine to Aruba, in partnership with Pete the Greek. He and Suze lived in Bungalow 101, east of the old Esso Club, and Claud kept cash on hand so poker players at the Club could get a "quick money" loan on the strength of a good hand, by dashing across the street. The interest rate, of course, was high.

The third brother, Lon, had been to college and taught school before coming to Aruba, becoming Superintendent of Schools in Cedar County, Missouri. His wife's name was Mabel (she was a teacher) and they had two daughters, Paula and Roseann. They came to Aruba in about 1942. I remember they flew down, but their household goods were on the Bolivar when it was shelled by a U-boat. The Bolivar survived but the Moyer's had shrapnel in their stuff when it arrived.

All three brothers were in the refinery the night of the U-156 attack. They climbed up the highest unit (the cat cracker, I guess) to try to see what was going on (I have to admit I slept through most of the attack, waking up briefly and being told it was "just thunder").

Claud was the first to leave Aruba. He got mad about some management decision, and returned to Missouri in about 1949. Lon, Mabel, and family stayed on, and we had Moyer family get-togethers at Thanksgiving and Christmas. Clyde and Lon went to all the Thursday evening softball games together. Margaret and Mabel played bridge together. Paula worked at the Army base in Savaneta after high school, before heading off to college. All three brothers were heavy smokers. Claud also took snuff. He died in his 50's of cancer in his sinuses. Lon also died young, of lung cancer. That was particularly rough on Roseann because she was about to leave for college when, all of a sudden, her Dad died and Mabel had to leave Aruba--there was no "home" to come home to, between terms. Clyde lived to the age of 80, dying in Dallas in 1985.

(Mother and Dad moved here from Missouri in 1983. Mother died of lung cancer shortly afterward.) Paula, Roseann, and I all went to Cornell, and we all live in Dallas today. Mabel Moyer lived here for many years, but died here about five years ago (about 2001).



Wartime morale booster poster.  
Photograph courtesy J L Lopez family. Source unknown.

# Childhood Memoirs of Bill Moyer

During World War II, we in Aruba had a minor contact with global war. A German submarine (we now know it was the U-156) surfaced one night, torpedoed several oil tankers, setting them ablaze, and shelled the refinery where my father and his two brothers were working on the night shift. We were relieved that the shelling did no serious damage to land structures, including a club house the Company had built for its employees with a movie theater, bowling alley, dining room and other recreational facilities. Not long afterward, however, we lost the club house to fire--cause unknown.<sup>1</sup>

Lago Oil (Esso) couldn't bring in much construction material because shipping was partially cut off by torpedoing, but they did manage to assemble a structure next to the Colony commissary, by putting four prefabricated army barrack buildings together to form the outer outline of a square. One building on the south side housed a soda fountain, among other things (we had an "all the ice cream you can eat" party to celebrate its opening that I will never forget), the building on the west contained offices and the counter where we purchased paper "coupons" to use as money in the club, the building on the north housed a long bar and shuffle-board tables. As I recall, the building on the east was used for storage and possibly the public library.<sup>2</sup> In the middle, open area, was our new movie theater. It was equipped with canvas chairs. We sat in the open air and watched a movie shown on a screen mounted on the east inner wall, the picture projected from an elevated booth over the west building. Even in heavy rain, the movies kept going, and diehard viewers (which always included me) held vacated canvas chairs over their heads to keep semi-dry.

The four buildings were mounted on frames that lifted them about three feet above the ground, for circulation, but this area was blocked off

<sup>1</sup> *It was always my understanding that the clubhouse was a victim of friendly fire, namely a casing from a shore battery.*

<sup>2</sup> *I seem to recall a barbershop was included in one of the rooms closest to the street. I vaguely recall the shop moved to the Jr. Esso Club area.*

by lathwork or latticing (kids still managed to squeeze through occasionally for a free movie, but openings were quickly spotted and repaired.) There was one entrance door to the movie at the southwest

corner, and James or Shorty or some other club staff member took tickets.

The American Army sent a detachment of Coast Artillery troops and a squadron of anti-submarine airplanes--A-20A's and P-39 Airacobras--to guard Aruba after the submarine attack (First we had Dutch marines, then Scottish Cameron Highlanders, then Americans). My cousin Paula worked as a secretary on the American base, and we got to go to movies there sometimes, and to see USO shows with live entertainment. The United Service Organization was, of course, intended to elevate troop morale by putting on wholesome entertainments at overseas bases, but they didn't object to letting us civilians be entertained, too. I loved the shows, and still remember songs like "Let Me Call You Sweetheart," sung enthusiastically by the crowd along with some entertainer up on stage, leading the way. Most of the USO talent was good, and one of the best was Al Jolson. Like Al Jolson.

**AL JOLSON MEETS**

Al Jolson was a negative. I still remember "Is It True What They Say About Me" more a story of my dog my Uncle O. Oranjestad from "Blackie", had followed us everywhere. He followed us to the game or the movie. When the movie were blacked out, he followed us from shining toys. He had walked a long way to carry the dog to the show up, waggling his tail. I lost his location after a while, out of range, but he was sharp in guarding his territory again, and then showed up.

<sup>3</sup> Please see at the end of the ex-patriot's pets.

Jolson had a reputation. People pleaded with him to come to our Colony to perform for the U.S. civilians in addition to his show at the Base, which he graciously agreed to do. We went with great expectations, although I, for one, was disappointed at his boastfulness and exaggerated showmanship as he sang songs he had made famous such as "Mammy" and "Sonny Boy." His voice must have been past its prime, because



Spritzer & Furman Jewelers, 1940. That's Mr. Furman himself behind the counter. Photograph courtesy Pavia Allen Kent collection.

My impression was that his recordings like "Swanee Song" were from Aruba, though, is a "Colombian Spitz" that had sailed to Aruba. After our first dog, he followed us to the game or the movie. When the movie were blacked out, he followed us from shining toys. He had walked a long way to carry the dog to the show up, waggling his tail. I lost his location after a while, out of range, but he was sharp in guarding his territory again, and then showed up. He followed us to the game or the movie. When the movie were blacked out, he followed us from shining toys. He had walked a long way to carry the dog to the show up, waggling his tail. I lost his location after a while, out of range, but he was sharp in guarding his territory again, and then showed up. He followed us to the game or the movie. When the movie were blacked out, he followed us from shining toys. He had walked a long way to carry the dog to the show up, waggling his tail. I lost his location after a while, out of range, but he was sharp in guarding his territory again, and then showed up.

*He tells an aside on*

He came to Aruba, but he was disappointed at his boastfulness and exaggerated showmanship as he sang songs he had made famous such as "Mammy" and "Sonny Boy." His voice must have been past its prime, because

impressive.

His greatest problem that night, however, was Whitie. Whitie had decided to follow us to the show again that evening, and had succeeded in slipping between the legs of people entering the theater door, although Dad and I had thrown rocks at him as we proceeded along the road and thought we had deterred him from coming. Whitie had a habit of barking a long, husky bark, followed, if encouraged, by mournful howls which he emitted with his nose toward the sky like coyotes do. Something in Al Jolson's technique inspired the worst in Whitie (or perhaps the best from Whitie's perspective). Jolson sang for a while and then Whitie started to bark. Al handled it well at first, joking: "That must be an Aruban canary!" The crowd applauded, and Al Jolson beamed. James or some of the other club staff members tried to catch the dog, but he eluded them, dodging among chairs, and they desisted rather than add to the disturbance. My parents and I tried to look nonchalant as if we were wondering whose dog that could be--we certainly didn't show any sign he might be ours.

Jolson started to sing again, and after a bit, Whitie not only chimed in with renewed barking, but this time he was inspired to give Al a selection of his best, most mournful howls, muzzle to the sky (just as he would for one of his favorite girlfriends when she was in heat). Jolson bore it as best he could, then lost his aplomb. He stopped and shouted, "Get that goddamn dog out of here!" This time the club staff (again unassisted by noncommittal Moyer's) chased Whitie around until they edged him toward the door. They had learned from previous encounters that he was a biter, so they didn't try to grab him, although one or two of them aimed kicks his way. He eluded the kicks but decided discretion was the better part of valor, and finally ran out the theater door into the night and rejection. By the time we got home, however, he was in high spirits again, and delighted to see us as if we had been on a long trip.

## **TOMMY TUCKER**

Tommy Tucker (In our Lago Colony Newsletter he is sometimes referred to as "Sonny Tucker"--his mother did always call him Sonny) was an interesting kid, older than I was, who led a small gang of younger kids. He always seemed to think of interesting things to do, had insightful opinions on unusual things, and told strange stories. For example, he and his family kept marmoset monkeys in a cage in their back yard. You could go back there and watch them, and Tommy took ~~them out and played with them. They were nasty things, as I recall,~~ quick to bite the unwary, but clever in acrobatics.

Tommy was interested in medicine and seemed to know a lot about it. For example, he told a story about how a man had been found drowned on a beach somewhere, and people tried artificial respiration and were about to give the man up for dead when a knowing individual

stuck his finger up the man's ass, whereupon the supposedly dead man "crapped all over the beach" and--voila!--miraculously recovered. The triggering of this one natural reflex, Tommy Tucker explained, had started the man's other vital functions going again! That was the sort of arcane knowledge we younger boys marveled at. I still believe the story about the amazing cure for drowning but worry that I might be too squeamish if called upon to treat such an emergency myself.

You never knew what Tom was going to do or say. He was brave, too, as he demonstrated on a Boy Scout trip to Palm Beach. We normally went for Boy Scout outings to beaches on the rugged, rough side of the island, like Boca Prins or Fontein. One time, though, we went all the way out to Palm Beach. This must have been soon after the War--maybe 1946--because Palm Beach was an almost deserted area. All the beaches on Aruba were public property, so you could walk along the shore anywhere, or swim, but the adjoining area of sand going inland could be private. Most of Palm Beach was blocked off from public roads in those days by tall fences of cactus, with private roads leading down to clubhouses along the water, the entrances blocked by locked gates. On one occasion, our scout leader or someone had arranged for us to use the facilities of one of the clubs--perhaps the Dutch Police Club--so we were driven in past the cactus and thus allowed access to the whole sweep of the beach. We were having a good time exploring, and swimming a bit in the shallow water, when someone noticed a big shark fin protruding from the water offshore. It was pretty far away--perhaps 100 yards--so not an immediate threat, but naturally we watched it nervously as we swam, always ready to retreat if it approached us. Strangely, however, it seemed to remain almost in one place, just moving with the waves. Then Tommy Tucker said he would do something about it.

He clenched a knife in his teeth, just as Tarzan did in the movies, and began to swim out to the shark, with strong, steady kick and strokes. Tom was an excellent swimmer, but I had never realized before that he had this much courage. We all edged back out of the water and watched to see what would happen. Tom didn't flinch--just kept swimming steadily. Then he began thrashing around the shark, lifting his arm up and down to stab it, throwing his feet out of the water and, altogether, putting on quite a show. By then it dawned on us, however, that the action was all one-sided, and the "fin" was protruding too far from the water as Tom began to tug it toward shore. It soon became evident that our "shark" was a big branch or frond from a coconut palm! The broad base had been protruding from the water, displaying a triangular shape.

Did you ever know anyone who could fold his eyelids in half? Tommy Tucker did that. He took the bottom of the lids, holding on to the lashes, and folded them upward so that only half a lid was left. The exposed part was normally the inside of the lid, of course, so it was pink,

and looked ghastly. Below the lid was the bottom half of his eyeball, showing only white. Ugh! It got a great reaction of disgust from the other kids, inspiring Tom to walk like the Frankenstein monster and hold his arms out stiffly in front, grabbing anyone he could. He was quite a showman.

