

# **The Lago Colony Legend**

**—Our Stories—**

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

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## Dedication

This book is dedicated to the thousands of multinational pioneers who arrived in Aruba as strangers. With an incredible "can-do" spirit, they came together, coping with unforeseen and unforeseeable situations, forming a unique "Family" over the 60-plus years the Lago Refinery operated. To this day, these one-time neighbors connect and reconnect across continents and around the globe through e-mail, phone calls, letters and especially *The Aruba Chronicle*, still seeing each other in memories if not in reality.

## INTRODUCTION

This book was begun by our father, James L. “Jim” Lopez back in the late 70’s. It was a mission for him and he determinedly persevered in his quest for as many personal “stories” as he could find. He was renown for asking so many questions of interviewees. Many of the story-tellers have since passed on, as has Pop. We siblings have inherited the reins of this compilation to see it to completion. We have chosen to present the personal stories of these Lago Colonists by name in alphabetical order.

While sorting out our father’s papers, we came across an official Lago Oil & Transport pamphlet entitled “Your Aruba Home” that is supposed to be an introduction “to the residential community where the foreign staff (ex-patriate) employees of the Lago Oil and Transport Company live.” It is dated November 1, 1946, and is presented as the 1947 edition.

“It would be a serious mistake, however, to regard Lago and its Colony as all of Aruba. A flourishing business and social life goes on apart from the Company. There are good schools and fine clubs. Dozens of athletic groups sponsor sports for their members. While Hollywood’s products (with Spanish sub-titles) are a popular form of entertainment, the island has always looked to Europe for its cultural heritage, and before the war a well-to-do citizen might send his son or daughter to the Sorbonne in Paris as readily as an Iowa parent would send his children to the State University.”

The booklet is specific as to the furniture that goes with each bungalow (“sofa, two arm chairs, two 9’ x 10’6” area rugs...”), stating exactly what the resident would have to supply (“...lamps, vases, curtains, radio...”) to “help greatly to individualize the appearance of the bungalows.”

There is a whole page devoted to the process that is used to determine housing assignments. Rent varied from \$24 for a 3-room house to \$79 for a six-room house, varying according to improvements such as garage, maid’s quarters, flower beds, walls



or sidewalks.

Passing coverage is given to Bachelor Quarters and Girls' Dormitory, again in exquisite detail ("one feather pillow"). It also acquaints you with the Dining Hall, the Commissary (ma called it the "Rob-issary"), Laundry, School, Colony Service, Renovation, Pets, Maids, etc. There is also a little map of the colony. I was surprised to find out the streets had names. As I recall, no two bungalow numbers were alike, you just lived in the "100 block" or the "300 block" for example.

Most of the referenced comments at the bottom of some pages are by the author, some are by his son, Victor, some by the author's wife, some by the story-tellers, and some came from who-knows-where.

There was a lot we didn't know was going on or why until we read these stories. We hope you haven't lost interest in waiting for them.

*Vic Lopez*

## PREFACE

College students who find they are good in math tend to consider engineering as one possibility of applying their skills when they are ready to place themselves on the job market. They are pleased with the money and security attached to the title of engineer. Petroleum engineers and geologists are usually found in oil exploration and production. Of course mechanical engineers sometimes wind up as Refinery Managers but it usually depends on the experience of the individual.

This is a story of a group of young men including recent graduate engineers and some who hadn't graduated yet. In fact the company was finding that it was not easy to attract anyone to help put together a crew to build and operate a new oil refinery on a barren coral island in the Caribbean.

In 1910, Venezuela became a country of rising influence when oil was discovered in the Lake Maracaibo area.

The Venezuelan government feared capital ships of foreign powers would invade their country if they dredged the entrance to Lake Maracaibo. This meant ocean-going vessels could not enter the lake. The sand bars at the entrance of the lake would allow shallow draft vessels to enter the lake at high tide. To carry their crude to the increasing world market for oil, they used tankers which drew no more than four feet of water when loaded. For some time they loaded ocean-going tankers offshore, but bad weather and other problems made this process tedious.

In 1925, they made an agreement with Holland to build a storage facility on an island 20 miles to the north of the lake: Aruba, a 5 by 15 mile island approximately the shape of a large sweet potato. It is the nearest of a group of Dutch West Indies islands and it had a natural harbor on its south side. The harbor was dredged and a second entrance was made and it proved to be just what was needed.

For a time the arrangement worked well enough. The Dutch recognized the opportunity to enter the business of refining, and

they made plans to build a petroleum refinery. In 1927 Pan American Petroleum & Transport Company's contractors descended on the little coral island and by 1928 the newly formed Lago oil and Transport Company Limited was in business on a 99 year lease on the San Nicholas end of the island of Aruba. (Pan American Petroleum & Transport Co. was a subsidiary of Standard Oil of Indiana.)

The original plans were to build an oil transfer depot but plans were changed and it was to be an oil refinery.

At that time, the refinery business was pretty wide open and engineers were blazing new trails.

When the Texas City refinery was destroyed by fire in 1947, the Lago Refinery became the largest in the world. Since then, automation has been the trend. Due to the increase of the well head oil prices Lago could not afford to continue operations and had to discontinue refining operations April 1, 1984. It had been in operation for 65 years.

The author has interviewed as many of the pioneers as he has been able to convince to respond, studied little remembered (or almost forgotten) historical accounts of events which took place in Aruba and the Caribbean between 1928 and 1984. Some of their narrations have revealed information not generally known. The war years were unforgettable; the human interest in their stories is spellbinding. I proudly present them to you for your enlightenment.

*Jim Lopez*

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## **The Mercedes Beaujon Family Story**

As you will see the Beaujon family was quite involved in the history of the island of Aruba. During our time in Aruba the Beaujon family consisted of Mrs. Mercedes Beaujon (whose husband had died many years before we arrived in 1929), the boys - Fred, J.C., John, Lupe and J.J. Rudolph "Rudy". Mercedes was the daughter.

Mercedes was called "Zikky", and I can verify was a good dancer. Fred, one of the redheaded sons, was the cashier in the accounting department, and had his office in the main office building. We used to go to his office to pick up our pay on payday and when we left on vacation. He left the company in 1955, about the time we transferred to Colombia. He later became involved in politics, and in 1961 he was the Lieutenant Governor of Aruba. He died some years later of a heart attack.<sup>1</sup>

John was in the personnel department in Lago and was at one time the safety director. Lupe worked with us in the instrument department office for a while, but I don't remember when he left the company. He was a very good friend of ours also and I think he died rather young.

John Jacob Rudolph was a very good friend, and was known to everyone as Rudy. He was a thin, red headed scholarly type of guy who wore glasses. All of his family looked and acted as if they were Dutch, though his family was originally French as you can see by his name of Beaujon. Before he came to work in the instrument department with us, he was the telegraph operator in the government telegraph office in Oranjestad. He was involved in the electronic side of the instrument work in our shop. He became a job trainer, teaching apprentices how to repair electronic instruments after I left.

His wife, Sally, came to Aruba one summer as a visitor of one of the Eman girls. She liked horses and rode them at her home in the States. And we attended their wedding. Her father was Wilfred Funk who used to write "It Pays to Increase Your Word Power" in the Readers Digest. He was a lexicographer who was involved with the Funk and Wagnall's Dictionary. He died, but his son, Peter, carries on that same column today.

Rudy had a heart attack some time after we left Aruba, and in 1964

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<sup>1</sup> *Mary and I knew his family very well.*

when I visited Aruba I went to visit him, his wife and two daughters in Oranjestad, and took pictures. I also took pictures of the great paintings he had done as a part of his therapy. He later went to the States and lived with his family until his death.

I made a mistake not going to visit the Beaujon family when I was in Aruba in 1985. But I will try to get this information straightened out for this story.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Regretfully, Jim Lopez was unable to correct this story as he intended.*



That famous Klim milk. Empty Klim cans and their lids were popular toys back then. Upon arriving in the States mom was chagrined to find that we wouldn't drink store milk, she had to buy fresh milk from a local dairy, 2 gallons-a-day.

**Photo and commentary courtesy of V. D. Lopez.**

# **The Hugh Monahan & Caroline Newson Beshers Story**

## **HUGH'S BACKGROUND**

Hugh Monahan Beshers was born November 23, 1899 in Carlock, Illinois. Beshers is a French Huguenot name as is Beaujean in Aruba. His father was the minister of the Christian (Disciples of Christ) Church for several years. His great grandfather, John Monahan, came from Ireland to the United States in 1818. As an apprentice he had come to blows with his boss and thought America might be a good place to be.

The Hugh Beshers owned two farms in Illinois. They were bought during the depression to help Hugh's father. They were in Woodford County, near Bloomington. The combined acreage was six hundred acres, more or less. After the death of Hugh's father in 1950, these farms were sold and a beef cattle farm along the Potomac was purchased.

Hugh went to El Paso High School in El Paso, Texas. While there he played football and went in for various school activities. After he graduated from high school he went to the University of Illinois where he majored in Civil Engineering. He graduated in 1922. He was Manager of the Football Team one year, but for the most part concentrated on his studies and had no time for other school activities.

## **CAROLINE'S BACKGROUND**

Caroline Newson was born June 5, 1901 in Lawrence, Kansas. Her father was head of the department of Mathematics at the University of Kansas. He had a B.S. degree from Ohio Wesleyan University. He took graduate work for two years in Germany, and when his money ran out he returned to Wesleyan to take his PhD.

Caroline's mother had a PhD in Mathematics from a German University. After the early death of Caroline's father, her mother had to go back to teaching. She was pretty well the whole math department at Eureka College in Illinois.

Caroline attended Eureka College in Illinois for two years and then transferred to State University so she could get the courses needed to be qualified for graduate work. She was a member of the Delta Zeta Sorority in college. She took part in various activities, including the Y.W.C.A and graduated in 1925.

Hugh and Caroline met at an Easter vacation when his sister had



invited Caroline to a little house party in 1922. Hugh was a senior at the University of Illinois at that time. They made friends right away and were married in August of 1925.

### **HUGH RECRUITED FOR ARUBA**

Hugh was doing mechanical engineering work in the Whiting Refinery of the Standard Oil Company of Indiana when he was recruited for the job in Aruba in 1929.

In 1929 three men were recruited from the refinery in Whiting to superintend the construction and operation of the new refinery in Aruba. Older, more qualified men had refused the assignment for good reasons. They had children in school; they had already bought their houses and were established in and around Whiting.

### **EDWARD BARTELS, LLOYD SCOTT, HUGH BESHES**

The three men selected to go were Edward Bartels, Lloyd Scott, and Hugh Beshers. Ed Bartels had no formal Technical education, was older and more experienced; was considered a practical, reliable, and loyal employee; thoroughly knew the refinery business; and had no children. He was much respected in Whiting. Lloyd Scott had a degree in Chemical Engineering and was 26 years old. Hugh Beshers had a degree in Civil Engineering and was 29 years old.

Caroline and Hugh were married in 1927 and their first son, Daniel, was born in 1928. As Caroline tells it, one day during the last week in June of 1929, Hugh came home and said: "Can you get ready to go to South America in a week?" Caroline said they were assured that the climate was good for children and the medical staff was excellent. So although she was terrified Caroline agreed to go and take their young son, Danny, who was 10 months old at the time. They sailed, from New York, on the tanker S/S Frederick Ewing on July 4, 1929. Fellow passengers were: Edward and Julia Bartels, Lloyd and Jean Scott. The trip took eight days.

### **ARRIVAL IN ARUBA**

When we first arrived we were put in Bungalow No. 90. Later we moved into Bungalow No. 72.

Dan, Jim and I were aboard the Pan Scandia, which had Norwegian officers and crew, when it went aground off Diamond Shoals Light House in July 1931.

It was about on March 1, 1936 when I sailed from Baton Rouge, Louisiana on the tanker S/S Haakin Hanan with the three boys when Eric was just 3 months old. He was born in Austin, Texas. We later traveled

on the S/S Pan Bolivar several times when Captain Larson was aboard. We also made several trips to and from Aruba on the Grace Line passenger ships.

As was the custom of many wives, I always went home on our vacations about a month ahead of Hugh with our three children. Then when Hugh returned to Aruba I stayed another month. Usually the first month was spent buying clothing for the children for two years, visiting my family and attending to any family matters. When Hugh was there we visited his family and whatever he had in mind to do.

In 1929 The Pan American Petroleum and Transportation Corporation was the company conducting refinery construction. Dr. W. W. Holland was already established as the Manager in Aruba. He had a PhD in Chemistry. A short time later, Dr. James Reid was transferred in from the refinery in Tampico, Mexico. He had his degree from the University of London. He handled Physical and Chemical Analysis in the Laboratories. Donald J. Smith (brother of Lloyd G. Smith who was to come later as Refinery Manager) was in Aruba in charge of Construction.

Upon arrival in Aruba in July of 1929 Ed Bartels was made General Superintendent. Of course in the early days the refinery organization was in its formative stage and some units were still building or to be built. However the three Assistant Superintendents appointed at the time subsequently had their areas of supervision defined as shown in an organization chart dated 1934.

Lloyd Scott was made Assistant Superintendent in charge of the (High) Pressure Stills and the Gas Plant. Frank Campbell (who had been in charge of the laboratories in the Casper Wyoming Refinery) was made Assistant Superintendent in charge of Receiving & Shipping, Light Oils Finishing (including Treating Plants), and the Acid Plant. Hugh Beshers was made Assistant Superintendent in charge of Maintenance, and Construction, Laundry, Commissaries (Retail, Cold Storage), Bakery, Dining Hall and Utilities (Electric, Instrument, Power House). Hugh once remarked that from the Drawing Board in Whiting he had jumped overnight to the supervision of a thousand men in a wide variety of tasks.

**THE FOLLOWING DATES INDICATE EXCERPTS FROM HIS LETTERS TO HIS FAMILY:**

**August 4, 1929:** "The plant should be nearly complete by Christmas, that is, the part on which we are working now. A lot more additions are being proposed. We have over 1700 men on the payroll besides about 500 the various contractors have working for them. So you see it is a

much bigger job than I had anticipated. About 1400 of our men are in my departments and besides I am supposed to sort of look after contractors and see that everything goes along all right with them. I surely am busy just trying to find out who is who and what they are doing."

**June 1930:** "Our first cargo of gasoline for South America should go this week. It will be for Rio (de Janeiro, Brazil)."

**July 6, 1930:** "We have quite a school this year and plan on an addition to the one building. We had 75 students and three teachers. More of both are expected next year."

**October 19, 1930:** "We have with us on the island one of those around the world sailors, a Norwegian with his wife, baby and dog in a forty foot sailboat. He left home a year ago in August and stayed quite a while in the Canary Islands where the baby was born; he is only five months old now. The boat started leaking between Curacao and Aruba and they stopped here for repairs. We have a big floating derrick that we can use to lift his boat and let him work on it."

Caroline adds these comments: "I remember going down to the boat and talking to the adventurers. I am quite sure it must have been in 1930. Anyone who might be interested in checking may look up the National Geographic for 1930 & 1931. In one of these was an article by the man telling how the boat was wrecked on the Australian Barrier Reef, but the people were saved."<sup>1</sup>

**1930 (probably):** "Most of the things we read about are how hard times are back home. So far we have managed to avoid them but from all the stories one can't be too sure they'll never come. We do have a lot of people come here looking for work. They are laying men off both in Curacao and Maracaibo (Venezuela). And every now and then some fellow drops in from Peru or Chile: Someone who has been working in the mines and left when trouble started. The government authorities are

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<sup>1</sup>*The story appeared in the December 1931 issue of The National Geographic. The title of the story was: "A modern Saga of the Seas" by Erling Tambs. He says he started his voyage in his 40 Foot Sloop "Teddy" towards the end of August 1928 leaving from Oslo, Norway touching at Le Havre, France; Cedeira, La Coruna, Corme, Vigo, Spain; Lisbon, Portugal; Tenerife, Las Palmas, Canary Islands. They stopped off here for four months and his son Antonio was born. When his son was six weeks old they continued their journey sailing only during the daylight hours. They headed for the West Indies in order to*

very strict about people coming on the island without jobs. They can't come ashore unless they deposit enough money to get them back to their native country and they can't stay if they don't get some kind of a job. They are especially careful about the colored people as they think that we should have more native help and less colored. But the colored people all speak English and have seen more of the world and are easier to use as they have less to learn than the natives, who are Indians. Whenever a workman is discharged he is immediately deported unless he is a native. However, lots of them get on the island. I think they come ashore at night from the schooners that are always passing."

**January 11, 1931:** "(The tanker) S/S Pan Norway just put in service and her sister ship (the tanker) S/S Pan Aruba will be out soon. They will each carry 5,000,000 gallons of gasoline as a full cargo."

**July 25, 1931:** "Count von Luckner, the German naval man who wrote 'Sea Adler', was here the first of the week on a trip around the world in his yacht. A new U. S. submarine also spent several days in port. It was very interesting to see."<sup>2</sup>

**January 25, 1932:** "Monday night last week we had a shipwreck on the island. A schooner bound from Curacao to Colombia went ashore almost straight east of our house. We can't see that part of the coast from the house and it was sometime in the morning before we found it out."

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*(cont'd) avoid Hurricanes at that time of the year. They stopped in Curacao and after leaving found that the high temperatures caused their planks to shrink and they took on water from leaks faster than they could pump it out. They arrived in Aruba, 70 miles away with two feet of water in their hold and here they stopped for repairs. They went through the Panama Canal; Cocos Island; Marquesas Island; Tahiti; Tutulia Rose and to Auckland New Zealand. An aunt was visited in Hawkes Bay and February 3, 1931 they experienced a great earthquake affecting over 50,000 people. Their 17,000 mile voyage ended in Sydney, Australia. At the end of their voyage they entered and won a race with the "Teddy" in the Trans Tasman Cup Race.*

<sup>2</sup> *Noted American author, Lowell Thomas, wrote a book which was published in 1927, "Count Luckner, The Sea Devil". In this book Thomas describes who Luckner was and his famous exploits as a raider of Allied shipping during World War I. Count Felix von Luckner's great-grandfather served under Frederick the Great and formed a regiment of mercenaries who fought for whoever could afford them. At the time of the French Revolution he served the new French government as the*

There were five men in the crew and one passenger. They all got safely ashore, but the ship was jibbed up on the rocks. They said their steering gear broke and then their mast and left them helpless to keep the ship off the rocks. They were lucky they did not strike the north coast, for the ship would have been dashed to pieces immediately. Our tug went out and pulled her off and she is in the harbor now tied to one of our barges behind the gasoline dock. I suppose they will try to get her fixed up as it is worth about \$3000.00. I took pictures of her. Her name is *Lindbergh*.

The Dutch soldiers are all excited about rumors of a Venezuelan rebel on the island and they are afraid he will take all of their guns and ammunition away from them. They are much worried as they would probably lose their jobs if they lost their army supplies."

**April 30, 1932:** "We are having our worries here. It appears that we have been 'sold down the river'. You probably have better news than we but our information is that all of the foreign properties of the Pan American Petroleum and Transport (Company) have been sold to the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey. This includes the oil wells, refinery, etc. in Mexico, the same in Venezuela, everything on the island, terminal warehouses also in Brazil and Argentina, the same in England and the refinery and sales organization in Germany. Also both the ocean and lake tanker fleets. I believe they take over the operation of the lake tanker fleet tomorrow. The rumor is that a whole delegation of vice presidents will descend upon us in about two weeks. Of course none of us know how long we are going to keep our jobs or just what will happen. Oh well...if the whole thing blows up I may come home to the

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*(cont'd)* commander of the Army of the Rhine. When the *Marseillaise* was written, it was dedicated to him because he happened to be the commanding general in the region where the immortal song was composed.

*At the age of 13-1/2 years Felix ran away to sea as a Cabin Boy on a four-masted sailing vessel. After an adventurous time he managed to arrive at the rank of Lieutenant Commander in the Imperial German Navy. Since he was the only officer in the Navy with "before-the-mast" experience he was placed in command of a three-masted sailing vessel, formerly under the American flag, which he named the "Seeadler" (Sea Eagle). This ship was armed and outfitted to carry prisoners. The vessel was disguised as a Norwegian Vessel with a pseudo Norwegian crew. After running the English blockade of Germany during a two months period in the Atlantic he managed to capture the captains and their crews of eleven Allied vessels and sink their ships, with no loss of life.*

lima beans."<sup>3</sup>

**May 16, 1932:** "Well, the suspense is awful. We know we are sold out and that is about all. All rumors received so far indicate that there will not be much change in personnel here. However all the people in the New York office are worrying."

**June 5, 1932:** "Well we have had The Standard Oil Company of New Jersey people around since last Tuesday. The men sent down are just looking us over and will stay here two weeks or so and then go back to report what they have seen."

**November 22, 1932:** "One of the hurricanes passed close enough for us to get a three-day rain that just about washed away everything that was movable."<sup>4</sup>

**February 18, 1934:** "This morning a five masted schooner, the *Edna*

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*(cont'd) another captured vessel. He then continued his harrying style of warfare on Allied shipping in the Pacific Ocean until a tidal wave left him and his crew plus his prisoners, who were three American ships captains and their crews, shipwrecked on the coral atoll Mopelia. This was a French possession in the Society Islands.*

*He and his crew met again after the War, in Germany, on January 2, 1920. Among the decorations he received from his country he was given the "Cross" which places him outside German Law. Like old time kings he could "do no wrong." He also received a Commendation from the Pope for the humane way he conducted himself during Wartime. His advice to the youth of America at the end of the book says: "Keep your bodies fit, and if your country needs you, just remember the motto of the sea: 'Don't jump overboard! Stay with the ship!'."*

<sup>3</sup> *Caroline notes: The last line refers to his father's canning factory in which his brother was already a partner and in which he would always have been welcome.*

<sup>4</sup> *Caroline notes: Had the waters come a little higher the stills would have been affected and probably put out of business. I remember their calling Hugh in the night and asking him to come right down. There were about six inches of water on the floor of our house that first day. The rain had come in from the SOUTHWEST and the louvers had never been tight on that side. I did not know it until I hear our boys and the Mingus children splashing in it. I believe Freda Penny was there, too. The flood at the plant came later.*

*Hoyt*, arrived here from Mobile bringing creosoted lumber for our new dock. She is quite a beautiful ship and one of the few large sailing vessels still in service (in the industrial world). It took her nearly forty days to get from Mobile to Puerto Rico and only four days from Puerto Rico to Aruba." <sup>5</sup>

**May 1, 1934:** "Japan is sending ships down here to buy up all the old scrap iron still in the West Indies, which does not look very good to me. We have shipped some oil to China recently but none to Japan. We are now shipping to every country in Western Europe. We are sending fuel as far as Port Said on the Suez Canal and to Dakar in Africa. We have approval to build one large still. That will run into a million and a half dollars and we expect to spend about another million in harbor improvement. That will probably be all until the harbor has been enlarged and more docks built as we can't handle any more now. We are doing better than 150,000 barrels a day at present."

**(Date missing; could have been earlier):** "We are getting ready a program of training Aruban boys to become skilled workmen. Start them at about 16 (years old) and give them four years training; an hour or more at school a day and the rest working at some job."

**June 17, 1934:** "Looking over the international situation, I would not be surprised to see war break out with Japan as one of the parties in the spring of 1935. The Japanese are doing everything they can to prepare.

We are being forced to extra effort to extend our capacity. More wells are being drilled in Venezuela and we are going to start on a rush program of harbor expansion to nearly double the number of ships we can handle by the first of year."

**July 29, 1934:** "This last week has been a celebration of the 300th anniversary of Holland's taking possession of these islands. They have had a lot of things going on.

The week before, we had quite an accident in the powerhouse. We pump about forty million gallons of salt water a day to the refinery and an equal amount to the condensers on the turbines that drive the generators. About 3/4 of the pumps for this purpose are located in a pit below sea level. One of the fellows made a mistake and opened a valve on a twenty inch pipeline that turned about 15,000 gallons a minute into the pit. Then he could not get it shut and by the time things were

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<sup>5</sup> *Caroline notes: When Evelyn Luberg and I went down to look the boat over, the captain told us she was the last five-masted schooners still on active duty. And would be the last. No more to be made.*

straightened around a bit the whole pit had filled up and all the electric motors and pumps were covered with salt water. As a consequence the whole refinery had to be shut down until we could get the water out and get things repaired. It was nearly a week before we were back on full schedule and then we were going faster than ever. Yesterday we ran over 183,000 barrels through the stills. The New York office rushed down some new motor parts by airplane and a passenger plane of the Pan American Airways brought them down from Miami going over Cuba to Jamaica to Barranquilla, Colombia to Aruba. It was certainly a nice outfit."

**October 12, 1934:** "The latest sign of the depression is that they are going to send us one the extra men from the New York office to be General Manager. That position has been vacant since they fired the first one three years ago. It is L. G. Smith. It was his brother, D. J. who had charge of the original construction here. D. J. remained with the Indiana Company when we were sold. He probably was luckier than anyone else involved in the deal and at the time he thought himself most unfortunate." <sup>6</sup>

**November 5, 1934:** "Yesterday ten convicts escaped from Devil's Island, came here in a boat about fourteen feet long. The Dutch put them in jail overnight. The Company repaired the boat and gave them some provisions. They (the escaped convicts) were trying to get to Colombia. This morning the pilot boat towed them out beyond the three mile line and let them go. The pilot boat turned around and started back to port, but the crew, looking back, could see no sign of the boat. Investigating, they found the boat capsized and the men clinging to the bottom. After pulling them out they brought them back. They are in jail again tonight and have nothing left but a few ragged clothes.

There is talk about taking up a collection to start them out again." <sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Caroline notes: Lloyd Smith was "extra" because the new company had taken over more top men than they had immediate openings for. As everyone knows, he was a most satisfactory manager with a thorough understanding of all the processes of the refinery. He was respected by everybody.*

<sup>7</sup> *Caroline notes: I assume from this that the sail boat was abandoned as un-seaworthy. But a collection was taken up in camp, I assume, to buy them a new craft and provisions. I remember that the French government protested angrily to the Dutch for trying to save "Desperate Criminals" from imprisonment. The Dutch then put all the blame on the*



In this letter of November 5, 1934 it is stated that there are 171 pupils in school. He does not mention it but about this time he was elected chairman of the school board. He was re-elected every year until we left in 1941. I know he served seven years and that comes out right.

In the same letter Hugh says: "I understand the Dutch object to being called that and want (these islands) to be called the Netherlands West Indies. So that is the official designation." <sup>8</sup>

**November 15, 1934:** "Saturday I attended a little ceremony celebrating the piping of drinking water into San Nicholas village. The government laid a pipeline about seven miles long to bring the water from the evaporating plant. They have a plant using fuel oil for evaporating sea water." <sup>9</sup>

**March 20, 1935:** "About a week ago one of our ships tried to anchor just off the reef a little after midnight. The captain misjudged his position and she is high up on reef. The waves were breaking clear over her for awhile but the direction of the wind has shifted some and the water about her is comparatively calm. Several efforts have been made to pull her off with other ships but so far the principle result has been to break about all the big wire rope in this section of the world. Steel ropes over two inches in diameter have not been able to stand the strain. A salvage tug has come from Miami but so far she has been here for three days and all she has done is to look the job over. The wrecked ship is nearly twenty years old and if they don't get her off soon I don't think she will

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(cont'd) *"sentimental Americans". It is clear now that the Dutch also felt sympathy for the men. They could have kept them in jail and refused to let them leave the harbor. This became one of Ralph Watson's stories. As I recall it, he said after the boat was launched a second time one of the convicts had a heart attack and they had to put back. But eventually they sailed away headed in the general direction of Panama and the jungle. We never heard of them again.*

*The New Columbia Encyclopedia says most of the prisoners on Devil's Island were political - Dreyfuss being the best known. In 1946 France began to phase it out. Concentration camps were out of style!*

<sup>8</sup> *Caroline notes: "Dutch" is a lot easier to say, but we WROTE Netherlands after that.*

<sup>9</sup>*This became the worlds largest Desalination Plant. Sea water was evaporated to produce salt free water which was then run over coarse coral gravel to add a "flavor" to it.*

be worth much." <sup>10</sup>

**March 1, 1937:** "Count von Richtan, Queen Wilhelmina's nephew, called on some of our friends as he was passing through here and they had us out to meet him. He seemed a rather nice sort of fellow; he is a farmer." <sup>11</sup>

**March 24, 1937:** "The ship that took Trotsky to Mexico is a frequent caller at our harbor and several of the fellows talked to the captain about his trip. He said Trotsky spent most of his time reading and writing. He was accompanied by his wife and son. The captain took a good many snapshots and gave some of them away. One of our good friends, Ralph Watson, got one of Trotsky on the bridge in his pajamas." <sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>*This was the Ocean going oil tanker S/S George G. Henry. She later was able to get off the reef at high tide with her own deck winches.*

<sup>11</sup>*Caroline notes: I doubt if many people remember this incident. The Count had bought some land in British Columbia and was raising dairy cattle there - had been for about ten or fifteen years. Alex Shaw's parents, also farmers, though from Scotland, were friendly to him and frequently asked him in to meals. By this time he had married a Canadian girl who was with him. I happened to talk to her while Hugh, who owned a farm in Illinois, talked to him about agriculture in Canada. She told me the Queen had asked him to travel incognito to her possessions in our hemisphere and talk casually to people in general. They had asked Mrs. Shaw Sr., by that time a widow in Seattle, if they could bring anything for her to Aruba. She gave them a package to carry. Since they did not want publicity they had asked to not be introduced as related to the Queen. There were perhaps eight couples asked in and we were all a little at sea. Hugh's sincere interest in farming saved the situation. Later in Washington some friends knew what must have been the same man. At that time I think he was an envoy, I think Ambassador of the Government in Exile. I put this story in to show skeptics the interesting life we led in a highly international community.*

<sup>12</sup>*Caroline notes: I remember the captain of this tanker told Ralph that Mrs. Trotsky cried when they went ashore, saying the voyage was the first peaceful time they had known in years. A representative of the Norwegian government came to meet them and said they had sent him a present. It turned out to be a revolver. As with the French convicts we had in Aruba, it is hard not to feel sympathy with the pursued. I believe*

**July 9, 1940:** "Saturday, the sixth, the French troops and the French warship stationed here were given until noon to surrender or leave by the Dutch who brought over a cruiser, two destroyers and a submarine from Curacao. The French elected to leave and sailed in the direction of Martinique. I felt very sorry for them as they did not know what to do. They do not approve of this business in France and yet they hesitate to disobey orders from the home government." <sup>13</sup>

As soon as the French Marines, presumably defending us from the Germans, had left, the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders came and took us over. This regiment was actually taking desert training in Aruba and was later sent to North Africa where it was badly cut up. The rumor was that survivors were nearly all imprisoned.

One of the survivors was the chaplain, "Murdo" MacDonald, who

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*(cont'd) the ship must have been one of the tankers used by the Esso Fleet and anyway it was a tanker.*

<sup>12</sup> *Leon Trotsky was the Russian Communist leader second only to Lenin during the Russian Revolution in 1917. He believed in World Revolution as opposed to Joseph Stalin's "Socialism in one country". He was mortally wounded by an assassin in Mexico City on August 21, 1940 and died the following day.*

<sup>13</sup> *France signed an Armistice with Germany on June 22, 1940 which ended fighting there and began the German occupation of the northern part of France during World War II. The remaining two fifths of southern France was under a "state" at Vichy France under Marshal Henri Petain who attempted to control French forces outside of France. There was much confusion among French forces in those times. In November 1942 Germany completed their occupation of France and the Vichy government ceased to exist.*

<sup>13</sup> *Caroline notes: Now here is the story as I remember it: On the fourth or fifth of July, as always on a holiday, one man of the Management top five was staying in the main office. This time it happened to be Hugh who was representing the Company. When he came home to lunch I was sitting alone in the garden. No one else was in earshot and he burst out with this story:*

*The captain of the French warship had come abruptly into his office, very much excited and upset. He said he had received an order from the Vichy government to sink every British ship on sight. There were several lake tankers around quite unarmed, of course, and I believe some other vessels. He was not in sympathy with Vichy and had already cabled his son to join General De Gaulle's Free French forces in*

preached such excellent sermons in the Colony church. While he was on the island he married Betty Russell, a Smith College graduate who was the daughter of Captain and Mrs. Russell. Captain Russell was in the Lago Marine Department. After Chaplin MacDonald's release at the end of the war Betty joined him in Scotland. They later had two children. He became eventually the leading Presbyterian Minister in Edinburgh and the high man in the established church.

I have this on the authority of Paul and Edith Rishell. Paul was the first minister in the Lago Community Church and it was built while they were in Aruba. She in particular had beautiful taste and the simplicity of the finished church was due a good deal to her. She insisted some gifts that were offered be politely refused because they would spoil the whole thing. She was right, but not everyone was happy to have his offer rejected.

Paul went into the Congregational Church when he went back to New York and was, for a while, minister of the Plymouth Congregational Church in Brooklyn, New York. This was Henry Ward Beecher's church during the Civil War.

Later, Paul headed the Congregational Social Service in New York City. They retired to Lancaster, Pennsylvania and we visited them there. We saw Paul again after Edith's death.

**July 24, 1940:** "The effects of the war are being felt here. We can't get enough ships to keep us going at full capacity. It seems as though we have plenty of buyers if they would only manage to haul the oil away.

The Dutch are making a great fuss and you would think we were only a few miles from Germany with some of the ideas they bring forward. They are going to put in some coast defense guns that will be useless and are proposing anti-aircraft guns that will be a further waste of money.

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*(cont'd) England. But he had not resigned his commission, and to disobey was treason. He asked Hugh if he could think of any way out.*

*Hugh told him to go directly to the Lieutenant Governor Wagemaker and tell him the whole story. He was sure he would sympathize with his dilemma and help him. Obviously the Frenchman did, and the Dutch put on a show of force and ordered the "Jeann d'Arc" to load up the French Marines on the island and get out. Otherwise they would be outnumbered in a naval battle. The last we heard of it the ship was in Martinique.*

*As far as I know this story has not been printed in any history of this period, but it is absolutely true.*

We have been practicing blackouts, etc. but have taken the position that blackouts are more dangerous than probably raids, and useless. We think we will win that argument...as the Shell is of the same opinion. Of course the Dutch do have a lot to worry about at home. The *S/S Simon Bolivar* (a small passenger ship that operated around Aruba) which was sunk off England had a lot of people from Aruba. One policeman was on board with his wife and five children. Only two of the children were saved. The whole thing is terrible from every angle."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>*The Shell Oil Company operated the small Eagle Refinery on the western end of the Island of Aruba. Shell Oil Company also owned and operated a refinery, having nearly the same capacity as the Lago*

## **The Don Blair Story**

As they say, you can never go back. However I know I'll always have wonderful memories of the time we spent in Aruba so long ago. These memories are as fresh in my mind today as they were the day they happened. A short time ago I received the latest Aruba Chronicle, and after reading what has happened to Aruba since I left, I almost cried. I know we all bitched like hell about everything, and we didn't really realize we were living in what you could call paradise. We had the best food you could want. Our chefs were superior. Our club was excellent. In our club the cost of a good scotch and soda was only 13 cents American. We could buy a bottle of Tanqueri gin for \$2.50. We had a good golf club; yacht club; laundry. Our servants were affordable.

I remember when I was a bachelor living in Bachelor Quarters Number Four we had a Chinese houseboy. All we had to do was leave our clothes in the middle of the floor. Heck, our mothers wouldn't allow us to do that when we were kids. The houseboy cleaned up our room and picked up our clothes, washed them and in a couple of days had them back in our bureau drawers.

The postcard scenery on our island was something to behold. Bettina and I will never forget, our favorite, the beautiful Palm Beach. Many times we were there, and except for an Aruban fisherman, there was not a soul in sight.

### **BEGINNINGS**

I was born in 1905, near Clarksville, Arkansas. My folks moved to a ranch near Roswell, New Mexico, and later settled in Ardmore, Oklahoma. In high school I folded sheets as a printer's devil, mowed lawns, sold minnows to fishermen - things that a young boy would do.

In 1925, my folks moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma. There I went to work in the oil fields for the Marlin and Carter Oil Companies in Bowlegs, and Seminole, Oklahoma. I attended the University of Oklahoma. I did not graduate, but from there I went to Tulsa, where I worked as an engineer for the Barnsdall and Amerada Hess Oil Companies. For a year during the depression I managed a carpet company.

### **GOING TO WORK FOR STANDARD OIL COMPANY OF NEW JERSEY**

In 1936 I went to New York where I saw an ad for engineers. Jumbo (O. H.) Shelton (the Personnel Manager in the Standard Oil

Company, New Jersey offices in New York) hired me. He sent me over to the Esso refinery in Bayonne to spend a week in the Engineering Department to prove that I knew what I was talking about. They discovered I did, and I was hired as Piping Draftsman. Jumbo was cautious because he had hired several people in the past who were sent to Aruba only to find they didn't know beans about the job for which they were hired. They lied and said they were engineers or fitters just to get a free ride down to a tropical island and back.

When I arrived in Aruba in 1936 I was put up in Bachelor Quarters (BQ) Number Four with another fellow by the name of Fred Quiram who worked in accounting. Later on we all were assigned one to a room. I went to work in the drafting room in the Technical Services Building. In 1936, this building was right down in the middle of the refinery where all of the process units poured out smoke 24 hours a day. Ecologists are squawking about the danger of being exposed to second hand tobacco smoke today. They say it is like playing Russian roulette with three chambers loaded. We were right in the middle of it, and somehow, not to mention my other health problems, I've lived to be 86 in spite of it all.

Lago built the new air-conditioned office building on the colony side of the main gate, and we were all moved up there in October of 1940. We worked under Bob Bagglely and Cy Rynalski in the Technical Service Department. My drafting table faced the only door to the outside, the door that opened out on the fire escape in the rear of the building. I could look out on the lagoon on which the west end lake tanker docks were located. The east end of the lagoon was where they built the new clubhouse after the war. Occasionally I could see stingrays shooting up out of the water and splashing down to try to dislodge the barnacles and other parasites from their bodies. I painted all of the murals on the inside walls at the entrance to the new office building, and I'm not sure what happened to them when I left. One of these was of the old "White House". This was at one time the residence of one of the members of the Eman family. He had made it available to the Company back there in 1928. It had been the Main Office Building and then served several other purposes. It was whitewashed white and had a red tile roof.

After a number of years in Piping Drafting I was called to draw most of the water and sewer lines for the Colony, and I eventually joined up with Norm Shirley and did architectural drafting. Norm was the one who designed the Colony's church, and I did most of the drawings for it.

## **NEW ASSIGNMENT**

After doing architectural work for a number of years Bob Heinze

had me transferred to the Industrial Relations Department. Bert Teagle was the manager of that department at the time. Heinze was the one who was in charge of the Acid and Edeleneau Plants, and he was the initiator of the Coin-Your-Ideas Program in Aruba. This was the program that encouraged employees to submit suggestions for improving the efficiency of field and office operations.

I was placed in charge of the Coin-Your-Ideas-Department, and I was the person responsible for implementing the suggestions if they were good ones. My title was Secretary of the C-Y-I Committee. During the war Eleanor Roosevelt paid Lago a visit, and a young East Indian lad suggested that a plaque be put on the guesthouse in which Eleanor Roosevelt had spent the night. (This was the wife of President Franklin D. Roosevelt) That was one I couldn't answer, and I sent it along to Mr. L. G. Smith, the final authority. Smith sent it back with a memo saying that the Company would rather wait to see what position Eleanor might attain in history before they put a plaque on the house.

Bob Schlageter was the editor of the Aruba Esso News in 1940. I subbed for him several times while he was vacations or business trips. Since I was an amateur photographer I took numerous photographs for the Aruba Esso News - newsworthy events, visiting dignitaries, and the like.

## **WAR TIME: WORLD WAR II**

During the war we had several visits that were arranged by the USO (United Service Organization). These performers also did a show for the Lago Colony, and I acted as master of ceremonies for Al Jolson when he came through.

Morey Amsterdam, another performer of those days, was sent through Aruba. He and his group were fresh from Trinidad. He was singing "Rum and Coca Cola," a tune that became popular during wartime, and I asked what was going on. Morey said, "I just picked this tune up in Trinidad and I am trying to memorize it so I won't forget it." I am wondering if the guy who originated the song ever received any credit. I figure that Morey Amsterdam made a million dollars with that song.

