

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 back yard 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 Whiteie'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 hook 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"¹ 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

¹ *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*



Continuation:¹

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.

¹For 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."