Tom Tucker didn't like me much. He was civil to me, but no more than that. He was older than I, and tough, so I was a little apprehensive. The only time it every amounted to anything, though, was when I was learning to drive. After World War II there was a big shortage of cars in the U.S., and even more so in Aruba. On our vacation in about 1947 Mother, Dad and I spent a few days as usual in New York City, and while there we looked for a car. The only new ones in supply were Kaisers and Frazers, built by Henry J. Kaiser, who had grown rich during World War II making "Liberty Ships" (freighters) out of reinforced concrete! The Kaiser was the less expensive, as I recall, the Frazer more luxurious. One place we looked, however, had not only new Kaiser-Frazers but also a few used cars including a Dusenbergs that made my eyes pop, and a green Cadillac Fleetwood that also seemed spectacular but was more affordable. Much to my delight, Mother and Dad decided to splurge and buy the Cadillac! The law in Aruba was fairly relaxed about minimal driving ages, and it wasn't long before my folks taught me to drive and even began to let me drive on my own (at age 14) although I had to be especially careful, not having a license. That didn't stop me from taking friends for drives in the evenings, and giving rides to girls, although I was a relatively careful driver.

Anyway, one night I was driving along with four or five others in the car--maybe Gleb Aulow, Bob Drew, Polly Mingus and others, although I don't remember for sure. The thing I do remember is that, as we were driving along just north of the softball field at the "Junior Esso Club", a car full of rowdy, older boys pulled up alongside and hurled taunting remarks at us. The Cadillac was powerful, and I lazed along, preparing to zip ahead and surprise them when they got too close. The right time came, and I stomped on the accelerator, kicking the car into passing gear, and it roared off. As we started, though, I got a strange sensation of something going on close to my left ear, followed by a bumping sound and shouts as we left the other car in our dust and it fell out of sight in the rear view mirror.

There was a party that night at Betty Ann Binion's house or maybe Murray Jennings'. We snuck around a while to see if the car of older boys was still looking for us, and made clever maneuvers like going around the block with the headlights off and without touching the brakes because that would have turned on the rear brake lights (Did I say something about being a "careful" driver? Well, there's careful and there's careful), but when they didn't appear, we stopped at the party.

Once inside, I noticed Tommy Tucker standing near me, looking at me with a strange expression. He was all scratched up. I wondered why. Later someone explained that Tom had been in the back seat of the other car (Roy Burbage's, I think) and, for some unexplainable reason, decided at the last minute to throw a proper scare into us by extending himself through the front window of the car in which he was riding, to grab me by the neck. He surmised correctly--it would have scared the Hell out of me. The only problem was, his outstretched hands were just inches from my neck when the Caddy took off, causing him to catch the window framing instead of me, with the result that he was pulled out of his slower-moving car like a champagne cork popping out of a bottle, stretched out horizontally and then, when he managed to let go with his hands, his body bounced off the rear side of my car, ricocheted off the other car, and ended up on the ground. It was a miracle that he wasn't hurt worse. Why he didn't retaliate by hitting me the first chance he got, I never knew. He may have been too badly bruised, or just embarrassed. Tommy Tucker was also the one who discovered the old shipwreck in the channel into San Nicholas Harbor. Who else would have thought to look there, or to swim there at all? The harbor at San Nicholas (at the western end of the Big Lagoon, but partly blocked by reef on which a lighthouse had been constructed to guide ships) had been created for tanker loading by the Company, which used dredges to deepen that end of the lagoon and dig a channel through the barrier reef into the ocean. Big ships passed back and forth through the channel and it was "off limits" to small boats. Other than that, the harbor was dirty with sewage, with oil spilling from ballasts of tankers and from the loading pipes, and since ships dumped garbage there, there was also, I supposed, more than the usual danger that sharks would be attracted for scavenging. So I never thought of spear-fishing or snorkel-diving any where near that area. The one time I caught a barracuda just east (upwind and up-current) from that area by trolling from a boat with bait, and cooked it for dinner, the fish tasted oily, so that was just one more reason to look elsewhere for interesting things to do. But not for Tom: He looked everywhere.

Right after I left Aruba to go to college, Tom Tucker and other divers ventured into the area of the reef offshore from the lighthouse, where the channel entered San Nicolas harbor. They found an ancient wreck lying on the bottom. The next time I came home to visit, the Aruba Esso News was filled with pictures of Tom and a large cast-iron (or bronze?) cannon he and others managed to bring up from the wreck. It wouldn't surprise me a bit to read some day that Tom has gone back there with a full expedition and uncovered gold or other riches. He is the kind of adventuresome spirit who could do it.

### **CAPTAIN BAILEY**

After the submarine attack on Aruba, my parents thought it would

be a good idea for my mother and me to retreat to Missouri, she to help her father operate his newspaper after his linotype operator had been drafted, and I to attend the Missouri Military Academy at Mexico, Missouri (near Columbia, west of St. Louis). The school looked nice in the catalog, but it was Hell. Those uniforms looked pretty, but felt stiff and uncomfortable to a nine-year old boy. We drilled one hour every midday, did one hour of calisthenics every afternoon, and in between stood inspection, cleaned up the building, and were fussed at for not folding our bedclothes just right or hanging the clothes in our closet just so. The best part of the day, in fact, was class. The school was a good one, and the curriculum more varied than what I was used to in Miss Olson's 4th grade in Aruba. The teachers were all men, and some were rather stern in their military uniforms. By comparison, Miss Olson was young and pretty. I liked her better, and was delighted to go back to Lago Colony after one year.

Fairly early in the year, I fell, while running for a base in a game of "hide and seek", and broke my left arm at the elbow. What a disgrace breaking an arm playing "hide and seek!" It probably was another reason I didn't like military school, because my activity was even more limited than usual after the break. The arm was in a cast for a while, and when it came out, remained in a bent position. I couldn't straighten it at the elbow. That's when Captain Bailey took over. He was one of our school officer/teachers. He made me a brick with a rope handle, though, to carry around campus and on our daily marches, so that it gradually straightened out my arm. To make the situation more bearable, he wrapped the brick in brown paper and wrote things on it. "This little brick works like a charm, to help me straighten out my arm. If I don't tote this brick about, Captain Bailey will bawl me out!" was the main message. It also said "Irish Confetti". People stopped to read my brick, and his clever solution made me proud to carry it instead of ashamed. My arm recovered fully, and straight, thanks to Captain Bailey.

### **TOM EASTMAN: "MR. HYDROPONICS."**

Some time in the late 1940's a young agricultural scientist named Tom Eastman persuaded Standard Oil of New Jersey to let him try raising fresh vegetables for the workers at Esso's Aruba refinery. His wife and little daughter came along. He built a series of concrete beds, lined with tar, and enclosed in a greenhouse. In a small office next door, he stored his chemicals, including potassium nitrate, sulphur, and a number of others. He blended these with water, every day running the solution into the beds. In them he grew green peppers, lettuce, turnip greens, and tomatoes. The Eastman's lived about a block away from our house, in a house on top of a small cliff line, and our family got to know them fairly well. They paid me to baby-sit for their infant one New Year's Eve, I believe, and I remember a chrome-plated 50 caliber shell, complete with bullet head, that they had as a souvenir. It had holes

drilled in its side where the powder had been let out. I was fascinated by bullets at that age.

My Dad, who grew up on a farm and loved farming (he even raised chickens along a windy cliff in Aruba in the 1940's), volunteered to engage in hydroponics gardening with the help of the young scientist. Dad built a raised (standing on stilts) bed of wood, lined with tar and gravel to hold water. With a drain plug at one end, it was same as the larger hydroponics garden the Company owned nearby. Tom Eastman gave Dad chemicals free, and we mixed a solution each week in an old 50-gallon oil drum Dad turned on its side, braced between concrete blocks, to be filled via a cut in the upside and drained from a spigot at the end. Every day we filled several buckets and poured solution in our gravel beds, and grew fresh vegetables such as Big Boy tomatoes and Firesteels. They were wonderful, much superior to anything shipped from the U.S. by tanker or by sailboat from South America.

## **FIREWORKS**

A fringe benefit for me, as a curious kid, was that I could take saltpeter, sulphur, and charcoal, and make gunpowder, which I did. Never in big quantities, because my chemical supply was modest, but I tried all sorts of firecrackers. They weren't packed tightly enough to explode (not that I would have minded their exploding, if on cue, but I didn't learn how to pack the powder tightly, and was cautious enough not to tamp it hard), but they made a beautiful hiss and a great cloud of smoke that gave me and my friends many hours of forbidden pleasure. We set them off all over. Even under the Junior Esso Club on one occasion, which was really stupid, because of the fire hazard, and which got me a sharp rebuke from James, the white-haired old black man who operated the club for us kids. I had to admit James was right. The club building was made of wood and stood on cement oil-pots intended to keep bugs out. It could easily have been set afire.<sup>4</sup>

The craziest thing we kids did, however, was steal small quantities of gasoline from a tank stored outside the hydroponics garden (to power the pump motors inside). We put the gasoline in bottles, stuffed the tops with oily rags, lit the rag-fuses with matches, and then threw the "Molotov Cocktails" to get a really dramatic effect of bursting flame. Not exactly an explosion, but close enough. We threw them up against a cliff for safety reasons, but one time I almost got badly burned. Just as I raised my throwing arm over my shoulder, the fuse blazing and the bottle full of gasoline, the fuse (rag) fell out and the flaming gasoline ran all over my right arm and side. Fortunately, I was able to pat the fire out quickly and deliberately, and was saved from injury. It just scared the

<sup>4</sup>*We also looked up how to make gunpowder in our encyclopedia and purchased the necessary chemicals at the pharmacia in Barrancabermeja, Colombia. They didn't recognize things like H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>*

*but they did things like Manganese Sulfate (It sure burned a pretty color). Production of gunpowder ended when the next door neighbor kid was using a Mennen spray deodorant bottle to dole out the gunpowder and re-sprayed some where he already had. He thought the embers were out but the resulting explosion was heard for miles and nearly blew his hand off. We were using it to blow up or burn out ant hills.*

*We noted that you could take a firecracker and break it in half. Then when you lit it would blaze out the break like a roman candle. Also you could jump the gun on mom's rule about setting fireworks off before a reasonable hour. You used the fuse-like string that tied all the fireworks fuses together: It was tied to the end of a fuse, extending it and burning much slower, and lit it off. Then you'd go inside and pretend to be reading a comic when it went off later, lamenting that some people had no respect for the early hour rule.*

hell out of me. Not enough to make me smart, though.

A few days later, we discovered we could get a more impressive blaze by throwing the Cocktails inside a nearby cave. It was really exciting, in the dark, to see the flames flash out all over. One time, though, I threw the bottle, it burst, but the rag went out while still in the air, so there was no fire. What does a boy do in such a situation? He throws matches where the bottle landed, so as to not waste the explosion! In this case, when the flash came, it came right at me, because part of the gasoline had run along the cave floor to where I was standing! I turned, ran, and forgot there were stalactites in the neighborhood, getting a good braining as a reminder. I guess we finally figured out this wasn't such a smart thing to do, because we gave up making Molotov Cocktails--or maybe the manager of the hydroponics farm discovered his loss of gasoline and put a lock on the tank.

### **PATTY LYKENS & BEA BALDWIN**

Patty Lykens is the first I can remember having a crush on, pre-school in Aruba. She was cute and blond. Then there was Bea Baldwin, in third grade, for which I had a "curious" interest. I even tried to feel her bottom once, during a Flash Gordon matinee at the old Esso Club, but she pushed my hand away. Bea liked Tinker Baggaley best, but that was pretty much the story with girls in Aruba--they all liked Tinker best! Bea's parents left Aruba, and Tinker and I tried to find a suitable going-away present, not the easiest thing in the world to do when you're in the third grade and don't have any money. We cut off the tip of a century-plant, which consisted of a lot of concentric cones, one inside the other. A puzzle--she'll love it! we said as we walked across the coral to her house. She didn't, but thanked us anyway. Then we tried to kiss her goodbye, but she'd have none of it! That was the end of that romance.