As I've mentioned previously, I lived in BQ (Bachelor Quarters) Number Four until I married Bettina in 1946. A few of the fellows that lived in Number Four were Dwight Fryback, Bill Harth, Leslie Seekins, Jeff Hoyt, and a fellow by the name of McClay (He worked in the Accounting Department and I don't think he thought too much of us



rough guys). I understand McClay came from a fine family back East. He always had his little shot of sherry in the afternoon before going to dinner. When I came down, I brought an old antique ivory handled .44 pistol, and I traded it to McClay for a .38 Police Special that I still have.

Jeff Hoyt had a trumpet on the night the German Submarine attacked us (1:31 a.m. local time February 16, 1942). Admiral King was on the island and he was staying in the Guest House just below BQ #4. As the Germans began shelling the Refinery, everyone gathered on the porch of our Bachelor Quarters. Hoyt was there with his trumpet, and he began to play. Toot Ta Toot...Get Up Admiral, come on goddammit Admiral, we're being attacked...Toot Ta Toot...Toot Ta Toot...Alert...Alert.

The Scottish Regiment, the Cameron Highlanders, was the backbone of our island defense during the period from 1940 until early February of 1942. Colonel Barber, the tallest officer in the British Army, was their commanding officer. Retreat was held at their camp once a week, either Tuesday or Friday, and as I had done some favors for them, I was invited. After the ceremony all the officers and I went to their quarters and got fried with Haig and Haig Scotch.

In return for all of the favors I had done for them they felt I should be presented with a kilt. Wait until the war is over, I told them, and then we'll see about a kilt. That unit went to North Africa and many of them were killed in the invasion.

A few years ago Bettina and I were traveling in Europe, and we visited Edinburgh, Scotland. I remembered about the kilt the Highlanders had offered me, and I asked where I could get one. I got the complete outfit that I still wear on special occasions. Also a few years back, Ed Byington, Mary, and Bettina and I attended a gathering of the Clans in Salado, Texas, and we all wore kilts. Bagpipes screeched, all of the activities they are famous for were observed.

There was a Lloyd's of London surveyor living in the Lago Colony. During World War II the German ship, the Antilla, was scuttled off the beach just above Oranjestad. This surveyor managed to get hold of the ship's bell. When he left Aruba he gave me the bell, and when I resigned in 1947, I had the Colony Service crate it up for me. Unluckily the sides of the crate were open, and when Dutch Customs saw what was in the crate, they confiscated it.

## **PRANKS**

Speaking of Hoyt makes me remember that time we caught a moray

eel in one of our fish traps. We took it to the Mess Hall while Hoyt was inside, and coiled it up in the back of the little scooter he was riding. This was when the Company provided those Cushman scooters for those people who rated one. We put it in the little compartment where most guys kept their lunches or other personal junk, so that the eel would be looking right at him when he opened the hatch. Hoyt quickly figured out who was responsible for that prank, and the next morning when I went down to get in my car, it had a wire-haired terrier in it. That dog had chewed up the upholstery in it, especially in the back seat.

Speaking of pranks, I remember one practice of ours was to get an electrician to wire the light in newlyweds' bedrooms so that it couldn't be turned off. Bells were often fastened to their mattress springs.

I was president of the Golf Club one time when the United States Navy paid Lago a visit. The commanding officer was an old S.O.B. who had been retired and held the title of Commodore. He was an old salt who believed in discipline. His men had to wear whites when they were on the dock, and they couldn't have pets. One time while we were having a gala affair at the Golf Club, I had the Engineering Department rig up a tank full of water on the back of an arm chair so that when the commodore sat down a small stream of water came out between his legs. He didn't notice it when he first sat down, but when he saw everybody chuckling, he finally realized that it was one of our practical jokes.

### **ARUBA FLYING CLUB MEMORIES**

In regard to the Aruba Flying Club, I joined it, and Skippy Culver taught me how to fly. Frank Roebuck also checked me out, and Lt. Keene, one of the Air Force pilots, the one who married Fay Cross (the daughter of Coy Cross who was Superintendent of the Light Oils Department in those days). They checked me out in the PT-19.

Bettina and I flew over to Curacao in the PT-19 one time. On the map the distance shows to be about 60 miles, most of it over open water. The plane had few instruments, and no radio. We notified the police in Aruba when we planned to take off, and when we got into Curacao, we notified the local police who radioed the police in Aruba to tell them that we had arrived. We wore Mae West life preservers, and had a pocket full of shark repellent, which of course we now know isn't worth a damn. If we went down we knew that would be all she wrote. Out of sight of land, we wouldn't stand a chance without a radio. On another trip, I took Jeff Hoyt to Venezuela and back in the PT-19.

### **BOATING EXPERIENCES**

The guys in the Yacht Club were a great bunch. We had a number

of Snipe Class boats, and races in that division nearly every weekend. A 12 gauge cannon started races.

I bought one of those Aruban fishing boats, a 20-foot gaff rigged sloop. There was a wiry little Venezuelan by the name of Chico who looked after Ellie Wilkins' boat, and may have been the one who sailed it down from New York. Chico, a fixture on Rodger's Beach, lived in a shed just above the high tide level. All of us looked after him, bringing him groceries and other essentials.

After I married, Jessie Upp's sister-in-law, Ruby Boys came to the island. One time I took Ruby and Bettina for a sail in one of the club's Snipes. We sailed the length of the lagoon, and when I told them that we were coming about, they both stood up like you would when you are waiting for the maid in a hotel to change your bed. They fell into the sails and turned the doggone boat over. Either Jake Walsco or George Larsen came out and picked us up. I was too flustered to remember which.

While I had my boat and McClay had the room next to me we decided to sail over to Las Piedras, on the Venezuelan Coast. Dutifully, I applied for a permit from the Dutch authorities. The fellow at the office told me, that if there were any legal way he could refuse to grant me a permit, he would do so. Reluctantly, he gave me the necessary papers, and we took off. It was getting dark when Chico, McClay and I arrived at Venezuela, and we decided to anchor off the coast. In the middle of the night all hell broke loose. There was gunfire, and all sorts of whooping and hollering. Bullets were whizzing over our heads. Chico was screaming at the top of his lungs and pleading in Spanish. Out of the night came a boat with some Venezuelan fisherman armed with old rifles. They captured us, and after some serious talking by our guide, Chico, we learned that they had been instructed by the Venezuelan government to pick up any suspicious persons off the coast who looked like they were dealing in contraband. Well after a few scotches, they helped us to find a better place down the coast, a small cove where we could anchor safely. The next morning we sailed by them and they were fishing. Everybody became good friends by the time we sailed away.

As you recall Jake Walsco and George Larsen had a big sailboat, and we went fishing in it every once in a while. We worked until 4:30 p.m. and by 5:00 p.m. we were out fishing. If the tuna weren't biting, we sailed near the coastline and caught barracuda.

I remember some of the steak fries we used to put on down at the Yacht Club. One time I had tenderloins and I think they ran me

something like 50 cents apiece.

### **OUR PET OCELOT**

As far as I know, John McCord had the first ocelot on the island. In Barranquilla, Colombia at the Del Prado Hotel, I ran across an American pilot who was flying for one of the American companies in that country. The pilot had a year old ocelot he wanted to get rid of, and I bought it. I don't remember what I paid for it, but I brought it back to Aruba. Customs in Aruba had me sign a bunch of papers holding me responsible in case he got loose and killed somebody. Everybody in the Bachelor Quarters played with him and he was quite a pet. Dwight Fryback wanted to keep him one time, and I loaned the cat to him.

Fryback said his claws were a little long and he thought he should cut them. I agreed, and he asked how it should be done. I told him that he just held the cat's paw and clipped them. When Fryback tried it he got scratched. Not to be outwitted by one of Mother Nature's inferior creatures, he cut a hole in a board, and after playing with it for a while, the cat stuck his paw through the hole. Fryback clipped off the nails. That trick was only good for one foot. The cat refused to stick his paw through the hole again. One day, for some unknown reason, it keeled over dead. Fryback felt so bad about it, he didn't tell me that he'd died for a long time.

### **MISCELLANEOUS MEMORIES**

I still have a ship's figurehead that was recovered over in Lake Maracaibo, Venezuela. A lake tanker awaiting a berth had anchored one night, and when they pulled the anchor up the next morning, the figurehead was on it. The captain of the lake tanker carried it to Aruba and gave it to Frank Campbell, the man in charge of Shipping and Receiving. And then when Frank left Aruba he gave the ship's figurehead to me. His wife had repainted it, and the figurehead is now sitting in our parlor in Santa Fe, New Mexico. It is probably one of the shortest saltwater figureheads in the United States.

I am sure many people remember Fanny's in San Nicholas. One of the few things I have left from Aruba besides fond memories is a back-scratcher that I bought in Fanny's.

Before Bettina came to Aruba I told her that Paul Guardier and I had a house and we had a French maid who cooked. I told her that when we got married we would have a French maid, and so we did. She was from the island of Martinique, and she spoke only French, a language with which I was unfamiliar. Our next-door neighbors had a maid who spoke both French and Spanish. When Bettina required something

special, I called the maid next door, instruct her in Spanish what we wanted, and she translated for us. That awkward arrangement went on for some time, but we decided it was too much trouble, and replaced her with a maid who could speak English.

Another story that is all hearsay as far as I am concerned, but maybe somebody will remember this. Someone in the Colony was having a dinner party with fish for dinner. The wife told her maid how she wanted the fish cooked, instructing her to put parsley in the fish's mouth when she brought it in. The maid misunderstood the instructions, and when she brought the fish in on a platter, the dinner guests were treated to the sight of the maid with parsley in her mouth!

Jim Bluejacket and I became very close friends since we were both Okies (from Oklahoma). On Sunday morning we used to pack up some stuff and go over to the Sea Grape Grove or one of the many other picnic spots, and cook Sunday breakfast out in the open. Jim told me when he was young he used to live in Bluejacket, Oklahoma, a little town not too far from Claremore. He used to walk to Claremore to play baseball.

## **LEAVING FROM ARUBA**

Bettina and I were married in 1946, and when I decided to resign in 1947, I was talking to the fellow that was the Refinery Manager's secretary. He said, "Don, what are you going to do? Here you are 40 years old and you got all of this seniority." I told him that we'd make it somehow.

## **A FREELANCE PHOTOJOURNALIST**

After leaving Aruba, I became a freelance photojournalist. Bettina did cartoons when required. In time I got an assignment in New York, and traveled to Central, South America, and Cuba for the United Fruit Company to cover those countries. We did work for various magazines, such as "True Magazine," "Sports Illustrated," "The Saturday Evening Post," "Time," "Fortune," "Business Week," and others. Bettina and I scooped the world on the announcement of the unveiling of the Hydrogen Atom. The Los Alamos Lab and England announced it simultaneously. You might say I was lucky. I got all of my material to Business Week, and they were the first magazine to come out with the news on the subject. They had held the press for 17 hours to get the story. We also did work for various corporations' house organs including Cities Service's. We spent two summers in the Arctic for the Hudson Bay Company, and covered the Northwest Territory. While we were free-lancing there were times when it was a little slow. Like the old

people in Claremore, Oklahoma had a habit of saying, "Well, we haven't missed any meals so far, but there has been occasions where it was a long time between them." It wasn't that bad as far as we were concerned!

Bettina and I did quite a bit of work for the Lamp Magazine, a publication put out by Exxon.

I changed jobs again retiring from Service Pipeline over 25 years ago. We decided to settle in a permanent home. I took Bettina out to New Mexico and said if it was okay with her, I would like for us to live there someday. We moved out here in 1951, and have lived there ever since. I maintain an office in downtown Santa Fe and keep busy doing nothing. We are lucky, and we still have our good health. I am still flying and I am 86 (1991) and I am going to continue flying as long as I can pass the physical.



## **The Jim Bluejacket Story**

If you hear someone who starts out "Now this isn't very elevating and it won't lift you out of the quagmire, but did I ever tell you..." it is probably Lago's best story-teller starting a yarn from his famous and apparently inexhaustible supply. Most of them are built on humor (and truth), and all of them are worth listening to. It is interesting to note that another great story teller, Will Rogers, grew up around Claremore, Oklahoma.

When Jim Bluejacket leaves "for good" late this month, Lago will lose not only the General Foreman of the Welding Department but a colorful character who was good for a ray of sunshine any time.

Jim, whose life has been studded with more "ups and downs and arounds" than most, says his plans for the future are beginning to round out a cycle. He started on a farm in Indian Territory, and is going back to a farm in the same general direction.

He was born in Indian Territory (later Oklahoma) in 1887, and as a Shawnee Indian he received a birthright of 80 acres of land. This, he says, was the land where the fellow who could whoop the loudest and ride the meanest horse was the most important member of the community. This probably made his subsequent job as a young country schoolteacher seem dull. Consequently in 1905 he left teaching to join the Army; he was only 18 but big enough so he had no trouble misrepresenting his age. He enlisted for service in the Philippines, but had to take a medical discharge before getting there.

He drifted into baseball in 1906, joining the Nebraska Indians, who toured the East playing exhibition games. Starting up the ladder from there, he played at Keokuk, Iowa, then Bloomington, Illinois (where oldest son Freddie was born).

Ward Goodwin was another baseball player who had to take up another line of work - in Aruba. After he retired he decided to check into Jim's story. After checking with libraries for years he finally fell heir to a copy of TOTAL BASEBALL which lists over 13,000 players. Near the top of a page there is BLUEJACKET, JAMES (born James Smith) 7/8/87, Adair, Okla. died 3/26/47, Pekin, Ill. BR/TR 6'2.5",200 lbs. DOB: 8/16/14.

As Ward interpreted the statistics of Jim's baseball career it was like

this. The outlaw Federal League started in 1914. The idea was to lure players from the American and National league. Only a few deserted and to fill the rosters, they had to recruit minor leaguers, Bluejacket being one. His first year with Brooklyn he won 4 and lost 5. In 1915 he won 10 and lost 11. The league folded and he caught on with Cincinnati Reds. In 1916 he won 0 and lost 1. He only pitched 7 innings for the Reds. His earned run average was 7.71.

Jim's earliest connection with the Company came through baseball. He was on a Wyoming ranch planting grain when he heard of a team at Greybull, where the players combined baseball with the solid earning power of refinery work. The Midwest Oil Company owned the league, and Jim joined up in 1921 as a member of the pipe fitters gang and the baseball team. When Midwest was taken over by Standard, Jim stayed on in pipe work and later welding.

Some time later Jim transferred to the Standard Oil Company refinery in Wood River, Illinois. After a year and a half in this job, Jim received a new job offer. Mr. T. S. Cooke, became Vice-President of Lago Oil and Transport Company. Mr. Cooke, who had known Jim in Wyoming, sent for him from Chicago. Mr. Cooke said they needed him at a new refinery being built on the island of Aruba. He told Jim this new refinery would grow, and later they might build 17 or 18 houses. He promised Jim he could stay on in a maintenance job after the Plant was finished. (Two parts of Mr. Cooke's statement were incorrect--nearly a thousand houses have been built and the plant has never really been finished).

Jim came to Aruba in the rough-and-ready days of 1928 (April 2) when work and poker were the chief aspects of Colony life.

In recent years he has replaced the poker with golf. Starting to play the game when he was nearly 50, he developed what was probably the stiffest barn door swing ever seen on a golf course; it brings results, however, keeping him in the middle 40's.

No Bluejacket story would be complete without a sample of Jim's yarns, many of which have to do with the "old days" here. He tells of two new employees of what he calls "the missing-link type," who hunted shells on the beach soon after their arrival and then sat down to write about it to their wives. A- "How do you spell Wednesday? I can spell Saturday but not Wednesday." B- "Why?" A- "I want to tell Louise we hunted sea shells today." B- "Tell her we hunted 'em on Saturday you can spell that--the letter won't be there for three weeks and she won't know you're lying."



In another story he tells of a discussion in the old *sheep sheds* about men too long in the tropics "slipping." It was during a time when the laundry service was uncertain; Bluejacket had his name written very large on his shirt, while a man named Coates had his name decorating the back of his trousers. Coates walked out during a discussion and a new man said, "How long has that fellow been in the tropics?" "Thirty years," was the answer. "Well, he's been here too long; he has coats written on his pants--and misspelled at that."

Don Blair, another ex-Oklahoman, says Jim was partial to others from Oklahoma. Don relates this story. Jim told me when he was young he used to live in Bluejacket, Oklahoma, a little town (no longer there) not too far from Claremore. He used to walk to Claremore to play baseball. As Jim tells it, John McGraw (A well known Base Ball Club manager in those days) came up to him one day as he was playing, and said, "By the way, what's your name?"

"My name's Smith," Jim answered, giving his family name.

McGraw asked him where he was from.

"I'm from Bluejacket (Oklahoma)."

"Are you an Indian?"

"Yes."

"From here on out your name is Bluejacket. Hardly anyone is going to come to see an Indian by the name of Smith playing." Later on, after Jim's boys were born, Jim had his name legally changed to Bluejacket.

While Jim was playing for McGraw's New York team most of the ball players were boozers. When they were in the chips they would buy a good diamond ring as an investment so that when they were a little short they would pawn it. One time Jim went on a toot and when he had spent all his money and was forced to sober up, he found himself in California. He sent McGraw a telegram which read, "Am surrounded by poverty. Please send ticket home."

Don Smith who was the company's construction superintendent during the early days shared his memories in an interview with a reporter from the Colony paper; "The Pan Aruban." Everyone lived in those old wooden "*sheep sheds*". He said he remembered Jim in his long night gown standing outside of his quarters beating on a steel triangle and calling all to join him in the nightly poker game.

Beulah Watson was the new X-Ray Technician in the Hospital in

the early days. She said Jim Bluejacket personally brought each of his welders to the hospital for any minor accident. As he came through the doors he gave a shout that resounded throughout the building. All who could possibly break away from what they were doing rushed to the clinic to listen and laugh at Jim's tales while his welder received attention. One time Jim got the flu and Dr. Mailer put him in one of the private rooms. Whenever one of us had a few minutes we gathered in Jim's room to listen to his stories. Jim called spying on your neighbors "doing louver duty." (This referred to the louvers on the shutters of the bungalow windows.) Finally Dr. Mailer decreed that this practice was to be stopped. When Jim heard about Dr. Mailer's orders, he said he wouldn't stay if the girls couldn't come to see him. He got up, put on his clothes and went home.

When Jim had his family in Aruba he found he needed something to keep his two sons, Jimmie and Fred busy. So he bought a pool table and set it up in the living room. He figured he could teach them baseball and how to play pool.

Because Jim Lopez was another ex-Oklahoman, Bluejacket always looked Jim up when he was in the neighborhood of the Instrument Shop. Jim Bluejacket only had one tone of voice. "Loud." Consequently when he began telling Jim one of his stories, all work in the shop stopped. All heard the story! One story told how when he was a kid they used to play baseball in the nearest cow pasture. Sometimes it was a little hazardous trying to maneuver through the "cow pies." No one wore shoes. He said when their team was the "winners" of a game they quite often had to run all of the way back to their homes to keep from being beaten up by the losing team.

Jim Lopez delving into his memory tells this story. "Mary and I were sitting on a Lounge in the old club one evening. We were a little early for the movie so we were sitting in front of the double doors that led into the outdoor movie. This was when there was no roof over the seating area. This area also served as the basketball court when there was no movie. Near the door was a drinking fountain. Jim Bluejacket was washing his hands in the fountain. Then he pulled out a handkerchief and walked over towards us as he was drying his hands. He started talking to us. 'You know one Saturday I got into trouble at the dance we had here. Jenny (his wife) and I were sitting at a table before the music started. Like all of the men I signed up for dances with all of the ladies at the table. You know we had those little dance program cards and I put my name down on all of those ladies cards. Then I wandered off to say hello to all my friends at the bar over there. The

dance was well under way when I got back to our table. The next day when I asked Jenny why some of those ladies wouldn't talk to me. Jenny said "Well Jim when you sign up for a dance and then you aren't there the ladies get mad at you!"

One work day L. G. Smith, Lago's resident President, walked in Vinch's barber shop in San Nicholas. Jim was already in the barber's chair getting his hair cut. (Wow! Supposed to be working and instead in the village getting a hair cut. And here is THE boss.) Jim looked L. G. in the eye and said "Well, it grows on Company time!" L. G. was probably thinking the same thing, and he asked Jim about his family.

Jim's 20-year interest in welding is now replaced with cattle, but in a mild sort of way. He plans to settle on his 140 well-stocked acres 90 miles from Tulsa, Oklahoma, where his brother runs things for him and will probably continue. Jim says that suits him fine because he has no ambitions whatever to get into anything like work after he leaves Aruba. (Jim died March 26, 1947.)

Courtesy of the June 4, 1943 issue of ARUBA ESSO NEWS.



## **The Gilbert B. Brook Jr. Story**

My name is Gilbert B. Brook, Jr. I was born on March 29, 1923, in Shreveport, Louisiana. My father, Gilbert B., Sr., was from Texas, but he moved to Louisiana and held many different jobs before he finally came to Aruba.

My mother, Margaret Webb, a Tennessean, came to Shreveport with her father, a painting contractor. My parents married in 1922. A newspaper clipping from a Shreveport News issue in May of 1922 tells of a shower given to the bride and groom on the week following their marriage, and states their home is on Stoner Ave.

### **GILBERT B. BROOK, SR.**

In 1929, my daddy got a job in Aruba as a second class helper in the stills, and he worked on one of those labor gangs called "clean out crews" who ran those machines that cleaned the coke out of the crude furnace tubes. After he had been there for three months, the Chief Watchman got into some kind of trouble and the company shipped him back to the States the next day. That was what was done with people who got into trouble--you cause trouble one minute, and you're gone the next.

My daddy was 6 foot 4-3/4" tall, weighed about 250 pounds, and he was big and ugly. At that time there were a lot of construction people down there building tanks, stills, this, that and the other. Those ole boys often played pretty rough. So they asked my daddy to take the Chief Watchman's job until they could find somebody else. Twenty-seven years later he retired from that same position. I guess they still hadn't found anyone better for the job!

As I said before, my daddy was the Chief Watchman and he had a warrant from Queen Wilhelmina which certified him as a Dutch police "agent", she sent him a ceremonial saber, which I still have.

He must have done a pretty good job because the Queen gave him the gold medal of the Orange Nassau after WWII. Nobody ever got into the refinery and messed anything up. The O.S.S. and the naval intelligence tried to penetrate the refinery to see how good of a job he was doing, and none of them were successful. He got along pretty good with everybody, and he knew everybody. When they got in trouble, people didn't mind talking to him. He would help them if he could. If he couldn't, he just put them on an ocean going oil tanker and sent them

back to the States.

### **GILBERT B. BROOK, SR. FAMILY TO ARUBA**

After my daddy had been there for six months or so he sent for us. We left Louisiana to catch a ship in New York. I rode on the train for the first time - actually, one of the few times I ever rode on a train. We stayed at the Lincoln Hotel in New York. I think it was about in 1936 or 1937 when the company employees started staying at the Abby Hotel. We were there two days before they sent us to the ship.

The ship was the ocean going oil tanker, the *S/S Paul Harwood*. It was in ballast, having previously unloaded its cargo of oil from Aruba. It was laying out in the "roadstead" as they used to say. We were taken out to it in a tug boat. That ship, the first one I had ever seen, looked like it was about 400 feet tall. It was empty and it stuck a way up out of the water, baring its Plimsoll markers (lines placed on the hull of a merchant vessel to indicate the legal depth to which the vessel may be loaded) almost to the bottom. They put a Jacobs ladder (a rope ladder with wooden steps) over the side and I climbed it. It was in December of 1929, too cold for us southerners, and there was ice all over the place. The *Paul Harwood* lowered a cargo box in a net, and strapped my mother and my year and a half old sister, Elizabeth, in it, along with our baggage, and hoisted them up.

That was a completely new experience for me, but then six-year-old's haven't had too many experiences anyway. I started learning about ships right away. For a short while, they let me steer the ship. We left that night, and about two days later we were out in the Gulf-stream where it was warmer. Those of you who have lived in Aruba know about that because you have probably made as many or more of those trips than I have.

In Aruba, my daddy met us and took us to our new home. He hadn't gotten a bungalow in the colony yet so he had rented a native house on the outskirts of San Nicholas. What a house! It was made of woven sticks plastered with mud, and it had a dirt floor and a straw roof. I don't recall my mama getting too upset, she was too busy soaking in the sights. It didn't bother me; dirt and young boys go together like horses and horseshoes. My mama used to tell about sitting in a chair at night, when my daddy wasn't home, with a pistol in her lap and a pump for pumping up the gas lantern when it grew dim. We lived there for about five months, but the only thing about that house that I remember is that dirt floor and that there were plenty of centipedes and scorpions and all of that kind of bugs. My mama found one of those centipedes that must

have measured all of a foot in length. And when she cut that rascal in two, both ends ran off in opposite directions! I never will forget how she hollered!

The company brought fresh water by truck every day. An ice truck came daily, bringing ice for the ice box. The kerosene truck came by once in a while and filled up the small barrel for the kerosene stove. We had gasoline lanterns, the kind you pump up, because there wasn't any electricity. We even had a bakery truck come by every other day delivering fresh bread. We weren't the only Esso employees; several others lived in the village like we did. I don't remember who all they were because none of them lived nearby. I started to learn Papiamento because all of my playmates were Aruban kids. That's the best way to learn I guess.

Then we got a bungalow in the colony, number 125, or maybe it was 127, I'm not sure which. Anyway it was right across from the school yard on the road that came from the refinery gate, straight up the hill past the post office and by our house. I think the Griffith family with Mary, Donnie, and Phyllis lived right behind us. I don't think they lived there right away. After they left, I believe the parents of Carl Patterson moved into that house. He now lives in California.

### **COLONY LIFE**

After we moved into the colony I started school, and I graduated from there. Our class was the first one to go through the school system. Some of the teachers were: Miss Maybell Parham, Margarite Fassler. I remember on one vacation we went through the Panama Canal to San Diego on a tanker and Ms. Fassler was my roommate. Of course I was too young to do any good, but she was my roommate. Not too many "fellers" can say that they have bunked with their teacher. I don't know what time she got in every night because I was already asleep.

### **ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

The first elementary school building was one story, and later on they built that second story which contained the auditorium. It had an enclosed metal tubular fire escape which made a dandy slide and we used to climb up it and slide back down on waxed paper.

### **HIGH SCHOOL**

Then they built the first high school building. We lived right across the street there for several years while they were building it.

The high school was on the edge of the cliff above the three rows of housing which was built along the lower road. One row was right next to the cliff and faced towards the sea. The middle row also faced towards

the houses on the cliff. The third row was along the edge of the lower cliff. These houses faced the street and the other houses across the road to the south.

The company kept up the buildings and the equipment and the teachers were all New York certified. I think we got as good an education as you could get anywhere.

My younger brother, Russell, was born in the Aruba hospital in 1935. My mother came down with phlebitis and stayed in the hospital for seven months - that's when we moved from bungalow 127 to 277. Bungalow 127 was a two-bedroom and 277 was a three-bedroom bungalow. We had a garage, but the car never got in it. That's where the washing machine, the work bench and all the tools were. My daddy was in a play one time, and I remember he played the part of Fu Manchu. He had his eyes all painted up and he was dressed like a Chinaman.

## **SCOUTS**

I was in the Cub Scouts in 1935. In fact, my daddy started the first Cub Scout troop because he wanted me to be in it. I was in the Boy Scouts when I got old enough.

I used to be one of those boys who loaded the clay "birds" on the gizmo that fired them off for the skeet shooters at the Skeet Club. They didn't allow us kids to shoot much, and I didn't stick with it.

## **BUSINESS VENTURES**

When I was eight years old, I got the shoe shine concession at the Barber Shop and the Clubhouse. After school and on weekends, I shined shoes in the Barber Shop, and at the Club House by the pool tables. That's where I learned how to play poker. I've seen \$5000 in a pot several times. I remember I shined some old boy's shoes several times the same night because he won a pot every time I shined his shoes--you know how some poker players are!

Along about that time I started delivering the Pan Aruban on Saturday mornings. Ole Bob Schlageter used to move me around from route to route so I could sell subscriptions. You made more money by selling subscriptions than by just selling the paper. You made your money right then because they paid you up front. The route that I liked best was down at the Mess Hall (Dining Hall). You could go down there and sell all of those bachelors a Pan Aruban on Saturday morning and the mess hall fed you breakfast. It was all right, I liked that!

In 1937, when I was 15, I got my first car. Ole Fred Switzer sold me a Model A touring car for \$25! I didn't have a regular driver's license.

Of course, my daddy being chief of police, made me pass the Dutch driver's test. He brought up a Dutch sergeant from the San Nicholas driver's license section to give me my driving test, and that son-of-a-buck really worked me over. He had me stop on a hill, and start up again, parallel park, and he asked me all kinds of questions, just like he did everybody else. I passed.

Then about two or three months before I turned 16, they passed a rule that you had to be 16 years old and had to have a license to drive in the colony. My car was stored for a couple or three months.

#### **ANOTHER BUSINESS VENTURE**

All of this time I was delivering the Pan Aruban and doing this, that, and the other. Bill Ziemann and I made a truck out of my Model A, and we used to go out to the cliff on the windward side beyond the sea grape groves, where the goats lived in caves. In some of those caves the goat manure was 12 and 14 feet deep! We took a pick and shovel and potato sacks that we bought at the commissary for a nickel apiece. We filled the sacks with manure and lugged them for a pretty good way back out to the truck, because the sand kept us from backing the truck very close to the cave. That was hard work. And we would go around selling them to people for fertilizing their gardens and flower beds. We even had a contract to supply the hospital for their flower beds. I think we were getting a guilder and a half a bag. In those days 2-1/2 guilders made a US dollar. To us, we had plenty of spending money.

#### **BEACH OUTINGS**

We would get together a skillet, some eggs, some bacon, some potatoes and go out to one of the beaches and build a fire and cook and swim. And we would roll up in a blanket behind a bush when it was bedtime. In the morning, we cooked up bacon and eggs and hash browns for breakfast. I'm sure we went to every beach on the island at one time or another, walking most everywhere we went, because there weren't many roads in those days.

#### **SUMMER JOBS**

When we were in high school, the company decided they had to give us kids something to do during our summer school vacations to keep us out of mischief. The boys got jobs in different locations in the refinery, and the girls usually got some kind of office job. Of course, us kids were not allowed to work in what were considered to be dangerous locations or jobs.

During our summer vacations, I worked in the welding department under Jim Bluejacket. I have a time card dated September 28, 1938. My



rating is shown as a mechanic apprentice, my payroll number is 5009, my rate of pay is 22 Dutch cents an hour. At the time, the rate of exchange was 2-1/2 guilders to the American dollar, so that meant I was making not quite nine cents an hour! That's what they paid the apprentice boys. The second summer, I got a raise to 33 cents, and the fourth summer, I got 1.25 guilders an hour. That was before I left to go to college in the States.

## **WORLD WAR II**

Nineteen thirty-nine was an exciting year for us. When Germany invaded Holland, the Germans and Italians in Aruba were rounded up and sent over to Bonaire for internment. Just before Germany invaded Holland, there were four German ships anchored off Palm Beach, west of Oranjestad. One of the ships tried to get away and a British destroyer got him somewhere north of Aruba. The Attila was scuttled right off Palm Beach north of Oranjestad.

I understand they have hotels along the Palm Beach area now, but at that time there wasn't anything there, just the beach. You could walk nearly 3/4 of a mile west out from the beach before it got over your head, if you were fairly tall. It was just pure white sand all of the way out, and a right pretty beach, but it didn't have any surf because it was on the lee side of the island.

I did "caddy" at the Lago golf course a few times, but that didn't seem fun to me. Some boys did caddy fairly regularly, and some of them even learned to play golf, but I always figured I wasn't old enough to play golf. But then, I still ain't.

A few days after the Germans had declared war on France, at the beginning of World War II, they sent some French marines from Martinique to help guard the island. We used to go out and swap cigarettes for that cheap French wine the guards drank. They weren't much for drinking water, and they didn't seem to have a liking for bathing either.

One night, Harry Shannon, the younger Harry Shannon, and one of the girls drove out towards the surf near where the rifle range was located. They went past one of the French guard posts. The guard hollered at them, but they didn't hear him over the noise of the surf, so he shot the back end of Harry's daddy's '37 Chevrolet full of bullets. Didn't hurt either of them, but it sure scared the hell out of them!

I saw Harry Shannon in Balboa, Panama in 1956. He was working

for the Panama Canal Company, but I don't exactly know what his job was.

#### THE FRENCH MARINES LEFT ARUBA

France fell, and they moved those marines out real quick. I don't think we had anyone guarding us for a while until we got the Cameroon Highlanders who had been evacuated from Dunkirk. The Highlanders and the Dutch were sharing guard duty when I left Aruba in 1941 to go to college in the States.

#### 1941 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

Eighteen of us graduated from high school in 1941; nine boys and nine girls. We were the largest class ever to graduate from Lago High School, some of us being the first ones to go from the first grade to the 12th there. One of us, Igor Broz, went to work for the company after he graduated from Houston's Rice Institute. He managed to escape being drafted because he had an extra set of ribs. I saw him in 1942 while I was in Houston.

Most of our graduating class went to the States for our college education. I came to Louisiana to go to Poly Tech in Resler, Louisiana. Terry Bradshaw from the Pittsburgh Steelers graduated from there.

#### THE UNITED STATES ENTERS WORLD WAR II

I had just started college when the United States declared war on Germany. The next day, I went down to New Orleans. I intended to enlist in the Navy because I figured, what the hell, I had grown up on an island and I had been around boats and water most of my life.

You know, I wore glasses ever since I was seven, and those rascals wouldn't let me in the navy because I couldn't pass their eye test. They still had their peace time requirements. If I had waited a couple of weeks I could have probably gotten in, but they made me so mad. They had us running around in this old, cold, building all day long, stark naked, and my eyes were the last thing they checked. They could have checked them first and spared me the misery.

#### ARMY LIFE

I piffled around until my daddy wouldn't send me any more money, then I joined the Army.

Well, a funny thing happened to me in the Army. While I was in Aruba in the Boy Scouts, Jim Farris, our scoutmaster, put us through a lot of infantry drill. He was a WWI veteran and he felt like we should know how to drill and look a little organized when we marched in

parades or having formal ceremonies. In the army outfit I belonged to, I was the only one who knew anything about right face, left face, about face, to the rear march, double time, column right, and things like that. I have to give credit to ole Jim Farris, because the first stripes I earned were for my proficiency in close order drill.

#### TRANSFER TO THE AIR CORPS

Since I didn't like the infantry very much, it was fortunate my scores were high enough for me to be able to put in a request for a transfer. The Air Corps took me and they sent me to Randolph Field, where I became a Flight Instrument Training Instructor.

In 1944 I got a 30 day furlough and came back to Aruba. I hitchhiked from Sherman Field, at Sherman, Texas by military airplanes to Miami, and then Puerto Rico, and then to Aruba. I spent the rest of the 30 days with my folks. Manuel Viana sent up a Packard automobile with four new tires on it for me to use while I was home, and I thought that was pretty nice of him. There was no rationing on gasoline, but they did take away everybody's spare tire. And when you ran out of tires, there were no more. I really enjoyed that vacation, I went swimming and laid around.

I spent most of the war in Texas teaching because once you get tabbed as an instructor, it was tough to get out of it.

My sister, Elizabeth, worked on KLM as a stewardess on the Miami to Aruba run for a while.

## **The Frans Joseph & Martha Breusers Story**

My name is Frans Joseph Breusers. I was born in Java in 1913. My father was a "Commander" in the Dutch Army and stationed there at the time. A brother, "Wim," was born in Curacao at some time previous to when I was born. Another brother and a sister were born in Java.

My father died, of a heart attack, in Java and my mother moved us to Holland. However she didn't like the cold climate there and moved the family to Curacao where her sister was living at the time.

I lived in Curacao for about 8 years and went to school there. I went to work in the Aruba Lago Refinery Process Department in 1934.

### **MARTHA "MAKKY" BREUSERS**

Martha Breusers, "Makky", was born October 27, 1907 in den Helder, Netherlands which is some 80 kilometers north of Amsterdam on the Atlantic side. She became a teacher as did her two sisters. At the time this was written the Breusers home in Pasadena had a picture of her father hanging on the wall in the living room. An enlargement of a picture taken in 1933 when he was 78, he is shown wearing a formal suit and a bowler hat. The two-story, eleven room, home where she lived as a child was sold after her parents died. Makky visits her old home each time she is in her home town. The last time they visited it had been converted into a small restaurant with rooms for boarders.

When she was 15 years old her father fashioned a wood burning tool out of a metal darning needle, and put a wooden handle on it. She used an alcohol lamp to heat up the wood burning tool to make a picture for her mother. Her mother said she would like something to hang over the mantle above the fireplace in their living room.

When her mother's home was sold the picture traveled to Canada with her sister who had moved there with her husband. And she later brought it to Makky who put it on her living room wall in her Pasadena home.

The picture is about 30" long by 18" high with a two inch wide dark oak frame. The frame was taken from another picture and must be about 150 years old. The picture itself is on wood and depicts a living room scene of her mother's home. It is darkened with age and Makky says she

cleaned it up as much as she could without disturbing the original coloring in the picture. It is something most unusual and could well be a museum piece.

A smaller picture made about the same time was on the wall in the hallway of her home. It depicts a her mother's kitchen scene and even shows a design on the tiled wall.

Makky was married to a man who came to Aruba to be in charge of a Church School in Oranjestad. They had three daughters. She was also a teacher in Oranjestad when she met Frans. She and her husband were divorced and then she and Frans were married.

One daughter married an Englishman. He worked in the Process Department in the Lago Refinery. Another daughter married an American. He also worked in the Process Department in the Lago Refinery.

Valentina, "Tina", the younger daughter was born in the Eagle Hospital, in Oranjestad, Aruba, in 1938. This hospital was located in the camp of the Eagle Oil Company located on the North Western end of the island of Aruba. Lennie, the nurse, who assisted Dr. Harms in the delivery, later became Mrs. John Ten Houde De Lange.

"Tina" attended the Dutch Schools in Aruba and was 16 when she left Aruba with her parents. She completed her High Schooling in Pasadena and later married Ed O'Keefe. Their son, Michael, went to school in Pasadena; became an Eagle Scout; and played football for the University of Arizona where he graduated in 1985. Ed is involved with Computers at the Houston International Airport and Tina is busy in charge of the Richey Street Pasadena Post Office.

Martha Breusers died April 18, 1997 and is buried in Grand View Memorial Park in Pasadena, Texas.

## **FRANS WORKED IN THE LAGO REFINERY**

Because I was not hired in Holland for work in the Aruba Refinery I was not eligible for a bungalow in the Lago Colony. I was assigned a house in Lago Heights where I lived until I left Aruba.

I began my employment in the Lago Refinery in 1930. I was on the "local" payroll during the time I worked at Lago. I started out as a "Fireman" on a Still. I worked in nearly all of the Units in the High Pressure Stills Department from Cross & Reducer Units numbers 1 through 8, Viscosity Breaker Units numbers 9 and 10 and Gas Oil Unit #11. In 1945 I was a member of one the shifts that operated the new

Catalytic Cracking Unit. Fellow crew members there included: Titsworth, Lawrence.

**JIM GREENE**

One night I was working on shift with Jim Greene on number 5 and 6 High Pressure Stills. I remember that Jim sat on the "firewall" between Units 5 and 6 to catch a breath after some pump switching and evidently had a heart attack there and died.

**BILL SOFFAR**

Another time I was with a group of people at some social occasion in Pasadena and somehow it came out that I had worked in the Aruba Lago Refinery. A girl spoke up and said, "Did you know my uncles, George and Bill Soffar, who worked in Aruba?"

I said, "Yes I knew them and as a matter of fact I held your uncle Bill in my arms when he died!". Then I explained that I was working shift with Bill when one night he fell from an upper level of the unit and received head injuries and when I picked him up it was already too late and he died then and there.

**FEBRUARY 16, 1942**

I was working the midnight to 8:00 a.m. shift on February 16, 1942. Oliver Forbes was the Shift Foreman. My area included #9 and #10 Viscosity Breaker Units. Forbes asked me to take a walk along the main road through the refinery and see if any lights were visible from the high pressure still units. (The whole refinery area was in the midst of instituting black-out conditions; unnecessary light bulbs were being removed in all the shop buildings and along the walkways in the unit structures.)

