

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.⁷

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.

⁷This 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.⁸ 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

⁸This 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

favours 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 Ralph'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