### **SARAH BOWN**

Sarah Brown was one of the first “women” in my life. One old family movie shows a young, thin black girl standing in front of a wash tub, looking back over her shoulder at the camera while her arms are supporting a little white boy baby standing upright in the tub. I don’t remember Sarah that way at all. She may have been only about 20 when the picture was taken, but my earliest memories of her are as a more substantial woman. Sarah was from the English-speaking island of Grenada, located on the eastern side of the Caribbean, and how she arranged to travel all the way to Aruba, maybe 500 miles to the west, I have no idea. The Dutch Government, which controlled Aruba, did not let people come there to live on the government dole, so somehow she must have obtained a work permit. She lived in San Nicolas with several grown-up brothers and did housekeeping for them, as well as for our family: maybe one of the brothers got a job in the refinery and gradually obtained work permits for the rest of the family. Sarah rode an old-fashioned bus into Lago Colony five days a week (showing her special pass that was required for all people entering the Colony), and rode home again in the evenings--about a 30 minute ride each way. Our town had about 1000 families and most had day-maids like Sarah, so the bus traffic was quite lively. The busses were also used as school busses, and of course had no air-conditioning (nothing did in those days), but the open windows allowed a nice breeze to pass through. We Colony kids used to ride the busses, too, when going to St. Nicolas to shop at Aruba Trading Company or Nick-The-Greek’s, or to have some fresh popcorn at a luncheonette nearby.<sup>5</sup>

San Nicolas was what today would be called a barrio. I didn’t realize it then, although I did sense that it was different from where I lived. Aside from two or three main streets that had shops or offices on them, much of the rest was a field covered with shacks made of sheets of galvanized tin, wood with tarpaper over it, or occasionally some cinder-blocks. The main bus went on through on the road to Oranjestad, so we kids (I remember going with Gleb Aulow at least once, to buy phonograph records) would get off and walk through the barrio over to one of the other shopping streets. As poor as the houses looked, some had carports with nice cars in them. Children played in the caliche-dirt roads between the houses, and ditches along the side of the road carried raw sewage. I don’t think the area had a sewer system, or maybe some parts of it did and other parts didn’t. The caliche was spread over flat expanses of solid, grey coral rock, so sewer lines were not easy to install.

Sarah began the morning by doing dishes, and then cleaned our house. My Mother did some of the housekeeping herself, such as making beds, and all the cooking, but Sarah did everything else. In the kitchen we had a kerosene stove, fueled from a tank on the side of the stove with about one gallon capacity. Just outside the door leading from the kitchen to a cement patio, was a larger tank which the Lago Oil

Company's "Colony Service" division filled with kerosene from time to

*<sup>5</sup>I remember the bus. Our maid also rode it. We used to give her money to buy pigeons in town for us. We had a flock of them. When the bus made rounds for school, if we were fast of foot, we could catch it in maybe three places if we missed it in front of the house. When I got a bike, I rode it to school and home for lunch, like he said. Now I can't put my foot on the pedal, push off and swing my other leg over like I used to.*

time. When our stove ran out, we detached the little one-gallon metal container from the side and took it outside to fill and then return to the stove. Near the kerosene storage tank were two large porcelain washtubs. Each was about two feet by two feet by two feet, flanging out at the top, with a drain in the bottom going to our (above ground) sewer pipe, and a faucet at the top of each tub to receive brackish water we used for washing. Fresh water was at a premium in the Colony, and was piped only to the kitchen sink. All other faucets, the toilet, shower, and outside hose connections, were fed brackish water pumped from certain areas under the coral where sea water seeped in and blended with the little bit of rainwater we received, to produce "utility" water.

It may have been in one of those wash basins that Sarah gave me baths when I was a baby. Later, when I was older, I remember seeing her (and my Mother too) wash our clothes in one tub, using Oxydol brown soap (these were the days before detergents) and a metal-on-wood washboard, and then rinse them in the other tub. There was no hot running water, so a kettle was kept on the stove, and water was boiled in it to pour over dinner dishes after washing in the kitchen, and over the clothes in the rinse tub if Mother thought scalding was necessary. Mother used Clorox on many things and bluing, too, on the whites, plus starch where needed, as her mother had done before her. Since the incoming water lines were above-ground, if you washed anything around midday or early afternoon, the water coming from the pipe was plenty hot, and I don't think the clothes received kettle water very often.<sup>6</sup>

Sometimes my parents had dinner parties on a Saturday, and I remember Sarah sometimes worked that evening for extra pay, or came in on Sunday to clean up. On such occasions, busses were infrequent, so we would drive to her home to pick her up and drive her home. That's when I would see her brothers, usually resting on chairs on their porch. One of her brothers worked for Colony Service as a plumber or electrical repairman (I don't remember which), so I would see him fairly often in the Colony, riding along on the motor scooter the Company provided. He was always friendly and pleasant.

Sarah was almost a member of our family, but she ate after we ate,

*<sup>6</sup>We had a set up like this at Bungalow #366 also. We knew it as the laundry room as the washing machine was there. It was also used for*

*baths whenever ma preferred that we use that instead of the bathtub. As I was 10 when we left, I remember being able to submerge completely and still have plenty of water over my head. I always thought they were huge wash basins.*

usually at the kitchen table. She was unobtrusive and I don't remember her "parenting" me in the sense of scolding, or telling me what I should do. I do remember hurting her feelings one time, when I was ten years old, right after I had come back to Aruba after a year at Missouri Military Academy--that would have been in the summer of 1944. She was standing in the kitchen, washing dishes in the sink, and I had been flipping rubber bands at things in my bedroom. Looking into the kitchen, which was right next to my bedroom, I had an impulse to flip one at Sarah's behind, and scored a hit. She turned with a very angry expression and I was ashamed: It hadn't been a playful joke at all, but an insult, I then realized.

Certainly I was sorry, and even had a sense of the awkwardness of her position, as a maid to the family, but also an adult better able to judge propriety than this ten year old boy. She did say something to my Mother, who scolded me, and made me apologize to Sarah.

Sarah returned to Grenada at some point and, many years later, we heard she had died there. Why she left our employ, I have no idea. I did see her brother on his scooter from time to time, and I always asked him how Sarah was. She never married, as far as I know. She was a sweet lady of whom I have only the fondest recollections.

## **RELATIONSHIPS IN ARUBA**

The relationship between blacks and whites on Aruba was curious. The whites were 'foreign staff' sent by the Company from America, or sometimes hired in Holland, England, Germany, and Hungary. The blacks were Arubans or natives of other islands, or people who came from South America such as British Guiana, Dutch Guiana (Surinam), and Venezuela. Only whites were allowed to live in the bungalows in Lago Colony, and they filled all the executive jobs in the company. Blacks rose to higher level clerical jobs in some cases, but mostly were lower level workers. The Company imported American teachers for us white children's school, and the blacks attended schools established by the Dutch Government or Dutch Church in St. Nicolas, Savaneta, Santa Cruz, and Oranjestad. The refinery was enclosed by high wire fences with one gate on the east (Lago Colony) side and one on the west (St. Nicolas) side. There was a third gate in a long fence extending from the refinery to the ocean on the northeast border of the Colony. Guards were stationed at each gate and you had to show a pass to enter the refinery or to enter the Colony from the northeast gate. If you lived in the Colony, you got a sticker to put on your windshield, and transit was easy. Without such a sticker, blacks had to stop at the gate and show a working

permit or other pass. In the refinery, blacks and whites worked together on the stills and in offices. I worked in the summers for 25 cents and hour, and punched the time clock in the same line as the black apprentice workers did. In the hospital, part of the staff was black and part white, and in the Esso Club, movie theater, and dining hall, the staff was mostly black. Most of the American refinery workers were from Texas, Oklahoma (oil states, naturally enough), or elsewhere in the South, and I think they tended to discriminate against blacks. The Dutch seemed to be much more egalitarian, and Dutch children attended the same schools the blacks did, and intermarried freely. We whites in the Colony never dated black kids--the closest we got to socializing with them was when our school basketball team played one of theirs.<sup>7</sup>

## **BOXING**

Boxing was very popular in Aruba, and I used to go to the fights occasionally, mostly to a sports stadium in St. Nicolas. Agramonte was the name of one of the native fighters who was especially good--from Trinidad, I think. Our fighters were fast and fought furiously, egged on by the crowd with such taunts as "Hit him on the cut, Mon!" Special, added attractions were visiting "greats" such as Sandy Saddler, a truly great featherweight fighter (world champ in 1948-9.) He was unbelievably fast. Jersey Joe Walcott also came to Aruba at about that time, and impressed the crowd by fighting two or three of the island champions in one bout (one for two or three rounds, followed by the next). He had them turning around in circles of confusion, not knowing where he was at times, and then engaging in heavy slugging that left them groggy. What a fighter he was! If you have seen him in old movies, you'll remember his extraordinary footwork. He would march up to his opponent, throw a few hard punches, dance from side to side, and then suddenly turn and walk away with his arms at his side! The opponent would gape in confusion, then try to catch up with the man walking away, only to have him turn, weave, and throw more devastating punches! Finally, the great Joe Louis came, and we were all anticipation. Powerful and impressive, but slower and less exciting than Walcott.

*<sup>7</sup>This issue of discrimination has been addressed within these books mostly obliquely . Bill touches on it here. It was practiced along lines other than national origin or color also. Dutch were employed in many cases because they were paid less than comparable Americans or Canadians. There was also a distinction between ranks of the employees as well. Not all ex-patriots were in management positions. As kids we rarely experienced or were aware of these prejudices. I recall a trip by bus through the South where there were colored facilities and white facilities. I almost got in trouble for using a colored drinking fountain.*

## **VACATIONS**

When living in Aruba, we went on two-month vacations every two

years, usually traveling by tanker to Bayonne, New Jersey, then waiting at the Hotel Abbey at 51 St Street and 7th Avenue in New York until our car was removed from the ship's hold and we could drive to Missouri. I loved the tanker trips, though was almost always seasick in the early part of the voyage.<sup>8</sup> It was great to stand on the bow or in the midsection and watch the ship plow through waves, or to look at the beautiful shades of blue in the ocean roiling around us (and splashing over--tankers ride low in the water when full of Lago oil!) In New York, we stayed at the Abbey Hotel in the middle of the theater district. Esso reserved rooms there for its overseas staff, but we had to pay our own way (\$7.50 a night for three of us, I remember, which my father thought was kind of expensive at the time, compared to the motels we stayed in as we drove across country). While at the Abbey we invariably went to movies at the Roxy, Radio City, or Palace theaters, especially for the live entertainment between showings of the movie.

### **MIKE ALEMANY**

Mike Alemany, Bobby Amman, Ray Burson, and Bill Mello were all guys I skin-dived with, and their names bring back some indelible memories. The first recalls cowardice on my part and two others bring to mind the only two instances I can remember showing real courage. The fourth memory is both scary and funny. First, as to Mike--he was a year younger than me in school, and for some reason willing to be my "follower" at times, such as when I returned to Aruba at age ten from a year at Missouri Military Academy and organized a military unit. Mike was my second General in charge. I was the Major General, naturally. We made wooden guns that would shoot stretched pieces of rubber inner tube, and marched around. There were other groups, mostly of older kids, who also were organized around rubber-gun tactics and who had wars, snapping rubber strips at each other. Our group was more peaceful. Our only combat experience, as far as I can remember, was when we went to the abandoned U.S. Army (ex-World War II) camp near B.A. Beach and helped ourselves to abandoned water-pumping portable fire extinguishers, after which my "army" spent an afternoon squirting each other, tackling each other in the sand, and having a very

*<sup>8</sup>This was true wherever 'oil field brats' were stationed. Our father was an old hand at authoring grand vacations. We didn't see a lot of the US but where we did go we saw every snake farm there was: Once we saw Lake-Okeechobee-Singing-Tower in spite of a driving rain.--We looked through rain streaked windows while pop puffed away on his cigar.*

exciting time, but with no real damage done or anyone hurt. Others in the army were Tinker Baggaley, Bob and Bill Burbage, probably Gleb Aulow, maybe Larry Morris and a few others.