The main refinery road ran east and west through the refinery. This road extended to the west from the main gate near the main office building on the east side of the refinery towards the west side of the refinery. This road ran near the shore line, between the units and the sea which was to the south.

As I walked south past number 10 unit Bill Miller, who was the operator on that unit, decided to walk along a little ways with me. Just as we reached the main road and turned to go along it to the west we saw and heard an explosion outside the reef to the south of them. Bill Miller verbally deduced that it was one of the Lake Tankers and a spark had somehow been generated causing its tanks to explode. Shortly after that there was another and then another and yet a fourth tanker went up in flames.

As we stood gazing seaward where the flames were lighting everything up at sea as well as on land we suddenly saw and heard what appeared to us to be "tracer" rounds from what we later found out was the attacking submarine, and they seemed to be aimed right at us. We both fell to our knees and began crawling back towards our respective assigned job areas. Subsequently all Refinery Units were shut down in a hurry.

#### MOVING FROM ARUBA TO MINNESOTA IN 1954

In 1954, after 24 years of service with Lago, I decided to leave Aruba with Makky and Tina and try our luck in the United States. Our two older daughters were already married and as a matter of fact they later relocated in the United States. I shipped our car from Aruba to Bayonne, New Jersey on a Tanker.



## **The Robert M. Campbell Story**

### **FRANK AND IONA SCHWARTZ CAMPBELL**

My name is Robert M. Campbell. I was born October 18, 1915 in Longmont, Colorado. The "M" doesn't stand for anything. My father was Frank Schwartz Campbell. Schwartz was his mother's maiden name. She was of German descent. He was born on July 5, 1892 in Alexis, Illinois.

My mother's name was Iona McKeenan, an Irish name, and she was born on February 15, 1892. My father spent his younger years in the Ozarks in Missouri. He attended Kansas State College in Manhattan, Kansas. He graduated as a Chemist. Before dad graduated he quit college after 2 years and went to Colorado to mine Tungsten.

My father also worked in some Sugar Mills as a Chemist in Colorado and Nebraska. Then he went back to Manhattan, Kansas and went to college for two more years and graduated, in 1916 or 1917, as a Chemist.

He was offered a job with the Mayo Brothers in Rochester, Minnesota. He went there and worked for a year as a Medical Technologist.

In 1921 The Standard Oil of Indiana offered him a job in the Laboratory of the refinery in Casper, Wyoming. When he got to Casper he was told that the only job available was in the "Bull Gang" which was the equivalent of the Labor Department we had in the Aruba Refinery. This was in spite of the fact that they had promised him a job in the Laboratory . Having two boys and a wife to support and things being kind of tough he accepted the job and went to work in the Labor Department. He worked there for about 3 months and then they transferred him to the Pipe Department. Here he was assigned as a Pipe Fitter Helper. Then he was transferred to the Low Pressure Stills and then the High Pressure Stills. Dad didn't appreciate this work very much because it was cold up there in Casper in the winter time. And he was working Shift Work. It was not a very pleasant job.

After about a year they transferred him into the Laboratory to the original job he was hired for. I am sure that at the time Dad didn't appreciate the education that he had received out in the refinery.

He was offered the chance to go to Aruba to start up the Laboratory in the new refinery they were building. So he went to Aruba in 1928 and



Mother came down a few months later with me and my brothers, Pete, and Carl. My mother came back to the States in 1931 for the birth of my younger sister, Dorothy. After that she returned to Aruba.

My older brother and I could not go to school in Aruba at that time because the High School was not yet built. So we had to stay in the States where we lived with my grandmother in Manhattan, Kansas.

Dad had the Laboratory and the Operators some time before the Pipe Stills were ready. When the Low Pressure Stills started coming on the line he went over there and assisted those people in putting those units on the line. And when the High Pressure Stills came on the line, some time later, he went over there and assisted those people in putting them on the line. The experience he had in Casper was invaluable at this time. He was instrumental in getting those units in operation.

Due to his experience, his education, and being very instrumental in getting the refinery going led to his being appointed Plant Superintendent. Of course this took place over quite a few years.

And then he was made Assistant Plant Manager a job which he held up until the time he left and went to a job in New York City in 1943.

In New York he was Coordinator of all of the oil produced by Exxon in the Caribbean Basin. This included Argentina, Cuba, El Salvador, Colombia, Venezuela, and of course the refinery in Aruba. He went to Washington, D.C. every week and gave them the amount of oil and the different products that Exxon could supply. And that was his job. He stayed in New York City until he retired in 1949 or 1950.

After Dad's retirement he went to Corpus Christi, Texas where he built himself a little place on Kokomo Bay and did some fishing down there. He had a brain tumor which did some brain damage. So he went back to New York and had an operation and while recovering from the operation he contracted pneumonia, which is quite common in that type of operation. And finally he was allowed to come home. When he came home he was paralyzed on his right side.

But he didn't let that stop him. He and mother went on trips to Europe, Hawaii, Alaska, all over the world. Even though he had trouble walking and talking and he used a cane to get around, but his mind was alert and he enjoyed the trips. Dad lived until he was 87 years old. My mother passed away when she was 86. Both were living in Corpus Christi. And they are both are buried near Ingleside south of Corpus Christi. My brother "Pete" is also buried there.

### **RONALD CAMPBELL**

My older brother, Ronald McKeenan, was born, in Longmont, Colorado, on December 4, 1913. McKeenan was my maternal grandmother's maiden name. Ronald worked in Aruba from 1931 to 1932 in the Laboratory. Then he went back to Kansas State College in Manhattan, Kansas for two years. Then he went to Fort Collins, Colorado and graduated in Forestry. He never worked in Forestry. All of his life he worked in the Oil Industry. He worked with the Charles Martin Company. Then he got a job with the U. S. Government in Corpus Christi, Texas where he worked until he was about 67 years old. He finally retired at that time.

### **CARL CAMPBELL**

My youngest brother, Carl, who is some ten years younger than I am, doesn't have a middle initial. I don't know why the folks never gave him one. He left Aruba after he graduated from High School. That must have been in 1942 or 1943. He immediately went into the Navy. He was on a Landing Ship Vehicle. An LST. And he spent two years on the same ship in the Pacific. He participated in landings at Okinawa and other islands. He saw a lot of action. And then when the war was over they made that ship into a Hospital Ship. They carried some 1000 or 1200 litter cases on each trip back to the United States. They made two or three trips doing that. After he completed his three years he got out of the Navy.

Carl then went to the University of Virginia and got his Doctorate in Education. He got a job in Shippensburg, Pennsylvania in the State Teachers College there. They have since changed the name. He worked there for over 30 years and retired a few years back. And he just spends his time traveling and enjoying life.

### **FRANK PAUL "PETE" CAMPBELL**

Frank Paul "Pete" Campbell was the name of my brother that was born after me. He was born December 17, 1921. He went to the Lago High School. He passed away with Lung cancer.

### **DOROTHY CAMPBELL**

My sister's name was Dorothy Campbell. No middle name. Her date of birth was June 17, 1932. She graduated from the University of Texas and her major was in Journalism. I don't remember right now when she graduated.

### **FIRST TRIP TO ARUBA OF RONALD AND ROBERT CAMPBELL**

In the summer of 1931 my older brother, Ronald, and I took a train

to Baltimore, which was quite an event for two young fellows. My older brother had just finished High School and I had two more years to go. We were going down to live in Aruba. We caught the Norwegian Tanker, the *S/S Pan Aruba*, out of Baltimore. We took a beautiful trip down to Aruba. The water was smooth and we sat on the front of this tanker and watched the porpoise and the flying fish. We had a very enjoyable trip.

When we arrived in Aruba Dad managed to take off a few days and took us on a Lake Tanker to Lake Maracaibo where we went to La Salina, Cabimas, and Laganillas and then we came back to Aruba. There I worked in the Post Office for six weeks. Ronald got a job in the Laboratory where he worked for a full year. In the fall of 1931 Robert Campbell returned to school in Kansas.

In the fall of 1931 I returned to the States on the *S/S Pan Bolivar*, sister ship of the *S/S Pan Aruba*. I returned to Manhattan, Kansas where I went to High School for two more years.

After graduating I returned to Aruba in June 1933 on the Tanker *S/S Esteldio* out of Aransas Pass, Texas. The *Esteldio* was a Chartered ship with an Italian crew and as far as I know it made just that one trip to Aruba.

I went to work in the garage. I was on the Local Payroll for about two years before going on the Foreign Staff Payroll.

After the attack on Aruba by the Submarine on February 16, 1942 Bob Miller, the Mechanical Superintendent of the Refinery came to the Garage and ask me if I would go down to the Machinist Department to assist them in maintaining the big Combustion Driven Compressors they had received for Gar-1 and Gar-2 which were a part of the Catalytic Cracking Unit Project at the time. Also to assist them in putting them on the line. The machinist who had come down to do that job had resigned and left. I worked in the Machinist Department until 1945 when the war was over and the people who had resigned because of the attack came back and I was sent back up to the garage. In the garage the people had returned there also so there wasn't anything for me to do. I asked for a transfer anywhere in the world and they promised me a job. But it was a long time, before I was offered a transfer to the Creole Corporation in Venezuela.

### **ROBERT AND MAYBELLE BROWN MARRIED APRIL 16, 1938**

In Aruba I married Marybelle Brown, the daughter of William and Ruth Brown on April 16, 1938. Bill was a stillman (Operator) in the High Pressure Stills from 1928 to 1932 and had four daughters.

Marybelle, Elizabeth, Martha Lee, and Wilda. Elizabeth married George Cunningham who was working in the Refinery Instrument Department. Mrs. Brown was very active in the Lago Community Church.

### **CREOLE PETROLEUM REFINERY IN AMUAY BAY, VENEZUELA**

In June of 1947, I was transferred to the Creole Petroleum Corporation as the Garage - Transportation Supervisor. I started to work the first of June. We did all kinds of Vehicle and Heavy Equipment Maintenance, occasionally helping the Marine Maintenance on Tug Boat Engines or something of that nature.

I arrived there just as the Amuay Bay Refinery was being built. They had lots of heavy equipment such as Cranes, Caterpillars, and all kinds of earth moving equipment. The Foreign Liquidation Commission of the United States Government had sold a bunch of this equipment from Panama to anybody that would buy it for just a few cents on the dollar. Probably less than 10 cents on the dollar. We had cranes, trucks, hand tools, all kinds of pumps and equipment.

When I left there, 19 years later, some of that equipment was still in use there. Jack Polk, later a Zone Supervisor of Maintenance in the Aruba Refinery, was the No. 2 man in charge of Construction. There was a nice fellow there from Esso Research and Engineering as the top man. However Jack Polk, and ex-US Navy man, was very aggressive and almost ran the place. We had a good time and really worked hard. It was a pleasure working for Jack.

They were building roads, foundations, firewalls, and laying all of the ground work for building the Units. Some of the equipment we had to work with was new, but most of it was War Surplus equipment that we had received from Panama. Cranes, trucks, tractors, all types of equipment, tools, all of which was US Army Surplus. Our first Pipe Still went on the line about 1950. A 100,000 Barrel a day unit. We later had Pipe Stills No's 2, 3, and 4 all 100,000 barrel a day Units. So our capacity was about 400,000 barrels per day. We also had a Power House; a big tank farm; a Lube Plant; a Hydroformer; and a number of smaller Units. We also built two big earthen reservoirs for Fuel Oil. One of them held 9,200,000 barrels and the other one held 10,300,000 barrels. A good number of the personnel were people who had transferred from the Aruba Refinery.

We would run the units all out in the summer time to build up our capacity and fill up our reservoirs. We would pump crude from Lake Maracaibo, which only had 5% light ends in it into these Reservoirs. If

we had a bad cargo of say Diesel Oil for example they would just dump it into the Reservoirs and sell it as Fuel Oil. This wasn't done very often because that was giving away profit. And in the winter time we would pump it out and ship this heavy oil up to the United States and all over the world. We used it in the Power House for fuel and we shipped it anywhere they needed heavy fuel.

Since I left there they built another earthen reservoir in the range of 10,000,000 barrels. In our huge Tank Farm we had all sizes of tanks from 30,000 barrels up to 250,000 barrels.

Our Power House had three boilers and we had three 7500 KW Generators. And a little later on we installed two 10,000 KVA, GE, Gas Turbine driven Generators.

Another thing of interest about the Amuay Bay Refinery was that we made reconstituted Crude. That is we made crude to meet specifications. It seems that all of the countries when they refine the oil in their own country wanted specialty Crude so when they refined it they could pull just exactly what they wanted. So we would make a crude to their specifications containing: Propane, Butane, Heavy Fuel Oil, Gas Oil, Diesel Oil, Lube Oil or whatever they wanted. Some was sent to Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Brazil or wherever and they would re-refine it and pull out the things that they had requested. I remember one time they had crude containing Lube Oil for Brazil.

#### **THE S/S MANHATTAN OCEAN GOING OIL TANK SHIP**

The Tanker, *S/S Manhattan*, carried 800,000 barrels. It came to Amuay Bay on its maiden voyage for a load of reconstituted Crude bound for a port large enough to accommodate it in Denmark. This was a huge ship and we could only load it down to 42 feet which was our harbor depth. Then they took it outside the harbor where it was deeper. We then loaded what we called a Super Tanker that carried 235,000 barrels. The Super Tanker then went outside the harbor and pumped their cargo into the Manhattan. That Super Tanker looked like a tug boat alongside of that huge Manhattan. I think that this was before they modified it to make that trip through the ice towards the North Pole to see if it was feasible to use such ships to transport Crude from Alaska to the USA.

#### **ROBERT CAMPBELL PROMOTED TO MECHANICAL GROUP HEAD**

After a few years, because of my machinist experience, they put the Machinist Department under my supervision. And a little later on they put all of the Crafts under my supervision. I was called The Craft Coordinator. And about four years before I retired I was made the

Mechanical Group Head. I had all of the Mechanical Group. This was the same job that Chippendale and Switzer held at various times in the Aruba Refinery.

### **ROBERT CAMPBELL RETIRES**

I retired, in 1966, after 19 years in Venezuela making a total of 33 years of Company Service. When I finally left there in 1966 the Company was just ready to spend a Billion dollars on the refinery. They put in a light ends plant. There has been so much work since I left there.

### **MARYBELLE PASSED AWAY IN 1973**

Marybelle passed away in 1973 of a heart attack. We had purchased a place at the mouth of the Suwannee River and we had a double wide Mobile Home there right on the Suwannee River. That is where I go to spend my week-ends and all the time that I can down there. It is a beautiful place.

### **ROBERT AND MARYBELLE'S CHILDREN**

Robert Lee, born at the Lago Hospital in Aruba October 17, 1940, graduated from Rensselaer Poly Technical Institute in Troy, New York as a Chemical Engineer. He went to work for Du Pont at the Savannah River Plant at Wilmington, South Carolina. He got his Masters Degree in Chemical Engineering from the University of South Carolina. He worked at the Savannah River Plant for about 10 years then he transferred to Orange, Texas at the Du Pont Plant and has been working there ever since. I guess he has been working for them for 20 years.

Sherry Lynn, born at the Lago Hospital in Aruba February 2, 1944, graduated from Vanderbilt University, in Nashville, Tennessee and then received her Masters Degree from Washington University in St. Louis. Received her Phd from the University of New York and she is a Neuro-Biologist is now teaching 3rd year Medical Students Biology at Kent State University in Ohio and doing research work.

Mary Dianne, born at the Lago Hospital in Aruba February 15, 1947, lives in Venezuela and has all of these years.

Sandra Merleen, born in Amuay Bay, Venezuela January 15, 1950, has a degree in Zoology from the University of Florida. And also has a degree in Medical Technology and works at the North Florida Regional Hospital as a Technologist.

Carrol Ann, born in Amuay Bay, Venezuela on January 26, 1955, graduated from the International University in Miami. And she took Hotel Management and Travel Agencies and she owns a Travel Agency there in Gainesville.

Richard Allen, born in Amuay Bay, Venezuela on February 5, 1958, graduated from the University of Florida in Political Science. And he works with Carrol in the Travel Agency in Gainsville.

### **WORLD WAR II YEARS IN ARUBA**

Now I will tell you a little about the War Years in Aruba. This is my perspective of it.

When we were attacked on February 16, 1942 about 1:30 am. The German submarine came up off our coast and torpedoed two Lake Tankers: The Oranjestad and The Perdenales ironically were anchored right off the reef. At the time I think we were living in Bungalow # 512. I went out on my porch and looked down towards the refinery and I could see these flames of the ships that were on fire. I could see Tracer Bullets coming in towards the refinery.

The Operating Department immediately started shutting down the Refinery. At that time my Dad was in charge of the Refinery. L. G. Smith had left for New York about two days before. He was still in New York when we were attacked. To shut the refinery down it took a little time. You have to cool the units off so you don't coke up the tubes as you come down.

The next morning there were lots of people that wanted to leave. So the Management did everything possible. Anyone who wanted to leave could leave. And they had to charter planes to ship the people out.

Also the Government was busy gathering up all of the Italians, Germans, and any Europeans who might cause sabotage and sent them over to an internment camp on the Island of Bonaire.

The Tanks in the Spheroid Tank Farm, which were upwind and on higher ground than some of the housing, were all painted white. These were 100,000 barrel tanks that could be seen for 20 miles at sea, particularly on a moonlit night. These had to be painted some darker color.

The Units couldn't be started up again because when the furnaces were lighted the fireboxes could be seen at sea at night. We couldn't show any lights. We had to have a complete blackout of all lighting.

However they got busy right away and put all of the laborers and mechanical helpers and whoever was available helping to organize for blackout conditions. They made up a mixture of lamp-black and kerosene and got up there on those tanks and poured it down and used some large brushes and you would be surprised how fast they became

dark grey!

We didn't have enough material in stock to make covering screens for the furnace fireboxes so they took the corrugated transit material off the roofs of the High Pressure Stills.

Before the refinery could be started up the Petroleum War Plant Controllers from Curacao came over in an airplane to see if everything was all right. Then when we started up they came over again to check to see that no lights were being visible from the sea. Some of us also put curtains over all of our windows in our houses.

All of the automobile lights had to be painted a dark blue with a 1 centimeter high by 3 centimeter wide slit through which the light could shine.

People were very cooperative. Everybody was pretty well scared too! We wanted to be sure we were blacked out. In fact we did such a good job making sure we were blacked out that the Esso Club House which had these blackout curtains installed was burned down later in June mainly because the flames were not visible from the outside until it was too late to save much.

### **TANK FARM PATROLS**

I remember they took the Skeet Club guns and gave them to certain men in the refinery and had them patrolling the tank farm to guard against sabotage. The Spheroids were filled with Aviation Gasoline which was a pretty dangerous situation.

### **CONTINGENCY PLANS**

Prior to the attack by the submarine they didn't expect that we would be attacked however there were contingency plans set up and there were certain places we were supposed to go in the event of an attack or emergency. I was supposed to go down to the garage and help get the equipment ready in case it was needed. So when the attack took place I reported down there and we got tractors and trucks ready in case they were needed. However they weren't required.

### **INTERNMENT CAMP**

I remember also that they sent a bunch of people to Bonaire to the Internment Camp, but there was also a number of people who escaped. The Zechinni's went to Venezuela. Dr. Sandvos who was in charge of the hospital got away to New York. Otto Sauer who was in charge of the Cold Storage Facilities also got to Venezuela. I saw him some years later. He was a wine Steward at one of the big hotels there in Caracas.



Ocho Zechinni, son of Al who worked as the Shop Foreman in the Instrument Department, had a factory that made sterile cotton for Johnson and Johnson. Later on he got into real estate and into gold and jewelry. He even had plant in Moron to make sulfuric acid. And the last I heard of him he was a Director the Banco de Venezuela. The largest bank of Venezuela.

### **FEBRUARY 19, 1942**

It wasn't long after our attack one morning we were awakened with flare shells soaring over our Colony. As we later heard they were shot by an American destroyer who had thought they had seen something between where they were and the eastern point of the island. This was the end of the island where the Lago Colony was located. They shot these flares out there to illuminate the area and they did. It was a bright as day.

However the flare casings were about 6" in diameter and at least 1/2" thick and I was told that they weighed 20 to 30 pounds apiece. The flares were released at an altitude of about 1000 feet and the casings came down. One went through the Club House. And the second one went through the roof of one of the Bachelor Quarters and down through the floor at the foot of the bed of one of the Dutchmen there, just missing him and ended up in a radiator of a car in a garage beside the Bachelor Quarters. Another one landed in the Tank Farm just missing one of spheroids and another tank. They were very, very fortunate there because if that casing had hit a tank it would have caused a terrific fire for sure. The whole tank farm would have gone up.

And although we were never attacked again we did see ships burning off the coast occasionally. They had been torpedoed by German submarines. There were claims of submarines in the area. I understand that there were over 600 ships lost in the Caribbean during World War II. If a ship could travel fast, say 15 knots, it could go directly from Aruba to Europe zig-zagging as it went and it was fairly safe. The slower ones had to go in convoy. They met in Aruba and Curacao and traveled down to Trinidad, which was 600 miles away. In that 600 miles there were many ships torpedoed and lost. They would gather up in a convoy in Trinidad and go across to Europe. But even though it was safer there were still many lost.

### **SPORTS IN THE LAGO COLONY AND ARUBA**

John McCord who was in charge of the garage was a real live wire when it came to getting things moving. When they were talking about starting a Golf Club he was one of the ones who was anxious to get one

started. And he walked all over the East End of the Island there looking for a spot. And they finally chose that spot where it was built. And Ray, the Club House Manager, was there for years. I guess he may still be there.

I remember some of the players. I used to play a little, but not too much. The top players were: Eddie McCoart, Harmon Poole, Jack Burn, Al Leake, Jerry Krastel, Neil Griffin. I guess there were many people that played there. They used to have a big barbecue every year. Johnny Sherman used to go out there and barbecue all night. They used to feed up to 1500 people. This was a real nice club.

### **BOB CAMPBELL'S FLYING CLUB MEMORIES**

John McCord was instrumental in starting up the Flying Club. We got permission from the Company to build a Runway. The Dutch Government gave them a little, Grand Prix Piper Cub. It was a brand new craft. When they got permission from the Company to build a runway. They called it De Vuijst Field after Commander De Vuijst who was Dutch Naval Officer and was very cooperative and a real fine fellow.

Later on the Dutch Government gave the Club two Aeronca Champions. That is also a small plane like the Piper Cub. And then we got two PT-19's, Army planes, Primary Trainers and then they got a PT-26. Which was an identical plane to the PT-19's except it was built in Canada and had a Canopy over it . It also had a little larger engine. Some of the people had their own airplane. Johnny Sherman had one and Alex Shaw had one. And some of the people used the Club Planes.

I was taught by a Navy Pilot and some were taught by Army pilots. Then later on Skippy Culver, Vernon Turner and Frank Roebuck became Instructors. There must have been about 60 members of the Flying Club. After the War was over we bought seven PT-13 Basic Trainers with 450 Horsepower engines. We brought them down, uncrated, just sitting on the deck of Tankers and fixed them up and sold them around Aruba. Other fellows who had one were: Skippy Culver, Vernon Turner, John McCord, Alex Shaw, and I can't remember who else.

I had one of them all ready to go when I transferred to Venezuela. I had never flown it. So I sold my plane to a fellow there: I know him well, I can see his face, but I can't think of his name. And that was the end of my flying.

### **MEMORIES OF THE LAGO GUN CLUB**

John McCord was also instrumental in starting up the Gun Club.

When they first started up we bought some 12 gauge shotguns and we bought a lot of ammunition. Some of active club members were: Stewart Harrison, Clyde Fletcher, Cary Daly, Hatfield, Tommy Yard, Hugh Orr, Al Pomeroy, John McCord. Stewart had a 410 gauge pump gun that he liked. He never hit very many targets, but he liked to shoot. We had a number of Winchester Pump guns and we had some Winchester Automatics. And we used Number Nine shot, which is Skeet Shot for using with Clay Pigeons. And of course there were many other Skeet Shooters. It was a very active Club in the late 30's and Early 40's.

#### FISHING MEMORIES

George Larsen was our most ardent Fisherman. He had a 27 foot boat that he had built, him and two other fellows. They used to go fishing at least three times a week. He really enjoyed it and he always enjoyed it along with them. Stewart Harrison, Clyde Fletcher, John McCord, Frank Campbell, John Sherman, Julia Sherman, Frankie McMahan, Johnny Pfaff, George Begin. They were all active in building boats and/or fishing. And fishing was a big Sport off Aruba. There were many different varieties. Anywhere from Tuna, Wahoo, Bonita, Grouper, Red Snappers, Sharks, Barracudas, Marlin, Kingfish, Mackerel, Yellow Tail, Sail Fish. We usually troll fished because it was too rough to fish any other way. Of course the water was always rough and it wasn't always pleasant. I've been sick out there about a thousand times I guess. And old John McCord and John Fletcher used to tell me "OH! you'll get over it tonight! You'll get over it tonight!" And then next day they would talk me into going again. And I would be sick again. Worse than I was the night before! They were right! After about a thousand times I finally got over it!

We took Dad out occasionally, but he had a lot of work to do so he didn't get to go too often. My brothers never went with us.

I remember the boat that George Begin started building and then sold to Johnny Pfaff. One time they came over to Amuay Bay and we had a good time with them and we showed them a good time too! We really enjoyed the visit with them.

#### **OCEAN GOING OIL TANKER SHIPS AND ARUBA**

I remember that most of our Tanker trips between Aruba and New York took us through Mona Pass which was between the islands of Santo Domingo and Puerto Rico. And I remember that when Jim Bluejacket went up one time on one of the tankers and Father Hendricks, the Catholic priest from San Nicholas was a passenger. They had obtained permission for him to travel on a tanker to the States. Jim was standing

out there on the deck one night with the other 10 or 12 passengers and Jim looked over there and he saw this lighthouse. And he said: "Jesus, Columbus shouldn't have had any trouble finding Santo Domingo, there's a light on it!" And of course everybody got a big laugh out of it. And Jim was still there on the deck after everybody else had gone to bed. And old Father Hendricks walked up to him and said: "Mr. Bluejacket, there wasn't any light on there when Columbus discovered America."

#### THE FRANKLIN

I do remember the big old Franklin that someone brought down to Aruba, my brother was the last one to own it. But I can't remember who brought it to Aruba originally. It was a good old car but it burnt up on the road near where the hospital was.



## **The Frances C. Clark Story**

I was born in a beautiful small Connecticut town on May 28, 1909. My parents separated when I was six. My four year old sister and I were boarded here and there until I was nine. At that time we went to live with an "elderly" couple who were 49 and 52. They were both loving and sweet.

My twelfth year was spent with my mother and step-father who lived on an island. My sister and I went to a one room country school reached by a two mile walk beside the lake.

A dedicated teacher conducted all classes through the sixth grade. An inspector from the State Department of Education spent a day observing each class and later the coveted designation of "Model School" was received.

Summer mansions owned by New York professionals were located along the lake's shores. Many mothers came during the spring with their children and remained until fall. One day the mother of two boys, eight and ten, asked if I would accompany her sons to school as I knew how adventuresome boys are.

Many years later, in one of the last issues of the old "Life" magazine, I read an article about two doctors having the same names. One had performed the first heart operation in New York City. The other had developed a mitral heart valve replacement that had successfully performed in tests and on several patients.

I wrote a congratulatory letter and in reply one wrote they often wondered what I had done in later life as my school grades were always higher than theirs.

After one year at that school it was necessary to walk three additional miles to the Center School for the seventh and eighth grades and High School. Much of this route was uphill and a friend who often gave us a ride had to back up the hill so gas would drain from the tank to the engine of the car.

This long walk, even during winter, was too much. I returned to the couple with whom I had previously lived and worked for my board.

During vacations I worked ten or twelve hours a day in a cannery for twenty cents an hour. No "coffee breaks" were included and I

accrued \$145.00 toward my advanced education.

I graduated from Bethlehem Grammar School in 1923 and then went to Watertown High School a distance of about seven miles by bus. There was a severe blizzard on February 12th, 1926. This was during examination week and blocked the roads. Unless we took the exams, credit for the previous semester's work would be lost. We left home about 6:a.m. and walked along fences and stone walls, singing much of the time. We had occasional short rides with farmers taking their forty quart cans of milk on horse drawn bobsleds to the trolley in Watertown. The trolley would take the milk to the bottling plant in Waterbury, as the truck could not get through.

When the day's exams were completed we started home and though some progress had been made with snow clearance, it was nearly dark when we reached home.

Upon graduating from Watertown High School in 1927, my best friend and I shared top honors. When I gave my speech, I am sure the trembling of my knees drew as much attention as the speech I had so diligently written and learned. In fact, I can still recall the opening lines, "Education is the systematic training of our intellectual faculties and the cultivation of our mental powers."

I dreamed of going to Pratt Institute in New York to study to be a dietitian but my meager funds were inadequate so I settled for nursing.

At that time the New York Post Graduate Hospital had an excellent program for doctors and nurses and my fund would pay for books, a few incidentals, and transportation to New York. No tuition was required. I graduated on March 13, 1930 with a prize for scholastic standing though I was the youngest in the class.

I was one of four nursing school graduates of that year whose picture, in nursing uniform, was placed in a time capsule at the end of the Worlds' Fair. This capsule contained other information and documents of that time. The capsule was buried in the Flushing meadows at the end of the Worlds' Fair, to be opened one hundred years from that date.

The position of Supervisor of the Surgical Clinic with its thirty-two sub-divisions plus an amphitheater was offered and accepted. The amphitheater was a large operating room that had balcony of seats for observers to witness operations from above. It was one of the largest in New York. It could accommodate fifty post-graduate doctors from throughout the world who came to observe unusual and interesting cases.

Shortly after Pearl Harbor I volunteered for service with our hospital unit collecting "Blood for Britain." We did this three times a week. Donors came by bus from New Jersey and New York boroughs. In addition to this I worked two evenings and on week-ends as Technical Assistant to the Director of Quality Control in a defense plant. We inspected and assembled landing gear for Bell aircraft and Sikorsky helicopters. This was all my "war effort" and I wanted to do more.

Our hospital unit was scheduled to leave the States February 9, 1945. However about two days earlier, I received a letter from the Surgeon General. He was requesting my signature on a waiver relieving the government from any responsibility for medical problems. It seems that the unit was going to a very primitive area and my health might be jeopardized.

One of our professors was lecturing at the Pearl Harbor Naval Hospital at the time the Japanese attacked on December 7, 1941.

He advised against signing the letter and referred me to the Exxon Medical Department. He was familiar with their hospitals.

I visited the offices of Exxon; passed the exam; and was offered a position as Charge Nurse in Talara, Peru. A few days later, a family emergency necessitated cancellation. When the problem was resolved, I was contacted and Barranquilla, Colombia was mentioned but someone had told me of the abundance of snakes in that area, so I decided against that location.

Shortly afterward, I was advised an Aruba Hospital Staff member was joining military service. I was offered a position there and I accepted.

A list of suggested articles needed was provided. When I attempted to obtain cotton dresses on blustery winter days, I was regarded as very strange.

Eventually, most of the articles were obtained and when American Express was called, I was advised plane passengers were allowed one suitcase and there was an embargo on all except military supplies by ship. The steamer trunk in which I had packed most of my supplies except the few that would fit in my suitcase could be accepted conditionally on a space available base. It is good no arrival date was guaranteed as the steamer trunk did not arrive in Aruba before I left. It was regarded as a "war casualty."

My departure date from New York coincided with the departure

date of our hospital unit for the Pacific. Due to a blizzard all flights from New York were cancelled. We finally left the afternoon of February 11, 1945.

As we approached Washington, D. C. I was advised I would be staying there over-night and taken to the airport the next morning at 5:00 a.m. My seat had been assigned to the Greek Ambassador whose priorities far exceeded mine. I was taken to the Mayflower Hotel and shocked and saddened to see many service men sleeping on the floor and every piece of furniture. On the other hand I had a suite and only a few hours to stay in such luxury.

Gas rationing was in effect and seven adults were "sandwiched" or rather "sardined" into one taxi with the luggage in a rack on top.

After several false starts when others with higher priority appeared at the last minute, I left for Columbia, S. C. in the late afternoon. I was advised of a short layover and reached Jacksonville, Florida in the evening where I remained for an over-night stay and another 5:a.m. awakening. I was called twice earlier by mistake because of late arriving military personnel.

Eventually I boarded a flight for Miami in the early morning with a sunrise flight along the coast.

Our flight arrived in Miami around noon I was met by Mr. Claude Reddish, the company representative. I was greeted like a long lost daughter. A flight from Washington had crashed slightly after take off and despite many phone calls, I could not be traced. Passenger lists were changed too often, and were often incomplete. I had taken three and a half days to go from New York to Miami. I was now scheduled to leave for Curacao on the Pan American Clipper in mid afternoon. It was a beautiful flight with the sea changing color from green to many shades of blue. Whenever we approached a restricted area, the windows were quickly covered with "Shields." After leaving the restricted area the shields were removed.

After arriving in Curacao the passengers were taken to the Americano Hotel. I sat on the porch there with the others and observed the activity on the pontoon bridge.

My room was above a cobblestone walkway from a rear warehouse to the street. All night long wheelbarrows formed a procession taking cargo to a freighter.

There was a Flit gun near the shower entrance in my room and



another setting over my bed. During the night I was awakened by a chorus from the shower area. I investigated and saw a SWARM of singing insects coming out of the shower drain. They promptly received the Flit treatment. (A Flit gun was a small portable manually operated sprayer. You held the small tank in one hand pointing the nozzle mounted on the tank toward the insect(s) you wanted to annihilate. You grasp the small wooden handle in the other hand and pumping it like a small bicycle pump you generated the air pressure needed to produce a cloud of insecticide. "Flit" was the brand name of a liquid insecticide available in those days.)

The next morning six men and I were taken to the airport very early. We boarded the Oriole, which was a twin engine, German made, Fokker for the trip to Aruba. I was told that this plane and another named the Snipe provided air service between Curacao, Aruba, and Maracaibo, Venezuela. These two Fokker planes formerly provided service across the English Channel.

We sat in bucket seats with box lunches in the overhead rack. We were advised the lunches were for passengers going to Venezuela.

The flight to Aruba was of short duration but as we approached the landing field our speed slowed and we went this way and that way in an effort to dodge the donkeys and sheep that were grazing there.

Upon landing, when the door was opened, a ladder was supported by a tall man as another man helped me descend.

Two airport men inquired about my final destination and looked around, then phoned Lago.

By then it was lunch time and I still waited and another call was made and eventually Val Linam arrived. He was most apologetic. It seemed the cable which usually precedes all arrivals had not been received, tho' I had been in transit so long.

I was taken to the hospital and met Miss Marion Wylie, who was the Head Nurse. Soon I met the lab technician with whom I was to room for a few days. She cleared out a dresser drawer and pushed clothes in the closet closer together. Soon a bed was set up. I was famished as only chewing gum was distributed on the plane. Meals between flights were very irregular and hurried. The change from New York blizzard temperatures to the tropics was drastic at the time.

The next day I met Dr. Carrell and I was told my assignment was as a general duty nurse doing shift work. I advised him I never had done

shift work and had always been a supervisor. The problem was resolved with arrival of the cables.

A portion of our salary was retained for room and board. A few months later we learned roast turkey was served in the Bachelor Quarters Dining Hall while we had Spam for the second time that week. We frequently had tea ice cream as the hospital cook was Chinese so we requested a meeting with Dr. Carrell. As a result, a much improved variety of meals were brought from the Dining Hall.

After a few days, I moved to my own room. After this experience I had drapes and a bed spread which I used to make the room of a new arrival more homelike. I also made sure their room had reading material and flowers so they would feel more welcome than I did when I arrived.

A “foreign staff” supervisor was in charge of each hospital section. She was assisted by a senior local nurse, and a female and at least one male nurse depending on the census of patients.

Several local nurses came from British Guiana or Trinidad where they had been trained under English nurses. A few came from Surinam where they trained under Dutch nurses. Others came from Aruba or the adjacent Caribbean islands.

Nurses working with me were encouraged to provide the same dedicated care they would expect their relatives to receive, if ill.

Reference material pertaining to a current patient medical problem was available for study. Included was Information about medications being used with desired benefits and adverse reactions. Periodic classes were held to broaden the nurse's knowledge and promote better nursing care.

Inasmuch as staff members had variable types of preliminary training and experience, classes were held to develop uniform procedures of care. Since that time, one female and one male local nurse have attended Medical School. Several nurses who have retired to the New York area have studied and passed the New York State Registered Nurses Examinations.

I had always had gardens and flowers. The first thing that struck me was the bareness of the patio at the nurses residence. I suggested something should be done about correcting this situation. I was told that there never had been flowers there and would never be. I had other ideas.

With the kindness of many colony residents we obtained large

wooden boxes which had supporting legs. These were placed along the rear porch and between the building projections facing the rear patio. I learned of a local employee who would provide garden soil for \$17 a load. This soil was brought over from Venezuela in small sailing vessels. We soon had the boxes and flower beds ready for planting. Shrubs, plants and seed were shared with us and in time we had a pretty garden area. We planted a border of petunias and had hibiscus and poinsettias. It made all of the difference in the world to that patio.

For weeks I carried water in 12 quart pails from the kitchen. Finally a patient saw me from a window in Section B and scrounged pieces of discarded hose which was fitted together. This hose was so helpful in relieving me of this chore.

One Sunday morning there were hundreds of grapefruit that washed ashore in the Little Lagoon area. Word quickly spread and many people happily carried dozens home. Apparently some small vessel had some difficulty resulting in losing their cargo.

A few years later, Paul Gardiere, Mr. Coy Cross, Skippy Culver, Jeff Hoit and others brought metal drums which had been cut in half. These were placed below the white fence bordering the roadway. These people spent a Sunday afternoon filling these drums with soil and a small sea grape tree was planted in each drum. These beautified the area very much. We were most grateful.

Two years later when I returned from vacation in states I brought albums of records. One of these was an album of "Kiss Me Kate." We all gathered in the living room to listen to them. All of the French Doors were wide open. Soon we heard a loud flutter and the room was filled with iridescent black humming birds. We turned out the living room lights and turned on the patio lights. We put out water and bread crumbs there. The birds rested after their long flight from the mainland (Venezuela). The second day many resumed their flight to the United States. However to this day many of their descendants still live in the "Cunucu" (country) on the island.

My first supervisory assignment was to Section B where foreign staff employees and their dependents were hospitalized. Among the other patients found in this section were: employees of the Consular Service; Marine Department personnel. We also had hospitalized personnel from foreign Whaling Ships bound for or returning from South Georgia Island.

Colony residents were always very thoughtful and visited patients

who were lonely and they were wonderful friends to the hospital staff.

When I went to the states on vacation I brought back red crepe for our Christmas decorations. We used a Flit gun to spray selected branches from sea grape trees with aluminum paint. We tied these branches to the porch railings to dry. A red crepe paper bow was fastened on each branch which was in turn placed over the doorways of the patients rooms. We tried to add a little Christmas cheer to rooms of the patients for better morale for all.

The ship carrying members of the Byrd Antarctic expedition refueled at Lago's docks. I was invited aboard for dinner. I do not recall the menu but I will never forget the beauty of the linen table cloth with the design of the United States official seal embossing the center.

I was told there were penguins in the ship's hold on cakes of ice. They were being transported to the Bronx Zoo. They would be the first penguins on display in the United States.

Over thirty years ago a ten year old boy was returning to his home in the village with a gallon of kerosene for the family cook stove. He met a school mate with matches and as a result he was burned over the upper half of his body. It happened on the same day his father was scheduled for lay off by the company. However that was deferred and the child was hospitalized.

He never complained of pain or objected to the exercises needed to prevent contractions due to scarring. His only concern was missing school.

When I vacationed in the United States I obtained text books suitable for his grade. I tutored him during the remainder of his hospitalization.

A few months after his discharge from the hospital and his father's layoff a very destructive hurricane struck their home island of Grenada. Their home was blown into the sea. They were left with only the clothes on their backs and one goat. They and many other families lived in the church there until the Red Cross could provide shelter.

Colony residents donated canned goods, clothing, and cooking utensils. These were transported by sailing vessels. In his letter of appreciation to all he mourned the loss of his precious books.

