

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" 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, 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.

Table of Contents

Name	Page
Alfaro, Richard (Beers)	1
Baker, Mary Louise	2
Barnes, David P.	3
Barton, Shirley (Hewlett)	4
Berrisford, Charles “Chick” & Helen	5
Borbonus, Robert L. “Bobby”	8
Boros, Peter	9
Brook, Russell D.	10
Burson, Ray H.	11
Carlin, Kay (Norris)	12
Carroll, Sharon Ann	13
Chandler, Valerie	14
Conte, Jean (Wubbold)	15
Csacek, Miriam (Forbes)	16
Dascanio, John	17
Featherston, Richard and Robert	18
Fernando, Marion (Bruce)	19
Frye, Robert	20
Gladman, Robert Frank	21
Greene, Donald	22
Hamilton, Beverly (Couch)	23
Johnson, Julia (Judy Ballard)	24
King, Elna (Harris)	25
Koopman, Nancy	26
Lecluse, John	27
MacEachern, Nancy	28
McAdams, Aileen (McReynolds)	29
Mingus, Odis “Lad”	30
Miller, Arthur “Clyde”	31
Moore, William W. “Billy”	32
Norcom, Stanley M.	33
Perkins, Peter	34
Potts, Jennifer	35
Powell, Janet (White)	36
Rae, James Neal	37
Rae, Mitsy (Jackson)	38
Riggs, Jim	39
Rutherford, Phyllis “Bootsie”	40

Name	Page
Ryman, Ned (Ege)	42
Sainthouse, Pat (Eperon)	43
Teagle, Nancy (Chippendale)	44
Van der Kerchow, Francoise (Mertens)	45
van der Linden, Dirk	46
Wiley, John P. "Jack"	47
Williams, Dr. Eugene	48
Woodrow, Pat	49
Anderson, Andy & Bess	50
Beaujon, Jan & Henrietta van der Biest	51
Brinkman, Wim & Family	53
Crippen, Louis Newell	54
Dunlap, Tres	56
Eaton, Frederick & Vera	58
Echelson, George	59
Faunce, Sidney George "Sid" & Annie	60
Fremgen, William E. and Roberta W.	62
Gibbons, Ted	64
Gladman, Frank & Gladys	66
Griffin, Francis & "Kay"	72
Holland, Ed	73
Holzer, Eleanore & Eugene	74
Koster, Jan	83
Laurenson, Elspeth	84
Learned, Bill & Pauline	86
McCall, Bryan	87
McMaster, Bill	92
Moyer, Claud and Lon	94
Moyer, William "Bill"	123
Murphy, Bill and Thelma	124
Phillips, T J "Terry"	128
Ratcliff, Walter	129
Rosborough, Jimmy & Celma	133
Royer, George & Frances	134
Spitzer, Walter & Edna	135
Turner, George R & Ann	136
van Duin, Robbert	137
Waits, Homer	

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.

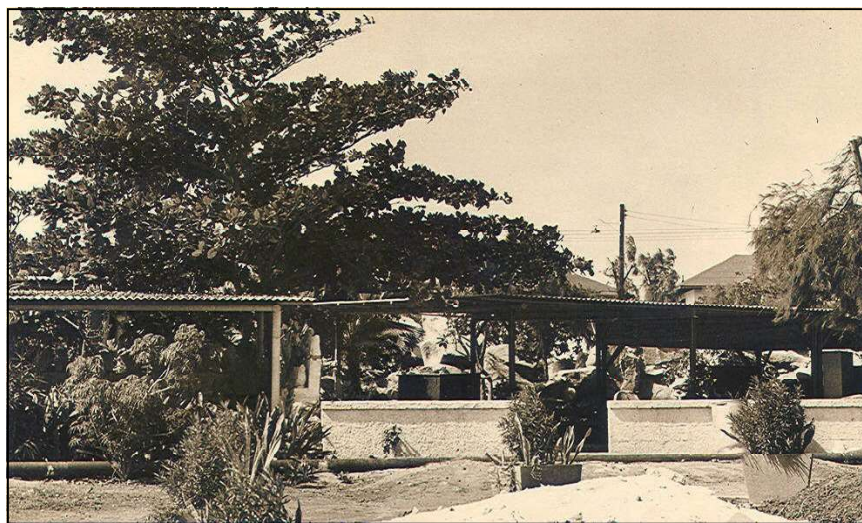
After high school he went to Notre Dame and graduated with a B.S. in Aeronautical Engineering in 1958. He then went to California where he worked in the aerospace industry. In 1972 he changed his career to computer technology and worked in Information Systems/Computer technology until 2002 when work 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 1940.¹ 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).²

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.³ 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.

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

²*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.*

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

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.



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.

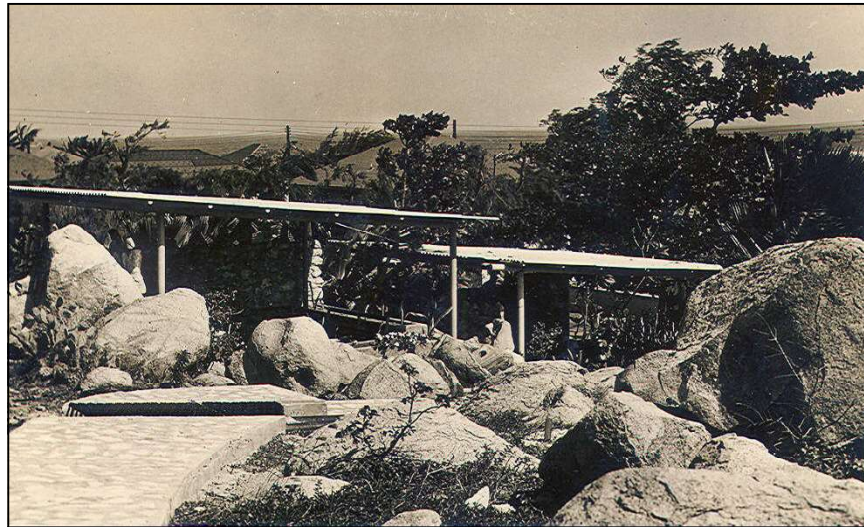


Kay (Norris) Carlin

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.