The story I wanted to relate about Mike, though, was about the time, some years later, he and I saw our first shark. We decided to go skin-

diving off the south coast of the island, starting offshore of the “dog cemetery” up-current from the Little Lagoon and drifting down to the openings in the coral at the entrance to the lagoon where we knew we could get back to land without getting cut up by waves washing against the sharp coral spires that grew along the coast in that area. The trick was to put on mask, snorkel, and black rubber swim fins and walk, as carefully as possible, across the coral into the waves (you were in pretty good shape standing up and looking down to see where the sharpest rocks were and the best stepping-areas were), then splashing into the water on your stomachs as soon as an incoming wave gave you enough water to carry you, kicking hard to make the ebbing wave carry you out, dodging coral branches reasonably easily because you were always moving outward, away from the spikes. We each carried a rubber-band-powered speargun, in one hand, and wore a knife on our belt for extra protection, for cleaning fish later, and for the all-around macho look we thought it gave us.

Normally, you could see quite well in clear Aruba water for perhaps thirty feet once you were past close-in areas where sand was stirred up by the waves. This particular day, however, there was rain, which created air bubbles in the top two or so inches of water, making visibility more difficult. To see clearly, you had to dip your head down a bit, causing swamping of the snorkel tubes so you couldn't keep your head down long. Less than ideal conditions, to say the least, and the rain cloud reduced the amount of light. But rain clouds had a tendency to go away quickly in Aruba, and we didn't let the weather deter our enthusiasm for adventure.

Mike and I surmounted all this and gradually worked our way out over the coral shelf to a point where it sloped sharply down to a depth of perhaps 30 feet--about my maximum diving depth in those days. We dove a little and looked around a little, but didn't spear any fish. Then, as we moved out a bit deeper, with Mike in front, I dropped my head below the rain-bubble-froth and turned it to the right to see a big shark--maybe six to eight feet long, but looking enormous, like a cruising factory (eating factory!) with little fish gliding along beside its mouth for tidbits and remoras hanging on its side. He was cruising close to the bottom, but coming right in our direction. “Shark!” I shouted through the tube, not very audibly, but enough for Mike to hear as I rotated on my axis and headed for shore, kicking as hard as possible! “Poor Mike!” I thought, “The shark hasn't hit me yet so he probably got Mike!” I thought that as I kicked and swam like Hell, never turning to try to help. Fortunately, when I did turn, once I had reached water too shallow for the shark to be likely to follow me, I saw Mike's splashing and bubbles right behind me. We clambered up to shore across the coral and exulted in being alive, whole, and survivors of an Adventure.

That night I had nightmare after nightmare about that shark, imagining he was coming after me at incredible speed. I hadn't stayed long to watch him in action, but what little I did see was terrifying: as I was turning and trying to swim as fast as I could, kicking my flippers so hard my leg muscles ached, he made an insignificant move with his tail and moved forward faster than I was going. What a swimmer--in another class compared to us! I had many regretful thoughts, too, about being such a coward. What kind of friend just ran off and left the other fellow to his doom? My kind, that's who. A Jewish man who came to Aruba right after World War II said he learned the same thing about himself in the concentration camps--that at some point you decide that if it's a question of who is going to survive, you or me, you decide: "It is going to be me!" His experience was a much truer test than mine, but gave me some solace.

On at least two other occasions, though, I had a chance to show some courage. Both were when younger, less experienced swimmers were with some of us older boys, so perhaps I felt more of a need to "be Big." The first time, Ray Burson, a couple of years younger, joined several of us older boys in the boat, and although we split up after entering the water, Ray stayed close to me. He pointed at things as we skirted just outside the shallow corals, and I identified the pipefish and other things for him, but suddenly I noticed we were being nearly surrounded by a school of barracudas that were between us and the boat perhaps thirty feet away. Barracudas are much smaller than sharks--about three to four feet long--but they are very fast and have vicious, sharp teeth. They will follow skindivers, particularly if you spear anything and let blood into the water, and they could really hurt you if they chose to. A school could finish you, although no one in my experience was ever hurt by them. They looked dangerous, and you never knew. This particular group stayed with Ray and me and gradually worked in closer to us. I realized that if we kept trying to retreat they could very easily lunge and bite us. So I took the offensive, and charged them with my speargun in front of me. The menacing attitude worked, and they backed off until we eased our way to the boat and pulled ourselves in. More nightmares followed, but not as severe, and with a better feeling because I had "done the right thing."

The next incident occurred on the rough, north side of the island where we seldom swam because the waves and tides were too powerful and dangerous. Occasionally, though, the wind died down enough that we could navigate in those waters reasonably safely. This incident occurred on one of those days. About 50 yards offshore, a reef rose from the sandy bottom up to about two feet from the surface, and around the reef lived fish we could spear for delicious eating. You could retreat to the reef for relative safety if sharks were to attack, but out over the sandy area you had to cross to get back to shore, there was no defense except

our (rather puny) spear guns. Again, a young boy had come along with perhaps five or six of us older boys. His name was Bobby Amman, a nice kid. He had swim fins, a mask and snorkel, but no speargun. We let him come along, and let him put the chain on his waistband to which we strung fish as we speared them.

On the way out to the reef, I had seen a shark about six or eight feet long, but moving parallel to our line of movement and away, so no threat. It had a baby shark following it. I was relieved it went away and didn't think much more about it. However, on the way back, I happened to look over my shoulder to see how Bobby was doing bringing up the rear with our catch, and noticed that the shark was back. This time it was closing on Bobby, obviously attracted by the smell of blood from the speared fish hanging from his belt. He didn't see it, but couldn't have eluded the shark even if he had. Instinctively, I turned and swam at the shark. Maybe the earlier experience of the retreating barracudas had been a lesson, but I supposed fish, even big ones, could be uneasy if something appeared to be menacing them. Maybe they remembered the days when they were little fish and everything else in the ocean was trying to eat them! Sure enough, this one turned and swam away, much to my relief. I would have speared it if it kept coming, or would have tried to, the problem being that shark skin is so tough (as I learned from trying to stab dead ones pulled up onto the beach by fishermen) the success of such a maneuver was in doubt. And after your spear was shot, what then? It was attached to the gun by a ten foot string, but it took a while to pull back in after a miss and reload, and if it was stuck in a big fish but without fatal results, there wasn't much of a second line of defense. Anyway, that incident came out okay and I felt I had again done the right thing.

We saw sharks many other times, the biggest perhaps twelve feet long, but which, thank God, was swimming in the same direction we boys were--toward shore--parallel to us, and which turned on a dime and raced out to sea when it saw us. The other time I got really close to one had to do with a trip with Bill Mello and boys on his boat plus several other boys in my boat. We anchored outside the reef off the Big Lagoon and fished, preparing for a fish fry at Hans Wolfe's house. For some reason, Bill had forgotten something and roared back into the lagoon. His boat was pretty spiffy, light and fast, painted red. The rest of us settled down to fishing. I swam slowly toward the reef, noticing a channel of slightly deeper water leading toward the rocks, and following it. Then, suddenly, I tilted my head back a little further, to look ahead, just in time to see a shark coming straight at me! This one, again, was six to eight feet long, big enough to be dangerous and scary. With relief, I noticed it was staying about four feet below the waves, midway between surface and bottom, moving slowly down the same channel I was coming up, but apparently it didn't see me! I lifted myself as close

to the surface as I could, taking care that hands and feet were all planing flat in the water (nothing dangling down!) and held my speargun by my right cheek, pointed carefully at the center of his head, which soon came right below me, close enough to touch. How wide it looked! A couple of feet wide, I guess.

Then, suddenly, it rolled a little, and I saw one eye look up at me. As if thinking: "A threatening object overhead. Yikes!" it accelerated forward with a startled burst of speed, to escape me, and the tail then flexed to produce a real surge of forward momentum. As I watched, numbed and amazed, it shot just beneath several pairs of dangling legs of the other skindivers between me and my boat. "Shark!" some one exclaimed. We all climbed back into the boat, limp with excitement and delighted with our close shave. Clearly, we realized as we talked it over, the shark had been at least as scared as we were--thank goodness. We even got our courage back after a while and returned to fishing, though with frequent looks over our shoulders, even more than usual, and I was always careful that way. A little later, Bill Mello came roaring back in his speedboat. For some unaccountable reason, he chose to make a flashy turn just as he came up to us and stopped, but he misjudged the waves, which were bigger than he thought, or at the wrong phase of the cycle in relation to the waves his boat created. He turned, his motor made a curious gurgling roar, and the next thing I knew, I was looking (from under water) at a boat coming down underwater too! Poor Bill--his boat had sunk! It was quite an embarrassment for him, but no real problem, because there were enough of us to pull the boat to shallower water outside the reef, rock it back and forth to get water out of it, then to help bail and eventually to tow him back across the lagoon to shore. All in all, it was really a fun day.

Another name I remember now, associated with my high school days, is Philip Zuhse. Phil was a cousin of Carla Massey's and visited the Massey family when he was perhaps a sophomore. Carla's dad, Harold Massey, was one of the early skindivers in Aruba, and went with Phil and me to check out some submerged rocks on the inside of the reef at the Big Lagoon.

Aside from barracudas, which worried me, and sharks, which scared the heck out of me, the only other things I watched out for under water were stinging live coral, spiny sea urchins and spiny blowfish, and moray eels. Morays were pure muscle, four to five feet in length, and lived mostly hidden in tunnels in the underwater rocks. They had a nasty bite, and one would sometimes stick its head out of a cave, showing its teeth, to protest the approach of a diver getting too close to its lair. The greatest danger would have been to have an eel bite you while it was strongly placed in the rocks, because it's doubtful a human would be strong enough to pull free of the eel before drowning. (We didn't have

oxygen tanks, after all, so depended on one lungful of air per dive, which gave at most one minute, or a little longer, under water.) Once, in about 25 feet of water outside the Little Lagoon, Bob Drew speared a fish, but couldn't get it dislodged from a rock where the fish retreated. Bob stayed down as long as he could, then, desperate for air, shot to the surface, dropping his spear gun. The gun was buoyant, and attached to the spear by a ten-foot string, so it stayed suspended over the spear. He was gasping on the surface, so I knew he was too tired to dive again right away, and I went down to help. Strangely, the fish had pulled entirely out of sight in a rock cave, with only a bit of spear protruding. I reached my arm into the hole, pulled and twisted, but the fish felt hard as rock. I gave up, too. As I headed back toward the surface, though, I looked down to see the fish emerge--it was held firmly in the jaws of a big, green moray! Omigosh, I thought, if that thing had grabbed my arm, I would have been stuck on the bottom. I shuddered. "Stay away from morays!" I told myself, and "Don't stick your hands into holes in the rock!" I never got to pass on those warnings to Phil Zuhse.

Phil was delighted at the new experience of being underwater, and swam enthusiastically from rock to rock. I followed at a leisurely pace, and Mr. Massey brought up the rear. Phil dove on a rock, and then shot excitedly to the surface, taking off his mask to shout, "There's a big fish down there!" He dove back to the rock, aimed at a hole in the center, and "sprong", the spear was in the fish. I followed along to see what he had shot, and realized to my horror that he had put his spear (attached to his gun by a string, remember, and thus to him) into the middle of the brownish-green body of a moray. In a minute that thing would be out of the rock, looking for vengeance, and Phil would be attached to it! "I'd better put another spear in it," I thought, "then we can pull on opposite sides and keep it between us." So I shot my spear next to Phil's, and swam in the opposite direction from where Phil was. Sure enough, a few seconds later, the moray was out of the rock, twisting and snapping at the spears, and I congratulated myself for my clever stratagem. But only for a minute, because Phil's spear came loose and I was alone on the string to the eel! While I was still thinking what to do next, pulling gently away from the eel, Mr. Massey swam into view and put his spear into the moray. We were able to keep it between us and work our way gradually to shore, not far from the Esso Club, where we found the Chinese cooks were only too happy to get an eel for their supper. I never liked spearing something unless I was going to eat it, and stayed away from morays as a matter of principal, but this one and only spearing of one turned out okay.