Many years later when visiting Grenada, I found his family with much difficulty as they had to move to a small apartment. The family depended on his mother's income from picking cocoa pods. His father

had gone to England and abandoned the family.

Our patient had to leave school because of inability to pay tuition and his clothes were clean but threadbare. Dr. Hendrickson, who had cared for him, very kindly donated a complete outfit of clothing and shoes. I paid tuition to enable him to graduate. At the time of the Queen's visit there, as an honor student, he was a member of the Police Honor Guard.

After much delay the family came to the United States. He entered a vocational school and now many years later is happily married. He has a fine son about to enter college and a six year old daughter. He and his wife operate a very successful business selling parts for European cars.

As long as kerosene was used in the cooking stoves in the Colony we had numerous cases of children ingesting kerosene. This was primarily because of kerosene being stored in coke bottles. It was used as a fire starter in the family barbecue pits. We also had our share of Pine-Sol floor cleaner being ingested by small children. The procedure for removing these two liquids from the stomach was very unpleasant one. Despite care a few developed pneumonia and one died.

When the company replaced all kerosene stoves with those that were electric the problem with kerosene disappeared.

There were two shrubs in the Cunucu whose leaves and berries were poisonous.

Articles with pictures of these shrubs for identification were written in the Aruba Esso News. The problem became less frequent as people became educated against the dangers of these poisons.

Casa Cuna in Aruba was a child care center. Children of many Lago employees were cared for there while their mother's worked. All laundry was done by hand; there was no refrigerator; only one toilet; and two children slept in every crib. Through the generosity of Colony residents many essential articles of equipment, clothing and bedding were provided. All were greatly appreciated.

A young Aruban man had a very serious medical problem and was scheduled to go to a specialist in Holland for surgery. He and the young lady to whom he was engaged wished to be married before he departed for Holland. So we decorated the porch of Section B with Corralita. Chairs and tables were provided for the family members and the government officials officiating at the marriage ceremony. Cake and ice cream were served after the ceremony. The operation was a success and

he came back to work for Lago. Their daughter is named Frances Boekhoudt.

My only trip to Aruba by Tanker was returning from vacation one time. I traveled on the S/S *Esso Aruba* with a lady who just knew she was going to be very ill even before she left her home.

One day out we encountered a hurricane. We bounced around like a top and headed for the mid-Atlantic to avoid its path.

Frequent reports of the wind and weather were sent from the ship to United States Weather Bureau. Extra pillows were provided as our beds were like double action roller coasters.

We finally returned to our regular course and arrived in Aruba 11-1/2 days after leaving the Exxon docks in Bayonne, New Jersey. Normally this trip would have taken 7 days.

I felt very fortunate to be invited to share alternate special holidays with the Bill Norris and Tom Hagerty families. This treasured relationship continues. Some holidays we spent with the MacLeans too. During my years in Aruba we shared the joys and sorrows of Colony residents.

I completed fifteen years service early in 1960 and retired to Lakeland, Florida. Later I moved to San Diego, California where I was employed by the Visiting Nurses Association for several years.

There were many features around the island that were really noteworthy. The pictographs in the caves at Fontein; the stalactites and stalagmites in the bat caves; the unusual formation of lava and coral near the Natural Bridge on the north side of the island; the beautiful double rainbows that were sometimes seen after a heavy rain; the momentary green flash as the sun set; the beautiful colors of the sea; the mesmerizing effect of the wave motion particularly at the Seroe Colorado end of the island; the salt water spray as waves hit along the north shore forcing water up through holes in the coral; the various forms of sea life visible along the coral shore near the light house; the frogs that after a rain sometimes made a sound that sounded like a ship's fog horn at night; the 6 inch high owls that made their nests in holes in the coral in the area west of the new hospital; the variety of fish that could be seen when pole fishing at the reef to the west of Rodgers Beach; the beautiful clear star filled sky on cool nights; the beautiful full moon; the goats up in a divi tree eating leaves; and on and on.

I can almost say I haven't fully retired. I spend many hours weekly

helping the sick, poor, elderly and those who have no one who cares. Sometimes it means help with personal problems: grocery shopping, cheering, providing reading material or a bouquet of pansies or sweet peas. Once or twice weekly I take magazines, puzzles and cartoons provided by Lago friends to two nursing and retirement homes.

For over three years I have written letters and contacted local transit officials requesting a shelter on each side of Midway Drive at Duke street. This is where the elderly from a housing complex and residents of a retirement home wait for a bus. It is hoped it will soon be provided.

Memories of my days in Aruba and the wonderful friendships are treasured. Now I feel truly blessed with good health, wonderful friends and the opportunity to help others.



Aerial view of company concession - - - Circa 1940's

Photo courtesy Joanne Storie

## **The Whitney Coffin Colby Family Story**

W. C. Colby raised his family in Montclair, N. J., a suburb of New York City. From 1919 until 1962 he was employed by the Standard Oil Co. of New Jersey. In the 1920's, he was in the corporate headquarters in Rockefeller Center as Personnel Manager. Colby focused on employee training programs. In 1937, he was asked to go to Lago in Aruba as manager of industrial and public relations, and to be the General Manager's assistant.

In August, 1937 the family came to Aruba on the tanker S.S. *Pan Bolivar*. Another passenger was Alvin Marks, the newly hired principal of Lago high school. The Colby family included wife Elizabeth (Betty), daughter Betsy, and sons Barry, Lyn, Whitney Jr., and Mason. After settling into a routine they resided in Bungalow Number 275, adjacent to Casa Grande, the L. G. Smith family home.

In Whit Colby's capacity, there were extensive dealings with the Dutch government and its visitors, with protocol matters involving U. S. Navy ships visiting Aruba. As WWII came upon the island, he handled the emergency plans, and the resultant new facilities of the Lago refinery to handle increased production, the expansions of the Lago Colony to house the personnel involved. Colby was regularly involved in hiring policies, and with community relations with the San Nicholas town leaders. He was one of the founders of the Aruba Rotary Club, he was instrumental in forming the Lago Community Church, and he encouraged the formation and growth of many of the Colony's social and sporting clubs.

During WWII's early years, 1939 through 1942, Mr. Colby was heavily involved in arrangements for the rest and relaxation of the Dutch, British, and French soldiers who used our beaches for recreation. Another matter on which he and the military authorities worked was the defense of the refinery with coastal artillery, and troops in the Colony.

Mrs. Colby was very active in the Community Church, in a bridge club, and did much entertaining at their home for visiting dignitaries and Lago leaders. The children attended Lago colony schools. Betsy took off for Wellesley College after 6 months. Barry ('39), Lyn ('41), and Whitney Jr.('43) graduated from Aruba High School and were each very active in their class governance, school theater, and sports. Mason attended the elementary grades at Lago.



In June, 1943, Whit and Betty Colby, with sons Whit, Jr. and Mason, left Aruba to return to Montclair, New Jersey, the children's birthplace. He rejoined the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey's headquarters, taking various management positions in Industrial relations. At the request of Navy Secretary Forrestal, he was loaned to the Cramp shipyards in Philadelphia as Director of Industrial Relations for a year to solve their sticky labor union problems. He retired from Esso in 1962 in ill health, and he died in 1963 of a ruptured aorta.



Cunucu scene - circa 1942

Photo courtesy M. G. Lopez

## **The Connie & Ray Coleman Story**

Ray and I first knew each other in 1924 when we started school in Manchester, England. I was four and he was five. In 1936, after graduating we started to date.

In 1939 when War seemed inevitable, and Ray was due to be conscripted within hours, he decided instead to volunteer so he could get in the regiment of his choice - a Scottish Regiment so he could march behind the bagpipes and drums wearing a Kilt! That didn't last long, on September 3rd, 1939 when Britain declared WAR after Germans marched into Poland on September 1st. The Kilt went into mothballs, replaced with battle dress. I know very little about his experiences. He talked to my father who had gone through WWI, but the consensus was that it was not - quote "not fit for our womenfolk ears".

After Dunkirk, Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands asked Britain for help in guarding the island of Aruba, to safeguard the Esso Refinery and the Shell refinery on the other side of Oranjestad. Parts of decimated battalions were assembled at the Cameron Headquarters Barracks in Inverness, Scotland in preparation for overseas. All arrangements had been made for our wedding in Manchester on August 17th - but instead we married in Inverness August 5th, 1940. And his battalion left Inverness on August 9th by train to Southlock and then by ship to where? Aruba? where is that? never heard of it!!

One of the first things Ray did was request permission to attend the Community Church in the Colony. This was where he met Trudi Ward who invited him home for lunch. Several other soldiers followed and Red and Trudi invited them home too. Soon Ray, who had a fine Bass voice, was asked to bring his soldiers choir to the church. Their accompanist on the organ was Vina Walz, a school teacher in the Colony.

William Joyce, a Nazi sympathizer whose parents lived a few miles from my parents, was broadcasting in English over the radio. He was known as Lord Ha-Ha!

In February 1942 he said that the Germans knew that the Cameron Highlanders were preparing to leave Aruba but would never reach home. Instead of leaving Aruba on Sunday as scheduled they left on Friday and were heading towards New Orleans when Aruba was shelled.

The battalion traveled by train to New York. There was a request for assistance received at this point. Riots had broken out in Nassau, Bahamas, and the Duke of Windsor, the Governor, needed protection. "C" Company consisting of 130 men was dispatched (including Ray). The rest of the Battalion proceeded home. As part of the bodyguard, Ray got know the Duke and Duchess. Seven months later they arrived home. Ten days leave and then up to the rugged Shetland Islands, off the North coast of Scotland and west of Norway until November of 1943. The rest of the Battalion that had been in Aruba was in North Africa

Ray left Scotland in December, was sailing past Gibraltar on Christmas Day. Censorship was very strict, but at some point he was in Egypt and then on to Italy, where they were pinned down for six weeks in the bowl below the Monastery at Casino where they suffered heavy casualties. Later while taking a patrol behind the German lines Ray was wounded and classified as unable to handle firearms, was put on the staff running a transit camp, Although the war was ended in June 1945 it was another year before Ray came home due to problems between the Fascists and the Anti-Fascists.

Ray went back to the architect's office where he was employed before the war but could not settle. He was appalled at conditions in post war England. I had relatives in Australia and we were checking that out when he received a letter from Red Ward asking if Ray had ever considered going back to Aruba to work. September 4th 1947 Ray sailed on the "Queen Mary" and I followed by air in November.

Ray worked for six years in the Technical Services Department for Bob Dorwart. During that time I worked for Gill-Delatush Company, a construction firm from Caracas to build the New High School. Then for McKee Company out of Cleveland, Ohio, who built a Pre-heat furnace for the Catalytic Cracking Plant, and finally for the American Consulate with Jessie Walker and Bess Weatherbee.

We lived at Colorado Point for 2 years, Bungalow #215 for the next two years and then Bungalow #206 until we left.

The only officers' I can recall are Colonel Begg, Major Douglas, Murdo MacDonald, Chaplain, and Captain Jimmy Miller of "C" Company who married Jean Moseley in Nassau in 1942 and returned there after the War. In 1949, on vacation in Nassau Ray and I met with them but have had no contact since.

In September 1953 we came to the States.

## **The Isidoro Cosio Story**

Isidoro Cosio of the Boiler, Tin, and Blacksmith department joined the small group of Lago's longest-service men April 1 when he received a 30-year button from General Manager L.G. Smith.

After working for a time as mining engineer at Oviedo, Spain, Mr. Cosio went to New York in 1910, and joined the Eagle works at Jersey City in 1911. He started as a layer-out helper in the boiler shop, and while taking a correspondence course in mechanical engineering, became layer-out and boiler-maker. In 1916 he transferred to Casper as boiler shop foreman, becoming general foreman of the boiler department in 1919.

In 1921 he left work behind for ten months, traveling extensively in Europe and the eastern United States. From 1922 to 1928 he was back in Casper, after which he came to Aruba, one of the earliest arrivals of the refinery staff.

Mrs. Cosio arrived in Aruba on July 13, 1928. She was the first wife of a foreign staff employee to arrive in Aruba. She lived in Oranjestad until housing became available in Lago Colony.

Old time Colony residents recall they used to go down to look at the flower beds planted by Mrs. Cosio. She evidently started people thinking about what they could do to brighten up their yards.

**Source: *Aruba Esso News*, April 10, 1942**

## **The Bernardo Croes Story**

Bernardo Croes has a long and intimate acquaintance with Lago pipe, dating back to the time when the only line was a three-incher for water from Mangel Cora well into the harbor, and the acquaintance continues in his present job as sub-foreman 2nd class, or "pipe-pusher," as it is known in the yard.

Bernardo, or "Benny," as he is known to his friends, was born here August 20, 1898. During a boyhood that included much sailing, with experience scrambling around a boat's rigging standing him in good stead for the high work he often has to do in the plant, he often worked for four cents, 20 cents, 15 cents, or any similar amount he could get per day.

Before the phosphate mines closed in 1912, he walked Mondays beside workmen riding donkeys from Sabaneta to the mines near the east lighthouse. He would take the donkeys back to Sabaneta and return to the mines the following Saturday to take the men home.

Later, like so many other Arubans, he worked in the sugar cane fields of Cuba for two years, from 1918 to 1920.

On August 15, 1925, he got his first job here, in the Labor department (which was almost the only department there was). After a month he was transferred as blacksmith, machinist, and fireman to the dredge that was making San Nicholas harbor. He walked to and from work four and a half miles each day, and was on a straight 8:00 p.m. to 4:00 a.m. shift without change. He says he never got sick because he couldn't: Someone had to do the work.

After a year he transferred to pipe work ashore, and has been at it ever since. A gang of four men, of which he was a member, made at that time what he says is a record that still stands, laying 99 joints in a three-inch pipeline in one day, straight across rough ground and without the help of loadmaster or railroad. One of his earliest jobs was on the windmills which old-timers will remember were located in what is now the eastern section of the colony, but seemed then to be far out in the country. He recalls, too, the way he helped transport 16-inch pipe from the dock to the tank farm, when 14 to 16 men dragged each section over coral and cactus. Later, as the refinery grew, his pipe experience grew with it, until there is hardly a section from Acid Plant to lighthouse where he has not fitted pipe.

*Source: Aruba Esso News, March 20, 1942*

## **The George Cvejanovich, Jr. Story**

My grandfather and grandmother went to Aruba for the first time in 1938. That was Mr. & Mrs. Bob Munding. They were there from 1938 to 1948.

My mother, Ruth Munding, grew up there. She went to high school there. And after she graduated from college she got a job with Standard Oil and went back to Aruba. She was X-ray Technician at the Lago Hospital. My father didn't know anything about Aruba until, at the age of 22, he graduated as a Chemist and went to Aruba. My folks met and got married in Aruba. My father worked in the laboratory with fellows like Ben Whitney and Dr. Broz. I was born in Aruba in 1952.

We lived in bungalow #352 and then we moved to bungalow #274, 1963 to 1979.

I know when I was in kindergarten Miss Michem was my teacher and there were 35 of us in that class. And by the time I was in the 9th grade there were 9 of us! Most of us had gone all the way through to that grade together. I remember that on our birthdays all of the members sent a birthday card. And my mother kept all of those cards and a lot of stuff like that. I keep in touch with those people of course.

1962 or 1964 was the last year we were able to travel by Grace Line to and from Aruba. I think that was the only time I ever traveled by Grace Line. I believe this was the last time they made this available as an alternative way of traveling. After that our traveling on vacation was done by air.

I remember that grammar school building which had a covered metal fire escape slide. I seem to remember that there were two of these which served the second story of the building. The door at the top was locked to keep the kids out but you could climb up from the open bottom and slide down. I remember it was covered and we used to have a lot of fun climbing up and sliding down that slide.

I was in the Cub Scouts and I just got started in Boy Scouts when they cancelled the program. At that time they tore down the Junior Esso Club and the Scout House. Some of the Scouts that were there when I was included: Mike Rogers, Meisenheimer, Jack Rose, Bergfield, Alan

Willis, Peter Story's daughter, Katherine Maxey, Mora Whitney, Helen Smits, Dr. DeReuters' daughter.

I had my picture in the Aruba Esso News when I won the Cub Scout's Soap Box Derby. I was in it again when the American Legion gave out Christmas packages to the poor. The Cub Scouts prepared the baskets and went to Cunucu to distribute them.

The Flying Club disbanded in the mid 60's I think. There were rumors about it being used to smuggle drugs. The buildings were torn down and the runway made unusable.

Then in 1976 I married Sue Higgens, whose father was working at Lago (from '66 to '69) as Technical Manager. Sue and I were in Lago High School together. We were married in Aruba and this was possible because of the fact that I was born there. It was possible to have a church marriage there, but not a civil marriage unless you were born there and your parents had been living there. Only a civil marriage was considered legal. I believe we were possibly the only American family where both the parents and one of their children were married in Aruba! There were some other cases where American kids had a church marriage in Aruba, but not a civil ceremony. There they have a clear separation of church and state as far as weddings are concerned. The two witnesses at our civil wedding were: Ron Teerman who was a long time worker in the Laboratory (I think he was "Knighthood" by Queen of Holland). He had worked with my Dad. My wife was born in the States.

The last Lago High School graduating class was in 1966 and the last "Year Book" was in 1965. I was in the 8th grade at the time. I took a lot of the photographs that were used in that "Year Book". When they closed the high school they moved us over to the Administration Building. They eliminated a lot of the extra-curricular activities. We didn't have any organized Sports. Mr. Downey wasn't working for them at that time. And then later when they had more money in the School Budget he started up some of those sports again. I believe this was in the 1970's. Then the class of 1966 had no year book and then they started up the Year Book for the class of 1967 but it only ran through the 9th grade. There were only 9 of us in that class. That was the year I "graduated" from the 9th grade of high school there.

During my time Christmas trees were delivered to the American Legion Hut, and people picked their trees there. After Christmas people

threw their trees away and we used to collect them. We stripped their limbs off and made things with the trunks. This was a novelty having wood of this nature.

After graduating from the 9th grade in Aruba I finished my high schooling in private schools in New Hampshire and Maine. I started college at Louisiana State University and then graduated from the University of Texas.

The Cat Plant was torn down in 1972 or 73. I took a lot of photographs and my father took a lot of them too.

The Stamp Club was pretty active. I know my father was involved in that when he retired in 1979.

I was in the bat caves with Dr. Wasco in 1982. There was a ladder going down into the Lago Colony cave.

The Yacht Club was active when I was there in 1982, and they were having Sunfish races.

The Esso Club showed movies all the way into the early 80's, until cable television was installed. I think the movie auditorium could accommodate 500 people. In the late 70's they had rock concerts with local bands. There weren't that many things you could do to earn money. Kids made popcorn and sold it at the movies. I sold Cokes at the Junior Esso Club, and later I worked in the summer recreation programs. Before the refinery's closing they had a program for college students to come down during the summer to work in the refinery.

After they had a big layoff, to reduce the company's tax burden, they tore down all unneeded houses and removed the roads. It was unsettling time when they were tearing down the houses and roadways. This started when I was in the 5th grade.

Another thing that I remember was the Youth Canteen where we had dances. Different parents acted as chaperons. There was a place there for a disc jockey to play records. A few times we did have a live band.

I remember the annual Halloween contest which was one of the big things. I won a couple of prizes in Halloween costume contests.

I was in the church choir. And when I was eleven or twelve my voice started changing and Doris Thompson, who organized the choir, said my voice sounded terrible and I couldn't sing in the choir any more. So she had me turning the pages while she played the piano.



Another thing I remember is the Christmas tableau we used to have on the lawn of the church every year. My brothers and I were at one time or another involved in this program.

I remember there was a picture taken of the choir and there was a picture of her back as she sat at the piano and a picture of my back as I stood there turning the pages. At the time I felt it was kind of unfair. You could see the faces of all of my friends and all you could see was my back.

I am the oldest and then I have twin brothers a year younger and then my youngest brother is two years and a half younger than I. So we are all pretty close. In school we were all just one class apart.

The sea grape grove that used to be along below the cliff which borders on the golf course is pretty well "deforested". Most of the trees appear to be dead. They have no leaves. As a matter of fact all of the trees that were on the land side of the pitch pile seem to be dead. Many people claim it was caused by the pitch pile. The fumes that came off of this pitch in the hot weather when the pitch became more or less liquid from the heat of the sun. However the Pitch Pile is quite a ways away from these trees. Perhaps they didn't receive enough rainfall.

The oil spots on the side of the cliff above the Sea Grape Grove area was probably caused when in the late 70's a company came in to dig up and export the pitch. They used to haul the pitch to the Spanish Lagoon where there were docks for loading this stuff on ships. That company went bankrupt and there is still a big pile of that stuff on the docks over there. This was a company that came along after Byerlite Company.

## **The Marchant Albert Davidson Story**

My name is Marchant Albert Davidson. I was born in Attleborough, Massachusetts on April 11, 1916. My family originally came from Scotland. I attended Nashville High School and Lincoln Technical Institute, which was a night school affiliated with Northeastern University. I acted in a school play and that was about all the school activities in which I was able to participate as I had to work my way through high school. I didn't see my high school football team play on Saturday afternoons until long after I graduated. I saw them play one time while home on a vacation from Aruba.

I spent most of my time working at a wealthy jewelry manufacturer's "hobby farm," the owner of which was only was in residence at the main house from August until spring. The dairy farm, Cowset, had a herd of 100 thoroughbred Jersey cows that he managed scientifically.

The chores seemed to be endless. The udders of each cow had to be washed with a fifty-fifty solution of Clorox and water, and each cow's milk had to be weighed and recorded daily. Every Saturday we would run a Babcock test on the milk of each cow to determine its butterfat content. After the herd was milked, the three milking machines had to be sterilized for evening milking. I learned every facet of dairy farming by hands-on experience.

In addition to the 100 thoroughbred Jersey cows, there were three bulls of better quality for breeding purposes. Fortunately for me, all 100 cows weren't milked at any given time (some of them were dry), and I didn't have to feed them or run the farm machinery or the pasteurizer. My duties consisted of milking the cows, cleaning and sterilizing the milking machines. We sold certified milk that did not have to be pasteurized, but was not allowed to exceed the specified bacteria count. This was checked regularly by the Public Health Department. If the bacteria level ever checked too high, you lost your certification. They used a milk bottle that had a bulge for cream at its top. With his bottle of whole milk, the customer was given a piston-like stopper. When it sat in his ice box long enough for the cream to rise to the top, he pushed it through the cream, and forced it into the narrow neck between the cream and the milk part of the bottle. Then he could pour off the cream to use in coffee, with cereal or whatever.

On Saturdays there were Babcock tests, and I cleaned the boiler that made the steam required in the pasteurizing process. The son of the Manager had charge of the dairy's bottling machines.

Every morning, I rode three miles by bicycle to milk the herd. After milking I biked home, had breakfast, cleaned up, and biked five miles to school. In the afternoon at 3:30, we would milk again.

After I finished High School I worked for seven months at the Foxboro Instrument Company, which is located at Mansfield, Massachusetts. This is where I met Fred Rich, Doug Johnson and Reede Holly all of whom I later worked with in Aruba.

At Foxboro, Fred Rich worked with the temperature measuring instruments - potentiometers and the like. I started in the Inspection Department, checking incoming supplies, and subassemblies from the factory before they went to the storage warehouse. The completed instruments were not inspected by us, because they were assembled, calibrated and inspected by another department before they were shipped. At that time, an assembler would draw the sub-assemblies from stores, keeping a record of errors inspectors, such as myself, had missed. I proved to have some facility for the job, so they made me a first piece inspector. My new job was in the small machine shop where machinists were industriously fabricating parts for Foxboro's products. When he had set up his lathe to make a part, the machinist would call me and I would check his set up against the blueprints. If I determined it duplicated the engineers' design I would certify it, and tell him to set it on automatic. Their confidence in me grew and I was transferred to the big machine room where they made heavy parts. Eventually I graduated to the Engineering Department where I served as Ted Stanley's *leg man*. (E. S. Stanley, a veteran of World War I, later went to work in the Instrument Department in the Lago Refinery. There he was in charge of the Standard's Room.)

Ted did the calculations for the special range tubes required for odd-ball ranges of flow. This was in the days of mercury-manometer type flow meters which called for different lengths of range tubes when measuring different rates of flow. Standard lengths were: 20", 50", 100", 150" or even 200". Some applications called for six-foot tubes. It was my duty as a *leg man* or *gofer* as they call those people nowadays, to chase down prints, go to the shop and fetch something he needed. That wasn't enough to keep me busy, so I was put to work checking the installation prints that were to be mailed to customers. Many prints were of standard flowmeters that had been made in our printing shop. With

these, all I needed to do was mark each print with my "Foxboro Company - - Certified Okay" stamp, sign my initials and jot down the date. If there were odd-balls, they had two fellows and a girl who would draw them and I would certify them. (Odd-balls being unusual designs) But that still wasn't enough to keep me busy they said.

A man who had been with the company from the beginning was the head of the Catalog Department. All the initial orders for spare parts coming from customers outside the plant went to him. He would write down all the part numbers for parts he could identify or remember from his catalogues. On those parts he couldn't identify, I was to research the part numbers.

One of those unlisted parts ordered was a replacement range tube for a job that United States Steel had special-ordered from us in 1928. I had to dig out the drawing for that original order and attach it to a new shop order.

I talked with Reede Holly who had formerly worked for Foxboro. This was when he came back on a vacation from his job with the Instrument Department in Aruba. I also wrote Ed Heffernan who was formerly with Foxboro and who was now working in the Instrument Department in Aruba. Ed said it was a good place to work. He was there one year before I arrived and stayed one year afterward.

### **ARUBA BOUND**

The primary form of transportation between Aruba and the rest of the world in the late 1930's was by tanker. The trip between Aruba and Bayonne, New Jersey took six to eight days depending on the ship and the weather. Whenever I journeyed to or from Aruba it was by ship. I sailed to Aruba for the first time on a tanker of the Standard Oil of New Jersey fleet, the *Esso Aruba*, as far as I remember. Back then, as today, lost luggage plagued many a hapless traveler as surely as cow patties draw flies, and my luck was no better than anyone else's. In Bayonne, New Jersey, they failed to load my trunk and I was five months without my gear. My dad's old steamer trunk, which I had borrowed for the trip, was two feet square, four feet long, and loaded with all my necessities.

As an energetic young man of 23, I arrived on Queen Wilhelmina's birthday, August 31, 1939. The elaborate celebrations and ceremonies to honor the ruler of the Dutch empire and the Netherlands West Indies were scrubbed. The invasion of Poland began the next day, and the Dutch knew they were high on the German's list of countries to be conquered. The substitute celebrations were quite subdued in light of that grim news.

The first night of leisure time I had in Aruba was a disappointment compared to what I imagined the exotic locale should offer. They cancelled the planned party at the club, and I was determined to find where things were happening on the social scene. Unfortunately everything was very subdued on that particular evening.

#### SHIPS TRAVELED

I sailed to Aruba on the Esso Bolivar once and the S.S. Chattanooga a couple of times. Savanna, Georgia was the home town of the Captain of the Chattanooga. He became a very good friend of my wife and me. His third mate, Calidino, from Passaic, New Jersey, was also a good buddy. Calidino later sailed to the Far East, bringing us an exquisite Oriental vase when he returned.

#### JOB ASSIGNMENT

I was hired as an instrument mechanic specifically for the study they were making on the temperature difference between a bare thermocouple and a shielded (or protected) thermocouple in the roof and wall tubes of the cracking plant furnaces.

The shielding was actually a special stainless steel tubing to protect a thermocouple on the surface of a furnace tube from the high operating temperatures. The thermocouples used were made of two lengths of 12 gauge wire of metal alloys each of the two wires made to different specifications. For example the thermocouple used for temperatures up to 1400 degrees Fahrenheit was made with one iron wire and one Constantan. Different alloys of wire were used for different applications.

The heat sensing end of the two temperature sensing wires were carefully twisted together using a special jig to make a solid mechanical contact. As the temperature increased at the temperature sensing end of the thermocouple, a small current was generated in proportion to the amount of heat applied. This small current was measured and interpreted by means of tables to give the temperature readings on the surface of the furnace tubes. The inside diameter of a furnace tube might measure six inches.

In the case of the tube metal thermocouple installation the two heat sensing wires of the thermocouple were not twisted together, but each individual wire was inserted into the furnace tube in 1/16" diameter holes that were 1/16" deep. The holes were drilled an eighth inch apart in the wall of the tube. The wires were then "peened" in place so they became a part of the tube. A metal punch used to hammer closed the metal of the furnace tube tightly around the wires of the thermocouple to become the heat sensing end of the thermocouple. Next, the 1" shielding tubing

formed to specifications in the machine shop was placed over the wire and arc welded in place on the furnace tube. Depending on its location, the shielding tubing and the two insulated thermocouple wires extended through the wall or roof of the furnace. A junction box was screwed on the shielding tube; and a ceramic "thermocouple head" was mounted.

Connecting wires ("leads") would be fastened to the terminal. It was at this end that the temperature readings of the furnace tube surfaces were taken. This method of shielding effectively protected the thermocouple wire from direct heat in the furnace.

The bare, unprotected, thermocouples were positioned to take the surface temperature of the furnace tube, normally lasting 48 hours. It was found that the protected thermocouples would last several months. A temperature difference between the readings on the shielded couples and the exposed couples of about 35 degrees was recorded. The operators could interpret that temperature readings of shielded thermocouples as being 35 degrees Fahrenheit cooler than the actual surface temperature of the tube. We experimented with various types of shielding, 1" stainless grade of shielding welded to the tube proving superior.

#### WORKING CONDITIONS

Not everyone was enthusiastic about working conditions in Aruba. A fellow from Foxboro, by the name of Autin, lasted only 11 days. He was a draftsman who had gone to another company from Foxboro once for three months, and came back. He came to Aruba and, because I had worked with him at Foxboro, they assigned him to me. We were working on numbers 7 and 8 pressure stills, field overhauling the wet gas meters. This type of Mercury Manometers had to be opened up and cleaned. A gummy carbon-like material, collected on the walls and bottom of the inside of the "float chambers," and they had a pungent hydrocarbon odor. When you worked on them, your hands were coated with a film of graphite-like material that was difficult to wash off. I disassembled one to show Autin, my assistant, and told him to clean it.

He said, "You mean I've got to get in there and clean out that stuff?"

I said, "Yes sir, let's go. Get busy!"

It so happened that he was married and his wife stayed stateside. In those days, you had to be foreman or of higher rank to have your family with you. Working in the field proved too strenuous and too dirty for him and he missed his wife. He quit after eleven days and went back to Foxboro.

## CUB SCOUTS

For a time, I was a leader in the Cub Scout Pack in the Lago Colony in Aruba. I used to give talks on Astronomy and I accompanied them on a couple of campouts.

## GOLF

During my first year in Aruba I played golf for a short time on Aruba's course. I never gained the enthusiasm of the course regulars. After finishing a midnight to 8:00 shift I frequently went with a young operator whose name I can't recall. He was a slender fellow who worked in the High Pressure Stills. I seem to remember that he got unduly disturbed when he made a bad drive or putt. I don't think we ever got past the fifth green before he exploded and threw his clubs to the four winds. The caddies would retrieve them and he would stomp off and go home. I never played more than 9 holes at one time--sailing was more up my alley.

## FISHING

In my search for amusement, before I was married, I sailed from Oranjestad with a fisherman in a regular fishing sailboat. The vessel was a locally built 28 foot single-masted boat, with a mainsail and jib. The crew consisted of three Arubans and one fellow from Trinidad. Accommodations were quite primitive; they didn't have modern conveniences such as compasses or toilets or electricity. For direction, they calculated their position by remaining in sight of Mount Hooiberg, the tallest elevation on Aruba. For calls of nature, they used the leeward (downwind) rail; for light, a kerosene lantern.

The Dutch harbor master who had arranged the trip for me suggested I bring along canned fruit juices. I had the foresight to bring some canned corned beef and other provisions that would keep in the heat of the Caribbean. The first night they all went below to sleep. It was so stuffy below decks, I couldn't sleep. So I came up and slept on the rough, fishy-smelling deck covered with a raincoat. For the remainder of the trip I slept on deck with the boom and the stars over my head. In spite of the basic living arrangements, I really enjoyed those nights and days on the ocean, with the tang of the salt air, the sound of the waves, the creak of the rigging, the flapping of our furled sail against the boom, and the camaraderie of my hard-working shipmates.

The captain was bottom fishing for red snapper. There were four hooks a yard apart on their 700-foot line. Scavenger fish always followed fishermen under their boats, waiting for the free meal they always got when the catch was cleaned and the entrails thrown

overboard. They would have dined on our bait if they could, but a lead sinker the size and shape of a pear permitted the line to sink rapidly enough to escape their attentions.

Red snapper don't give much of a fight; when you feel a bite you give a jerk to set the hook. You don't pull all of that line up for just one fish, you wait until you figure all hooks are full. As they brought the fish up, they threw them on the deck. After an hour or so, they throw a bucket of sea water over them to wash them off and into the hold with the ice they went. When they have a half load, they are brought on deck, gutted, and stacked back on the crushed ice like cordwood.

The fishing continued until they had a complete load, usually in about six days.

The third day, of our trip, the fish were notably absent, and the crew worked on their gear repairing it and rigging new lines. In spite of its worn appearance, the vessel was solid and in good repair. We never had to bail out anything other than melted ice water although the fishermen were prepared for most eventualities, and they were no strangers to hard work. One day, while the fish were in a feeding frenzy, they worked by lantern light far into the night to make up for the days they had cast their nets in vain.

The cooking was boiled or fried, and the only water was a barrel on its side. A wide stave on the top had about a four inch hole cut out and a flap made from an inner tube was nailed over the gap.

The Trinidadian had warts all over him, and I was concerned about the possibility of my looking like a candidate for Ripley's *Believe It Or Not World's Most Warty Man* category. Drinking any of the untreated water **could** have me looking like the Trinidadian, I reasoned. So for six days I drank either the scalding tea that they prepared for each meal, or my canned juices.

They wouldn't take a thing for my spending those six days on the trip. I had such a good time sailing with them; I later bought a Snipe sailboat so I could continue to pursue my new pastime.

#### **TEMPERATURE PROBLEMS**

Henry DePauw, the Instrument Shop Foreman, had a temperature recorder set up in the shop to record ambient temperatures. I remember that it showed that about 1:30 p.m. was the highest temperature of the day. The average temperature was 85 degrees Fahrenheit. The coldest temperature that I experienced while in Aruba was 69 degrees Fahrenheit. That particular night it was raining like I was standing under



a waterfall and I got a call from Tony Smits, the operator of the Number One Alkylation Plant. He said that there was something wrong with the thermocouple up at the top of the isobutane tower at the point where they make the split between butane and isobutane. The temperature was reading two degrees too high. I checked it with a potentiometer and the reading agreed with the recorder in the Control House. That wasn't satisfactory to Tony, so I put in a new thermocouple and when I tested it again, I got an identical reading. That wasn't good enough. I used a lab-tested thermometer with the same result. That wasn't acceptable. I got a nickel resistance bulb and a resistance potentiometer and--you guessed it--got the same reading. Tony said that was impossible, it was reading two degrees too high. I told him I had done all I knew how to prove the temperature reading was accurate, and that I was soaking wet and cold. Two days later he called me up to explain that they had contaminations of pentane in the feed stock that night, and this raised the boiling point of the product, hence the extra two degrees.

#### **PROMOTION**

After being an Instrument Mechanic for some time, I was made an Instrument Supervisor and finally Instrument Shift Leader during the war years.

Over the years I was loaned to Caripito three times. Twice for turn-arounds, and once to replace the Instrument Foreman while he went on vacation.

#### **SAILING**

Alfred Phillip Post at one time worked in the Instrument Department and was later transferred to the Instrument Section of the Engineering Department. We were good friends and he taught me to sail. He often sailed with me when we competed in the Aruba Yacht Club sponsored races. He had worked at the Leeds and Northrup Instrument Company in Philadelphia before coming to Aruba.

Alfred and his wife, Grace, had two girls and two boys. The youngest boy died of leukemia in Aruba at the Lago Hospital not long after the end of World War II.

I visited with them twice after he retired in Darlington, Maryland, a little town near the Pennsylvania border. He had a well-built stone house, with walls about two feet thick, which was a quarter of a mile from the road.

An elderly chap was in the process of clearing the grounds one of the times we visited. On another visit, I helped him chop a couple of

cords of wood for the fireplace, and we towed them up to the house.

His wife was quite an avid bird watcher. During one visit they drove Dorothy and I to visit Nicholas P. Schindeler and his wife, Ans, in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. This was after Nick had retired there in 1968. At one time Nick worked in the Instrument Department and was later transferred to the Engineering Department where he worked with Al Post. We toured one of the first Nuclear Power Plants built, the Peach Bottom Reactor. He was acquainted with the tour guide and we saw more than the average tourist would and had most of our questions answered. This plant, owned by Pennsylvania Power and Light Company, is just across the Pennsylvania border.

Al had retired in the early 50's when he was fifty. He died two or three years later of an unusual ailment. I still correspond with his wife, Grace.

#### **SAILING WITH THE U.S. NAVY**

Walter Sawyer once upon a time worked in the Instrument Department with the rest of us. He owned a sail boat and I bought a third interest in it. Wilfred K. Dudley bought a third interest in it, and later I bought Walt's third. It was 23 feet long, a former Aruban fishing boat, and previously had been owned by the Venezuelan Consul who used it as a pleasure craft. I renamed it the *Sea-Breeze*, had it three or four years and spent many an enjoyable hour sailing it. It got me involved with the Navy and the American Coast Guard, and eventually into sailing on tankers.

I was sailing into the lagoon one day when a U.S. Navy mine sweeper, the "YMS-4," passed me on its way to a rendezvous with a convoy, I figured. On the dock, two navy-types in swim trunks and T-shirts were in a panic. As I tied up, a man who later turned out to be the captain came over to me and asked if I could possibly take him to his boat. I knew that during war time, if a ship received orders to sail, they sailed immediately, as long as there was enough of their crew to work the ship.

The two men convinced me they were the Captain and the Chief Engineer of the wooden minesweeper, the "YMS-4." I was pleased to be of service to our navy, and I said, "Sure, let's go."

The "YMS-4" was moving slowly as if they were hoping that the skipper could get out there. So I suggested to the chief engineer that if it were possible, he should signal to them to wait. We were inside the lagoon and I had to sail to the east entrance of the harbor to get to sea.

He agreed and climbed my mast where he semaphored "wait" to his vessel. As we sailed to catch up to the minesweeper, the skipper told me they'd hidden their uniforms and AWOL bags at a place on the beach. He asked me to pick them up and take care of them for him. He said as soon as he got aboard ship and learned their sailing orders; he'd tell us when he'd be back. I was to keep my mouth shut (this was classified information).

I came alongside his vessel and they dropped the *Jacobs Ladder*. When I tried to get close enough for him to reach the ladder, the mine sweeper shied away. The Captain gritted his teeth and said the main reason he wanted to get aboard was the executive officer, who was acting captain, was a very dedicated man with good intentions, but he was a miserable excuse for a seaman; he couldn't be trusted to sail a toy ship in a bathtub.

I tried to bring him alongside again, but again the ship shied away. There we were, a little tub trying to do a simple thing like board passengers, and this 110-foot minesweeper can't stay still enough for us to get together.

We came alongside again; he drifted away again. The Captain couldn't reach the ladder. Drastic action was called for. I asked the skipper if he minded if I rammed his boat. I told him I would tack parallel to his boat's course, and when we were making our top speed, I would put the tiller completely over and aim the bowsprit at the ladder. If he and his chief engineer were waiting on the bow, they should be able to scramble up it before we drifted apart.

He thought it was a good idea; the only chance he had of boarding his ship before the war was over.

So I hit the thing so darn hard that I put a two and a half foot dent in one of the paravanes they had fastened to the side of their boat. He climbed aboard, conferred with the executive officer, and called to me that they would be gone four days. We waved and said our good-byes and they steamed off toward Venezuela. I went back to the dock and tied up. The uniforms were where he had said they would be and I took them to my room in the bachelor's quarters for safekeeping.

Four days later I met them with their gear. They were docked and tied up by the time I got off work. The captain was so pleased to get their gear back, he asked if I would like a trip on his boat sometime when there was no submarine activity and everything was quiet. He promised to try to fix it up with the commodore.

The commodore was a former captain of one of the company tankers who had been inducted into the US Navy and made the commodore in charge of the harbor.

The Captain worked it out so that one weekend when I had 56 hours off, I went to Venezuela with him. We sailed at 6:00 one morning, made a double rectangular cruise between Aruba and Venezuela, tracing the route empty lake tankers followed, six miles apart to avoid collision. We went over with the empties, and came back with the crude-filled tankers. Two voyages, and 48 hours later, I was back in Aruba.

Skippers of the lake tankers saw me on the minesweeper, and several asked if I wanted to sail with them. Sailing on the Navy ships was contrary to regulations. Some were willing to take me and some were not. In appreciation, I allowed the Naval Officers to use my car and took them to the beach, golfing and to social activities.

Being on the Navy ship was fascinating. They taught me Gunnery and Navigation. Earlyford, a sailor on a Coast Guard cutter from Massachusetts, was willing to try anything to keep things lively. He used to paint two five gallon cans bright yellow, jam them into egg crates, and tie scrap iron to them so they would sink when holed. He threw them out every so often and we would make a run on them with all guns blazing - machine guns, rifles, flare guns, whatever they had. We would come at them head on, and we would come up parallel to them, blasting away, shooting up enough ammunition to fight a major engagement.

Other times they wanted to have a fish fry at the officers' club which was near the number two bachelor quarters. To collect enough fish to feed everybody, they would go over near the Venezuelan coast so there would be no trouble with the Company or the people on the island, make a run at maximum revolutions per minute to escape the blast from the depth charge that was set to go off at 75 feet. Even at their best speed, the stern of the ship would buck like a bronco when the shallow set charge went off. The shock wave would come first and then a big geyser of water flew into the air. We would swing around and pick up the stunned fish. If the charge went off amid a large school of fish, there would be more than we could use. The Venezuelan fishermen would come out and collect those we didn't take.

Then at times we went ashore in Mene Grande and Las Piedras at noon and stay until maybe 10 o'clock that evening. The Navy and Coast Guard based there did not see much action, and when a convoy from Europe or the Pacific came in with larger escorts, you could count on more than the usual amount of brawls.

The commodore in Aruba gave orders that all liberty for Aruba-based ships would be taken in Venezuela. I went with them on several trips. They were allowed to put beer on the ship, but it could not be drunk on board. There were beer parties for hundreds of sailors, and they were wide open. Afternoons at 4:00, we played softball against the Venezuelans who worked in the Gulf Oil or Mene Grande tank farm, and sometimes we would go to the Gulf Club and see a movie.

I was there with the "YMS-4" once in daylight hours, and I saw one of the longest docks I have ever seen. If Venezuela used zip codes in those days, it would have rated its own. You could tie up four ships on either side. We were anchored as the second ship out on the north side at a place called Trapathon. It was no more than a couple of bars and four or five houses on the beach. As you come off the dock and turned north, you went past Trapathon, beyond which was the town of Las Piedras. The bars in Las Piedras sold 8% Zulia beer and the boys were not used to that.

I went with them into one of these bars that had three "hirable" women. These commercial women were the scruffiest I had ever seen in my life. The guys used to kid each other about not even wanting conjugate with them using the other's private parts. The 8% beer and the heat got to some of the crew and they got plastered without realizing it. The chief engineer, a reserve officer by the name of Simpson, who was a good friend of mine, was later serving on the Indianapolis when it was sunk in the Pacific. Simpson became so drunk he thought he could walk back to the ship across the water. The captain, a regular Navy man, caught his impromptu novelty act, and shouted to him over the ship's intercom where every one could hear, that he was setting a bad example for the men. He confined him to the ship for 20 days. I never saw a worse example bad discipline in my life than I saw at Trapathon.

### **RECREATION IN LAS PIEDRAS**

Hartman, whom I mentioned before, was regularly over at Las Piedras and the Mene Grande camp inspecting cargos for the military. An owner of one of these bars, a woman, said, "I'd like a good sign for this place that will attract sailors like you boys."

Hartmann said, "I'll take care of it." He had the ship's carpenter make a sign that said, "Weenery and Drainery." In spite of the fact she wasn't able to read English, she was so proud to get the sign she couldn't thank him enough. It did get sailors into her place; though it was likely they entered laughing.

## **CARIPITO REFINERY EXPERIENCES**

### **AN ASSIGNMENT TO CARIPITO**

Exxon was required to get a Venezuelan work permit for employees who served in Venezuela. I was loaned from Lago to the Caripito refinery for a major overhaul of that refinery and I was to be there for five or six weeks. I had a work permit for sixty days, and it was sufficient to cover the time I was there. The powers that be arranged for me to come back shortly to replace an instrument foreman for about two and a half months. Somehow I failed to extend my work permit. Two rifle-toting Guardia Nationals showed up at the refinery, picked me up and took me to my quarters. They only gave me enough time to grab my clothes before they took me to the airport and kicked me out of Venezuela. Back in Aruba, I had to apply for a new work permit and a new visa. Exxon was fined 500 Bolivars for not providing a valid work permit for me. I reported to Paul Jensen, our Lago Instrument Department General Foreman, the day after I got back. I advised him that I was stuck in Aruba without a visa and asked what I should do. Jensen said, "You are still working for the company in Venezuela, and I can't put you to work. Report in to the main office every day whether you have your visa or not. Go over to there now, check, and let me know."

I enjoyed eleven glorious days of vacation before I got my visa, returned to Venezuela with a renewed work permit, and I finished my job.

The head of the Electrical, Instrument, and Power House departments at the Caripito Refinery was a Mexican engineer who had graduated from Notre Dame. He ran a model operation and was a nice guy who took care of everything while I was gone.

### **I HAD A RATHER NERVE-RACKING EXPERIENCE HERE**

Another inspector, who was a Venezuelan resident, was a real pain and a mean drunk. He was determined to make trouble for me.

I wasn't in the Navy, and I was in the country illegally. He started heckling me at the Gulf Club, calling me a "maricon" which, in Spanish, is one of the worst things one man can call another. If I had been Venezuelan, a machete duel to the death would be the required etiquette. I knew what it meant, but I couldn't let it get to me. If I started anything, the Guardia National (Venezuelan National Guard) would check papers, and if they did, I would be arrested.

### **THE THIRD TIME**

The third time I went back, I met my future wife, Dorothy. At this

time the Mexican engineer was gone and they had promoted the man under him to fill his place. He was a guy who had come up through the ranks with no technical training at all. They gave him the title, but he didn't have the paycheck. This rankled him no end. Of course he didn't come close to having the ability of the Mexican engineer, and his notion of maintenance echoed the sentiment of that popular country and western song, If It Ain't Broke, Don't Fix It.

During his stint as a power house engineer, walking through the power house was like walking through a downpour. There were so many leaks from the overhead steam lines you couldn't count them.

This man slid by until they wanted to enlarge the electrical capacity of the power house to handle a field they were developing 80 kilometers away. He submitted a report which said that the boilers weren't capable of making steam enough for the additional generator they needed. On consulting the construction design of the power house, they found this to be erroneous. By the time they realized he was totally incompetent, the boilers were in such bad shape that they couldn't generate anything near their rated capacity without major repairs.

#### **AN ACCIDENT AT THE CARIPITO REFINERY**

One thing that happened while I was in Caripito was kind of amusing. They had many feast days that were quasi-religious holidays; the sort which didn't require days off to celebrate. During these holidays people used the observances as a legitimate reason to celebrate, and barrels of Hinchapia, the local firewater, were consumed in the process.

This power house was just inside the fence near a native village, similar to the location of our old commissary in Aruba. (This was in the days when the Aruba Commissary was near the Lago Main Gate and the village of San Nicolas.) Dayshift people were keen to get off and join the partying. The fireman came in well lubricated for his 4:00 to 12:00 midnight shift. The dayshift fireman was aware of the condition of his relieving fireman, but he had places to go and people to see; he took off before anyone could draft him as a replacement.

The incoming fireman went to boiler number one and in an impetuous act of bravado common to dipsomaniacs, pulled out not one, but two of the five burners to clean them. He finally managed to have them ready by 5:00 that afternoon, put them back in and turned on the fuel oil to the burners. In his impatience to get on with it, he opened the valves all the way. The heavy fuel oil came out so fast it didn't have time to atomize or heat enough to light off. It just lay in the bottom of the fire box in a puddle.

Suddenly, it ignited with a WHOOOOOM you could hear for miles. The explosion raised the pressure of that boiler so fast and so high and the safety valves were blown so hard they wouldn't reseal. Steam howled for minutes on end until it blew down to atmospheric pressure and the valves reset. No one was hurt and we all had a big laugh out of it.

### **THIEVERY IN CARIPITO**

In order to bring charges of theft against a man, you had to have two witnesses to a theft, according to Venezuelan law. The chance of a tossed coin standing on its edge is more certain than finding two witnesses to a theft in Venezuela. No, let me restate that: It is more probable that a thief would confess than two witnesses would present themselves to testify against him. The workers would throw their tools, shovels, or wheelbarrows over the fence and come around at night and pick them up. Without proof there was nothing the company could do about it. Some astute individual came up with an answer of sorts--a second fence around the store house fence. It didn't help catch any thieves, but it sure stopped the losses.

### **DUDLEY'S FISHING TRIP**

In 1942, I was in the hospital for an appendix operation. W. K. Dudley took two Esso employees on a fishing trip off the coast of Venezuela in our jointly owned sail boat, the *Sea Breeze*. A storm came up and when they took shelter in the shore line, the Venezuelan Coast Guard ordered them to either move outside the three-mile limit, or face internment. The Venezuelan government was understandably skittish in those early war years. They knew their oilfield was a prime target for sabotage.

Dudley and his friends decided internment was preferable to the probability of ending up in Davy Jones' Locker permanently. The Venezuelan Coast Guard took them to Las Piedras on the western side of the Coro Peninsula where the three men were incarcerated. This little town is near Punto Fijo where the Creole Amuay Refinery is located. Nearby Punto Cardon is where the Shell Refinery is located.

Bill Hartman, the Saybolt Oil Inspector based in Aruba, frequently traveled between Las Piedras and Aruba on an American Coast Guard cutter. Bill helped the American Navy inspect cargos. He was the one who eventually obtain the release of Dudley and friends, but not before they had done several days in the not so commodious quarters.

Accommodations in the Venezuelan jail had no redeeming qualities as far as the boys were concerned. All they had to eat was the one raw



fish they had caught before the Venezuelan Coast Guard took them into custody. To their misfortune, they had suspicious gear on board when they were boarded by the authorities.

Some time before a good friend of mine who was the chief engineer on an Ocean going tanker, the Motor Ship (MS) *J. A. Mowinkel*, gave me some old life preservers from his ship. That ship was built in 1930 by Cantiere Navale Triestino, at Montfalcone, Italy. The old life preservers the Chief gave me had the Italian word, "Genoa", on them. Genoa had been the home port of the tanker when it was under the Italian flag. Dudley and his crew had those Italian life preservers and no identification papers with them. They had sailed in swim wear as they didn't expect to be gone for long. The gendarmes were certain they were Italian spies.

Our boat had three-quarters of a ton of lead ballast, most of it "liberated" from the acid plant. This disappeared in Venezuela and stones were substituted in place of the lead.

All was not a total loss; one of the lake tankers hoisted our boat on board and brought it back to Aruba lashed to their deck. I was both pleased and surprised at their thoughtfulness.

We lost interest in sailing for a while, and I left it on the boat rack too long to suit Henry Goodwin. He took it off. Later, I sold it to one of the operators to recover my investment. I don't remember his name; all I recall is that he used it to putter around.

#### **SHIFT INSTRUMENT SUPERVISOR DURING WORLD WAR II**

During the war years I was an instrument shift supervisor, and we were working 8 hour shifts - 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., 4:00 p.m. to 12:00 midnight, 12:00 midnight to 8:00 a.m. Bill Weber was the shift supervisor on the shift before me.

One Sunday I was supposed to relieve Bill at 8:00 a.m. or as we called it, "the finish of the graveyard shift." The U.S. Navy minesweeper I was making a cruise on at the time was scheduled to arrive in Aruba at 6:00 that morning. Unfortunately one of the engines broke down and we had to limp in on the remaining one. I was an hour and a half late relieving Weber. I heard about that for months afterwards.

I met some of these U.S. Navy and American Coast Guard fellows after the war while they were in Miami for training. We enjoyed a round of golf together and reminisced of old times on Aruba.

### **LAKE TANKER FRIENDS**

I made some good friends among the Lake Tanker personnel. In peace time, I took trips with them when circumstances permitted. I went over to La Salina, Venezuela several times, particularly around Easter time. La Salina is located near Cabimas, Venezuela on the eastern shore of Lake Maracaibo, and there was a small refinery there with a crude loading terminal. While they were loading I would visit Len and Pauline Wannop and other people that I knew who were transferred from Aruba. I have never been ashore at the Amuay Bay Refinery of Creole Petroleum Corporation, although we dropped off a pilot there once. The Amuay Refinery had a lot of personnel who had been transferred there from Aruba after the war. It was located on the western side of the Coro Peninsula which was before having to cross the bar to enter Lake Maracaibo. That route, I remember, was only a 6 hour trip from Aruba by tanker because you didn't have to wait for high tide. On the other hand, the trip from Aruba, over the sand bar at the entrance of Lake Maracaibo on a lake tanker was a two-day affair. You had to wait for the tide.

### **A TRIP ON AN OCEAN GOING OIL TANKER**

One time I took a trip on Niacus' S/S *World Traveler* for three weeks, taking part of my vacation, or a three-week local leave - I don't remember which. We loaded fuel oil in Aruba and went past Mayaguez on the west coast of Puerto Rico before unloading our cargo in San Juan. And then it was back to the Lake Maracaibo for crude, which we unloaded in Aruba. While in Aruba, I went up to my room for a change of clothing and we were off again for Cristobal Colon in the Panama Canal Zone. We had 40 hours in port and I went over to the Panama City side to see some of the sights. From there, it was back to Venezuela for crude, and then over to Aruba where we unloaded the same. The ship was loaded with a finished product this time, and we went to St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands. Then back again for a load of Venezuelan crude, and we ended up at Aruba. It was a pleasurable three weeks to me and I didn't really want to go back to work in the refinery.

### **A TANKER TRIP TO CUBA BEFORE WORLD WAR II**

Before the United States entered the war, I took a trip to Havana on the Norwegian tanker, S/S *Hamlet*, which was delivering a partial load of product, and then around to Santiago, on the southern coast of Cuba. We sailed past Guantanamo Bay up to Cienfuegos to finish unloading and then went back to Aruba. The trip took nearly two weeks during which time we ran aground in both the Havana and the Cienfuegos harbor. The Cienfuegos anchorage consisted of a single pier jutting perpendicular

from the coast that was able to accommodate a ship on each side. On the seaboard side of the pier was a ship from Calcutta unloading jute used in the manufacture of sugar bags. The *Hamlet* was to berth on the shallow side of the pier, but the tide flowed so swiftly, the captain ordered the helmsman to steer for a distance past the end of the pier before he turned. Lines were heaved over while we were well out from the pier, but the Cuban dockworkers performed their duties so lethargically, by the time they got into action, the heaving lines had fallen back in the water and we had drifted too far to be able to throw them back to the dock again. The incoming tide drove us aground. The captain was boiling mad. I don't know why we went aground in Havana harbor. It must have been an error on the part of the pilot. Both times we were only aground for 30 minutes or so. For whatever reason, it is most embarrassing for a captain to have his ship go aground. He is the final authority on a ship. He can marry people, incarcerate suspects, give aid to poor souls adrift on the high seas, but if his people fail him, he alone bears the responsibility.

#### **TANKER TRIPS TO EUROPE**

I took several trips to Europe on Norwegian ships. Once I arranged a trip to Brazil for my friend Alfred P. Post. He was eternally grateful for that. On all of these trips we paid only a \$40 fee. I had done the Norwegian owner of a small shipping line a favor, and in return, he allowed me to sail on any of his ships anywhere, anytime for \$40.

#### **DOING A GOOD TURN**

It all came about when I got one of his captains out of a scrape in Aruba. I was on the midnight to 8:00 a.m. shift one night, when I chanced to drive by the Marine Office and found this intoxicated, boisterous man in a captain's uniform screaming at a taxi driver. From the way it was going, I believe he had intentions of giving the man a sound thrashing. The argument was over the double fare the driver insisted on charging since it was past midnight. The skipper refused to believe this was an accepted practice, and the driver was adamant about being paid double; neither would give way. I got the officer calmed down and back onboard his ship before the police arrived to complicate things further. The owner found out about it when his captain was later diagnosed as an alcoholic. Authorities in many ports had charges against him.

#### **THE CAPTAIN HAS A PROBLEM**

This same captain almost lost his ship near Aruba. When he was finally relieved of command in India, the officer who succeeded him was

told to make a log of his mistakes.

The incident outside of the San Nicholas harbor in Aruba which I witnessed was only one of his many blunders. He sailed out the east entrance of the San Nicholas harbor and dropped the pilot. As per common practice, they angled out towards Venezuela before they sailed around the island. That day, I had seen my friends in his crew off and stood on the dock, watching the ship as it departed. As the tanker cleared the harbor entrance, the captain, who was drinking heavily, told the helmsman to come left. The Spanish helmsman, who had previously been disciplined by the captain for failing to follow orders, obeyed without question - he turned the wheel to the left. No sooner had he done so, when the captain passed out. The helmsman, who, in compliance with his last order, continued to hold the rudder at hard left, awaited the command to bring it back. The tanker made a complete circle and headed back toward the reef marker light outside the harbor. All that stood between the ship and complete disaster was the standard practice of stationing the chief officer of a tanker at the bow while his ship docked and undocked. I saw this man hop like a cartoon character and was actually able to trace his progress as he ran across the foredeck to the amidships' bridge and up the stairs. He gave the helmsman a swat, pushed him aside and brought the wheel back to the right.

On their next trip to Aruba, I got the full story from the chief. It was a year afterward that the captain was relieved of his command.

#### **ARRANGING A TRIP TO NORWAY**

Prior to that time, in 1955, I heard Captain Gunner Neilson's tanker was scheduled to unload a cargo in Antwerp, Belgium. From there, it was to proceed to the Chubb yard in Rotterdam for repair and refit.

I had asked the skipper for permission to sail round trip because the time it would spend in dry dock was about the duration of my vacation. The skipper said he had also planned to take his vacation after delivering the ship to dry dock, but he couldn't promise me a trip back because he wouldn't be the captain in charge of the return trip.

Less than a week later, he returned to Aruba after delivering a cargo of finished product to Trinidad and Brazil. I was there when he docked, and when he had completed his duties on the *Thorjorg*, he came over to me and said, "Aw hell, I'll take you to Europe with me anyway. Don't worry about getting back I'll see you get back somehow. You can come and visit me at my home." Gunner Neilson went on to explain he intended to buy a car in Belgium and wanted to take me with him to spell him on the drive to Norway. I packed my gear and away we went.

It should be noted, the tanks of an oil tanker have to be cleaned before they go into dry dock so there would be no fires when they are welding or using spark-causing tools. In the pre-EPA days when you flushed out the tanks you pumped your oily bilge water over the side. In this case after the cargo had been unloaded in Antwerp, the ship sailed to the open sea where they flushed out their tanks without giving any thought to the damage they were doing to the sea life.

### **ARRANGING A TRIP ASHORE**

Fortunately for me, the Scheldt River winds through Europe without regard to national boundaries and its meandering course passes through Dutch territory before coursing through Antwerp, Belgium. Passengers from Aruba, at that time a Dutch Protectorate, could visit Holland without a visa.

A pilot and a ship's agent came aboard when we entered the Scheldt River. The pilot told the captain to drop the anchor in a nearby area out of the main channel of the river. We were to wait there until a berth opened in the docking area.

The captain asked the ship's agent if he could arrange for me to leave the ship before it crossed into Belgium. The agent agreed to try. If he succeeded, a pilot boat would arrive the next morning at 6:00 a.m. carrying an immigration officer who would process me through customs. If I didn't receive approval, I would be required to remain on ship until a berth opened, and it discharged cargo, and could get off only when it arrived in Antwerp. The next morning I was greatly relieved when I heard someone shout that the pilot boat was approaching.

### **EVERYTHING GOES AS PLANNED**

For once all had gone as planned; after I got off Captain Neilson's ship I went to France. The immigration officials were very stuffy; they considered my method of entering the country highly irregular. The two immigration officers argued about it and one of them said in English, "Aw let him go, he is here on vacation." In France, I saw my friend, Jean Saucillon, who had been taught English by my wife, Dorothy, while he was in Aruba some years before. He was in Port Jerome, which is 25 miles up the Seine River from the port city of Le Havre on the Atlantic side of France. Afterwards, I returned to the dry-dock in Rotterdam.

### **A GENEROUS INVITATION**

In a generous gesture, the captain invited me to his home in Norway. I had planned to return on the same ship but he begged me to visit with him, saying he would arrange for another ship to take me

home.

Not one to pass up a chance for adventure, I went up with him and had a great time. His father was sail master for the millionaire Sir Thomas Lipton on the famous yacht "Shamrock I." Lipton challenged for the America's cup in 1899 and made 5 other attempts but never won. Nielsen's father had autographed pictures of him and old Sir Thomas with their arms around each other. The old man was as fluent in English as Gunnar's mother. One of his brothers and one of his sisters weren't very articulate in our language. The Nielsens lived in Grimstad, which is near Kristiansand to the south of Norway. His first mate, Niels Marnar, lived in a little place called Anlusasian. On a subsequent voyage I visited the first mate at his home.

Captain Nielsen had mentioned before we left the ship that he intended to buy a car in Antwerp, and drive it home. When we got to Rotterdam I asked about the car. He explained that he had bought the car before he knew they wanted so much for registration and insurance. He had decided to ship it by freighter to Oslo. We were to fly there to pick it up and drive it home.

There was a newly completed Norwegian ship in one of the dry-docks whose owner had flown the entire crew from Norway by chartered plane. The airline advertised among the ships chandlers that for \$38, they would take back to Oslo as many Norwegians and their luggage as the plane would hold. Word got around through the shipping circles, and men were buying washing machines and all kinds of other things to take back with them.

Captain Neilson and I signed up, arriving at the airport just as last call was given. The pilot said there would be a slight delay, and we waited until two immigration officers arrived leading two tipsy Norwegian sailors who had lost their papers, their money and their gear. One of them had never flown before and he was absolutely terrified. As soon as the officers walked away from the plane he got up from his seat and walked off the plane. He was too drunk to escape unnoticed. The two officers marched the sailor back to the plane and strapped him in his seat again. Then the officers watched the airliner until it left the runway. The expression on the poor man's face as we headed for cruising altitude was one of sheer terror. The seat belt sign went out and he un-strapped himself clumsily. He was so drunk that he gradually flowed off his seat and on to the floor, like Chuck Jones' cartoon cat, Tom, after the mouse Jerry whacks him with a large mallet. Patiently, the stewardess hoisted him up. Fifteen minutes later he was on the floor again. Captain

Neilson, the senior officer aboard, told the stewardess to leave the hapless seaman on the floor. He promised to get him strapped in before the aircraft landed.

Captain Neilson and I were processed through immigration and went to Oslo. I lost track of the drunken seaman, but I'm sure he was most grateful to get home. After processing all our papers, we got the captain's car out of bond and started for his home.

Neilson's home was in Dramond, near the southern tip of Norway, quite a long haul by road. The first night we stopped at the home of a Mr. and Mrs. Nelson. Mrs. Nelson, the captain explained, was an aunt of his, and they owned a paper mill that specialized in making carbon paper. They had an orchard of 600 apple and pear trees, and they grew wild strawberries in the grass between them. Those strawberries were used to make the most delicious wine I have ever tasted by blending syrup from the wild strawberries with cider pressed from their apples and letting it age during the winter season. I carried a bottle of it back to Aruba, and thinking of them as I sipped it.

The next day we continued our trip to the captain's home. I had the traditional Norwegian breakfast of Aqua Vita, raw onions, herring and boiled eggs. Every morning I was there, we were treated with this same menu. It got so I truly looked forward to it; it was the kind of meal I envisioned lumberjacks were required to eat before they went to work, and upon their eating such a meal, you would have no trouble locating them by their breath. They had a farm with a salmon stream on the back of their property. The last day I was with the family, the salmon were in season, and they asked me to join them. It was raining heavily, I had a cold and my clothes were wet. I had to beg off. Everyone went and they had salmon that night for supper. The girl who spoke English kidded me, saying I shouldn't be allowed to have any because I didn't help catch it.

I had my first experience driving a diesel car. The captain's brother, Ralph, had an unlicensed business on the side picking up captains and crew members who had to travel long distances from their homes to the airport. Ralph had a nice Mercedes with a diesel engine, and he drove long distances to transport the crews. On one of his trips, I joined him and he offered me the chance to drive it. Everything went smoothly until I went up a very steep hill and I didn't shift gears soon enough. The engine stalled. I let it roll with the clutch in to get a start on the fly like I was used to doing, and when I popped the clutch, that thing stopped like it had hit a brick wall. Ralph cracked his head on the windshield, and he

was very vocal about my inferior driving skills and my harebrained notions about starting cars by popping the clutch. Diesels are high compression engines which are not amenable to roll- or push-starting.

### **THE SHIP'S OWNER**

When it was time for me to leave, I returned to the Rotterdam dry-dock where the ship was about ready to sail. The ship's owner was down from Norway to check on the work being done, and to arrange for vacation-relief for his captain. I met him at the dry dock. He said there was a bar in Rotterdam he wished to visit, and he invited me to accompany him. He told me, as a sailor, he had frequented this bar when a nice lady owned it. He wanted to find if the lady and the bar were still there, and if the lady remembered him. We found the bar and had a drink while he told me of his experiences as a seaman. As he talked, I saw a woman watching us with keen interest. To my surprise, as I was about to tell him about the woman, he said he had heard about my helping the skipper and that he appreciated my intervention. As I recall the ships he owned were: Touren, Cayak, Thorjorg and the Chubb Yaw. Three were ocean going oil tankers and the fourth was a refrigerated ship.

He continued, "I wish to show my appreciation by allowing you to sail on any of my ships, any time, for only \$40. When any one of my ships passes through Aruba, you may sail with them and, if you don't have the money, you can pay me on your next payroll period."

I told him about the woman who was watching us and he went to her and introduced himself. "Well now," he said to her, "I was a sailor the last time I was in here. Now I own the ship I was sailing on, dear lady, and I own three others." Drinks were on the house; the old lady, the owner and I had a good time that night.

The owner had to return to dry dock and I went with him as far as the nearest hotel where I checked in. I was invited to pay him a visit at his home in Kranstad, but unfortunately I never had the opportunity to make that trip. This trip was made in 1955 - only 10 years after WWII and there was still evidence of wartime damage.

### **MY RARE LIQUEUR**

I had bought a bottle of rare liqueur to take back with me. It was in a bag and had a weak spot in the glass. Somehow I dropped it and a hostess noticed it was leaking in time to save the store's new rug. They provided me with a replacement and I was on my way.



### **THE CAPTAIN'S SON**

Seafaring is in the blood of Norwegians; a time-honored tradition dating from the days of the fearless Vikings who plundered Europe. Possibly the owner of these ships was swayed by this inbred trait when they decided their eldest son, Arvid, should go to sea to learn the family's trade. They gave him his duffel bag and he was assigned to one of their ships.

When the young man's ship called on Aruba, we met him and took him home with us. I recall Arvid's English was quite good.

On its departure, his ship sailed around the flank of South America to Argentina where he became seriously ill, according to a letter he sent me. Out of the blue I got a cablegram from the ship's owner saying Alex wished to send Arvid home. I knew which ship he was on, but I knew only that the ship was somewhere in the South Atlantic. It cost me \$1 a word to send a Worldwide Radiogram to the ship. At those astronomical prices--remember this was the late fifties when Americans could buy gasoline for as little as 18 cents a gallon--I made my message as succinct as I knew how. The Cable Office down in Oranjestad sent it to Bergen, Norway. Bergen was the home town of a radio station which broadcast messages and instructions to Norwegian ships worldwide.

A cable from the skipper of the ship Arvid was on contended they would be coming through Aruba soon. He promised to cable me when they reached Trinidad. A couple of days later I got the word that the ship would dock in Curacao, but the captain would send the boy on to me in Aruba by plane.

I'll be damned if the owner's refrigeration ship didn't arrive in San Nicholas harbor for bunker fuel. I hot-footed it down to the dock and explained to its captain that the son of the ship's owner was sick, his parents wanted him home. I filled him in about the son being on the flagship which was docking in Curacao. The captain said he was sailing for England by way of Curacao, and that he would take Arvid with him if he got down to the ship before he sailed.

I had trouble getting off work to go to the airport to meet Arvid. My boss, Ellie Wilkins was not overwhelmed by my urgent desire to help the son of a non-Esso employee get home to his mother. But, following a number of promises and a spate of undignified kowtowing, I was off for the airport and there I explained the problem to the immigration and customs people. Fortuitously, I knew the immigration officer, and with a minimum of difficulty I got Arvid through red tape and rushed him to the ship before it sailed. I sent another cable to his

father telling him what ship he was on and that they had to meet it in England. The boy arrived in England safely and was taken back to Norway by his father and youngest sister.

#### **THE CAPTAIN'S DAUGHTER**

That same sister came to visit us in Aruba and stayed for two weeks. George and Marty Echelson's son, Donald (I think), dated her while she was there, and I took him aside and said, "I don't think you smoke, but don't do anything to get this girl to smoke. Her parents would be more angry if she came home smoking than if she came home pregnant."

#### **ANOTHER NORWEGIAN CAPTAIN'S INVITATION**

Another Captain that I knew had planned to have me visit his home, but he died at sea. I knew his Canadian wife because she had sailed with him on voyages to Aruba. She had the distinction of being the first woman marine radio operator in Canada. Her whole family went to sea with the captain until the children reached school age. He was in Aruba when he was assigned to command the largest ship under the Norwegian flag, and we threw a big celebration for him. As the result of a radio transmission, the consul and I were the first people in Aruba to get the word that he had died on his ship in the Philippines. When I went to Norway to offer my condolences to his wife, she said, "I know my husband planned to have you visit us. We had planned to take you to his sister's. Her husband is a fisherman and he knew you'd have fun with them."

The sister and her husband lived in a village so remote, you had to go by boat, or travel part way by car and walk the rest of the way by a footpath over the hills. There were just six families in this little village on the edge of the sea. The Captain's brother-in-law had 200 lobster traps and three enormous salmon traps set in the river to catch the salmon going upstream. We went out every day and worked the lobster and the salmon traps. The latter were built of cyclone fence wire and were 12 feet on a side. Every day we cleared the traps of leaves and trash. If the salmon saw debris, they wouldn't enter the trap. Every night, supper consisted of all the lobster, toast and vanilla ice cream you could eat. I had the good fortune of being there only five days; if I had stayed longer, I would have had to buy a new wardrobe two sizes larger!

#### **SHIPS ADOPTED BY SCHOOLS**

Each Norwegian ship is adopted by a school, and the *Chubb Yaw*, on which I sailed on twice, was adopted by a school in the very small town of Lanheim in northern Norway. During my first trip on the

*Chubb*, its Captain asked me to write about Aruba to the students in the Lanheim School. The school teacher answered my letter and invited me to visit the school. On my second trip, I visited it and the class pleaded for me to give a lecture on Aruba. The father of one of the girls in the class was the chief engineer of the paper mill so I got a visit to their paper mill, the northernmost paper mill in the world, but the most interesting thing was a museum of musical instruments in a nearby town. I was fascinated by the collection of musical instruments. They had instruments from all over the world; jungle drums covered with human skin; one of three existing piano-harps; and more. They had a room dedicated to Mozart, one to Chopin, and the other to Schubert. In Chopin's room, they had instruments he had played, compositions he had composed, a photograph of he and his girl friend, one of the first photographs (most likely a lithograph) ever taken. The guide played Chopin's Minute Waltz. I promised I would get them an instrument they didn't have and when I got back to Aruba, I got them a "Wiere-Wiere." As any Arubanite will tell you, this is a hollow tubular instrument usually made of wood. There are notches down the length of this 2 or 3" diameter by 12 or 14" long instrument are rubbed with a dowel, producing a scraping sound similar to the playing a washboard. The instrument produces a beat for the music being played. The more modern ones are made of stainless steel tubing instead of wood. The "Aruba Esso News" had an article about it, and I sent a copy of it along the instrument to the museum. They gave it a place right along with all their other exotic instruments.

#### **THE TETRA ETHYL LEAD PLANT IN THE LAGO REFINERY**

It must have been in 1955 when, they had the first ever complete turn around of the Tetra Ethyl Lead plant in Aruba. They had to lift the 50,000 pound weigh tanks which were used to measure the Tetra Ethyl Lead (T.E.L). The T.E.L. had to be blended into the process stream by weight. T.E.L. was blended with gasoline to increase the octane number. Then, aviation gasoline had an octane number of 100. By comparison, regular unleaded automotive gasoline today has an octane number of about 87. Today they use alternate methods to increase octane rating of gasoline.

To get back to my story, they had to raise these tanks enough so I could clean the pivots and bearings. In this type of equipment, the pivots and bearings had very close tolerances. The operating staff had told the fellow who was acting as Zone Supervisor that they could only spare the equipment used in the procedure for eight days, and that they would build a bypass blending arrangement if necessary. This Zone Supervisor

said he thought he could do the job quickly enough to avoid the expense of building a bypass.

So they jacked the tank up. I then examined all the bearings and cleaned everything up. We were waiting on a machinist to finish his work, when the Zone Supervisor came along and ordered me to set the tank back down. I told him we weren't ready because there was more than the required quarter inch clearance between the bearings and the pivots. I warned him that the equipment wouldn't work properly unless the spacing was correct. He insisted everything would be all right. When we put it back together and set up the scale, it wouldn't even measure the first 5000 pounds.

The tank had to be jacked up again, and they finally got it right. The job took more than eight days. If it had been anybody else they would have been made to walk the plank. The Zone Supervisor's brother was the department head.

#### **ROY ELLIOT**

Roy Elliot was a thin fellow in his forties. He was balding with the red nose common among those who share the need for strong drink. He was a likeable fellow and a good friend of Fred Rich. He came down as a bricklayer with Kellogg and worked on the pressure stills furnaces that were under construction in 1939-40. He brought his accordion along and he was an accomplished musician. When Kellogg finished their job he was hired by Lago because our Colony dance band needed him to complete their roster. He was assigned to our department. One of the jobs he was put to work on was "ringing-out" the thermocouple wires on turn-arounds.

#### **THE WHALER KILLER BOATS**

Whalers stopped in Aruba to load bunker fuel on their way to the whaling grounds in the Antarctic, accompanied by the new type of "killer boat." The fifty foot craft resembled small ocean-going tug boats with harpoon guns mounted on their bows.

At the beginning of the war a squadron of these boats was stationed in the Oranjestad harbor. Early in the conflict, escort and minesweeping craft were at a premium. These relatively small boats were fitted with paravanes and adopted for use as minesweepers. The paravanes, 15 foot aluminum cylinders, were towed on each side of the boat, their cables forming a V with the boat at the bottom of the V. In theory the connecting cables snagged the mooring cables of mines, tearing them loose to float to the surface. There they were detonated by gun fire. We were told these same boats participated in the invasion of Holland and

Norway.

Wilfred K. Dudley, another instrument mechanic and I were over in Oranjestad one day where those converted "killer boats" were moored along the wharf. Dudley thought they had something to do with whaling boats, but didn't know what the paravanes were. Dudley said, "Look at those aluminum things. What do you suppose they are?"

Thinking to test his engineering acumen, I said, "Those are bobbers they use when they're fishing for whales." He swallowed my story hook, line and sinker. I never told him any different.

Dudley must have been telling someone about those giant "bobbers", because a month later he came hopping up to me like the Walt Disney character, the Tasmanian Devil, sputtering and fuming about the trick I had played on him.

#### **THE CARIPITO REFINERY**

The Caripito Refinery is located on the San Juan River. The mouth of this river empties into the Gulf of Paria approximately 50 miles away. Trinidad is located on the south side of the Gulf. Caracas, Venezuela is approximately 300 miles, as the crow flies, to the north of Caripito. Originally, lake tankers were used to take crude from the loading terminal there. In 1939 ocean going tankers were used after dredging was done. The refinery's power plant had four boilers and four turbines. This power plant was larger than needed by the refinery because it supplied power to the oil producing fields in the area. The employee's camp was located some distance from the refinery, and there were about 100 families living in it. We had just enough time to drive home for lunch and make it back during our noon break. There was a large warehouse there which served the drilling and producing fields in the area.

The storehouse manager, who had an ongoing feud with the production manager, got permission to build a fence that was supposedly meant to protect the storehouse. When finished, the fence was close to the building on the sides and back. To me, it seemed to extend much further to the front of the lot than was necessary. The loading dock was at the front of the building. The storehouse manager handicapped the production manager by refusing to allow any of his drilling trucks to back in to the warehouse loading docks. The only way the drilling people could fill their orders, was to send out a platoon-size crew of people to manhandle their drilling pipe and supplies from the dock to their trucks. As I watched them one time, it struck me how much they looked like an African safari; everyone carried something on their heads.

On one of my tours in Caripito, I had the job of installing some tube metal thermocouples in the furnace of the one big unit during their first major overhaul. As I recall, the refinery could process 42,000 barrels/day. They assigned four Venezuelans to me who had no mechanical skills; spoke no English; and were all thumbs. Somehow, in spite of their collective efforts, I managed to install the tube metal thermocouples in the roof tubes.

On the start up of the furnace I got a call from one of the operators that one of my thermocouples had gone straight off the chart. I looked at the instrument and I couldn't find anything wrong with it. We looked in the firebox and found the problem--a white hot roof tube which sagged down like boiled spaghetti. We got the fire turned off, shut down the furnace, and when it cooled, we found that a pneumatic reaming tool turbine (used during the shutdown to grind coke build-up from the inside of furnace tubes) that one of the laborers had left in the tube and not told anyone. It was fortunate that tube metal thermocouple had been installed in the roof tube with the blockage; the overheating problem was easily detected and a rip-roaring furnace fire averted.

In preparation for this shutdown, extra personnel were required, and the company contracted a road builder to supply laborers. Each laborer came to work with a machete on their belt as if they were cinema cowpokes in a Venezuelan western. Along about noontime they got in a fight and started acting like a sword dancer's convention after somebody spikes the punch bowl with gunpowder and loco weed. People were slashed up something terrible, and the National Guard had to be called in. The company advised the contractor that, from then on, everyone had to check their machetes at the gate.

My first wife, Dorothy, a Canadian, was an Operating Room Supervisor at the Caripito Refinery Hospital in Venezuela when we first met. She had completed her training in the biggest hospital in Toronto and got her "RN" degree there. In Toronto, she worked for a Physical Nurses Supplementary Certificate. She was naturalized as an American Citizen in Miami before we returned from our first vacation.

Dorothy and I were married in Venezuela in January of 1945. The marriage took place in Venezuela instead of Aruba because of wartime restrictions related to her being a single woman. Once we were wed, obtaining a visa was a simple procedure.

Dorothy had given the company in Venezuela notice that she was resigning. Now that she was going, it helped her bear the abysmally bad food she was forced to eat in the mess hall. The mess hall was run by a

concessionaire sure that everyone knew the prime objective of operating a business was profit. Thus, the lower he kept his overhead, the more profit he made. After the Manager threatened to revoke his contract, employees got good food for the rest of his tenure. But Dorothy's health was already so bad that she was dyspeptic and her skin had a sickly tone. When my job was over in Venezuela, I had to return to Aruba. Dorothy still had about a month to go on her contract. That was far too short of a honeymoon as far as I was concerned.

Bungalows we lived in while in Aruba were: 87, and 1563. Bungalow 87 was next to J. J. and Corrine Cassell.

After Dorothy had been in Aruba a few years, another Canadian nurse, Ms. Marian Wylie, came to talk to me on the job one day to ask if Dorothy might be interested in temporary work at the hospital. Postwar Aruba was like anywhere else overseas; many nurses left for the States, feeling they had done their time.

I said it was okay with me if it was okay with her, and Dorothy was hired to work in the operating room. But the change between the outside heat and inside cold of the Operating Room was too much for her system, so they transferred her to the clinic. Patients were referred from the dispensary; there were no walk-ins.