Thinking of Mike Alemany also reminds me of the "chloral" caper--the time Bob Drew and I made knockout drops and experimented on Mike with them. Our high school science teacher allowed us a certain amount of creativity in chemistry class, and Bob and I had a wonderful

time cooking up things in unofficial experiments. We fermented cornmeal and yeast, then distilled it into whiskey. Next we did the same with molasses, making rum (Both were small quantities, and both smelled and tasted pretty bad). Then we read somewhere that bubbling chlorine gas through ethyl alcohol made chloral, otherwise known as “The Old Mickey Finn” or knockout drops. Bob and I made a little and wondered when we might be able to use it. The occasion was a weird one in many respects. It was at what might be properly called an orgy, or as close as I ever came to one.

Hans Wolff, a bachelor who lived in the Colony, occasionally “house-sat” the houses of married couples who went away on vacation. He was staying at the house of, I believe, the Binnion’s, when the incident I am going to relate took place. Hans offered to let a bunch of us boys have a fish-fry party at the house. We could use the kitchen to cook the fish, and could bring beer or other booze, if we wanted to. It was while we were preparing for that particular fish-fry, in fact, that Bill Mello sank his boat as I related earlier, and the shark swam under me. We brought all the fish we speared that day, as we had for several other days, to Hans’s place, storing them in the refrigerator-freezer until there was enough for the Big Party. The party itself was a lot of fun, especially at the beginning, but it got a little wild as the evening wore on and we all had some beers or other alcohol. I remember, for example, Bill Mello going to sleep on a bed and several of the rest of us trying to get his hand, dangling from one side of the bed, into a bucket of cold water because we had heard that a hand in cold water would cause involuntary urination. In the spirit of science, in other words, we wanted to see if we could get Bill to pee in his pants. It didn’t work--he kept pulling his hand out, and was still sensate enough to mumble, “You guys are trying to make me pee in my pants, damn you!” The other drink-related incident was giving Mike a Mickey Finn, again, in the interest of science. It was a very small dose, thank goodness, and although Mike got much drunker than would have been normal for the three or four alcoholic drinks he had that night, he didn’t get knocked out or hurt. Like Bill, in fact, he was still sober enough to say, when he learned what we had done, “Damn you guys!”

Prostitution in Aruba was legal. “La Hija del Dia”, in San Nicholas, was a little two-story hotel that housed perhaps 20 girls at a time, and they stayed a month in Aruba and then went to other islands, in part of a traveling vice-syndicate controlled by a couple of history’s biggest crooks--Trujillo in the Dominican Republic and Batista in Cuba. The Dutch government in Aruba tolerated prostitution as a release of sexual energy that otherwise might have been diverted into sex crimes (of which we had none, as far as I know). The girls were inspected by doctors once a week, I was told, to avoid passing of diseases, and they were then licensed to carry on their profession legally. They didn’t grant their

favors in the Hija del Dia, but rather were taken by their clients to “Bichi-Bichi”, which could mean any place from a beach to a deserted sand dune area, but most often was an area west of San Nicholas where some car seats were left out in the open. We boys used to cruise along in front of the Hija del Dia or park just across the street and watch the activities there. Girls would stand on the sidewalk or in balconies upstairs, and flirt with prospects. They weren’t much interested in us boys, knowing we were young and mostly without money, but they didn’t seem to mind our presence either. There was a bar on the first floor, where men sat at tables and bought drinks. The first of the month, when the new group of girls came in, was a festive one, with men all over the place to meet the new girls.

Bob Drew is a successful businessman now, and came to Dallas recently to attend a sales convention. He called, and he, Sue, and I had dinner together. In the course of the evening he mentioned “Ralph Stahre’s car”, which has got me thinking of some other wild times in Aruba. Ralph Stahre (pronounced “star”) was a friend about two years older than me who got his driver’s license before the guys my age, like Gleb Aulow and Bob Drew. Ralph’s parents were Swedish, I think--really nice people who spoke with slight accents. Ralph’s house was near mine and he walked home along the same route with me and some of the girls in that neighborhood like Mary B. Spitzer, Katie Hussey and Willie DeWeese. Sometimes he would let various kids of our group, both boys and girls, ride around with him in his parents’ car. Mr. and Mrs. Stahre didn’t go out much, apparently, because the car always seemed to be available for Ralph.

The car was old, and quite a specimen. It was a Chrysler or a La Salle, with old-fashioned features such as running boards and a hand-throttle. Running boards probably were a throw-back to the days of horse-drawn carriages, when riders could jump on the outside of the vehicle and stand on the “boards” running along the side of the car and joining the front and rear doors on each side. The hand-throttle was an advanced idea, equivalent to modern systems that allow you to maintain acceleration without using your foot. You could just pull out a little knob on the dash to the driver’s right and the car would accelerate without any pressure on the foot-pedal. Those features made for some interesting riding experiences.

One favorite trick for Gleb, Bob, and me, for example, was to wait until Ralph was distracted by something (such as the guy in the back seat jumping around or screaming) and surreptitiously reach over with our left hand and pull out the throttle. The car would take off, with Ralph grasping the steering wheel, pumping his right foot, and for some unexplainable reason not quite realizing at first what was happening! We would roar ahead, beads of sweat would pop out on his forehead as

he fought for control, and then he would see and hear us breaking up with laughter and realize what had happened. He could slow down (with difficulty) by braking, of course, so the maneuver wasn't quite as crazy and dangerous as it sounds, but almost. He could also push the throttle back in, as soon as he realized what had happened, or one of us would quickly push it back in if we saw danger approaching. Gleb or Bob even figured out, one night, how to climb out the left rear door, creep along the running board, and then "Yeoww!" spread himself, arms outstretched and facing inward, on the windshield right in front of Ralph. That was a real shocker for Ralph and for me who was sitting in the right-side front passenger seat at the time. Since the guys in the back opened the rear doors frequently, even while we were moving along, the sound of the door wasn't a particular warning. But, all of a sudden, there was the wildly grinning face looking right in the windshield. Ralph swerved a bit at that one, but kept things under control as the "wild man" returned back along the running boards the way he had come. Other times, people in the back seat would suddenly cup their hands over Ralph's eyes while we were zipping along, leading to still more merriment. The person in the right front seat had to be alert to help steer in such emergencies, which, fortunately, were brief and infrequent. I sent a copy of this story to Gleb recently, and he reminded me that the Stahre's had a little dog named Buster. Buster had stiff hair and was probably a "terrier-mix". Anyway, Gleb said, Buster's blanket was always in the back seat of the car, and it was this disgusting thing, with its bad smell and prickly hairs, that was thrown over poor Raph's head to provide a little excitement from time to time! What an incredibly good natured guy he was!

Cruising with Ralph, we usually ended up at the soda fountain at the Esso Club for a root beer float or similar delicacy. Or we went bowling, or to the Thursday night open-air softball games at the Junior Esso Club, or to a movie. Or we went out to the Seagrape Tree Grove to spy on "Bichi-Bichi" couples. The Seagrape trees provided shelter and privacy in that area between the B.A. Beach and a line of dead-coral cliffs. The ground was coral rock with beach sand blown over it in gentle ridges rising to higher dunes against the cliff line. Seagrape trees can grow even in sand, with very little water. There were rough paths in hard-packed sand winding between the trees, where cars could go if you were careful to avoid softer, sandy areas, but the place was challenging enough not to attract normal motorists (all the more reason for people going "Bichi-Bichi" to go there).

Our approach was to drive very slowly into the area on nights when a little moonlight helped you drive without headlights, until we spotted a parked car. Then we would drive up close behind the "target", flash our headlights on bright and even honk the horn if that was needed. Usually, the headlights did the trick pretty quickly. The couple in the car would stay down for a moment, and then realize this jerk was going to keep his

headlights on them, whereupon we would see two faces looking out the rear window at us first in puzzlement, then in anger followed almost inevitably by threatening fist-and-finger-signals. We, of course, would just stay put, all of us giggling gleefully. Finally the man would start to get out and come get us, and we would back out, swerve into a turn, and make our getaway. It made for an exciting evening in the days before TV, and you can readily understand why “old timers” long for those simpler days when kids had to be creative and develop their own entertainment.

Gleb Aulow and I used to have great times on Thursday nights in Aruba. That was softball night, and my Dad and his brother Lon attended the games religiously. My mother and Aunt Mabel were less interested, but Clyde and Lon smoked cigars in the strong Aruba breeze and shouted their heads oft for their departmental teams, cheered on combatants when fights broke out among the players, and had an all around good time. Lon had been Superintendent of Schools in Cedar County, Missouri, before coming to Aruba, had been a championship track athlete specializing in the 400-yard run, and was very skilled with his hands. He whittled wooden chains, for instance, and carved wooden spheres within spheres. He had a woodworking shop in the garage of his home and spent a lot of his spare time there, making things for his children such as jigsaw puzzles, other puzzles in which you slid a flat block of wood within a frame from one corner to another (these things are made from plastic now) and other things. His job in the refinery had to do with training young Aruban boys in the manual arts. Many of them had never seen a wrench or screwdriver before, and in the refinery they had to know how to handle tools. At one stage he was given a company-owned motor scooter to use in getting around within the refinery, between work sites and training facilities. The scooter had a side-car. He was allowed to drive it home at night, and on the nights of the softball games, he drove it to the games.

That’s where Gleb and I came into the picture. Uncle Lon said I could ride his scooter around, if I wanted to, while the game was going on! I would drive away, pick up Gleb, and we would head for the highest hill in the Colony. That was up near the hospital. From there, we had clear sailing on a straightaway to the west, with the wind at our backs! We would open the throttle wide open, hunch down low, and roar down the hill as fast as we could go. The little scooter would bump and swing on its springs, and give us its best shot, but it wasn’t too stable even at moderate speeds with the sidecar occupied. We didn’t care. The speed was delicious and the breeze was cool. We had to shoot through one major intersection, but then were on another stretch of straightaway until we hit a giant bump as the road entered a more populated area with driveways and side streets. We’d bounce off the seats and hang on going over the bump, and then slow down, exhilarated. Then we’d turn and

climb the hill again, and repeat the procedure until we were tired of speed runs and thought of somewhere else to go. Those were great evenings. I hate to think what it must have done to Lon's scooter's motor and springs, but he never complained or even cautioned us. I guess he figured we couldn't get into too much trouble no matter how hard we tried. He was right. We couldn't, though we did try our best.

John O'Brien: I remember playing with lead soldiers in John's backyard as a little kid. He had the kind from World War I with doughboys lying down behind a Browning machine gun, or carrying bayonets in "Out of the trenches and attack, boys!" position while wearing silver-painted helmets and wearing regulation-brown uniforms. Much, much later, I remember John in connection with the annual Christmas tree riots.

The Company supplied one tree to each family at Christmas. They were brought down from New York under tarpaulins on the deck of a tanker, and then delivered by truck. You didn't get much chance to choose, which is probably why I'm not fussy about Christmas trees to this day--the truck pulled up, my mother would go out and collect whatever she was given (maybe pleading with the crew to give us another if the first choice was really a scrounge, but not necessarily with success). We would then decorate it with love, smelling the fir ecstatically because it was so unique, particularly when compared to anything we grew on the island, and leaving it up as long as we could, usually until after New Year's.

Then some special fun began. We boys would collect our own tree and those of our neighbors and try to assemble them for a bonfire. The first year we got together and had a nice fire--nice enough to show that, the more trees we had together, the more spectacular the blaze would be. So the next year we really worked at collecting. I went around to every house I could (and not just in my own neighborhood, but all over town) soon after the trees were first delivered, and asked people if they might be willing to save their tree for me to collect, once they were through with it. People were generally pretty receptive since, of course, they had to dispose of the tree anyway. Many other kids did the same.

Then came the time for trees to be thrown away. Resentments soon developed over "poaching" by boys who spirited away trees that had been promised to other boys. This sort of ungentlemanly and unsportsmanlike behavior led to the inevitable--sneaking into other boy's yards in the dark of night to restore collected trees to their more legitimate owners. This went on for several days, limited by the fact that we had to go to school by day and our parents (though they didn't yet realize what was going on) insisted we get to bed at reasonable hours at night. Little by little, though, John and I, and a number of others, built up a nice stack of trees which my parents didn't seem to mind our storing

in my back yard patio, protected by tall lattices and fences, and White's reputation as a barking, biting dog. We even staged a Friday night raid on a similar stash, in Jack Pakozdi's yard, which netted a glorious addition to our supply.

I went to bed Saturday night with visions dancing before my eyes of the spectacular bonfire we soon were to have. The next morning, however, imagine my righteous dismay when I went out to survey the treasure of drying trees, only to find the yard empty! Nothing but a few stray sprigs and pine needles remained. Then a frantic search was on, finally leading to a low-ceilinged cave below John O'Brien's house. Our supply of trees was jammed inside! A group of my friends and I began dragging them out, only to be met in mid-retrieval by another group of boys who laid claim to the same trove. Some fighting followed, and much pulling on trees that were increasingly falling apart anyway because of brittleness. Finally, a truce was reached, and we all pulled the trees down to the flat area below the cliff, where we had a big fire that night.

As I recall, someone was burned pretty badly in a Christmas tree bonfire somewhere else that night, and the Company ruled that the trees had to be collected henceforward by the Boy Scouts and burned on the point near the Esso Club, with adult supervision. That made for a nice ceremony every year afterward, but nothing that matched the romance and excitement of our earlier approach, with mass movements into forbidden back yards at night and the endless gloating that followed as each group of boys counted its hoard. I can still remember the spookiness of the Pakozdi's dark, dark patio as we lifted the latch on the gate as quietly as we could, waited for the someone getting a drink in the kitchen to turn off the light and return to bed, and then resumed our evil deed, moving Lord knows how many trees away without being detected (and then the indignation over having the same thing done to me just a night later!)

Ken Work recently reminded me of the bicycle "races" we used to hold on the basketball court at the Junior Esso Club. Bicycle demolition derby would be a better description! At that period in our lives, some boys became very creative with their bicycles, especially Tinker Baggaley, Ronald Turner, and Joe Carroll. I helped Tink with his. He took an old frame, we cleaned it off with lye and emery paper, and he turned the frame completely over then repositioned the pedal-shaft on the top of the frame rather than the bottom. Next he got someone in the refinery to weld a rod on top of the inverted frame and mounted the seat on the end of the rod. He could sit about five feet in the air, with pedals perhaps three feet off the ground, and propel the bike forward more or less normally, steering by wooden broomsticks stuck in the handlebars which, of course, had been mounted on the reverse side of the frame

(Tink also built a unicycle, and taught himself to ride it, but that's a different story). Everybody was soon riding around on old bikes, many of which had been modified enough to be really distinctive. Mine was stripped down but otherwise relatively plain.

During noon hour from school, we all rode our bikes home for lunch, stopping en route to play a while at the Jr. Esso Club, perhaps swinging from exercise bars or just sitting around talking. One day someone decided it would be fun to race by circling around the cement basketball court, which was small enough to make frequent, slippery turns necessary, but big enough to hold six or eight bikes at a time. These races became big deals, attracting more and more kids, and (like modern hockey) they became rougher and rougher almost as if through the workings of some natural kid law. It wasn't long before we were smashing into each other, pedals were projecting into the spokes of moving wheels, and bikes were coming apart at the seams. Defeated gladiators would drag crumpled humps of wreckage home on wheels that would hardly turn, or that wiggled with tremendously warped rims. I remember squaring off with Joe Carroll once and both of us being pretty mad, and my bike being more or less totaled on another occasion, but I don't remember what stopped the "races" unless we all just ran out of equipment eventually. Anyway, they were fun while they lasted!

One other thing Ken Work reminded me of was the work he and some friends did waxing cars. It was a lucrative business, and important in Aruba where the salt spray decomposed car bodies pretty quickly unless they were washed frequently with fresh water and coated with Simonize or Johnson's Wax or both. Ken loved cars and was a good worker, and made a lot of money offering regular washings and waxings to selected customers. He would pick up the car; take it to his house to work on, and return to the owner's garage. Regular customers would leave the key and trust him to get the job done. Ken said there was one special Jaguar or similar luxury car that he loved so much he drove it all around, the owner remarking that he couldn't understand how anyone could drive 200 miles for a wax job on a 14-mile-long island. It wasn't just that Ken drove it himself, but he also used it to teach Penny Richey and other girls to drive! Ken related that, during one of these lessons, someone had backed a customer's luxury car off the street into a coral patch where the flywheel shield had been dented into the flywheel. After a brief moment of panic, Ken decided his best hope for rescue was the Carroll's "shade tree garage" (where Earl Carroll, Joe's father, was always working on some car or other in an area in back of the Carroll house). Ken arrived as the family was finishing lunch, and Joe left the family to come out and talk with him, but Ken heard Mrs. Carroll say, "Don't go with Ken Work! You'll get into trouble!" Joe did come and help get Ken out the fix, however. Ken told me a story about his older brother Clarence ("Dippy" was the only name I ever heard him called)

that I'd like to pass along, too. I remembered hearing Dippy had been born a triplet, and was the only survivor of the three. Ken confirmed this, adding that the triplets were born in winter in Wyoming, and initially all three were believed to have been born dead. Mr. and Mrs. Work mourned the loss of all three of their firstborn children, and family members sadly put the little bodies in shoe boxes and sat them out on the back porch of the house until a more permanent solution was decided upon. A little later, however, an aunt coming in through the porch noticed that one of the premies was moving! She rushed into the kitchen with it and warmed it in the oven. That was Dipper's start in life--an unusually dramatic one!

About the only thing I remember about Dippy in Aruba was that he had a bottling machine at their house, and brewed and bottled his own root-beer. It was the only contraption of that type I had ever seen. I never saw it work, and never sampled the brew, but it sounded like a great idea. You could buy root beer extract in a bottle in drug stores in those days, and I tried diluting some once in soda, but it didn't taste special--maybe Dipper's brewing made it better.

*I noted earlier that I would comment on overseas pets. We obtained ours from a family that left. At first he kept going back to their house, but eventually became a member of our family. Whenever a picture was taken, he was at the ready to be included, be it a children's birthday party or a cocktail party for adults. I remember our maid having to cook him a rice dinner when we didn't have any scraps for him. When we finally left Colombia, we managed to plead pitifully enough to have our parents agree to take him with us. When we got to the US and store bought dog food was available and convenient, we bought it but he wouldn't eat it. From Colombia he traveled to Iran. He lasted there for a little over a year before he disappeared, presumed eaten or killed in action. I still wonder what they thought when the family showed up with him. Like Bill, we continued with his creative name, Blanco (Spanish for "Whitie").*

# **The Bill & Thelma Murphy Story**

Both Bill and Thelma came to Aruba in 1948. He was an accountant and she was a surgical nurse at the hospital. They were married in 1950 and had three children, all born on Aruba. Mike is the oldest, born in November 1954. Jim was born in 1956, and Bill was born in 1961.

Mike attended school through the third grade and Jim attended school through the second grade in Aruba. Bill was too young to attend school during the period we were there.

We lived in many different bungalows over the years, but the last one was next door to the Proterra's on the cliff overlooking the beach. On a recent trip back, the house is still there and in very good condition.

The family left Aruba in 1963 to move to Caracas, where Bill worked for Creole. In 1965, they moved to Madrid, Spain where Bill helped to expand the Esso Chemical business there. The family moved to Southampton, England in 1970 where Bill continued to work for the Chemical business. In 1975, Bill and Thelma moved back to the U.S. and settled in New Jersey. Bill continued to work in New York for Exxon until his retirement in 1983. Bill and Thelma continued to live in New Jersey and spent summers in Rhode Island until his death in 1999.

Thelma continues to live in New Jersey, near her son Bill and his wife Virginia. Mike lives in Massachusetts with his wife Maggie, and Jim lives in Florida with his wife Stephanie. The next generation includes Bill's son Chris and Mike's four "kids" (all now over the age of 22), Amy, David, Matthew and Marianne.

Mike and Bill have been back to Aruba on several occasions over the past five years with their families and enjoyed showing the younger crowd around. Things have changed a lot, but the basics remain very much the same.

# **The T J "Terry" Phillips Family Story**

**As told by Diane Phillips Berthelot**

My father, Terry J. Phillips went to Aruba in 1947. He lived in the Bachelor Quarters during this time. My mother Irene, my brother Derek and I followed in 1949. My brother really didn't know his father, in fact he came tattling, stating "that man won't take me to see the fish".

Upon arriving in Aruba, we lived in one of the apartments at Colorado Point. My soon to be best friend, Loreen Anderson lived in a group of apartments behind us. I remember this distinctly because as I was trying to walk across the coral and cactus to play with her, I fell. I had a behind full of cactus needles! Loreen and I used to torment my brother when we told him we were going to the lighthouse to see the "devil". I'm surprised he still claims me as a sister.

Our next move was into a bungalow in the 100 row. My mother believes it was #137. It was during our occupancy of this house that the Aruba Strike occurred. My father was one of the men locked in to keep the refinery running. We spent that time at the Cavell's along with the Shaffet's as our home was fairly close to the front gate. We lived in this bungalow for approximately six months before moving to Bungalow #211. We were expecting a new addition to the family. The 100 row doesn't hold a pleasant memory for my brother. It was here that he had an accident involving a tree limb poking his eye and lacerating the cornea. He has suffered with that injury ever since.

Many memories occurred in Bungalow #211. Our parents ordered all the furnishings for a new nursery from Bamburger's in New Jersey. I can still remember unpacking the crates in our garage. Some boxes were off limits...my parents had ordered our Christmas gifts at the same time. I remember climbing up in the attic with my brother one night (the parents were out to dinner) and we went through all the goodies. Imagine our surprise on Christmas morning and half the toys weren't there. Because of the limited shopping resources in Aruba, my parents had included items for birthdays etc. for the entire year. Once again, we learned a lesson the hard way. Our little sister Terry Lynn was born in June of 1952 while living here. We had a huge seagrape tree near that house and we would gorge ourselves on the grapes. I still remember the stained fingers from those grapes. Another person that remains fondly in my memory is Shortie from the Old Esso Club. He made the very best

ice cream sundaes.

Our next move was to Bungalow #821. We finally each had our own bedroom as they closed in the porch to create a third bedroom for my brother. I recall my father taking us all out to Cunucu to get Olive Trees for our new yard. When we arrived home, he proudly planted the bushes and then went to the club. To relax, I'm sure. Hank Van Deutekom heard of our adventure and couldn't resist calling my mother. In a disguised voice, he proceeded to tell her he was the Chief of Police and understood my father had stolen some olive bushes. My mother had a hard time forgiving him for that prank. I can still remember the excitement when all the new electric stoves arrived, or when the "Christmas Tree" truck would wind through the colony delivering trees. We lived fairly near the Gibbons whom we called Uncle Ted and Auntie Jessie. My mother knew the Gibbons in England prior to moving to Aruba. Our first pet, Laddie was a beautiful black cocker spaniel that was from a litter of Auntie Jessie's spaniel. He was so mischievous. He would hide and wait to torment our maid, Cynthia. One of our most memorable Christmas' was in #821. Derek and I wanted bikes very much. When we woke on Christmas morning, there was a string with a piece of paper attached. Our names were on this paper. We had to follow this string.....it went around the inside of the house, out through the patio, down the driveway and out into the coral in the back. There at the end were our bikes. My Dad had a blast that Christmas eve creating wonderful memories for his children.