After she had been in the clinic a month or so, we were invited by some friends of ours to dine with them and another couple. We had no sooner sat down to eat when the hostess turned to Dorothy and said, "Now that you are in the clinic, you have access to all the medical records. I know you would never invite anybody to your home that has syphilis or gonorrhea, and I want you to tell me who in the colony has those diseases so I won't invite them either.

Dorothy was flabbergasted. "In the first place, I only see the folders of patients that are referred to the clinic. In the second place, I don't go all through the folders. Even if I did know, I wouldn't tell you. That would not only violate my medical ethics, but it would sure as hell violate Dutch law."

The hostess clouded up like she was going to rain. When we had eaten, we played liar's dice. The dice came around to Dorothy and she said, "It's a queen-high straight." Then she slid the cup to me. I didn't bother to look at it. I picked it up, shook it, slammed the cup down over the dice and passed it to Bill. I said, "It's an ace-high straight." Bill wasn't ready to believe such a wild statement, so he picked up the cup. You could have knocked him over with a feather--it was an ace-high

straight!

It was plain they thought we had cheated somehow, some way; it couldn't have been luck alone. I was being truthful although Lady Luck had never been so kind to me before or since. They refused to believe we were innocent, and we were never invited again.

### **EMPLOYEES COUNCIL**

It must have been in 1938 or 1939 that Lago introduced The Lago Employees Council for employees on the local payroll. Employees in each department elected a representative to this council. These representatives elected eight of their number to represent them in discussions with six management representatives. The idea was to establish a line of communication between employees and management by which company policies could be explained and employee complaints could be aired. A similar organization, The Foreign Staff Employees Council, was established for employees on the foreign staff payroll.

Eric Gairy, the instrument job trainer's secretary, was a representative on the employee council. Gary made it a practice of encouraging employees to file grievances so his duties as representative wouldn't leave much time for him to do his company job. He presented quite an imposing figure when he came marching down the road by the Alkylation Plant office, his pretentious white double breasted suit's unbuttoned coat flapping in the breeze, his wide brimmed white hat set at a jaunty angle. He was always late. At the time Stan Chapman was in charge of the office group of the Instrument Department. Stan couldn't discipline him because every time he jumped on him, Gairy would retaliate by pumping up an employee's grievance until it went all the way to management level where it tied up their meetings. The brass told Stan to keep Gairy out of their hair, no matter what it took. So, every morning, he came in whenever he pleased, 10 or 15 minutes late. Stan would start off his day with high blood pressure and considerable gnashing of his teeth; there was nothing he could do. When Gairy decided to leave the company for greener pastures, he said, "You will hear about me; you can plan on hearing from me."

Eric M. Gairy became Grenada's first Prime Minister when it was granted its Independence from England in 1967. He and his United Labor Party carried the elections of 1967 and 1972, but his dictatorial rule was overthrown on March 13, 1979.



### **NEW FCC UNIT DEDICATED**

On December 4 and 5, 1943 the Fluid Catalytic Cracking Plant in Aruba was dedicated. Previously, Lago oil had constructed the Gas Compression units, Light Ends units, Isomerization Plant, and a new Alkylation Plant. These were all part of new aviation gasoline producing facilities built as part of our effort to increase the production of 100 octane gasoline needed by the beleaguered allied air forces. As these units were being fabricated, Esso was building 32 similar units at other major refineries in the United States. The identical design was used for the Esso Refineries, the only difference in the blueprints being the "AR" ending on those used in Aruba.<sup>1</sup>

### **CHECKING ON INSTRUMENT DEPT. SUPERVISORS**

Our Cat plant was an imposing 20 story structure. In 1947 I believe it was, they had a program to check the efficiency of all of the supervisory staff in the refinery. In the Instrument Department supervisors were scheduled to be checked out over a five day period, Monday through Friday. Our Assistant General Foreman at the time was assigned to check me out, and he took his job seriously; he followed me everywhere. The Cat plant was experiencing instrument trouble at the time, and the elevator was out of service. When it worked, the elevator went up fourteen floors. Above the fourteenth floor were four more floors accessible by stairways. Steel ladders extended from there to the very top of the unit, levels 19 and 20, from which the highest overhead lines were serviced. For the holiday season each year, electricians installed a grand, lighted, decorated Christmas tree on those levels.

I walked my "shadow" up and down and all around, and he became painfully galled between his legs by the humidity and his unaccustomed exertions. Tuesday morning, he asked, "Do we have to go up?" To which I replied, "Of course, I've got one of my mechanics working on a Westcott flowmeter on the eighth floor, and I can't depend on him to do it right." It was true; Black, the mechanic, was getting so forgetful, it was a wonder he could remember to go home when quitting time came around. (This poor fellow was a locally hired man from Trinidad. He was noted for his prowess as a cricket player in his earlier days.)

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<sup>1</sup> *One of these identical Alky Units was located at the Union 76 Smith's Bluff Refinery in Nederland, TX where Vic Lopez worked as an engineer upon graduation in '67. It's said that walking in the control room door of that unit you couldn't tell the difference from entering the Lago Alky Unit control room.*

"They're working on an important pressure transmitter on 14 and I have to make sure they have the purge system working properly," I said. The fourth time we went to the top, he was on the verge of collapse. Wednesday morning, my "shadow" decided he could evaluate me more efficiently from the ground floor.

I remember when Ted Stanley designed a plus 2, zero, minus 2 test gauge with red oil in the glass tube. This was an exceedingly accurate and sensitive gauge. The Assistant General Foreman (AGF) heckled Ted while he designed it, "What are you doing, when are you going to finish it?" Ted completed his project and everybody in the shop gathered around for a demonstration. After viewing the positive results, the A.G.F. said, "Now, that's the way I told you it should be done." Ted could've served as an inspiration for one of the Wheatley Pumper magazine's "If Looks Could Kill" cartoons.

#### **REPORTS WRITING**

There was a time when the Assistant General Foreman asked Stan Chapman, our office supervisor, to write a report on an incident during which an injury was narrowly avoided. Stan wrote a detailed report and submitted it to the A.G.F, who looked it over and said, "Chapman, I don't have all day to read this thing, condense it." Stan condensed it and resubmitted it. Again the A.G.F. looked at it and said, "Where the hell are the details, how can I make a decision about this without details?" Chapman took it back and added the details. Again the A.G.F. looked at the revised version and said, "Condense this damn thing." In sheer exasperation, Stan resubmitted his original report. The A.G.F. looked at it and said, "Yeah, now that's more like it."

#### **WORLD WAR II**

When the German Submarine, *U-156*, attacked the refinery on February 16, 1942, I was living in bachelor quarters number two: It had a clear view of the lagoon. Sometime after one o'clock in the morning, I was awakened by the sound of torpedoes exploding against the lake tankers, *Pedernales* and the *Oranjestad*. As history records, the *Oranjestad* sank. The more fortunate *Pedernales* drifted six miles west, ran aground, was salvaged and later used during the invasion of Normandy. As I looked toward the reef outside the harbor I saw the lake tankers, *Pedernales* and the *Oranjestad* on fire. I had been working at the Hydrogenation Plant the previous day, and knew it was an extremely flammable environment. If it were hit, there would be an explosion that would do a terrific amount of damage to the refinery. Although I wasn't a member of the operating staff I dressed and ran to the Hydro plant. We

frantically dropped it out of service. The critical parts of the refinery were later shutdown, but some vessels in the Hydro Plant contained hydrogen at 3500 pound per square inch of pressure, and even the greenest wiper knows how dangerous hydrogen under pressure can be.

Following the attack, we operated under strict blackout conditions. The lenses of our flashlights were covered with a blue plastic except for a centimeter square opening. Our pick-up truck lights had blue plastic coverings with a one by three centimeter opening just below the center of the light. Their tail lights were also covered with a blue plastic with one 1 centimeter openings. We all had our difficulties functioning under blackout conditions.

### **WARTIME ANECDOTES**

- Once, when I was on the midnight to 8:00 shift, they had dug up a road between my quarters and the plant during the day. I almost fell into the ditch near the main gate as I groped my way to work that night.
- Another time I went to the totally blacked out mess hall for my evening meal. Some guy parked his pickup truck right by the east exit of the mess hall. There was no moon that night and, as I went out the exit of the mess hall, I ran smack into the pickup's protruding rain gutter, knocking out several of my upper front teeth.
- At the Hydrogenation Plant we took care of three oxygen analyzers. They had a scrubbing train for the gas sample being tested. The sample passed through a flask containing cadmium acetate, and, if there were any hydrogen sulfide in the stream, the solution turned into cadmium sulfide, an easily detectible, bright yellow compound. We had two flasks of cadmium acetate in the train in series. As the incoming gas stream started to turn the first one yellow, you would remove it and shift the second flask to replace the first. The contaminated one was then cleaned out, the cadmium acetate replaced, and it was reinstalled as the second flask in the series. The idea was to protect the platinum element in the analyzer from being destroyed by the hydrogen sulfide.

One day, for some inexplicable reason, an instrument mechanic had mistakenly replaced the cadmium acetate in the first bottle with an unknown fluid failed to turn yellow on contact with hydrogen sulfide. When the second bottle began to turn yellow, the operator became quite concerned. Fortunately, the platinum element wasn't damaged. The instruments we were using were made in Germany and, as you could imagine, replacement elements for them, during the war, were

scarcer than hen's teeth. The instrument mechanic was subject to some harsh words when his boss learned of the snafu.

- One day, while riding around with one of the other instrument fellows, Stu Johannson, we passed by the French marines' encampment, and we tried to talk to them. Failing that, we gave them some candy we'd brought along. The French were only in Aruba a very short time, the majority of them being posted along the road to Oranjestad and not far from Mount Hooiberg. Their numbers were few and they didn't seem to be what you would call happy campers.

Later after the French had been replaced by the Cameron Highlanders I met one of the Scots' soldiers who was on guard duty. His station was near the central tool room on the south side of the main road--opposite the 7 & 8 and 5 & 6 pressure stills.

One day I was going kind of fast in the company pick-up, and I hit a puddle, splashing him. We became acquainted when I stopped to apologize, and we went to the beach together now and then when we were both off at the same time. I visited the Dutch Marine camp, but never made it to the Scots' camp. Most of my spare time, I spent in the company of my Navy friends.

#### **JOB ANECDOTES**

- In the Number Two Power House, problems with the mercury type temperature thermometers and the right angle thermometers on the bearings in the condenser area pump pit began to arise. The scales were getting dirty and difficult to read. The Mechanical Superintendent, W.R.C. Miller, came by one day and he said, "Davidson, your maintenance isn't up to snuff here, I can't read these thermometers." Quick like a flash, I trotted over to the storehouse and checked out four thermometers for the inlets and outlets of the two turbine oil coolers. I changed the thermometers in the idle lube oil cooler. To change out the others, I had to ask the Assistant Shift Foreman to switch the idle oil cooler into service so I could replace the thermometers in the oil cooler that was just taken out of service. Unbeknownst to me, he shut down the one in service and failed to bring the idle cooler on line. Twenty minutes later, there was a "thump" and the turbine cut off. Its bearings were wiped out, the shaft had to be sent to the states, and the turbine was out of service for months. I had the proper work permit, from the operator, as per prescribed procedure. My job was to change the thermometers, not to switch the system.
- In the 1950's at the Edeleneau Plant at the West end of the refinery

they had a very vital pressure controller in the Number One Tower which wasn't functioning properly. This controller was the most important instrument in the whole plant. (I remember it had just a 4% proportional band which indicated the pressure was only allowed to deviate very little from the control point.) I was working days at the time when the shift foreman at the Edeleneau plant called me out after hours. He said it was a matter of highest priority that I fix it. I got right on it and determined that the 1/2" piping which ran from a point near the top of the main tower to the "Airline" Honeywell Controller on the control panel was plugged. In those days, the instrument was directly connected to the pressure connection of the process tower; nowadays a transmitter is used. This means a device, called a transmitter is installed near the pressure point. A shorter length of piping is involved between the pressure point and the transmitter. One type of transmitter converts the pressure reading it receives to an air signal that operates a pen on a chart or a pointer on a scale. The piping between the pressure point and the transmitter is sometimes sealed to prevent the line fluid from entering the transmitter body.

When the shift foreman said, "Pump it clear," I got one of the pumps we had for installing seals that kept process fluids out of the bodies of mercury manometer type of meters. A lower pressure seal pump wouldn't do it, so I used a higher pressure one. Even that failed to unplug the instrument lead line. I reported to the shift foremen that he would have to have the piping changed out by pipefitters. He laughed and said, "Leave it until tomorrow." Apparently it wasn't an emergency after he saw I couldn't fix it.

- They had us install the gauge glasses in the Edleanu plant boilers without the Microsite normally used to prevent the sight glasses from being eroded by steam. After they had been used for a time they would leak. We had to change gauge glasses every two weeks, but that was because they were below the water level. They had two of their own 225 p.s.i. boilers to provide the uncommon pressures intrinsic in their operations.
- The acid from the Treating Plant and Alkylation Plant which was sent to the Acid Plant for restoration was stored in small black tanks which were 15 feet in diameter and 20 feet high. On one hot, sunny day, during a stretch of warm weather, one of the tanks foamed over. The acid spill produced a cloud of sulfur dioxide which spread rapidly, gassing the people in both of the units at the Acid Plant. Panic-stricken, they ran in all directions. Some fellows ran down on the docks, but even there the gas was so concentrated that they gasped for

breath. A Dutch launch pilot courageously took his craft to the docks where he rescued three fellows. Some guys claimed they never fully recovered from the sulfur dioxide. George Cvejanovich took a sample, and in his laboratory, he determined the temperature at which the gas was produced. I was interested because I had been at the site, and George and I were good friends. It was concluded, that during extremely hot weather, the tanks shouldn't be filled to capacity, and in some cases, they should be cooled. Some sort of cooling system would have to be devised; perhaps water sprays on the sides of the tanks, or the tanks painted silver to reflect the sun's heat. I lost track of what they finally did about this one.



**THE PICNIC GROUNDS:** A 1950's picnic-style birthday party. This is how we managed to hold birthday parties for guest lists of 20-40 kids.

**Photo courtesy M. G. Lopez**

## **The M. John Ten Houte De Lange Story**

### **BEGINNINGS**

I was born August 1911 in the South-East Asian city of Rangoon, situated in the delta of the Irawaddy River in Burma. My parents were Netherlands Nationals. My father was a dealer in Cotton textiles manufactured and imported from Holland. My mother was a certified Elementary School Teacher.

Burma is about the size of Texas. Burma is bordered by Bangladesh in the West, by China in the North, by Thailand in the East and the Andaman Sea in the South. The greater part of the Burmese people are Buddhists. The most beautiful shrine of this religion stands on a hill in Rangoon. Its golden spire rises more than 300 feet above its base. It is currently being covered by gold leaf offerings of the people. At present the country, according to recent newspaper articles, is in political turmoil. At least the military dictator Ne Win has resigned and the army has taken the side of the people who demand a democratic government. But much is yet uncertain. When we lived in Rangoon, 1911-1920, Burma was still part of the then British Empire.

My father was co-manager of a small import-export firm dealing mainly in printed cotton broad-cloth that was sold to the local dealers. Burmese, at that time at least, both women and men, all wore the traditional sarong like garment: the "longgyi." So my dad's business dealt in longgyi cloths. As a point of interest: my father's business employed a Burmese artist-designer who at his drawing board created designs of patterns and colors for longgyi material. The designs chosen were sent to Holland to the textile factory in Hengeloo. There the cotton cloth was woven and color printed and shipped to Rangoon. There my dad and his Dutch, Indian, Burmese assistants would take samples of Longgyi cloth to the local bazaar (market). There, often sitting cross-legged on floor mats opposite the native merchants, the business was transacted. Of course each dealer, including my Dad's firm, had his own interpreter who could handle English.

When World War I broke out in 1914, my mother and I were on a vacation in Holland. Meanwhile my Dad was in Rangoon. Just before hostilities started we were able to catch a passenger-ship back to Burma. During the War my father was appointed acting Netherlands Consul in Rangoon.

On reaching school-age my mother as an elementary Teacher taught me "the beginnings." Later on I was taught by an English woman teacher. The children of the many British citizens there at school-age were all sent home to schools in England.

In 1920 my mother, 2 brothers, & myself came to Holland for good. My father continued to work in Rangoon until his health caused him to repatriate also. He died in Holland during WW 2 while we were in Aruba. John suffered a stroke in May of 1993 and died on June 18, 1993.

We still live in the same house we bought in 1960 and relatively close to where our children and grandchildren have their homes: Michiel in Amsterdam, and Karl and family in Utrecht. Even Marlene, our eldest, is our neighbor. She and Michiel are not married. Michiel continues his musical career as one of the tenor-voices in our Netherlands Chamber Choir. Recently the choir made a concert tour in Japan. A golden opportunity to visit the tourist sights there. Their plane route took them past Anchorage Alaska including the "Jet Lag" experience: a conflict between human-biological rhythm and geographical time.

### **ARUBA EXPERIENCES**

I know the Esso News picture that Charley Overstreet of our Esso Club dance-band "The Dixielanders". I remember some of the players: John (Jan) Koulman (Trombone and leader, I think), Bob Reimel (Tenor Sax), Charlie Overstreet (Clarinet and Alto Sax), Tony Sarrat from the U.S. Consulate (Trumpet), and Henk de Keyzer (Bass) from the Aruba Customs Office. The drum outfit I used then, I had bought from Bill Hughes, if I remember properly. Before we left Aruba for the last time on July 4, 1959 by K. N. S. M. Passenger ship, I think my drums went back to Hughes.

I learned playing the drums teaching myself in the attic of our parents' home in Hilversum, first playing on an old toy drum and to the music of borrowed dance records. I became acquainted with original American Jazz through a friend in our neighborhood who had lived in Texas and who, besides owning American boys' books, also possessed a Saxophone (for Holland quite unique in 1927) and "American Brunswick" jazz records (Red Nichols, Miff Mole, Fletcher Henderson, Louis Armstrong, Dorsey Brothers, etc.)

Listening to these records on a borrowed "Victrola" and late at night to the broadcasts of the BBC from London of the top English dance orchestras through the head-phones of my home-made crystal radio



receiver ("Cats' Whisker!"), I became a dance music fan. Through the English monthly "The Melody Maker" I obtained the address of the British drum manufacturer "Premier" in London.

Then at Technical College in Amsterdam some fellow students were planning to form a dance band and needed a drummer with an outfit. So I approached the importer of the Premier drums in Amsterdam and managed to talk him into selling me a basic-drum set on an installment basis! The first dance party our 5 piece orchestra played at got underway January 2, 1932 in Amsterdam. I paid my first installment (on my drum set!)

Right from my first band engagement I recorded each playing-date, place and "occasion" on the snare head or underside of my first snare drum.

On re-reading this record it shows that on March 19, 1937 I played at a University student dance at Schniphol Airport Amsterdam. The next "Engagement" reads: New Year's Eve dance "Old" Esso Club, Lago Colony, Aruba N. W. I. 1938- 39. I think it was "Marv" Case who then was the leader of the band. Presently it is hard for me to remember the names of players who participated. Bob Reimel of "Personnel" (Sax & Clarinet) I recall of course. My drum record reads, for example, that on Jan.26, 1939 we played at a ball on the Esso Club Tennis Court in honor of personnel of U. S. Cruiser "Memphis". The last drum record before W W 2 started reads March 30 '39 with the notation "The Bat." Don't know the meaning. Quite possibly it was a stage-play. All those events in Lago Colony took place so long ago that is hard for me to remember details.

As an afterthought: when we left Aruba on July 4, 1959 by passenger ship "Prins de Nederlanden" there were included in our boxed and crated belongings practically all issues of the Aruba Esso News that I had collected starting about 1938. After removing various clippings over the years I finally discarded the remainder. Too late I realized that I should have saved more of them for occasional reference. A complete set I understand is at present in the Public Library of Oranjestad on Aruba anyway.

I set foot on Aruba for the first time on June 6, 1938. Then I was the only "passenger" on the Belgian tanker *M. S. Ampetco*. On the ships' muster-roll I was entered as "Cadet (apprentice)." Leaving Antwerp, Belgium on May 15, 1938, the ship then only carried make-ballast. It headed for the Caribbean area and for Eastern Venezuela in particular. Through the Gulf of Paria - West of Trinidad - we entered the river Rio

San Juan on our way to the tanker berth in a river bend where the ship moored and loaded a full cargo of Caripito crude oil. By skillful maneuvering back and forth in the river bend the *Ampetco* Master turned her around and on her way down the river heading for her destination: Aruba and the Lago refinery.

We docked there on the early morning of June 6, 1938. Years later, after WW2 the *Ampetco* re-entered Lagos' harbor in sad condition. If I am not mistaken she was severely damaged by a fire and declared unfit for repairs. Her tragic end was to serve as target ship for the U. S. Navy, leaving her on the bottom of the Caribbean. Part of her story, I think, was recorded in one of the Aruba Esso News issues.

Upon my arrival at Lagos' finger-pier I was greeted by George Hemstreet of the Personnel Department who then took me to the Commissary where I bought work-clothes, gloves & safety shoes and was shown to my Bunkhouse. Looking at my several photographs of my Bunkhouse I cannot detect or otherwise remember its number. It was a simple, about 7 x 10 ft. room with 2 "tumble windows." Each bunkhouse contained 4 rooms. Each 4 bunkhouses were grouped around one washroom. I remember a near-neighbor was Jim Harkness and also Joe Protterra was there.

After a Safety Talk by Gordon Owen and Ray Brown, I was introduced to Paul O'Brien, Process foreman, I think, of the Cracking Plant's Combination Units.

I believe I started the 4-12 shift or the "grave-yard" on #1 and 2 Combination Units. Stillman in charge was, I believe, "Pop" Ray Imler. I think it was customary that an apprentice-operator, my first job title, started to learn the unit from the bottom level up. So I began as apprentice fire-man, watching and adjusting temperature of the furnaces, changing burners, etc. One of the level-men on "1 and 2" was your across-the-road neighbor, Frans Breusers. I believe his wife was the elementary school teacher of our two eldest children, Marlene (44) and Michiel (43).

Quite possibly Frans will remember another "Cracking-Man" was Henk van den Arend - Assistant Operator, I believe, and Bouten (I forget his first name).

I clearly remember that, at that time, there was no organized attempt to teach the rather complex operations of the units to us new comers. There was no visible Flow-Plan, so you had to make sketches yourself, and so I did. After Charley Smith, George Dickover, Clark Donovan,

Roy Stickel, George LeMaire started Process Training classes, a definite need was filled.

Off the job I took numerous photographs which later I mounted in albums. Together with these and the many color slides I made in and outside the Refinery and Colony over the years I am reasonably able to recall some of the places, things and people of Lago and Aruba.<sup>1</sup>

## **WORLD WAR II**

When WW 2 broke out in the fall of 1939 I was called into military service in Aruba together with all Netherlanders who in Holland had fulfilled their required military training. Among those of us who were called up were the Instrument men Nick Schindeler, and Bill Koopman, both Sergeants. I myself was a corporal. Other Lago employees in the same boat were: John Moller (TSD), Karel Egers, Paul Gordijn, Herman Tielen, Henk van den Arend, Pete Teekens, Bouten (all Process). We were all housed in the barrack of the Netherlands Marines Camp in Savaneta. Netherlanders from Oranjestad were also in our group such as: several people of the Eagle Refinery near Oranjestad and some Aruba Nationals.

The majority of us were occupied with guard duty at "Strategic Locations." Tank farms, docks, the water plant at Balashi, the coastal light-houses, the airport, the power-plants.

I recall that a regiment of Free French landed at Oranjestad. I served as a make-shift interpreter together with Doe Ecury (Doe died in Holland a few years ago), who spoke French fluently. It was a grand experience! And we were exempt from guard-duty!

Doe (pronounced as a short "Boo") was one of the sons of the Ford Motor Company Agent in Oranjestad. His brother, Hubert, worked in Lago's Garage.

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<sup>1</sup> *John made drawings for various occasions in Aruba. He was quite a cartoonist. He did the front cover of our I.S.A Bulletin each month. This was a publication that our Instrument Society of America - Aruba Section put out. He did that cover for five years. He was the one who invented the character "Juancito Instrumento" that appeared in each of these drawings.*

## **A John Denton Story**

### **JOHN DENTON RELATES THE FOLLOWING:**

When the DC-3 came over that late Sunday afternoon in 1946, I was at home. When I saw how low he was flying it was obvious to me that he was in trouble and trying to locate the Flying Club field. A teenager was at our house at the time. She jumped in my car, and we headed for the Aruba Flying Club. By the time we got to the Flying Club field it was dark, so I parked my vehicle at the head of the field with its headlights shining down the length of the runway. I had a 1941 Ford at the time and had just finished putting new Sealed Beam headlights on it. Until that time we had the type of headlights that used a replaceable bulb. When he came in to land, he was so low I thought he was going to run over the roof of my car. The teenager and I got out of the car and stood over to one side.

The pilot almost had a stroke when he saw how near he had come to the cliff at the end of the runway before he brought his aircraft to a halt. He said he had a load of farm machinery bound for Venezuela.

I had to go to work the next day so I didn't get to see it take off, but I understand they had to unload it first. Skippy Culver helped the pilot get the plane off the ground before it went over the cliff at the end of the runway.

## **The Henry Devolder Story**

Henry Devolder, a Belgian who has spent most of his life in all parts of the world except Belgium, knows the bottom of San Nicholas harbor about as well as most persons know their own living room. As diver for the Company since 1935, a good deal of harbor water has passed over his head, and he has been on similar watery work ever since his first dive in Mexico during 1919.

The high spots of his wandering years, before he settled down to spend the last 14 years in Aruba, read like the script of an adventure movie.

When he was 12 years old he left Belgium on a training ship, first arriving in New York in November, 1912. The big city looked good to him, and he tried to jump ship, but was unsuccessful. The next stop was Australia; the next was England, and then Ecuador, where he finally ran away from the ship in 1913. After playing a minor role in a small revolution in Quito, he moved to Panama, a boy of 14 with a knack of shifting for himself.

Here he made a precarious living as shoe-shine boy, bellhop, and newsboy. Most of the time, he slept in the police station. Occasionally he struck it rich, as when the U.S. fleet passed through the Canal late in 1914, and he busied himself carrying drinks to sailors on shore leave, a good percentage of whom would say "keep the change." More often he saw hard times, and frequently would enter a restaurant jingling a few nails in his pockets, a sound that made it appear that he must have money enough for a meal. After eating his fill he would make a dash for the exit; sometimes these tactics landed him in police court, but nothing ever came of it. He says he used to earn a little extra money occasionally by smart merchandising methods: the Panama newspaper he sold was printed in two sections, English and Spanish, and he would split them, selling each section separately.

Eventually he tired of his happy-go-lucky existence there, and signed on a ship, going first to Rio de Janeiro, then to Port Arthur, Texas, where he again became a landlubber. Later he moved to Tampico, Mexico, where in 1919 he made his first dive, acting as a substitute when the regular diver was off work because of illness.

He worked with various transportation and salvage companies there until 1927, when he came to Aruba to work on the construction of the

Eagle pier. After a brief period in Maracaibo, some work on the gasoline dock here, and a return engagement at Eagle, he joined Lago's forces in 1935 and is now a member of the Dry-dock staff.

A diving career is certain to produce some yarns, and Henry has his share. Once, while working below the surface, a motor-boat's propeller cut his air line. He was raised to the surface a somewhat deflated young man, and spent two weeks in a hospital. Another time he was working in very cold water, at the depth of 55 feet, on a salvage job. Shortly after he went under, about 1:00 p.m., a blow came up, and his line became tangled in the sunken boat he was working on. Nine hours later, nearly frozen and with his suit full of water, he was rescued.

The deepest he has ever gone down was at a powerhouse in Mexico City, where he worked at 180 feet. This was in fresh water, which is much heavier and exerts more pressure than sea water. His deepest salt water dive was to 145 feet. The most San Nicholas harbor can offer him is 50 feet.

Source: *Aruba Esso News*, July 24, 1942



Early “pioneers” - date unknown

Front: Ans Schindeler, Dorothy MacNutt, Walker, Nydia Krottenauer, K Jensen, A. Halpert, Elsie Koopman, Dorothy Davidson  
Back: P.E. Jensen, A. S. MacNutt, A. E. Krottenauer, Karl Walker, M. A. Davidson, N. P. Schindeler

Photo courtesy A. S. MacNutt

## **The Dr. Lee A. Dew Story**

### **MEMORIES OF THE BAKERY AT LAGO**

My Father, Allen Dew, operated the bakery at Lago beginning in 1929 until 1940, when operations at Lago were phased out and the bakery contracts turned over to Jefe De Veer, operator of bakeries in San Nicholas and Oranjestad.

"Dew," as everyone on Aruba knew him, was born in Carterville, Missouri, a small lead and zinc mining town. After working at a variety of jobs he was inducted into the Army during World War I. After the war he learned the bakers' trade, and became a bakery manager for the Federal Bakeries system, operating bakeries in Savannah, Georgia, and later Northampton, Massachusetts.

In 1929 he signed on with Lago and was one of the first to arrive at the site of what was to become the Lago refinery. At this time, no wives were allowed, but the next year, after the first bungalows were built, his wife, Irene, joined him and the following year I was born. While not the first American child born at Lago, I was certainly one of the first.

The bakery was located near the Main Gate between the refinery and village of San Nicholas. It was right across from the old commissary building. While it was a very plain building, it was a wonderland for a child. I remember many details about the bakery, but especially watching the revolving shelves of the oven, as the pans of dough would be put in, and then slowly revolve until they would come around again all nicely browned.

Many different kinds of bread were made at the bakery, and Dew prided himself on the fancy breads and rolls which they made. Often I would go with him to collect palm fronds, which he used to put the creases in Vienna bread. It could have been done with a knife, but by laying palm fronds across the dough as it was rising he got a much neater cut across the top of the loaf, which suited his sense of order and symmetry.

All kinds of special desserts and pastries were made, too, and I particularly liked to be at the bakery when it was closing time for the commissary. Then he would cross the street and pick up unsold products which we and the bakery employees could take home.

Flour and other supplies were brought to the bakery by railroad, a

siding came to the back door, and sacks of flour were unloaded from the flatcars directly into the storeroom. I can remember spending many happy hours playing on the flour sacks, or on the flatcars which might be found on the siding. From the front door of the bakery could be seen the shipping office, with its signal flags for vessels entering and leaving the harbor and radio antennas.

Another happy memory of the bakery was the big refrigerator, where my father always kept cold cuts, cheese and other snacks for visitors, and where, on Saturdays or on holidays, I could go and have a hot roll and salami for lunch.

I don't remember how many people worked at the bakery, but I do know they were of a great number of nationalities, as was so much of Lago's work force. Jamaicans, Cubans, Trinidadians, Chinese, Hungarians, even a Swede as I recall. Many were highly skilled bakers and pastry chefs, although for the really intricate jobs such as wedding cakes, Dew always did the decorating. He was a consummate artist at decorating cakes and turning out special pastries, such as *éclairs*, tarts or puff pastry for parties and receptions of which there were many in those days.

Part of his job, too, involved victualing ships, and he got to be well acquainted with many of the ship captains who visited Aruba, whether it was on British freighters, Norwegian whalers refueling for the trip from polar seas, or the occasional warship which would pay a call as World War II began.

The bakery and its products were also important for the many bachelors at Lago, men who did not have their wives with them and who lived in the various bachelors' quarters. Because many of them worked shift work, and, of course, ate at the mess hall, the daily (or nightly) coffee break, complete with fresh doughnuts or pastry, was an important and looked-for touch of home and familiarity.

Because we were at Lago early, we had one of the first bungalows, number 19, on the water front just a short distance from the refinery gate. Our next door neighbors in No. 18 were a Dutch family, the van Mauricks. He was a harbor pilot, and his son, Cornelius and I were good friends. Life at No. 19 was delightful. It was a typical two bedroom bungalow, located where later the water distillation plant would be built. (The company moved the house to a lot by the new hospital up on the hill in 1942.) From our back yard we could watch the ships entering and leaving the harbor, since this was before the new harbor entrance was opened, and there was a constant stream of traffic as the lake tankers



ferried crude oil from Venezuela and bigger tankers and freighters from around the world called at our port.

## **MY BEGINNINGS & CHILDHOOD**

### **BIRTHDAY**

I was born in the first Lago Hospital, run by Dr. A. R. Mailer, whose main job in 1931 was obstetrics. It seems that with the building of the first bungalows and the bringing in of the first wives in 1930 the stork got quite a workout. In fact the hospital was so crowded when I was born in September of 1931 that I was placed in an open dresser drawer, as the limited number of bassinets were all full.

At 18 months, I made my first trip back to the United States, for a two-month leave, and on the return trip to Aruba, on the tanker *Pan Bolivar*, we ran into a hurricane. My parents often told of strapping me into heaving bunk with my father's belts, and how the morning after we had first hit the storm, he was the only one of the passengers who was able to report to the mess for breakfast. Today, in the days of comfortable flights from New York or Miami it is hard to believe that the best passage to Aruba was by tanker. One of my earliest memories is of our trip home in 1938. I can still see the catwalk from the castle to the stern, with seas breaking over the well deck. I can remember, too, the novelty of the thick crackers served in the mess, although I cannot remember anything else about that trip, taken when I was not quite seven years old.

### **SCHOOL**

There was no kindergarten at Lago, and so, when I was five, my mother and another lady started a kindergarten, which met in the community building. I don't remember how many kids attended, but I know that there were a couple of Dutch children. I remember early one morning one of the Dutch marines on Aruba coming by our house to talk to my mother about enrolling his child, and I was quite impressed that this marine, in uniform, appeared at breakfast time. It was still peacetime, of course, when military uniforms were almost comic opera in appearance, especially the tropical kit of the Dutch marines which looked like something out of the nineteenth century, with their absurd straw hats and black belts.

I was in the first grade at the time. School, even on Aruba, had to intrude into the lives of children. I started first grade in the fall of 1937. Ms Edith Greer was the teacher. The first and second grades were in a separate building next to the main building, which had two stories. The high school was on the other side. It was a short walk from our house

down the street, then up a flight of stairs to the school yard. I only remember the names of two of my first grade classmates. They were Marjorie Smith and Susie Mingus.

My second grade teacher was Ms Ethel M. Alsdorf, with whom I did not get along very well. I was quite relieved to escape second grade. I was promoted to the third grade in the impressive two-story building. This was real status. My third-grade teacher in 1939-1940 was Ms Myrtle Parham, fourth grade was Ms Beatrice M. Olson, and fifth grade, in the traumatic year 1941-42 was Ms Helene de Lhorbe.

### **OUR HOUSE**

Aruba was a marvelous place to be a kid, if you lived in the Lago Colony. Our house was a typical two bedroom divided by a bath on the north side. It had a large (or at least it seemed to me) living-dining room and kitchen on the south side. There was a small front porch with a main door leading into the living room. A back door lead from the kitchen directly out to the street. Naturally this was the door that everyone used.

The bedroom windows on the north side caught the trade winds. Through the window of my bedroom I could see the street light. I could also see the lights of the bachelor's quarters on the hill beyond the light. The road leading to the Esso Club passed under that street light and on to my right. In the kitchen there was our kerosene stove and a breakfast table. There was a sink and counter top with cupboards above and below on the west and south side of the kitchen.

The kitchen was the domain of Elrica, our maid and friend. Elrica was from "Statia" she said. St. Eustatius is the full name of that 8 square mile island. It is one of the Netherlands Antilles group. I was born shortly after she came to work for my parents. She is one of my earliest and fondest memories. Elrica cooked my meals as a small child. We played all sorts of games together. Indeed I was probably closer to her than to anyone other than my parents. Fruit vendors, with trays of fruit piled high on their heads, were frequent visitors to our back door. Our family made regular trips to the harbor in Oranjestad for produce. Venezuelan schooners lined the dockside there. (Today these schooners are all motorized and not nearly as colorful.) Every Friday we had baked red snapper, my mother's favorite. A highlight of our family table was my father's chili, the best anywhere. He kept a pot on the stove at the bakery, and often would bring it home a special treat. But perhaps the most persistent memory of childhood food on Aruba was KLIM. This, of course, was the powdered milk that I was forced to drink at every meal.

Our yard was rather famous through the Lago colony because of our garden. Both of my parents were great gardeners, my mother especially enjoyed the many tropical plants and flowers that could be grown on Aruba. She often described herself as "Aruba's happiest citizen" because of the great joy she experienced there. Weekends were often spent on excursions to remote parts of the island, such as Boca Prins or Fontein to gather topsoil and goat manure to be carefully brought home and rationed out for the plants.

My parents lived for a time in Florida, and there became familiar with Australian pine, which grew in sandy and saline conditions. Dew reasoned that if the Australian pine could grow in Florida it could grow in Aruba and survive on brackish water, so he wrote to a friend in Florida to send him some pine cones. He brought home large fruit cans from the bakery, filled them with dirt, leaf mold and goat manure, and planted the seeds. Soon we had hundreds of little Australian pine trees growing all around our house, along with the coconut palms planted from sprouting nuts found on the beach and sea grape and almond trees.

One day at the bakery he noticed some date seeds which had been thrown out by one of the bakers were beginning to sprout. He took them home and planted them in cans like the pines. Soon we also had a thriving date orchard. When the trees were large enough he began transplanting them, especially at the new golf course. Many were given away to friends, or used as landscaping at various places on the island. Today in Aruba there are date trees and Australian pines which are living monuments to the dedication of my parents to bringing life and beauty to desolate spots of coral.

But the focal point of my childhood life in Aruba was our yard, bathed in its almost eternal sunshine. We had a large patio built around a big almond tree and even bigger coconut tree. The patio was of brick, which we got from the brick pile by the Acid Plant and carried home in the trunk of the car. It must have taken a hundred loads to build the patio, walkways and retaining walls in the garden. Across the front of the house, next to the street, was a row of sea grape trees. These shielded the house from some of the road noise. And a picket fence started by the back door and went around the west side of the house. On the east side were the driveway and garage, connected to the house with a lattice fence about 8 feet high. We kids used to climb from the porch rail to the top of this fence. On the top of this fence there was a 2" by 6" board. We would walk on this board to the roof of the garage. Thus this back yard was really private, and was filled with all sorts of flowering plants, trees and shrubs. Whenever we would find a sprouting coconut on the

beach we would bring it home, and had quite a few bearing trees. In addition, we had a fine lawn, carefully watered and tended.

Because the back yard looked out directly on the ocean, there were always things to see and do. Native fishermen cast their nets in the shallow water of the lagoon. Ocean going freighters and tankers could be seen passing the island in an endless stream. Some waited at anchor off the reef for clearance to proceed into the harbor.

### **PASTTIMES & HOBBIES**

Eating was a major sport on Aruba where there were numerous good cooks. Dinner parties were a standard form of entertainment. Also the food at the Esso Club was an anticipated treat. We often would go to Oranjestad for dinner. Invariably it was a Chinese dinner.

Since my dad went to work at 4:00 a.m., he often got off early in the afternoon that gave us time for all sorts of afternoon activities. Oranjestad was also the place where we shopped for all sorts of items. One of our favorite shopping places was the Aruba Trading Company. My treat, if I had been good, was a box of cookies called Children's Own Biscuits, from the Aruba Trading Company.

But my favorite place to eat, other than the bakery, was the free lunch counter at the bar at the Esso Club. My father would take me in, set me on a bar stool. Then he would buy me a coke. Next we would make sandwiches from the breads (fresh from the bakery, of course.) cheese and cold cuts at the "free lunch." There were also bowls of pretzels on the bar - quite the treat for a small boy impressed with being allowed into a man's world.

There was a sea grape tree by the back step at the back door. My play area was under this tree. The house was setting on concrete piers with a moat around them. These moats were kept filled with black oil, by the Colony Service. The moats were there to keep out crawling insects such as cock roaches. I soon discovered that I could make excellent roads with a mixture of dirt and oil from these moats. Of course these roads were for my little cars and trucks. I built endless roadways, imitating every new building project at Lago.

Just to the left of our yard was the pilot dock. This was where the Dutch pilot boats were moored. These little boats had rounded cabins meant to deflect choppy seas from entering the boats. And at all hours of the day and night these little boats were darting out to a ship outside the harbor. Sometimes they were carrying a pilot out to an incoming ship. Sometimes they were picking up a pilot from a ship that had just left the

harbor. It was fun to visit the pilot dock. And the pilots were quite the envy of us boys because they got to ride on all the big ships. And we could only watch from shore.

Later, the refinery began to expand eastward into the residential area of the Colony. And a water-intake facility was built just west of our house, with a long jetty jutting out into the lagoon. This Jetty became the fishing pier for the neighborhood. A little string, a small hook, and some frozen shrimp from the commissary, kept us boys occupied for hours. There many varieties of beautiful fish which inhabited these sheltered waters. And, occasionally, we could hook a good-sized red snapper or sand shark.

To reach the water intake jetty we traveled on the special Lago sidewalks. Of course these sidewalks were the water pipes. For boys, these pipes, set above ground of course, were ideal playthings. (I later realized Lago would have had to dig pipe trenches with dynamite. It was easier to install and maintain the piping on low concrete piers.) They could be climbed on, walked on, fought over, and generally made use of. They were large pipes, of six or eight inch diameter, "just right" for us to walk on in our canvas Keds. Keds were the only kind of shoes any of us ever owned on Aruba.

The road by our house was subjected to heavy traffic all day long. This was because we were located next to the Gate into the refinery. This was particularly true as the refinery and housing area expanded during the 1930's. A highlight of any day was the passing of a Caterpillar tractor. In those days Lago used Caterpillars for all sorts of jobs. These were the tractors having metal treads instead of wheels. And they came in all sizes. Today rubber tired wheels would be used. When we would hear a tractor coming we would always search frantically for a board or plank to put in the road for it to run over. And we would follow it along the road until we got tired. One day a large crane was moving slowly along the road by the Club. My father, who knew the driver, put me aboard for a short ride. This was quite an experience for a 5 or 6 years old kid.

Another piece of equipment frequently seen was a crane truck, number F-7, which was used by the blasting crew. The crane was used to place the heavy mat, which they used while blasting. They were blasting holes for utility poles. The mats were placed over the dynamite charges before their ignition. This was done to prevent flying rock from damaging nearby facilities (and small boys). This truck was a chain-drive vehicle with solid tires. I have the picture I took of this truck as it

was working near our house. That was one of the first pictures I ever took.

One of the greatest treats for me was to take a trip by car through the refinery area where I could see the small gauge railroad trains there. Another great treat was to go by car to Oranjestad, where there was the possibility of seeing the trains there. These were the trains that ran on the two-foot-gauge Eagle refinery railway. I was always on the lookout for train movements. And carefully catalogued all the cars parked at sidings. It was particularly exciting to drive down to the bakery, down the main refinery road. This road paralleled the tracks. And by the finger piers with their double lines of railroad, because it was here that most of Lago's rail activity took place.

The Eagle refinery, at Oranjestad, with its smaller tracks had English locomotives and Dutch cars. The trains at Lago were all American made. We used to enjoy buying fresh fruit from the docks at Oranjestad and watch the activity in the harbor. The activity in the harbor was so different from the businesslike operations at Lago. Nearly every Sunday we would take a drive to some part of the island, often with a picnic at Fontein beach, Palm Beach, or the dunes at the California Lighthouse. Or we might stop at the gold mines at Bushiribana or the smelter at Balashi. Sometimes, too, we would stop at the airport to see if there were any planes, a relative rarity in the 1930's.

School in Aruba was fun, largely because of the free time. We played baseball every chance we had. We played "work-up," which could be played with any number of kids. Marbles were also popular, and everybody carried around a sack of marbles. Our sack of marbles contained "glassies" and "steelies". A few of the boys had bright clear red marbles, which had originally been license plate decorations on cars. Nearly everyone had a bicycle, it seemed, and the bike rack at the school ground was always crowded. We had a short cut when walking to or from school which by the third grade I was able to use. The short cut involved climbing the face of the cliff from the level where our bungalow was to the higher level where the school was located. It was a great day when I became big enough to negotiate the shortcut, and no longer had to use the "baby" stairway.

Bicycles also meant that we could adventure in all sorts of places. One such place was the old phosphate mines by lighthouse hill. My mother would have been appalled that I sometimes rode my bike out to the old mine caves and explored them. On other occasions we rode down by Baby Lagoon to the sand dunes to engage in rubber gun fights.

Sometimes we even went as far as the old rock crusher, located near the base of lighthouse hill. This was a formidable place, near stark, threatening rocks and pounding, sea.

The beaches, however, were our favorite spots. Baby Beach, with its clear, calm gentle waters, was the favorite spot for mothers and young children, and it was here that I learned to swim. There were small wooden changing houses, with wooden walkways leading out **over** the water. However we always wore our suits to the beach so that would not have to change. Often ships or pleasure boats would pass beyond the reef. And occasionally a native fisherman would be patiently casting his nets in the placid water. When I was about 9, I received swimming lessons. These lessons were given at the diving dock at Rodger's Beach. Those completing these lessons were allowed to go swimming without adult supervision.

Kite flying was another favorite occupation. We were inspired, no doubt, by the Chinese who worked in the Dining Hall. They would fly their very elaborate kites from lighthouse hill. I remember dragon kites and all sorts of other elaborate and gigantic kites. And sometimes they would have fighting kites and engage in elaborate battles. We kids then would try to imitate these battles with our home-made kites. Our kites were made of bamboo, string and tissue paper and held together with flour paste.

## HOLIDAYS

The most important events in a child's world, however, are holidays. Christmas was heralded by the arrival of the Christmas trees, delivered by truck fresh from the ship. We would eagerly wait alongside the road for the truck to appear and drop off our tree. Since we were one of the first houses, we usually got a "just right" tree. I sometimes wondered what kind of tree the people living "way up on the hill" got. Christmas for us was somewhat different from most of the Lago Colony families. My mother's cousin, L. C. Stabe, was a "stillman" in the Pressure Stills. Stabe was a bachelor, and lived in the Bachelors' quarters, but was my favorite babysitter. He always came to our house for holiday meals. And often come for supper, when my mother would fix his favorite food, dried navy beans. Apparently this was a delicacy, which they did not have at the mess hall. When I would come home and smell navy beans cooking, I always knew Stabe was coming for supper.

The Fourth of July was celebrated by a parade, featuring the Drum and bugle corps of the Lago American Legion. After dark there was a fireworks' display out over the water. The fireworks were launched from

the point where the new Esso Club was built. It was quite a spectacular show, with the colors reflected in the water. We boys also looked forward to the Fourth of July for firecrackers, which could be set off in nooks and crannies in the coral rock. We loved to play at blasting with firecrackers, and it is surprising that we were not hurt.

Easter meant Easter egg hunts at the baseball field, with special prizes for those kids lucky enough to find the special eggs, and the Queen's birthday meant a sack of candy for us school children. But for a child growing up in the Lago Colony, every day was like a holiday. Our bungalow, No. 19, was just a short walk from the Lago Club with its many activities. At the soda fountain giant ice cream cones could be had for a nickel, candy bars for 10 cents and comic books for a quarter. And, on an allowance of two guilders per week, I was really rich. A kid could also watch the action at the bowling alley or pool room or go across the street and rummage for stamps for one's collection at the post office. There were movies at the Lago Club on Fridays and Sundays. And on Sunday mornings there was Sunday school, held at the school building before the building of the Lago Community Church.

#### VACATIONS

Our trips home, to the States, were important events. The earliest trip I can remember was in 1938, when we came up on a tanker to Bayonne, N. J. It was in the spring, and I remember my first experience with cold weather. I was outfitted with a coat and "long pants." Up to then I had been wearing "short pants." We returned to Aruba on the *Santa Paula* of the Grace Line, leaving New York on April 29, 1938. The ship did not dock at Aruba, but, if my memory is correct, we disembarked into a tug and were taken ashore.

#### WORLD WAR II

All of this "world" was to change dramatically beginning in the fall of 1939 with the German invasion of Poland. I don't know what my first memory of the war is, but I can remember playing a game called "The Russians and the Finns," a take-off on cowboys and Indians. The Finns were the good guys, however. The German invasion of Holland on May 10, 1940, was a time easy to remember, however this brought the reality of war home to us for the first time. One of the most vivid memories for me of those days was the building of the bomb shelters. These were Quonset-hut shaped steel structures reinforced with sandbags. These structures appear to have been a silly idea when seen in retrospect. But they symbolized a world suddenly becoming very serious for us kids. We did not take them completely seriously, however. We kids soon found that these shelters made good latrines. And soon the atmosphere



in them was such that most people would have probably rather risked the bombs than the shelters.

In another vivid memory I see my parents and me driving to Palm Beach. Upon arriving there we see the German ship, *Antilla*. This was a small vessel, which had been scuttled by her crew on May 10, 1942, when Germany invaded Holland. I seem to remember a Dutch marine on guard duty on the shore. We made quite an outing of it with a picnic on the beach. About this time, too, my father took me to visit a German fellow he knew in San Nicholas. I remember being impressed with a picture of Hitler, which had been set up in his front room. It was almost like a shrine. Shortly afterwards, he was arrested and interned by the Dutch authorities. I remember my parents talking about him, and saying that he was probably a spy.

It was in this atmosphere that we returned to the States for our family vacation in 1940. On this vacation we flew to Curacao and boarded the Grace Line's *Santa Rosa* for the trip home. By the summer of 1940 it was war time for Europe. Huge American flags were painted on both sides of the ship. These flags were brightly lighted at night to demonstrate her neutrality. It was with a sense of relief that my father woke me early one morning and took me up on deck. He wanted me to watch our ship enter New York harbor and pass the Statue of Liberty.

The French marines, 180 in number, landed on Aruba on the night of May 10, 1940. They were transported to Aruba by the French auxiliary cruiser *Primauguet*. They were supposed to reinforce the small Dutch garrison in Aruba. I can remember the French, with their berets topped with a red pom-pom. (The pom-pom was a yarn ball about golf ball size.) I also remember they seemed always to be driving around like crazy in their trucks. One time they had a wreck on the road near the Club. This caused quite a bit of excitement in our neighborhood. On July 6, 1940, the French marines left Aruba. This was the day the French Government surrendered to Germany. The actions of the French military unit were unpredictable.

The American cruiser *Vincennes* made a courtesy call, docking in Lago's harbor one day. They were followed by the destroyer *Rowan* the next month. My father took me to visit these ships as they lay in port. We also visited the Dutch submarine *O14* at the Oranjestad docks. The bakery was often called upon to help supply visiting vessels. As a result of this my father was a frequent guest aboard. And sometimes he took me on these visits. One of the most fascinating of these visits was to a Norwegian whaling ship. And I still have two whales' teeth, mounted on

a teak wood plaque, as souvenirs of this visit.

There was a unit of the Dutch Colonial Army stationed in Curacao. A contingent was transferred to augment the forces in Aruba. These were artillery men who set up some gun emplacements. These emplacements were set up on the other side of the island. As a result we at Lago saw little of them.

The departing French marines were replaced by a unit of the British army. These troops were a part of those stationed in Curacao. This contingent of 120 troops saw brief service on Aruba. The arrival of the British made us realize there was a war going on. These troops were replaced on September 3, 1940, by the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders. This 520 man unit of Scots was professional troops. They included 18 year old young recruits first time away from home. Also included were survivors who had been recently evacuated from Dunkirk, northern France. They were also skilled at public relations. They put on performances at the school with their pipes and drums. And they explained the traditions of their uniform and equipment. The officers were guests at the Club for movies and other activities. There was a young boy with the Scots who had claimed he was 18 years old when he enlisted. And the army found out in Aruba that he was under age. He was pointed out to me one night at a movie in the Club. The Scots were housed in Savaneta. Sometimes they marched from there, through the refinery, to the area around Baby Lagoon. There they conducted training. This put their line of march right past our bungalow. It was quite a thrill to hear the pipes and drums in the distance as they approached. And it was a sight to watch as the soldiers marched by in their battle kit.

The Scots departed Aruba on February 13, 1942. I remember their parade through San Nicholas, past the main gate of the refinery, on to the docks. My mother bought me a small union jack, which I waved as the troops marched by. Radio Berlin promptly notified the world of the name of the ship and the embarking date. This showed us the efficiency of the Axis intelligence network on Aruba.

Two days before the Scots departed more than a thousand American troops landed in Aruba. Their landing date was February 11, 1942. Some air corps troops had arrived earlier to begin the job of expanding Dakota airport. The upgraded airport had to accommodate the bombers and other military aircraft. It had to be lengthened and strengthened. The runways had to be able to receive loaded bombers. They had to be prepared for nighttime traffic. American G. I.'s were soon to be seen

doing sentry duty at important points around the refinery and Colony. One guard post was at the first road junction inside the colony. This was where the main road divided near the Dining Hall. One road went up the hill and by the club. The other branch of the road went by our house and past the swimming docks. I remember going down to talk to the soldiers on duty at the road junction.

We boys also visited the troops as they were trying to get settled in the sheep sheds. There they were housed in crowded quarters. And it became quite a mark of status to wear a pin, ribbon or insignia of some sort given to us by the soldiers. These young troops were probably quite delighted to find themselves among Americans. And the colony residents welcomed them with open arms.

The first blackout came about this time. And the lens of all automobile headlights had to be painted over. Only little strips of light could be shown. I also vaguely remember that all spare tires had to be surrendered to authorities. I remember wondering at the time how the refinery could be blacked out. How were they going to black out the brightly burning flare a couple of blocks from our house?

On Sunday night February 15, we went to the movies at the Club as usual, and then home to bed. Shortly after 1:30 in the morning my father woke me from a deep sleep, saying we had to get out of the house. There was a strange red light in the sky, and I remember a considerable amount of noise. We got into our car and drove along the road to a point near the church, where we stopped. There was a crowd of people and we watched the drama taking place right off the reef. A German submarine had torpedoed two lake tankers lying at anchor off the reef. One, the *Pedernales* was aflame. And the other, the *Oranjestad*, was broken in two and sinking. We could hear the roar of the flames of the burning oil, and hear shouts. Eventually the *Pedernales* burned through her chain and began drifting off. We could see flames off in the distance where other ships were hit. According to knowledge we gained later it was the German Submarine U-156 that did the damage. The commander was Kapitenleutnant Werner Hartenstein. A fatal error damaged his 10.5 centimeter deck gun on their first shot. Antiaircraft shells they fired were defective. Tracer bullets were fired, but no damage done. Neither the refinery nor the colony suffered from the attack by the submarine.

After some time we left the area of the church and went to a friend's bungalow near hospital hill. This was the home of the Farquarsons and their bungalow was near where the new hospital was later built. Their bungalow, unlike ours, was nowhere near the spheroid tank farm. These

tanks were at an elevation above our bungalow. If a fire occurred among these tanks, burning gasoline would have flowed right by our bungalow. Since it was nearly dawn, my father dropped us off at the Farquarsons' and he went on to the bakery. People would want bread whether we were at war or not. I went to sleep, and missed school that day. And I doubt if much studying was done by the few kids who did appear. Incredibly, I understand that some people slept through the whole thing! Many bungalows were not as close to the seafront as our bungalow. We had a ringside seat so to speak.

### **EVACUATION**

A day or so later, our school building was shaken as if by an explosion. We said it was either a depth charge or the firing of heavy guns. A short time later, parents began arriving to pick up their children. They were taking them to places further away from the tank farm. Our school building was downhill from gasoline filled tanks. We were still sleeping at the Farquarsons throughout this time. We returned to our house only for changes of clothing and similar necessities. The decision was made to evacuate some dependents, and we were put on the list of those to go. My father's job was disappearing, thanks to Dutch government orders. They were demanding that auxiliary functions at Lago be turned over to Aruban nationals. The Aruban national in this case was Jefe De Veer. He operated bakeries in Oranjestad and San Nicholas.

The morning came when we were to be evacuated. So carrying only a couple of suitcases, we reported to the air field. By this time it was full of military airplanes and a beehive of activity. At this point the only safe mode of travel to and from Aruba was by air. We were loaded onto an airplane and flown to Maracaibo. There we found ourselves comfortably housed in Lago facilities complete with swimming pool.

After a day or so at Maracaibo, we boarded another plane for Panama. I remember that there was an American MP aboard the plane. As we approached the Canal Zone he carefully checked to make sure all the windows on the plane were blocked off. The curtains on the windows were adjusted so that none of the passengers would be able to see the canal or the defense works around it. We spent a day in Panama City. Then we flew to Guatemala City, where we spent the night. When we arrived in Brownsville, Texas we were still in our tropical clothes. One of our first tasks was to go to a department store and buy "American" clothes. For me that meant long pants, and the first pair of leather shoes that I could remember. We then experienced a two day train trip before arrived at our home in Missouri. In those days every

transportation conveyance was crowded with military travelers.

### **LEAVING ARUBA**

My father remained on Aruba until late summer of 1942. He was busy phasing out the bakery and overseeing the transfer of the facility to Mr. De Veers. He was offered the job of manager of the Commissary but declined. He felt he should be with his family in Missouri. He also felt the Commissary job would be a temporary one. When he returned to Missouri in August he was permitted to ship out two barrels of household goods. Everything else, our car, furniture, clothing and other possessions had to be abandoned. He managed to sell some things. Other items had to be given away. Due to the tremendous expansion of the refinery during this period our bungalow was relocated. It wound up on a new site on hospital hill. Our garden with all of its improvements and trees was bulldozed. I was told a water distillation plant was built on the site.

A set of 3 "nested" teakwood tables, a mahogany coffee table, some carved ivory, and two whales teeth represents souvenirs of our 'happy days' in Aruba. Another treasured "keepsake" is an oil painting of our house done by a man who lived in the bachelor's quarters. He painted the view from his window. I have an ongoing interest in the history of Lago. The eventful days of 1942 that so altered my life are of particular interest to me. I wrote an account of the attack on Aruba by the German U-boat 156. It was published in the February 1978 *American Legion Magazine*. The U-boat war in the Caribbean in 1942 is of particular interest to me.

### **ARUBA THOUGHTS**

People sometimes ask me about growing up in Aruba. They ask how my childhood on Aruba was different from growing up in the States. The answer is, not much. Our schools were American schools and were very good. I was pleasantly surprised to find that I was about one grade ahead when I returned to the States. We played the same games, had the same holidays. We generally thought of ourselves completely as Americans. The only real difference was that on Aruba we escaped the Great Depression. We lived in a rather unreal society. We were carefully segregated from poverty. We were not involved in politics or decision-making. It was a patriarchal society in which the Company made every decision for you. How much income you would have to what Christmas tree you would get was decided for you. It was an idealized world. However, for us kids, it was a world of eternal play, and eternal summer.

My growing up on Aruba was different, perhaps, from the other

Lago Colony kids. Our bungalow was located on the edge and not in the middle of the Colony. My world was much more refinery and sea oriented than many of the other kids. I spent many hours by myself. It so happened there were not many kids in my neighborhood. I also spent many hours within the refinery gates. Since my father's job was not in a hazardous location I could be with him on the job. The fathers of the other children usually worked in hazardous locations. Other kids seldom went through the refinery gates.

My parents were not really refinery people, not oil people. My father's job had nothing to do with the processing of oil. Company politics held no interest for my family. And we were not drawn into any of the Colony cliques. My father was an out going man who made friends with everyone. He had friends outside the Colony as well as inside. He had no racial or national prejudices as did many of the expatriates. Our family was much more self sufficient in our interests. This may be one reason; of course, why we were "expendable" in 1942 . . . we were among the non-essentials.

Looking back on my childhood one thing becomes increasingly clear. It was a unique privilege for me to be a part of this experience. Not only did it provide me with a happy childhood but some unforgettable experiences. I realize now that I was a part of a great historic event. Lago existed as a part of the late colonial era. This was when the old world of the Nineteenth century was still unshaken by nationalism, or separatism or any of the other isms that have come to characterize our time. The Dutch political empire and the American economic empire co-existed. They were compatible together. The cosmopolitan world of the Lago refinery really was two different worlds. There was the comfortable world of the Lago Colony. We had our modern houses and Commissary. We had our clubs and golf course. We were a little middle-class America in a resort environment. Then there was San Nicholas with its squalor. Some houses were little more than packing crates. No self-respecting Kentucky pig farmer would let his animals survive under such conditions.

I can remember when we would drive our maid, Elrica, home to the village. She would disappear into a narrow alley between two shacks that I called "Elrica's hole." I did not think about it at the time, but I have wondered since what kind of living conditions she had. I am sure she was saving her money so that she could return to "Statia" with a dowry. I'm also sure she was making much more as a maid than she could have made on her home island. But she also represented the disparity between our great comfort and her poverty. I am afraid this disparity still exists

on Aruba. It is bound to increase with the phenomenal birthrate on that troubled island.

Still, Aruba was home, and when I return I still feel as if I am coming home, even after all these years.

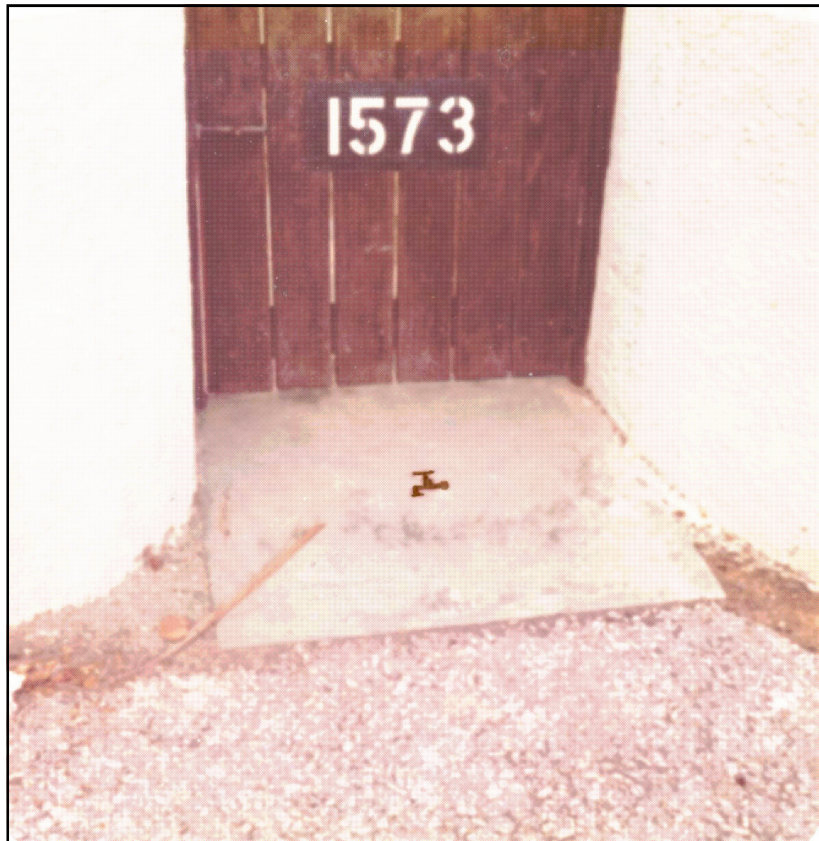


Image of a faucet in sidewalk at the Faucet's gate. It was there when we left in 1955 and I looked for it to take this picture when we came back in 1976.

**Photo courtesy of V. D. Lopez**

## **The Brian Fredrick "Freddie" Dirkz Story**

### **CORRECTION TO *ARUBA, PAST AND PRESENT*: FREDDIE'S STORY**

Let me begin by talking about the book by Johan Hartog, *Aruba, Past and Present*, talk about a fault in the book and set the record straight as to just what had happened to my grandfather.

I was born in 1911. Both of my grandmothers were born here in Aruba. My last name shouldn't be Dirkz. My father married my mother in church and did not go through the necessary civil ceremonies. This meant there is no civil record. My last name should be Gomez. My mother's maiden name was Dirkz. My grandfather's first name was Brian, and my grandmother's first name was Frederica, and that's why my father gave me the first names of Brian Frederick.

My grandfather was born here in Aruba. Simon Zacharias Gomez, my great-great grandfather and the patriarch (root) of the family, and Coco Gonzales came here during an uprising in Venezuela. This was during the time of Cipriano Castro who was the dictator (1899-1908). This was the dictator in power before the dictator Juan Vicente Gomez (1908-1935). They were natives of Spain during Simon Bolivar's time. (Bolivar was successful in defeating the Spanish in 1821) They fought on the side of the Venezuelans helping them obtain their freedom from the Spaniards. However things got too hot and they had to get away for a while. My great-great grandfather stayed here and got married with the Lampe family. The other one, Gonzales, went back to Venezuela. One of the big shots of the army was waiting for him when he arrived and he was killed.

### **THE LAMPE FAMILY**

The Lampe family came here in the 1700's. When I went to Holland, with my father, we passed through the place our family, a family of fishermen, is from. It was Flushing—across the sea.

My grandfather, Pieter Lampe, used to own property in Oranjestad. His wife had died and he lived with his slave in his house, Casa Salinas, near what is now called Roger's Beach in the Lago Colony. He was killed by his slave, Gerard Lampe (Slaves had the same last name as their master). The crime happened on April 21, 1829. Gerard was the last person to be hung in Curacao.



**WHAT HAPPENED:**

Gerard told the authorities that they used to keep drinking and cooking water in a barrel in the house. (We used to call the dipper "Coco." because they made it from the cocoanuts. Even after they were made from tin, we still called the dipper Coco.) As the slave was getting a drink of water from the Coco, he let the excess water run over his body and drip back into the barrel. Pieter said, "No wonder they call you people pigs." The slave got mad, and when Pieter fell asleep, he opened up his head with a hatchet.

There was considerable blood on the bedroom floor so he brought sand from the beach to hide it. Then he took the body to the beach and set it afloat in the Lagoon.

When Pieter's family came to visit Pieter they asked where Pieter was, the slave replied that he went fishing with his net. By mid day, Pieter still hadn't returned. Pieter's bed was made from rocks and a plastering material we called "Cauti." The ceiling was so low that blood had splattered on it and one of the visiting family noticed it. They called a meeting outside and said it looks like something has happened to the old man. They tied the slave up and began to question him. Cleaning away some of the sand, they found blood. They took him to Oranjestad and the authorities asked what he had done with the body. He said he had thrown in into the sea. One of the men of the visiting family paddled out in the old man's canoe and found the body floating in the lagoon. He tied it to the canoe and paddled it back to the beach.

**FREDDIE TALKS WITH JOHAN HARTOG:**

One day I was driving down the road in my car and came upon Johan Hartog, the author of *Aruba - Past and Present*. He was out walking as he liked to do. I stopped my car and he got in. I told him I had read his book and I didn't agree with some of the things he had written. He said, "For instance, what?"

I said, "The story about the murder of my grandfather, Pieter Lampe. You mentioned he was killed over near Fontein on that side of the island, and that isn't true. He was killed in Casa Salina which was located near Rodger's Beach in what was later the Lago Colony. Johan Hirases' father was the one who found him."

Hartog said, "What you are telling me now is what I tried to find out when I was writing the book. I went around gathering information for the book, and I got the wrong information from the people I questioned."

## **FREDDIE BECOMES A LAGO EMPLOYEE**

I went to work for Lago in 1924. My job was as "waterboy". I carried drinking water around for company personnel. I was the lowest paid employee at that time. I earned .25 Netherlands Antilles Florins (NAFLs) a day. We worked 6 days a week and this came to NAFLS 1.50 a week. Some people earned NAFLs 1.00 a day.<sup>1</sup>

Some people walked to work and others rode donkeys. In the early days people only went home at the end of the week. They brought cooking utensils and kaffri corn meal and seasoning with them. They cooked fish they caught every day and made bread with the corn meal. This was the "pisca and funchi" that was the main Aruban diet in those days. At first they slept in hammocks and later in barracks that the company built for them.

## **SOME ARUBAN FIRSTS:**

### **FIRST BARBER**

Manuel Geerman was the first Aruban barber in San Nicholas. His last barber shop was right near the gasoline station on the east end of the village.

### **THE DREDGES USED IN SAN NICHOLAS HARBOR**

A bucket type dredge, the *Red Canton*, came from the States, and worked for a while, but it didn't do much. There were no tug boats.

The three-masted phosphate schooners had trouble negotiating the harbor. The winds were tricky. They had to maneuver the schooners by means of ropes from shore in order to bring them up to the docks.

The dredge was moored near shore until it rotted, and they had to blow it up with dynamite to remove it. Before then, laborers from the other islands lived in the dredge.

Later they had a bucket type dredge that worked. In the beginning the dredged material was carried out to the ocean and dumped.

At that time I was working in the mess hall. Later I went back to

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<sup>1</sup>*I first met Freddie when he was 21 years old, in 1932. I was working in the Oil Inspection Laboratory, down near the #1 Power House in the refinery. He was in the Sulphur Lab where they tested various hydrocarbon products for their sulphur contents. In those days the Sulphur Lab was located up near refinery gate leading into the Colony.*

the office where I used to be an office boy, the first office that was run by Enriques and Eilas Art used to be in that office addition by the "White house." Then two Americans, L.B. Cagler and Albright arrived. They called Cagler "Half-Pint" because he was so short. Of course, Albright was a little bigger, but he wasn't what you would call a big man. I remember I was amazed that Cagler was a chain-smoker. He kept lighting a new cigarette with the butt of the old. He bought Chesterfields or Camels by the carton.

One day I went around to mail a letter, and when I was coming back, I saw Cagler and Enriquez, the two head guys at that time, walking down the road. I asked Cagler what was going on. Cagler said they had gotten into a fight with Albright, and had quit.

The two remaining guys took over the office. The boss over them was the first Superintendent, the one who carved 1926 on the rock that used to be near the "White House." He was a nice husky guy who chewed tobacco, Frank W. Levitt. He lived into his ninety's. One man told me he had met Levitt in South Caroline some years ago.

Then there was Jack Keaton, and two brothers by the name of Volk: One tall, one short, never got along because the skinny one drank too much. Next was a fellow by the name of McKing; he lived upstairs in the Whitehouse.

With the exception of a while when he went to school, Watson was here all the time. He and Fred Penny, an Englishman, ran the Receiving and Shipping Department.

Captain Robert Rodger and William Clark came in after things were surveyed. They left. Rodger came back but Clark never returned. Rodger opened up an office in Oranjestad, and that's where Casey Eman and Bunch worked with Rodger down there.

#### **THE FIRST CAR ON THE ISLAND:**

The first car on the island was brought here by Doctor Hopkins. I still remember the color of the car. It was yellow. I was going to school then. The doctor and Johan Beaujon put it together because it was dismantled for shipping to Aruba. There were no ships large enough to bring it to Aruba already assembled. Beaujon and John G. Eman drove it for him. The first time I saw it, John was driving and Doctor Hopkins was with him.

#### **FREDDIE'S FIRST TRIP TO ORANJESTAD:**

The first time I went to Oranjestad from Savaneta was to see a cock. Johnny and his father came up to San Nicholas with his horse and buggy

and my father borrowed it. Oranjestad was something to see. It was a big city.

#### **“FIRST” FREDDIE CORRECTS A RADIO PROGRAM:**

Years later, a friend said, they are having a quiz program on the radio about the old days. I tuned in the program and they were asking if anyone knew the name of the very first ship that came into the San Nicholas Harbor. I called and told them it was the Francunion. The guy told me I was wrong, and proceeded to tell me what its name was and that it had been brought in by Frank Beaujon.

I told him, I'm not asking you which ship it was, I'm telling you which one it was, and Jose Rollas was its captain. The ship was just outside of the harbor and calling for a pilot to bring him in and dock him. The only problem was there wasn't any pilot. A laborer I knew who had some experience in moving ships in the harbor volunteered to bring it in. There were two Lake Tankers, the Francunion and the Inver Colony.

I came inside Lago in the Main Office and told them to correct the person who was running the radio show.

#### **FIRST OCEAN GOING TANKER SHIPS TO ENTER THE HARBOR:**

The *Cerra Ebano* and the *Cerra Azul* were the first ocean going tankers that came in to San Nicholas harbor. They came in the same day as the lake tankers. That was a big day and there was a fiesta dance to celebrate it in the house of Captain Rodger. The first two large ocean tankers had sat at the lower end of Sabaneta for a long time. The smaller lake tankers came over from Venezuela and pumped crude into the ocean going tankers, and when they got a full load, they went to the States.

One of the small lake tankers, the *San Nicholas*, was converted into a dredge to keep the channel at the mouth of Lake Maracaibo open.

Pedro Greo, who used to work in the Laboratory then, and I served the people at the fiesta.

#### **HARBOR SURVEY**

There were two Englishmen, Watson and Gray. They were the ones who did the survey of the San Nicholas harbor. My uncle, Gabriel "Gabby" Werleman, and Manuel "Manny" Geerman started to work the same day I did. They were hired to row Mr. Watson and Mr. Gray around the harbor as they took soundings and surveyed the harbor.

#### **BUNGALOWS WERE BUILT AND MOVED**

There were bungalows built to the east of Captain Rodger's house in the concession. The old Laboratory Number 1 was built to the south

of Capt Rodger's residence. Then there was a Main Office. One of the bungalows was occupied by three girls, Lottie (McReynolds) and her sister Sylvia Gravenstein, and Peggy Edwards. John Alden, my boss lived in one of those bungalows. One of the bungalows became an office. That picture you will find in The History of Lago with some of them sitting on steps, some of them on a porch. Pete Barker, Corella, my brother, Max DeCuba, T.C. Brown, and his assistant, Bernardino "Etty."

### **LEARNING ENGLISH**

I learned my English working with the Americans. You can't imagine that I didn't know one word of English. Right out of school, we learned a little Dutch. To go to school we had to walk from San Nicholas to Savaneta, and from Savaneta to San Nicholas six days a week. We went to church on Saturday.

Whatever we learned, we lost playing on the road. When we graduated, we didn't get a diploma. If Chinese had come instead of the Americans, we would be speaking Chinese today. We had to learn.

My uncle went to school in Oranjestad; he knew a few words of English, but not many. He came to live in San Nicholas to work in the phosphate mines and he had a little store that sold groceries and liquor. That house used to be right where the gate by the white house is now, near where the first crude oil storage tanks were built.

### **WHAT HAPPENED TO PHIL HUNTER**

Do you remember what happened to Phil Hunter and his assistant at the original Pan Am Club? There was the old club that burned down during WWII. They left and went onboard a ship, direct because they had told a dark skinned engineer at the Club Bar: "Listen, finish drinking your beer and leave, because we don't cater to colored people here." That fellow just went mad. He said, "Don't you know who you are talking to. You are talking to a real American, an American Indian. Just wait for me, I'll be right back." And Phil and his assistant took off in his car. He boarded one of the tankers, ready to leave. The engineer went all through the club, all over the colony looking for him. Nobody would say one word. Phil never came back to Aruba again.

### **THE LIGHT HOUSE KEEPER**

Johan Croes used to ride his donkey to come through the concession from San Nicholas every day. He used to clean and light the kerosene lantern in the old lighthouse lamp at Seroe Colorado and then go right back to San Nicholas.

## **The Eduardo Dorsey Jr. Story**

I was born in Galveston City, Texas on May 1, 1914. Later my father left the United States to go to work in Tampico, Tams, Mexico. He succeeded in obtaining employment with the Huasteca Petroleum Company in 1922 in a neighborhood in Vera Cruz in a location crossing the Panuco River to the south of Tampico. He began working in 1929 and left the Company in 1935. I was traveling with merchandise to sell in the petroleum camp at Cerro Azul in Vera Cruz. I had the opportunity to see the well known Well Cero Azul #4 whose production was calculated to be between 280,000 and 290,000 barrels per day.

I met Edgar Jackson in Mata Redonda, Vera Cruz on December 19, 1932. We became good friends and he has visited me in Mexico and I visited him in Pompano Beach, Florida after he had retired there. I also met Miles Epler and P. V. McDermott there in Mata Redonda. The unit they were working on was an M. W. Kellogg plant similar to the “visbreaker” and “cracking” unit in Aruba. Later on I became acquainted with Jim French and Andy Crump when they came as vacation replacements on these units. Cerro Azul was about 125 kilometers from Mata Redonda. The famous Cerro Azul #4 well with the production of 280,000+ bbl/day crude also produced a considerable quantity of gas. This gas was piped to Mata Redonda and when it arrived there considerable gasoline was recovered due to the condensation during its 125 kilometer journey. I noticed that the beginning pay here was very low so I decided to apply for work to the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey to Mr. Harold Attwood and I had the good fortune to receive a letter telling me to come to the office in 30 Rockefeller Plaza in New York City, New York. After they informed me where I was to catch the boat in New York I went to the Hotel Taft and later the Hotel Lincoln and finally to the Y. M. C. A. . . . it looked as if they were abandoning me.

But finally I left New York and arrived in Aruba on April 24, 1936. In the beginning I worked in the mechanical shops. I was assigned to Number 3 and 4 Combination Units (also known as the High Pressure Stills). I was there until June 30, 1935. I received a telephone call from Louis G. Lopez who told me that he understood that somebody had arrived from Tampico and he desired to get acquainted. And if it was convenient would I come by and see him after getting off of my shift. When I got off my shift at 8 a.m. I went by his office in the Gas Plant

where he was waiting for me. We talked for about an hour where I brought him up to date about Tampico and people we both knew.

After that he invited me to his house where he lived alone and many times we listened to his radio and made trips around the island singing beautiful old songs that he knew and I learned many of them. We often went to the club and had a few drinks and then we would go to our rooms. We had a wonderful friendship and I have many fond memories of those days.

I arrived there in 1936 and became very homesick in 1937 and took a leave of absence with the intention of being in my home for the traditional Christmas Eve dinner. So I left December 12, 1937 on the S/ S *Canadolite* which arrived in Baltimore, Maryland where I took a train for Tampico December 25, and never did arrive home for my Christmas Eve dinner.

While in Tampico I became engaged to Alba Ruiz del Angel and on January 21, 1938 we were married.

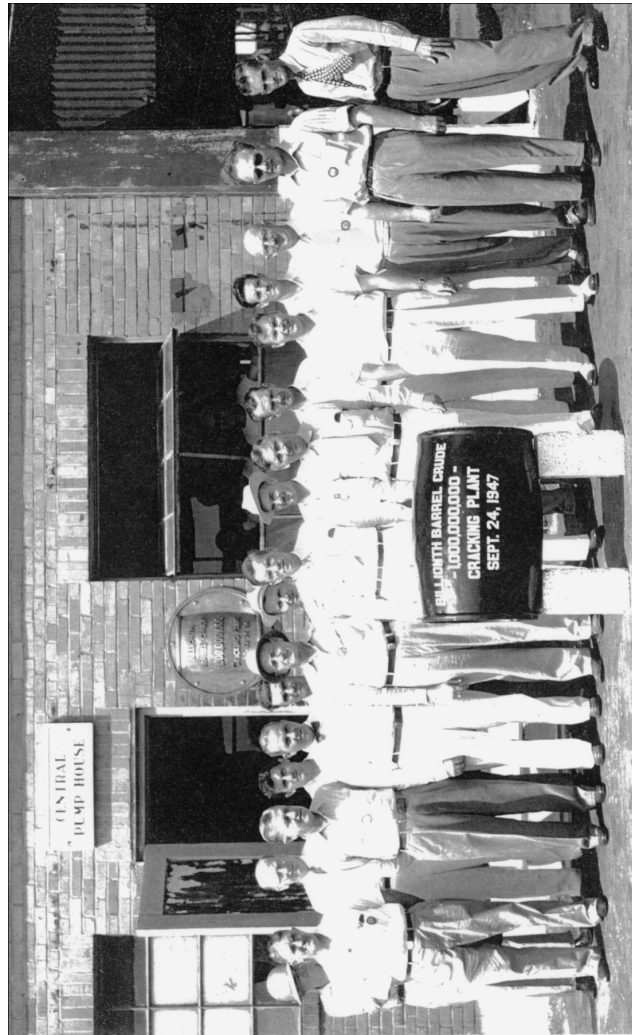
My friend, L. G. Lopez, wrote a letter for me in English applying again for a job in Aruba with a contract on the Dollar Payroll. And they offered me a job as an Apprentice Operator in the Pressure Stills. After my marriage and honeymoon I took a tanker in Tampico bound for Aruba on February 13, 1938. On March 18, 1938 the Mexican government expropriated the property of the oil companies and the government offered me one of the positions that were left open when Edgar Jackson and others left the country. I left Aruba on the *H. M. Flagler* bound for New Jersey and again I took the train back to Tampico. I went on the payroll of Pemex and worked on the Cracking Unit where Edgar Jackson had worked for them until I retired on October 27, 1970.