Derek and I were both very active in the scouting program. I remember that Mrs. Ewart was my scout leader. We went to Ikebana one year and we all became ill from brackish water that was mistakenly used for drinking water. Our troop also participated as part of the Color Guard for Queen Juliana when she visited the island. I have "fond" memories of the caves behind the hospital. I was forbidden to go there but I was so enticed by the thrill and defied my father's instructions. Unfortunately, he knew his daughter too well and waited for me in the hospital parking lot. I received an extensive punishment for that adventure. We used to go out to Oranjestad to visit Hank Van Deutekom's mother and father. We loved going there as his father enjoyed entertaining us with his dog, Bonzo. We left Aruba in 1956 to return to England. We thought our life had ended. This is all we had ever known as children. We returned to England for vacations every other year and we dearly loved and missed our grandparents. But we sure didn't want to live there. Our wishes were soon granted. My parents were persuaded to move to the U.S. by friends, Richard Shaffett, Hank and Evie VanDeutekom and Dottie and Johnny Wengert. It was just as good as going back home to Aruba. In 1957 we moved to Baton Rouge where we have all resided ever since. Derek is the only one in our family that has returned to visit Aruba. My father passed away nine

years ago after a lengthy battle with cancer. My mother is still doing quite well despite a terrible hip fracture and several fractured vertebrae from osteoporosis. We see Hank and Evie quite frequently.

I have been a Registered Nurse for the past 24 years. I recently retired from a local Obstetric Hospital where I was the Director of Obstetrical Services. I have three grown children and 7 wonderful grandchildren. Derek is married and has four step-grandchildren. He recently retired from Ciba Corporation after a very successful career. Terry Lynn married and has two children and two grandchildren. She works for one of our local banks and hasn't retired yet, as she is still the youngest. Our small family has really expanded.

**MEMORIES:**

- Sitting on the huge boulders across from the church to watch the firework display that my Dad helped with.
- Picnics outside the colony with friends. My Dad would tell us to sprinkle salt on the parakeets tail and we could catch them. I was an adult before I realized that I would never get that close to them.
- Going to the large caves to explore...and being afraid of the bats that were everywhere.
- Collecting sea urchins and seashells near the natural bridge
- Sitting on the wall outside Lago Community Church with our maid, waiting for Hank and Evie VanDeutekom to leave the church after their wedding.
- ~~Mrs. Wade's paper and book stand.....~~
- Eating croquettes at the Aruba airport with that wonderful Dutch mustard.
- Shopping in San Nicholas and Oranjestad.
- Vacations to England and sailing on some of the most wonderful ships...before there were Cruise Lines.
- Sliding down the fire chute at the elementary school.
- Wonderful, wonderful memories and friendships came from living on this small close-knit island. I feel so very lucky to have been given this opportunity.

# The Walter Ratcliff Family Story

As told by Charlie Ratcliff.

My father, Walter Ratcliff, moved to Aruba in 1951 from Baton Rouge. He was a chemical engineer and worked in the General Office Building. My mother (Dorothy) joined him a couple of months later in early 1952. They lived in an apartment in "Seroe Colorado"<sup>1</sup> until they made it to the top of the list to get a house. Then, sometime before 1954, they moved into Bungalow #1569. They had their first child (my sister Peggy) in 1954. I (Charlie) was born in 1956, and my brother Tom was born in 1958. We all attended school in "Seroe Colorado" in the 1960's.

When I was in 3rd grade, we moved to Bungalow #28, which is right on the coast about half a mile west of Rodgers Beach (three houses up from the powerhouse). We lived there until my father retired in 1972.

By the time I was in 4th grade, plans were being made to eliminate the high school. By the time I was 5th grade, grades K - 9 were consolidated into a building near the refinery that used to be used as an office building. High school age kids went to prep schools in the States or Europe. My sister went first (Emma Willard School in Troy, New York - class of 1972). Then I enrolled in Northfield Mount Hermon School in Northfield, Mass. (class of 1974). My brother followed me to NMH (class of 1976).

In 1972, my father applied for early retirement (he was in his early fifties) and we moved back to his boyhood home in Upstate New York. My parents and I moved to Birmingham, Alabama in 1982; my brother joined us here about three years later.

Both of my parents are still alive and live in the Birmingham area, as does my brother. My sister has lived in Albuquerque, New Mexico since the mid 1970's

<sup>1</sup>*It used to aggravate me when people referred to this area as "Seroe Colorado." I considered the idea revisionist. Not only have I mellowed, it has since been pointed out that the area where Lago Colony was built was originally known as Seroe Colorado. It's still Lago Colony to me, politically incorrect or not*



**H o o i b e r g**

# **Continuation:<sup>1</sup>**

## **Jimmy & Celma Rosborough Story**

Jimmy and Celma were newlyweds and were working in Chicago after Jimmy's graduation from Eureka College. Jimmy's brother's wife's brother worked for Standard Oil of Indiana and he heard about a job in Aruba. Jimmy had never heard of Aruba. The pay was \$135 per month plus \$100 living allowance. Jimmy interviewed with a Vice President and was hired as a chemist to inspect the quality and quantity of oil as a result of a certain cracking process. Standard Oil of Indiana owned patents for Hi Temperature and Pressure Cracking of Oil and Jimmy was to keep track of the yield for royalty payments. After the usual six to seven day tanker trip from New York City, Jimmy arrived in Aruba, where he lived in a bungalow with several other bachelor foremen. They knew he was a big shot but they didn't know exactly what Jimmy was doing at the refinery. One of the men living in this first house was Ralph Watson, who later became a very close family friend along with his wife Beulah. Jimmy was en route to Aruba in November of 1929 when the Stock Market crashed. He gauged tanks for volume and did distillation for yield. After one and a half years he transferred to the refinery owners, Pan American. Standard Oil of Indiana had oil but no markets and Standard Oil of New Jersey had markets, so they bought the refinery.

### **THEY GET THEIR FIRST BUNGALOW AND CELMA COMES**

Jimmy was told that he would get a house in six months although most people waited two years. Dr. Humphreys from Indiana came on a visit in January of 1930 and took care of Jimmy getting priority on a house. Their first house was Bungalow #128.

Celma took the train to New York City. Sheldon, from Personnel in Standard Oil, called the ship and asked the Captain to wait for her. They put Celma on a barge and she had to climb up a rope ladder in the dark. She had never even seen a ship, "I had only been to Kansas!" Celma was so cold that she slept with her clothes on, and she couldn't even find the bathroom (didn't know what the 'WC' was). There were six passengers and all ate with the crew in the back of the ship. She arrived in Aruba the last day of January in 1930. Long time friend, Ralph Watson, and Jimmy went out to the ship to meet Celma. Ralph's wife, Beulah, worked in the hospital lab. At the time, there were about 1000 men and 50 women in the Colony. Ralph & Beulah Watson were Celma &

Jimmy's oldest friends in Aruba.

## **BASKETBALL**

Basketball was a big thing down there in the early days. Jimmy was on the Lab Team and played forward along with Grady Burnett. Jimmy remembers a six-foot center named Herman Bechtel. George LeMaire was also on the team.

## **THE BIRD CAGE ROW GANG**

Bungalow #128 was part of 'Bird Cage Row', a group of three room bungalows all occupied by young married couples. Lots of good times were remembered, and lots of Scotch. Pete & Eleanor Linster and Ellie & Belle Wilkins were part of this gang. A short time later, Jimmy remembers buying a second hand Model a Roadster with a rumble seat for \$150. One of the things Jimmy wasn't too popular for was the fact that they had a telephone (one of the few in the colony). The reason that Jimmy had the telephone was because he had to get up at all hours of the night to go out and 'gauge a tank'. The company supplied everything, furniture, linen, etc.

## **CELMA'S FIRSTS**

Celma's first specialty was frying canned chicken. In 1931, Dick was born in the hospital by the refinery – a small one story building. Ralph & Beulah Watson sat in the hospital with Celma & Jimmy waiting for the birth. Beulah was a lab technician at the hospital and was a big help. Dick was the first 'colony' male born in this hospital (Betty Ann Binnion was the first 'colony' female born in this hospital).

## **WORKING IN THE LAB**

Mr. Tanner in the Lab taught Jimmy everything. Mr. Tanner was not liked, but Jimmy worked hard for him doing something worthwhile. Jimmy got two promotions and moved into the plant. After he left the lab, O.B. Whitely put Jimmy in charge of 22 chemical engineers responsible for process control. Jimmy edited their reports. He started up a refinery lab in Venezuela, which was a feather in his cap.

## **JIMMY'S LAB ACCIDENT**

Jimmy's lab accident was from a 3 liter flask of gasoline that was being distilled. There was not enough water getting to the condenser to condense the gas. The cork blew out and zap, it exploded. To get at the gas valve to turn off the burner, Jimmy had to reach through the fire, burning his right arm. The accident happened in July of 1931 when Dick was a tiny baby. Louise took care of Dick as Celma had to be in the hospital all the time. Jimmy was constantly calling for morphine. Every morning the nurses would clean off the scab, leaving it open and spraying it with tannic acid. Jimmy said that it hurt like fire! The nurses would not give Jimmy enough morphine because they worried about it

being habit forming. He was hospitalized for two months, and you couldn't see his arm because of the scabs.

## **MOVING ON UP & WWII**

Celma & Jimmy moved to the five corners area (Brook's house), then to Bungalow #418 across from the Schoonmaker's house, where the air raid shelter was. All of the boys peed all over the inside of that shelter. During the war, the Dutch Marines came first, then the French, then the Scottish Highlanders, and then the U.S. Troops. There were a lot of parties at Ellie's shack. In 1941, the German U-Boat shot at the colony, 40% of the women left Aruba and were paid. Celma said that the women that stayed on the island thought it was unfair since they got nothing. The U-Boat torpedoed the lake tankers, but their big gun jammed and they only had a small machine gun. There was a complete black out, and about 2 a.m. Monday morning the family went to the church to see the activity. Celma said that the boys all had whooping cough. Some torpedoes were found on Palm Beach. There were also shells that hit the BOQ and a Lago Heights bedroom. Ten days later, a star shell from our own troops burned down the clubhouse. A temporary club was built with four Quonset huts.

Celma remembers that in 1944, she left Aruba because her mother was sick. Celma couldn't return to Aruba until after the war was over.

## **POST WAR EXPERIENCES**

In 1945, Celma & Jimmy moved to Bungalow #553. Celma and Beulah took a trip to Venezuela and the Andes Mountains in 1947. They went on native buses and stayed with Father Sanchez high in the Andes.

In 1950 a new clubhouse was built on the point. Donald was lucky. He drew lots of special food, and Celma & Jimmy had him draw for them. Donald also won a Christmas tree. Celma remembers that cars were up on blocks because there were no tires to purchase and all the screens on the porch were rusted.

Jimmy remembers that in the early days, we all went swimming at 'BA' Beach and remembers being caught in a rip tide. The women went to Little Lagoon every day with the children. Celma remembers that during the war, she was in charge of seeing that every American soldier went to a home the first night he arrived.

<sup>1</sup>For the rest of this story, see also “The Lago Colony Legend—Our Stories,” the first volume, page 543.



Bill McMaster, 4 months old, with his father. It was Bill's first trip by sea on a vessel believed to be the *s/s Invercorrie*.

Photograph courtesy Bill McMaster.

# **The George & Frances Royer Story**

**As told by Rusty Royer**

I was born in Aruba in 1947 and lived at Lago Colony with my parents until 1961. We lived in Bungalow #321. My father, George W. Royer, who was from Decatur, Alabama, graduated from Auburn University in 1933 with a degree in electrical engineering. He went to Aruba in 1936. He worked in the No. 2 Powerhouse. He and my mother, Frances C. Royer, who was also from Alabama, married in 1942 and she came to Aruba that year. My mother was a registered nurse and worked for a time at Lago hospital until I was born. When I lived in Aruba, I was known as Rusty Royer because of my red hair.

My mother and father also had a son who died at childbirth in September 1946. He is buried in the Masonic cemetery in Oranjestad.

My parents and I left Aruba in 1961 and returned to Alabama. After return to Alabama, my father began a second career as an engineer with the Army Missile Command in Huntsville, where he worked until his retirement at age 70 in 1978. My mother died in 1995 and my father is still living in Decatur.

## **The Walter & Edna Spitzer Story**

Walter G. Spitzer arrived in Aruba in 1945 from Meridian, Texas, his place of birth. He was hired as assistant principle and physics/chemistry teacher at Lago High School. The family, wife Edna Earl, and three children, Mary B., Kyle and Art stayed in Texas until the summer of 1946 when Walter "deemed" Aruba a fit place to raise a family.

Walter soon realized that his physics/chemistry degree was in demand in the refinery operations and left teaching for the Technical Service Division and more pay. A great decision he told the family years later after having paid for three college educations. His career moves included several years in Personnel and Training where he helped to develop and run the apprentice training program for the refinery. Finally, he moved to department head of the Lago police department.

While Walter left teaching, Edna Earl, who taught in Texas with Walter before coming to Aruba, returned to teaching. First she was a substitute and later was a fulltime 5th grade teacher. The Spitzer's were among the first latch key kids in Aruba. It was a natural step since we had already had a nanny back in Texas when both parents worked outside the home.

Even though Walter "deemed" Aruba a great place to raise a family, Edna Earl had her doubts after living for more than a year in converted army barracks at Colorado Point. One day she announced she was returning to the U.S. and civilization - -she had had enough! She asked the kids if we want to come with her. We all said no. Edna Earl stayed in Aruba and with Walter through 66 years of marriage.

Walter retired at 56, leaving Aruba in November 1964. They returned to Texas where their parents, brothers and sisters and three children were living. They made the Austin/Georgetown area base camp. Over the next 30 plus years they traveled, enjoyed family and friends from coast to coast and beyond. It was a retirement filled with good health, a Standard Oil NJ monthly pension check and an Airstream travel trailer they pulled all over the USA , Canada, Mexico and even to Alaska.

Walter died on Christmas Day in 1999 at age 91. Edna Earl died November 2002 at age 92.

**From information supplied by Art & Kyle Spitzer.**

## **The George R & Ann Turner Story**

George Turner, the High School English teacher from 1954 to 1959, came to Aruba in August of 1954. He had been teaching at West Point's prep school but applied for a job with Standard Oil as he now had a wife and two children.

George and his wife Ann and the two children, Diane and George Jr. lived in Bungalow #88 when they first arrived but after a couple of months they moved to Bungalow #301 where they remained until July, 1959 when they went to Norwich University for a one year temporary appointment on its faculty. They loved it there and George enjoyed this job and never returned to Aruba.

Ann was a professional librarian and was able to have her own career in the States, something she could not have done in Aruba.

In addition to teaching English at Lago High School, George also worked as the night manager of the Esso Club.

According to George, "Our years in Aruba were wonderful."

## **The Robbert van Duin Family Story**

**As told by Robbert van Duin.**

I lived, and am living again, in the colony. My father was Engelbertus (Bert) van Duin, and we moved from Holland to Aruba in 1968. He was a pilot, bringing in ships in the Oranjestad harbor. He transferred to Lago and we moved to Bungalow #248 in 1968 or 1969.

In 1978 we moved to Bungalow #327, which we bought and where my mother continued to live until she moved back to Holland in 1996. I have the fondest memories of growing up in the colony with the Esso Club, tennis courts and beaches.

It was dream upbringing and only later I realized it. I attended public school in Aruba, went (away) to study in 1985 and returned to Aruba in 1990. In 1992 I moved in Bungalow #231 thanks to Mr. Henri Coffi, who offered me that house right before Exxon was transferring the area back to the Aruba government.

In 1995 I moved to Bungalow #160, which I am living in and was able to buy from the government 4 months ago. It has been renovated and the painting process should be over by next week. Yard work will not be mentioned!

I have always been very happy growing up there, and it was through the colony that I spoke English without ever being officially taught. Many American friends came and went, and good memories remain. The colony is a sad shadow of the past, but the government has initiated a plan to at least sell all the homes. This would definitely upgrade the neighborhood, but the speed of government action is disappointing.

It has always been a desire of mine to remain in touch with friends from the past. My past was obviously the period from 1970-1985, but I greatly enjoyed the old pictures found on Dan Jensen's *www.lago-colony.com* website. Yvonne Brinkman told me about it when I saw her.

# The Homer Waits Story

As told by Homer Waits

## GETTING THERE WAS THE BIG ADVENTURE

I had graduated from the University of Texas in June 1943 with an offer of a job in Aruba - just the sort of thing that I had hoped for from high school days - something a long way away from Texas. I never looked back either.

The plan was to leave on the Southern Pacific train from San Antonio, make a connection in New Orleans that would take me to Flomaton, Georgia to catch an L & N train to Jacksonville, Florida where I would take the Seaboard Line to Miami and a flight that would somehow get me to Aruba. Then, as they say - the devil was in the details.

Things got off to an omen-filled start when I arrived in New Orleans to see the tail-lights of my continuation leg as it pulled out of the station. I was able with some help from another passenger in the same boat to find a place to sleep that night and catch a train on out the next morning. This part was 'standing room' only! And the arrival in Flomaton put us off in a switch-yard in the middle of nowhere - the town of Flomaton



my second wife, Jamie. I should also remember the name of the hotel in Maracaibo. I had the pleasure of staying in it on later occasions with other equally interesting experiences; among them finding Rusty, my

cooked into the bottom of a loaf of bread on my table! Really, I did!!

The trip out of Florida was on a Pan-Am flying boat. Now that was quite an experience. We flew all that first day against a head-wind and got only as far as Jamaica. Upon taking off the next morning, the plane started out across the bay and instead of taking off, turned back for another run. I discovered that it was not uncommon for the plane to lift a column of water from a flat calm surface that would weight the plane down enough to prevent it taking off. The simple act of going again through the previously stirred water would overcome this.

The Pan-Am plane took off from Dinner Key in Coconut Grove, FL and we just stepped in through a door that was at dock level. One wound up sitting inside the plane just a foot or so above water level. I used to have a picture of it but ----. The plane was the Sikorsky S43, a smaller version of the S42 that was on the Pacific run. Pictures on the internet show them on (retractable) wheels but in Miami and Jamaica we were on water. I don't remember about Barranquilla.

We arrived in Barranquilla that evening, July 4, in time for a huge party that night at the hotel to celebrate both July 4-5 since there were so many US soldiers stationed there at the time. I was among some old-time Creole-Venezuela employees who gave me a hard time for mixing my scotch with Coke, it being my very first hard liquor other than rum.

The next couple of days were spent in Maracaibo at a hotel that has mercifully been torn down since - I had to keep the light on to discourage the four and six legged wild-life running around the room! After one of the taxi drivers helped me through my first encounter with the Venezuelan immigration maze, I finally got off to Aruba in one of those wonderful old Fokker Tri-motors with all the hair-pins on the cowling and arrived in Aruba on July 7, 1943, some three weeks after leaving my home in San Antonio and became the second youngest employee at Lago. My 21st birthday was three weeks later on July 26.

### **MY FIRST JOB AT LAGO**

I started working in what we called #1 Lab, the process control lab, as a shift leader for Tim Binnion. After a couple of years or so, I moved to #3 lab for a while and then to TSD working for Jack Watkins in planning group. We were responsible for long term planning and economics. This led to an interest in computers in 1954 that held me for the rest of my life: The really crude beginning in Aruba on a lash up with (I kid you not) 32 BITS of storage; in Caracas; in a bank after we moved up here to Virginia; and as hobby to this day.

### **ACCOMMODATIONS IN LAGO COLONY**

I lived in Bachelor Quarters #6 first in one of those rooms with shared baths. My neighbor was Bob Johnson who had arrived a few

months before I did and also transferred to Creole in 1955.

In 1945, I married Almeda Stryker who had come down from California to teach first grade (I believe). We moved into bungalow #123, up the street a few houses from Eddie Dorwart (Ginger was a baby at the time). We moved to #601 in late 1947 or early 1948 after my daughter Julia was born. Bungalow #601 had belonged to a man who had gotten so severely beaten while in New Orleans that he couldn't work any more.

### **LAGO COLONY RECREATION**

While I was working in #1 Lab, one of my responsibilities was to sign off on the quality of shipments. In that capacity I met RC McClay in Accounting who, with an Englishman named Armstrong, had to make up the final papers for the shipments. He was half owner of a boat named *Patsy II* that he and a man named Harth had built not long before I arrived. Mr. Harth was transferred to Venezuela and I became sort of a working partner with McClay. He taught me, a total landlubber from central Texas, all I ever knew about boats (he had grown up with fishermen in Tampa, Fl). We had plans to build one ourselves, a 36 foot, ketch-rigged motor/sailer, after the partner in Venezuela sold the *Patsy II* to Creole in Maracaibo. Unfortunately, McClay was transferred to Indonesia so that came to naught. I suppose I could say that partying was rather a full time activity in those days! Our closest friends were the Berrisford's. Their daughter, who was born with a heart defect, was in the first class that Almeda taught. They had a large, really wonderful covered patio that was the site of some great gatherings!

### **LIFE AFTER ARUBA**

From Aruba I transferred to the Creole Refining department in Caracas in late 1955 just a few weeks after my son, Richard, was born and finished my career with Exxon there when I retired in November 1972. In the mean time, I married Jamie (Richards) McArdle in 1962. She had come to Aruba in 1951 with her husband, Doug, who also transferred to Caracas the same time I did. Jamie and I had a story-book marriage cut short just 4 days short of 37 years when she died of a massive stroke in November 2000. My two children live on the west coast (CA and WA) and Jamie's two daughters, Marie and Pam, live not far from me here in Virginia.

### **IN CONCLUSION**

It has been a continuing pleasure to be a part of such a diverse group of people who have been so closely knit for so many years. We are now running on third generation connections and I understand that even some forth-genties are forming!



The Spitzer family: Walter, Edna, daughter Mary B, sons Art & Kyle.

Photograph courtesy Art & Kyle Spitzer.











**Sikorsky S-43**

**Pan American World Airways**

Pan American World Airways Sikorsky S-43 like the one Homer flew on.

Photograph courtesy [www.PanAmair.org](http://www.PanAmair.org). Used by permission.



Above, top: Esso Club game room, early '40's.

Photograph courtesy the Paria Allen Kent collection.

Above, bottom: Capt. Herbert L Morgan, Cardiff, '39.

Photograph courtesy Paula (Morgan) Young.



Above, top: Boca Prinz.

Above, bottom: Inside the company Dining Hall. (Both early 1940's)

Photographs courtesy the Paria Allen Kent collection.



Above, top: The colony Library.

Above, bottom: The colony Golf & Country Club. (Both early 1940's)

Photographs courtesy the Paria Allen Kent collection.



Mitzi Fletcher & Ted McGrew (1948-1949)

Photograph courtesy J L Lopez family. Source unknown.



Above, top: Guard Marine BQ, Oranjestad during WWII.

Above, bottom: Carpenters Dept, early '40's.

Photographs courtesy the Paria Allen Kent collection.



Lawrence of Aruba? Sand dunes in 1964.

Photograph courtesy J L Lopez family. Photographer J L Lopez.