I worked for another company for the next 10 years and retired with another pension. Since that time I have gone to work in San Juan Del Rio, Queretaro, where I worked until October of 1986.

Now I have dedicated myself to read the books that I like and work around the house and visit my two sons. The oldest, Eduardo, was born October 20, 1938. The youngest, Edgar, was born March 14, 1951. Both were born in Tampico. The oldest is an architect. And the youngest is an economist with three degrees obtained in Belgium.

The friends I had in Aruba, besides Louis G. Lopez, were: Fred Corporan, Eugene Work, Jack Hagerman, Norman Orr (who was my first roommate), Dewey Haller, and my second roommate Dudley Morton

McBride, Tucker, Jim French, John Silvers, Si Yates, and Fred Vincent. And I mustn't forget Eddie Pfeiffer with whom I had many beers in the club, but the following day he was in good shape to work.



Left to right: O. Forbes, P. A. O'Brien, J. Lykins, Ben Cobb, C. A. Rogers, F. J. Griffin, W. Richey, G. Barnes, Bouten, J.J. Horigan, T. Kelly, O. Mingus, E. A. Wokk, J. J. Stone, Demetbos, E. Jackson, M. Smits, D. Vlaum

Photo courtesy M. G. Lopez



## **The Edna Dorwart Story**

### **EMBARKING FOR ARUBA**

My name is Edna Seitz these days, but I was Edna Mulvanie when I arrived in Aruba in June of 1938 to be married. We had a marvelous trip down on the *S/S Santa Rosa*. We sailed from New York City and my roommate was Barbara Maas who later married Dwight Fryback. Barbara was better known as Bobbi. Her father, Aimee Maas, was the manager of the commissary in the Lago Colony. On that same ship was Jane Richardson, and Lydia (later married L. D. McBurney). Now Lydia and I, both, were going down to be married and so we couldn't have been more at our ease because we didn't know much about anything, much less Aruba. We had a lot to talk about. We had great expectations for our new life on the island. When I look back, I realize we were so young and wet behind the ears that we didn't know from nothing. I wondered why we expected so much. Just blind faith, I suppose. All that we knew for sure was what our men told us in the letters they wrote, and even then they didn't begin to answer all the questions that arose when we got there. Bobbi very nicely explained to me, with Jane Richardson's help, about the Commissary bus that they had in the colony. There were square nickels that you had to give the bus driver. Bobbi was also generous enough to give me one of these square nickels, saying that if you wanted to go to the commissary or anywhere you just went out and gave your nickel to the bus driver. He would take you to where you were going.

### **VENEZUELA STOPOVER**

The first stop of the ship we were on was at Cartagena, Colombia. The next stop was Venezuela where an interesting thing happened. Bobbi had met a man on board ship who was an officer on the Grace Line. He and his wife were having a vacation. He was a stamp collector and he took Bobbi and me with him to visit a man who sold stamps down along the wharf somewhere. The officer was a very nice man and when we found the shop he was looking for he introduced himself to this shop keeper. The shop keeper was a radio repair man and had some electrical appliances for sale. While the officer was looking at stamps Bobbi and I wandered around the shop. We were just talking in general and we noticed the shop keeper was called away several times because it seems he was a ham operator. He was called to his radio. I learned years later that this was some of the network that the Germans had in all over the

northern coast of South America. This network was very important to the Germans because they were very sophisticated back in 1938 so you know what was happening by the time the war came along. It was always very interesting to know that we had been in that little shop and the man was German and it was very obvious he was a part of this German spy network. I am still astonished when I think that we had actually been in that little shop while a real German spy was transmitting secret information to his superiors.

### **ARRIVAL IN CURACAO**

When we arrived in Curacao, Bobbi's father was of course well known by anybody in any kind of business in Curacao. He had told everybody that his daughter was going to be on board the ship. So Bobbi was nice enough to take us all under her tow and we went with her to meet all of these people and then we went to a very nice barbecue out in the country somewhere. It was really an exciting thing, except Bobbi and I didn't have enough sense to know that in this culture women went in one place and stayed there and the men went into another place and stayed there. So all of these young girls who were our age were chaperoned and they just sat and glared at Bobbi and me and we just had a good time with the men. We did this wherever we went. Finally we were so tired that at one of the homes we decided to take a little nap. It was new to me to not have screens in the windows. The first thing you know a chicken popped up on the window sill and jump into the room with us and started pecking the floor looking for something to eat. There was a gorgeous bathroom where nothing worked. But that was that day and time and of course we just happened to get there when these things were sort of new to have in Curacao.

When we were in Curacao we talked to a man there who was the Immigration Officer. He told me all about his brother who was an Immigration Officer in Aruba and he had another brother in Curacao who was a policeman. We found the brother with his white gloves in the middle of the street there directing traffic.

### **ARUBA ARRIVAL**

When I disembarked in Aruba I had this trunk and all of this luggage because I was coming down to be married. I started talking to the Immigration Officer about his two brothers in Curacao and before you know it here came Bob. He had borrowed a pick-up truck to pick up me and my luggage. Bob came in and said Hi! to me and said Hi! to the Immigration Officer. The fellow helped Bob put the luggage on the pick-up truck. I never did open a single suitcase or my trunk! We never

had a problem with the people in Immigration!

In those days you went to South America first before getting to Aruba. Now there will be a lot of people who came to Aruba after that was changed and they went to Aruba first. But in the old days the ship took the other route. I think a lot of it depended on the cargo. The trip took 12 days. Also this ship didn't come into Oranjestad as it did later. It came into San Nicholas. Then we had to go through customs.

## **LEARNING THE ROPES**

My second day on the island, I decided I would like to get out on my own. The commissary was the logical place for a prospective bride to visit; I needed to know what sort of groceries they had in stock. I went out to the curb at the spot Bobbi described to me, and I got on the bus and I gave my square nickel to the driver, whom I later came to know as Mario Croes. He looked at me like I had taken leave of my senses. Everybody on the bus laughed uproariously. One of the passengers was kind enough to let me in on the joke: the bus was free for all employees and their families. Bobbi (Barbara) was not close at hand, and that was quite fortunate; I could have cheerfully wrung her neck! Eager for gossip, the inhabitants of the colony probably jammed the switchboard in their haste to tell their friends, and, like anything that happened in that small community, everybody knew about it before the sun set that day. I'm sure Bobbi got a big charge when she found her little prank had worked so well. I also learned that all new comers were subjected to such misleading advice.

With Bob Dorwart, my husband to be, I spent my first few days on the island arranging for a place to live. We then planned our wedding, and waited two weeks after posting the banns. Our nuptials took place in the Dutch Reformed Church of Oranjestad, and there was a small group from the Lago Colony who had known Bob, and a handful of my friends (whom I had met on my trip to Aruba on the Santa Rosa) and other guests. Following the ceremony, we went to San Nicholas for dinner, after which we joined a sizable group of Lago Colony people at a cocktail party being held for Mr. Colby from the New York office. The room was abuzz with the news that our company was giving a salary increase to the local employees in Aruba. Also they were planning to expedite the construction of new housing to be offered to them at a reasonable price. It was an exciting, stimulating and unforgettable evening; particularly for me, since, besides my friends who were those I met on the trip to Aruba and Elizabeth Dickey who I had met in Aruba, Bob was the only one there I knew. I couldn't wait to express my

opinion of the company's raise, and I picked a politely attentive man to tell exactly what I thought of it, and I asked his opinion. Much to my mortification, everyone began to laugh. The stranger I was talking to was Mr. Colby, the man from our home office who had brought the news in the first place.

After the reception we went to the home of John and Clara Mechling, where we'd left our suitcases several days earlier. Clara was about to take her children to the States for orthodontist work, a common practice among company personnel living in Aruba, since the (resident) local dentist was not trained in this sort of thing. Clara planned to be Stateside for as long as six months while her children's teeth were taken care of, and Bob and I were to live with her husband while she was gone.

Don Hebner and his wife, two of the new friends we'd made at the party, dropped Bob and I at the Mechlings. They couldn't stay since they had to get the Pan Aruban ready for distribution the next morning. (The Pan Aruban was the 8-1/2" x 11", 10 or 12 page, weekly; colony news publication put out by a volunteer group of employees, and distributed every Saturday morning) Every light in the house was on; there was a party in progress with people we later came to know as the Baums, the Hatfields, and all the neighbors were in attendance. Bob and I stood outside and watched them for a minute. We decided a walk would be more relaxing than joining them, and if we took long enough, the boisterous crowd would be gone. It seemed like we walked for hours on Rodger's Beach in our bare feet--both of us had new shoes, and it was more comfortable carrying them than wearing them. When we finally got back, all lights were out and the place was still. We went to bed, delighted for the chance to be alone. At noon the next day, I met Madeline Reilly, whose first question was, "Where were you last night? We held a reception for you at the Mechlings, and you never came home."

"Reception, what reception?" I said.

"Why, John had everybody over to meet you. We had coffee and drinks, and we waited for you."

When I asked John about this he made a noise and looked at me like he wished I'd take a hike. He'd forgotten to tell us.

## **HOUSING (OR NOT)**

When I left New York, my husband-to-be was near the top of the housing list, but we spent months at John Mechling's waiting for our new living quarters. It seems that the Mexican government had appropriated

Standard Oil Company's oil fields for themselves, and all our people posted there were moved to Aruba while the company waited for developments on the International scene. I want you to know the displaced workers from Mexico got a place to stay immediately, while Bob and I fell even lower on the housing list.

Eighteen months passed before we had our own house, during which time we lived in 13 different places! After Mechling's, we lived at Harland Baxter's for another six months or so. Some places we lived in for a week or two while we waited for more permanent arrangements. Our circumstances were not unique for Aruba in those days. We were members of a group that lived in the houses of those who loaned us their homes while they were on vacation. They were called "vacation houses."

When they finally got their house, the lucky families would in turn put up other new people who were waiting for their house. The situation got so bad that at one point Bob and I ran out of houses to go to. Circumstances had developed where we had a place that would be available in a month, but there was absolutely no where else we could stay until then. For that month, we lived surreptitiously in a little structure on the beach Bob had built to house his boat! Brushing your teeth in the ocean every morning and going through your daily routine with no facilities of any kind is the kind of experience that causes one to learn to appreciate the amenities we all take for granted. In a way, it was also a wonderful time for us; we were away from civilization, alone by ourselves. The beach had a rough and untamed beauty--new driftwood washing up ashore each day, the rolling sound of the surf on the reef, the rhythmical lapping of the gentle waves on the beach, the cries of the gulls, and the salt spray that came like a mist at times. We waded among the minnows and smaller fish that swam in the shallow water, collected shells and hermit crabs, sea urchins, and investigated all happenings on our stretch of the beach. Somehow, it was hard for me to cope with the idea we had to live in a home-made beach house because the system failed us. I am sure everybody was aware of our plight; it's hard to believe they couldn't have noticed us out there on the beach. We kept a candle burning all night, and Rodger's Beach was in plain sight of the houses on the hill.

## **GIRL SCOUTS**

The week I arrived in Aruba, Bee Reynalski (whose husband, Cy Reynalski was in charge of the Technical Services Department where Bob worked) came to me and said, "Now listen, your husband tells me that you had a Girl Scout troop back there in the States. Now we are in

need somebody to take over our Girl Scouts."

### **YOU'RE ELECTED**

Well, it was true that I had a Girl Scout troop, yes, but I didn't feel I had enough scout training to do a proper job. She should have also taken into consideration the fact that I was new in Aruba, not to mention being a newlywed. But before you could say Jack Robinson twice, Mrs. George Wilkins came to visit, with news that they had already made up their minds that I was the ideal Girl Scout leader, and my presence was required at the next meeting. It didn't seem to matter much if I felt I was ready; I was the new Girl Scout leader. Reverend Rischel of the Lago Community Church had some reservations. For one, he wasn't too sure I was old enough. By this time, I had gotten into the spirit of things and I set to work convincing him. After all, I was married and thereby I should be old enough for anything. Well, I went to that meeting, and I became a Girl Scout leader; a post I held almost continuously for 20 years. I guided girls from the time they were Brownies until they became Sea Scouts. It was a memorable experience, and many of the girls whom I have taught grew up to be responsible members of the community, got married, raised families, and I still see them from time to time. Scouting was an important part of my life in Aruba.

Ruth Kilpatrick was the Chairman of the Girl Scout Committee, and she had been the Girl Scoutmaster before me. We only had enough girls to make up one Girl Scout Troop (11 to 14 years old). When I came along, she was somewhat relieved because she would now have the time to better organize the Brownies (for girls 7 to 11 years old) and the Sea Scouts (for girls 14 to 18 years old). I worked closely with Ruth for many years and we got along famously. Claire Goodwin was my direct Scout assistant for a good many years, as were Mary MacNutt, and, you must excuse my failing memory, a host of others whose names I can't recall off hand. Before Claire, I handled my troop by myself. Assistants, like Gertrude Preston, who coached us with the Sewing Badges, gave me help in specific areas. I organized the acquisition of qualified people to help me with each area of expertise. Help came from people like Louise Hassey and Mrs. Wilson (I can't remember her first name), and there were many of the girls' mothers who pitched in when they were needed most.

### **CAMPING OUT UNDER THE STARS**

The Girl Scouts had a summer campout my first year on the island. I arrived in Aruba in June and in August of 1938, I took a group of

young people on a camping trip, to a campsite near the present site of the Esso Club. We were there for about a week, tying our hammocks under some canvas awnings. Bob and a couple of the fathers made a kind of a framework for the hammocks to hang on. Canvas strips were used to fasten the hammocks to the framework. It was hot and dry in August, and old-timers had assured us we needn't worry about the weather; it never rained at that time of year. Somebody forgot to tell that to Mother Nature--it poured every night we were there. In the mornings, we hung our sheets, pillows, pillow cases, bedding, underwear, and hammocks on the leaf cactus to dry. When that little chore was out of the way, we would dig up some wet and soggy provisions to eat. Camp activities were next on the agenda. As one could imagine, camp activities were rather limited since it took us all morning to get things squared away. In spite of the weather, we had a good time. Among the women on the trip, I remember Jane Kurtz Andrea, who was then Jane Wilkins, Ann Mechling and Libby Hassey.

The next year, our camp was more organized and we weren't subject to the rainy weather we'd had the year before. Our Girl Scouts troop grew and somewhere along the way, I can't remember the year, I knew that we had become a bonafide organization that was the equal of any Girl Scout association anywhere. One year, when the French sailors were there to protect the island during the war, we had a camp out at Balashi. We also had a camp at the first Sea grape Grove. The fathers were at that first camp, and they were just marvelous; so helpful. They brought tarpaulins, laid out a camp, and put down wooden floors for the tents. There were 20 of us, including Claire Wilkins--the names of some of the others will come to me in just a minute--. We had a nice group of girls and we stayed for two weeks that time. There was strict rationing with the drinking and bathing water. We were very fussy with the amount of water the girls could use for bathing, face washing, and teeth brushing, etc. In the evening, when the girls got ready for bed, they would go to a campfire we had previously prepared and I got them all started on the nightly routine. Bob, who probably ranked among the world's best story tellers, would have marvelous stories with which to scare the girls, some of them rather macabre. When he began to weave his tales of blood, mayhem and horror, it was difficult to tear the kids away. Some stories he repeated several times during that campout, but they didn't seem to notice. They were a most appreciative audience. I quickly learned that this was the ideal time for me to take my bath, and I would slip away to the shelter for my basin that hung on the outside, bathe, and don my night clothes. I am mentioning this because a little later the girls came back from the campfire, and Arlene Silvers, Claire

Wilkins, and one other person became dreadfully upset when they found someone had stolen their suitcases. Well, I just knew that their senior counselors, Mary Jewel Walker and Libby Haasey had done the dastardly deed and were just teasing the little girls. I said, "Now, come on, this isn't the least bit funny. Give these girls their suitcases." They said, "But Eddy, we didn't take their suitcases." I wasn't easily convinced, and I knew that the suitcases couldn't have walked away by themselves. We hunted all night, and the next morning we covered every crevice, rock and bush, and still no suitcases. Frieda Cummings, our detective, discovered footprints in the sand that went in a different direction, and were too large to be a little girl's size. We called the Watching Department of Lago to have them send someone out. Gilbert Brook came with three Dutch policemen, and they quizzed all of us. I was the first, and I had to tell them why I was born, where I was born, and by whom I was born, as if that were crucial in deducing the whereabouts of the suitcases. The girls went through the same intense grilling, and none of them knew where they had been born. All they knew was they had been born back in the States somewhere, and they were really confused as to what that had to do with the suitcases. The three Dutch policemen, who called the suitcases "zuitcases," only succeeded in frightening them. For years and years the incident of the purloined suitcases was repeated and attempts to explain their disappearance fueled many a heated discussion. We never saw or heard tell of them. What worried me was, who were those people who left the big footprints, and where were they while I was taking my bath? You can rest assured I found a better method to bathe on our next campout.

The second Sea grape Grove campsite wasn't easily accessible, and we were only there for a little while. Balashi, our next location, was a superior site because it had much better accommodations.

By this time the camp had grown rather grandly, and we had two canopied shelters, and in addition to the girls' tents, we had tents for the advisors, the nurse, Margie Norris, the camp director, and any other supernumerary who might come along. We had water delivered on a regular basis. An assortment of people came in the morning and stayed all day to help us with any problems that arose. Chris Nielsen and quite a few people came out to help us with the day's activities. We discussed sophisticated things, such as a name for our camp, and we had a designation for everything. Like in *Alice in Wonderland*, we had the Jabberwocky. For sick call, we had a pillbox; for showering, we had a water container hung from the limb of a tree. We were able to refresh ourselves occasionally and that was a real treat after a day in the sand



and salt water. Normally, the girls used a little basin and a small amount of water with which to remove the day's accumulation of grime.

Mothers delivered groceries to us as needed and brought things that other mothers sent along, such as baked goods, prepared foods and useful condiments. If anybody had mail, it was delivered to their tent.

Our little daughter, Ginger, was really too young for our campouts. Her father would have been happier if she'd stayed home, but the older girls bedeviled me into letting her go with us. She spent more time with us than she should have, but as long as the girls agreed to take care of her, we allowed it. Ginger was a happy camper, and never inconvenienced us while we went about our scheduled programs. Sometimes mothers who had no babysitters brought their children. One of those was little tykes was Patty Osborn.

Those camps were very successful. At the end of each camp period we would turn the facilities over to the Dutch and British scouts from Oranjestad. They brought their own tents, camp directors and leaders. By that time we had a tarp-covered dining room. All the tarps were set up with one side open so the wind wouldn't blow them down. One night it rained, and my dear little girl scouts, who didn't know any better, stood on their beds and pushed the water-filled dips in their tent with brooms to make the water run off. When they did, the water poured in on their beds like it was coming from a faucet. You can imagine the pandemonium that followed.

The refinery used powdered catalysts in the production of petroleum products, and some of them were packed in lightweight 55-gallon cardboard drums. These drums were just marvelous for storage containers, and we used a number of them during our campouts. During the first night, the sound of falling coconuts hitting the drums had the girls out of bed and talking for at least an hour before they were able to go back to sleep.

A new kitchen aid, aluminum foil, had just become popular with housewives, and we learned it was handy for cooking potatoes or meat in the fire. It was the greatest thing for campers since sliced bread; you could use it to wrap leftovers, and you could even make soup or stews in it. If you wrapped stew meat, carrots and celery in it, and placed it carefully on the coals, in about an hour, you would have stew--no messy pots or pans, no dishes. Looking back, I realize that was probably the prototype of TV dinners; of course in those days, television was still in the planning stage.

There were abandoned gold mines nearby, and there was nothing the girls liked more than to climb in them, and play hide-and-peek. We made many side trips through Frenchman's Pass, and we hiked all over that area.

Frenchman's Pass is shown on a map of Aruba. It is about half way between San Nicholas and Oranjestad. It is a small valley with a roadway that winds off from the main road to Oranjestad towards Santa Cruz. Supposedly this is where a group of French sailors were massacred by Indians in distant past history.

During one of those outings, a little Aruban girl, belonging to a visiting Aruban family, wandered off. We organized a search party, and we hunted for hours. Finally, after much traipsing around and shouting ourselves hoarse in an attempt to overcome the sound of the surf, we found her. The experience of helping to locate the lost girl and return her to her family was an important lesson for our girls. This took place at Balashi after World War II, because during the war we were forbidden to be there as it was some kind of a defense post.

In the late 40's, Ruth Kilpatrick had become more than just a scout leader in Lago Colony. She was coordinating scouting activities of local scouting units all over the island. At the time there was considerable interest in Scouting in Aruba. We honored her accomplishments with a scouting day that included all the scouts on the island. It was quite sophisticated. There were all the scout activities that we did. There were all sorts of races, and it was very international. It was a marvelous experience for the girls. We did a lot of singing, of course each group sang in their own language, and we had many ceremonies.

We had many Girl Scout Sundays at church, and that proved to be a marvelous learning experience. Normally Catholic girls had their services in San Nicholas, and our Protestant Colony Scouts, Brownies, Girl Scout, and Sea Scouts had ours in our Lago Colony community church. Once in a while we were able to have a part of our service in each of the Catholic and Protestant churches with Girl Scout units from outside of the colony. (Regular) Ecumenical services for young people were a long time in the future. On Aruba, most of the different denominations had little contact with each other, and people from the village were not aware of the differences in their religions. Drawing them together in our Girl Scout experience was most satisfying.

It would probably be safe to say that there are many denominations today that do not condone intermingling of congregations. However more and more churches are having joint services on special occasions.

But in those days we are talking about this was something new and unheard of. This was what made it a memorable time in the life of the Girl Scouts who took part.

We had many hikes on our little island and covered much territory on them. In those days it was required that a Girl Scout had to hike 50 miles to earn a Hiking Merit Badge. All the members of our Troop would get it one year. At the beginning of the next Scouting year all of those girls would go around telling the new little scouts that they got their hiking badge the previous year. When those new scouts heard about that hiking badge, they wanted one. For the adult leaders this was quite something to say that you had to hike five 10 mile hikes because this was about all the time the adults could spend with those children during a year's time. The distance from the Lago Colony to Santa Cruz was about ten miles. After we completed our hike, the fathers, (particularly Bob) would bring hammocks, our big frying pan and the food. The kids would scurry about and gather wood for the cook fire, and we prepared supper. Bob would tell his stories for hours. You would swear to goodness that they could never sleep after hearing his dreadful horror stories, but the minute he was through and taps was sung they were out like a light. Hiking all day inevitably had them so worn down; they were too tired to be bothered with such things as nightmares!

#### **LIFE OUTSIDE OF SCOUTS**

During my first two weeks in Aruba, while we waited out the wedding banns, I lived with the school principal and his wife, Alvin and Ethel Marks, their house guests: Doris Wease (I can't recall her maiden name, but I remember she was a secretary for Esso), Elizabeth Dickey, who had attended our wedding. The two girls were there because they were going on a vacation.

#### **NEW JOB**

Everyday I learned a new lesson about life in Aruba, and for that I have always been grateful. In the fall when Ethel had to go to the States, Alvin found himself in a spot. His school secretary had been transferred with her husband to Venezuela, and because there weren't any readily available applicants for the job, he asked me if I would fill in for her while he located a replacement. I told him I didn't know the first thing about what a secretary did, but he assured me that it wouldn't be any big deal. I would help at library and I'd register the children for the new school term. He said I would only be there a week or two, but the job lasted much longer.

The senior class consisted of people like Mary Haasey, Igor Broz--

here again, if I could just remember their names, I'm sure everyone from the old days would recognize them. The first day on my new job, I registered the children. One of them was a beautiful blonde named Iverson Muldijke. I can assure you, if you were a native of Pennsylvania who had never traveled, the spelling of Dutch names would give you trouble. The sequence of the letters in the Dutch words is not what you would expect; they aren't spelled at all like they sound. It was ironic that I learned about my job from people who were only a few years younger than I was myself. When they came to get books and help for their spelling in the library, I had a chance to talk with them. Igor Broz, a Yugoslavian, told me about life in his country, and I was fascinated by their culture. (Dr. Broz, his father, was a specialist in the Technical Services Department) He told me how he fervently hoped for a chance to attend school in the United States.

Igor did realize his dream; he enrolled in Rice University. We later became close friends through his interest in tennis. He was Bob's tennis partner quite often.

#### ROSE LAFEVER

Rose Lafever, a girl who came down to be a kindergarten teacher, was the sister of another teacher who had sent me a letter encouraging me to meet her and make her welcome when she came to Aruba. I did so, and Bob and I racked our brains to think of who we could introduce her to so she would have someone to take her out, and the first person who came to mind was Igor.

Igor was quite a photographer. It was his habit to prowl the island week after week; taking photographs for the contests he kept entering. After much coaxing, we conned him into agreeing to take her along on one of his outings. Now Igor was not the kind of man to show interest in the opposite sex, and he pretended taking Rose was merely doing a favor for Bob and me. They went to the northern shore of the island where he began taking pictures of fishermen's nets. Igor began experimenting with arranging his subjects in such a manner that they might be more interesting. He said Rose should pose by one of the rustic nets; her long, beautiful hair complimented them so nicely. That picture won a contest, and I always thought it changed their relationship. He was so pleased about it, he made an exception to his rule of working alone. From then on, Rose accompanied him on his photo sessions.

One night he brought Rose and a bat to our house. That afternoon Igor had been out on the golf course taking pictures of bats, and he thought I should know what one looked like. Rose had asked him to take

her to the dance at the girl's dormitory, and she was radiant in her beautiful full length dress. Because he was so excited about the bat in the shoe box, I am not sure Igor remembered she was with him. Poor Rose, she looked like she wanted to crawl under the sofa--the man who was taking her to the dance was more interested in a yucky bat. I had warned him not to let the bat get loose in my house before he came in, but wouldn't you know it, it got loose and flew all over the house. Much later we got Rose, Igor and the bat off to the dance.

I tried to explain to Rose about our kindergarten, telling her that the children had a habit of taking their shoes off when they got to school, but she didn't believe me. Everyone knew the kids didn't like to wear their shoes. Rose was adamant about the wearing of shoes in her classroom--she vowed things would change. She said, "They'll wear shoes in my class whether they like it or not. I won't have children coming to school without their shoes on." The next day, I walked past the school and there were Rose's kid's shoes--lined up on the porch Japanese-style, while their owners were bare foot in Rose's classroom. When they went home, Rose took them out and one by one, and waited while they put on their shoes. At least she could say they wore their shoes to and from school.

For a time, the relationship between Rose and Igor smoldered without really taking off. At a tennis match one day, while I was sitting with Igor's mother, I made a silly observation about the couple. There was a lull in the game and without realizing conversation would cease while Igor, Bob and their opponents readied themselves for another set, I said in a voice loud enough to carry over the hubbub, "Wouldn't it be funny if Igor married Rose and she would become Rose Broz?" My sentiments echoed across the hushed crowd at the tennis court. The tennis match was not the same after that; Mrs. Broz wasn't very happy about my remark, and Igor glowered at me from the court. Sometimes even the silliest things have a way of becoming truth, for Rose did marry Igor and she became Rose Broz.

### **SIGHT-SEEING**

Our men were working quite a bit of overtime in those days; young student engineers were even working on Saturdays. I had a desire to see the much talked about the Natural Bridge that was on the other side of the island. One moonlight night when he had some free time, Bob decided it was time for us view the wave-worn (carved) cliff formation. The post card beauty of the Natural Bridge at nine o'clock on a moonlight night was wonderful to behold. We stood on top of the bridge until the tide began to come in. I became so afraid, I begged Bob to go.

I got to see it in daylight and it wasn't as intimidating as I thought it was that night.

I got the urge to share our island with people who weren't aware of its sights and pleasures. After the war I met Ernest Marbles, (or was it Bartels?) the first agent of the Intourist Bureau's new office in Aruba, through Don and Kay Evans. As I spoke with Ernest, I gushed about Aruba's sights and I wondered how it would be if people could enjoy them as we did. That same year, I had been elected president of the Women's Club, and with Ernest's help, Jane Kurtz and I worked hard to set up a tour of the places we had found. We noticed that most Esso people in Aruba rarely left the colony. When they did, they went shopping in Oranjestad, attended a few ceremonial occasions, like the 4th of July tour of the governor's mansion, and the most adventurous of them had been on picnics at the Sea grape grove or to our own B. A. beach, but they hadn't really tramped everywhere as we had.

That year, our Women's Club didn't miss much. Ernest took them to the bat caves, to restaurants in Oranjestad; to all the places you could possibly imagine, and he was always looking for more. He worked hard at promoting the Intourist Bureau. Sue and Karen Halleck, cement dealers from Miami, brought architects and before very long they had built Basa Rooti. So began the hotel experience on the island.

### **CASINOS**

Meyer Lansky introduced gambling casinos to Batista's Cuba, and they were a tremendous success. The notion of hotels and tourism in Aruba gained momentum after 1955 and it wasn't too long until a second hotel was built. When I left in 1958 the local government decided to get on the bandwagon and offer tourists more than the usual fun in the sun--gambling became legal on Aruba. Before that time any gambling that was done was on a small scale and no official action was taken.

### **INDONESIAN COOKING**

Ernest Bartels was the man responsible for the Indonesian houseboat restaurant. The owners, friends of Tina and Ernest Bartels, came to Aruba in it, and they got to talking one day and decided that a boat with an Indonesian restaurant on it would be a good idea. Everybody figured success was certain because Tina Bartels had a genuine talent for cooking. She was more than just a cook. She had lived in Jakarta, Indonesia and she knew cooking all the way from growing it to serving it. At the pleading of the women's group, she formed cooking classes, starting with a nucleus of 10 women. We would take turns preparing dinner, two women at a time, following Tina's

recipes. Tina was very precise about her cooking and we couldn't get away with any deviations. I take that back, there was one of us who did-let me see if I can think of the name. Oh, yes, she was married to the dentist there, it was Linda Grubbs. Linda got away with a lot because she was from Bali and Tina took it for granted she would be well versed in the art of cooking. What Tina didn't understand was that she had also been in the United States and she was familiar with such things as Waring blenders, electric mixers, etc.

Tina gave us assignments, and we had to bring them to class. Everyone except Linda almost worked our self to death trying to do it as the servants would have done it in Indonesia. Linda, having never had a servant, hadn't the foggiest notion what they did. She used her Waring blender and her beaters, and was the example of how perfectly food could be prepared. Poor Tina never did find out Linda cheated. The classes were a success and just anybody who cared anything about the preparation of exotic foods attended her classes. We had rijsttafel and we had Nazi Goering. Then the men became jealous, and they demanded she teach men's classes. I remember Doctor Reeves and some of the women who worked in the Lago offices decided to go to these classes, and had more fun than we did. They never invited us to any of their todos, but from what we overheard, we gathered they really had a good time. The house-boat restaurant didn't have to be a success; the interest it generated in Indonesian food was enough to keep us going there to eat every chance we got. A few years ago at a reunion, I had a chance to sample her student's cooking again. Tina Bartels had been after those cooks the same way she was after us. They didn't fool around; they did it right.

The experience of living in the 13 different houses before we got our own was educational. I've always maintained I didn't know how to keep house, but somewhere along the way, I learned. When you move from house to house, the average person can't help but try different arrangements. During each successive move, you tend to become more and more organized. I couldn't believe it when we had our own little bungalow, number 114. We lived there for 19 years and you couldn't have run us off with a ball bat.

Perhaps one of the nicest compliments my daughter ever paid me was the day she came home from school and said, "Now listen, mom, I want to know which of these things are ours and which belong to the company." To me, that was a compliment, because during my years with the Girl Scouts, I met many young people who didn't really appreciate how fortunate we were to have such nice, well made, attractive

company-supplied furniture. Many people, after living in a house, left it the way they found it. Some people replaced the company furniture with their own. We did a little of both, to the point that Ginger couldn't tell whose furniture was whose. She was never allowed to treat their furniture any differently than ours.

Bob made an isometric drawing of a three-bedroom house, and I furnished the cards for this tally (?) and all of my decorations had to do with a three room house. He framed copies of famous paintings we brought back from The Metropolitan Art Museum in New York, and we gave them away as prizes at our bridge parties; our way of thanking the many people who had helped us until we got our own house.

### **KIDS AND PETS**

By the time I was carrying Ginger, the company decided we were eligible for a larger house. Bob and I had been discussing this issue for a while, and we told them no, we were staying on our old house. So what Bob did was build the "little house", a separate structure joined to the main house by the roof over the patio. When she grew up, she had her own bathroom and the little house served as a way station for the kids coming to and from school by way of the back gate. The kids never realized we had an intercom. People would say, "Aren't you afraid to have her out there?" I would reply, "There is no one in this community closer to their child than I am--I can hear her breathing all night." It was sort of nice; the intercom was set up so she couldn't move without our knowing that she was there. Sometimes I did turn it off because I couldn't stand the comics they were reading aloud. We had everybody's comic books--when kids tired of reading them, they would come to the little house after school and trade them for ones they hadn't read. Some of the kids who came were Roger Evans, and Buckey "Put-Put" Cullen, Pancho Klepetko, Sara Albens, and Betsy Green, and Sue Humphreys.

Outside of her little house, was a dog house for her dog, Rusty. Captain Patrick Hughes gave it to her because her mean old parents wouldn't give her a dog. Ginger was about seven when she got Rusty. The dog was hit by a car although its driver was going very slowly. Rusty deliberately ran in front of the car and it hit him. That night Bob was at a singing meeting that had something to with some island program. I stayed with Ginger until he came home, then we both stayed with her until 3:00 a.m. She held the dog in her arms until he died. He was buried in the dog cemetery down on the beach behind the colony before daylight came.



## **TELESCOPE**

We had a telescope as Bob was interested in astronomy, and he found that there were Dutch gun mounts up behind Lago Heights that were ideal for a telescope base. He managed to get one of the four foot mounts and had it set in concrete. Alex Shaw ground the lenses for it, and he constructed it with an adjustable prism so that you could look at the stars or out to sea. Igor Broz was helpful as were others. The 12-inch telescope had a wooden tube Bob had made himself. It was used by Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and everybody. Anytime anyone had a visitor they would bring them to have a look through our telescope. On one occasion, the Wilkins came to visit Jane and Don Kurtz. As they sailed away, they stood on the bridge with the captain of the ship and waved and sent all kinds of signals we could see through our telescope. Donny, a ham radio operator, was able to talk to them. Many people came to use the telescope to be able to see their families on deck when they sailed away. Needless to say, my Girl Scouts learned a great deal about the stars from that telescope.

## **DORWALT'S PUB**

On the face of the cliff below the house there were little crevices in the coral where we planted things. Some enterprising soul had built a flower bed there and we had a really nice garden in it. During World War II we introduced the practice of "musical evenings" once a month. We began them in our patio, but because of the blackout we were not allowed to do much entertaining out of doors. So we had soldiers and bachelors over. Elsa and Hans Trainey--he was a mechanical dentist--were accomplished musicians. One played the violin and the other played piano; that was how they met in Chicago. They introduced Bob and me to classical music. They helped us pick albums, and we bought a turntable and huge amplifier to play it in the patio. One thing led to another. Bachelors and soldiers sat by the hour listening to music and we served wine and food. By the time the war was at an end, we were entertaining as many as 100 people.

Ralph and Beulah Watson lived next door, God bless them. They didn't like crowds, so they opened their window, sat and listened to our music. We always stopped at exactly ten o'clock. In the end, many of the people were lying on the grass with blanket or they brought folding chairs. We provided coffee and Coke. We had a brick wall around our place and lights in the wall. The moonlight and the lights in the wall were the only lighting. It was too dark for introductions and you wouldn't know who was sitting next to you. Captain Reed of the emergency department was absolutely marvelous with the hi-fi

equipment. He provided his equipment and helped Bob set up. There two enormous speakers on either end of the garden, and they were loud, but balanced. Igor Broz would do the program; he announced what was to be played next, gave a commentary on the composer and orchestra. At some point during the program, I would ask two couples to be responsible for the next program.



Landmark old mining building on the north side of the island. Circa 1980's.

**Photo courtesy of Sharon Klein.**

## **The James Michael Downey Story**

James Michael Downey is the full name. I was born in the little town of Mount Morris, New York on June 18, 1923. This is a town in upper New York State between Rochester and Buffalo with a population of about 5,000 people. I went to elementary and high school there as a youth. My school activity was, of course, in gym.

I played a lot of sports, particularly baseball, to the extent that I decided to take that up as a profession. Of course in those days college was very expensive. I managed to get a scholarship through the influence of a very good friend of mine by the name of Eddie Sawyer who happened later on to become the manager of the Philadelphia Phils. I did manage to get to college for a year and a half. One day in 1941 I happened to be in the library when it was announced that Pearl Harbor had been bombed and the good old USA was now engaged in World War II.

### **OFFICERS CANDIDATE SCHOOL**

It wasn't long after that when we were on our way to a place called Newburg College in Alabathat, Virginia. There we started our OCS, that pre-flight training program which was an Officers Training School. I spent a year there. Upon completion of this training I was sent to San Diego to begin my military service. I spent three years in the Pacific in the Marine Corps. Most of my assignments were with support troops. I returned back to the States in 1945. Then I had a stretch of duty in Augusta, Newfoundland. When the war ended I terminated my military service.

### **AFTER THE WAR**

Back in College I again took up the usual activities and I was active again in sports. My baseball career did pick up in college. I played on several outside amateur teams in the city of Rochester and eventually wound up playing on the New York State Baseball Team sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation. That was about at the peak of my career in baseball.

I did have an opportunity at one time to pitch against the Buffalo Bison's which was in the town of Ulbertson, Pennsylvania. I didn't do so well so I knew that my baseball career was at a standstill.

## **ARUBA**

I arrived in Aruba in September of 1947 as the Athletic director in the Lago School system. I took care of the students in the Elementary school as well as High School. <sup>1</sup>

On June 18, 1980 Jim and Ida Lee Every were married and Donna Lee was born on June 18, 1981.

## **TRIP TO PUERTO RICO**

Sometime after 1955 we made contact with the Army base in Puerto Rico and proposed an athletic competition between our school and the base school. They accepted and invited us to come over. They would put up our students in individual homes. We started organizing the details of the trip. We would charter a plane to take us over and back.

I believe it was something like 8,000 guilders for the over and back trip. Well we raised something like 4,000 in bake sales and everything and then it was divided up. We took over 60 students. Like 35 boys and 35 girls. Something like that. Each family had to pay the difference which was something like 200 guilders and we came up with it.

So the stage was set for this trip and we made a lot of plans. We had nice meetings with the parents. The children were going to stay at the homes of the other people. We had already corresponded with the people in a decent tone and being very tactful with all of the etiquette. All of the children brought gifts for their hosts. All of our children

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<sup>1</sup>*Jim retired to live in Aruba in 1964. This was after 17 years of Company service. This was when the Company was reducing the number of employees on their payroll. Shortly after his retirement he was brought back on contract to work as Physical Education Teacher in the Lago Schools. He worked on contract until 1972 when he retired . . . again.*

*In 1973 Jim bought the old Eagle Club in Oranjestad and six of the houses that were in that colony there. He made apartments out of the houses and rents these to visitors and others. At the old Eagle Club Jim established a TAI HUNG BAR AND RESTAURANT, a HEALTH CLUB, and has four Tournament grade Tennis Courts with night lighting. He promotes island tennis tournaments as well as tournaments with clubs in the surrounding area.*

*Jim is involved in the planning and arrangements for the Lago Reunions in Aruba. These reunions include the grandchildren of ex-Lago employees. Jim sometimes hosts an evening at his home for the former Lago students.*

dressed like they do for the Olympics, with blue blazers and white slacks. Believe me, they looked outstanding.

What kind of surprised us all was that we didn't arrive at the Base Airport, but at the regular Puerto Rico commercial airport. We were met by a kind of rickety old bus. There was an Army driver and there was a black boy that met us. He was a representative of the school. We were not upset by racial considerations, that wasn't a problem to us, but personally I thought that we should have been met by the principal of the school or some one from the base. We got on this bus and took off to Ramey Airfield which is about 100 miles. It is on the other side of Puerto Rico.

I can't think of the city it is in right now, but on the way the bus ran out of gas. I thought this was something. When I asked the driver what he was going to do he said: "Well, I don't know. It's not my job to put the gas in it I just drive for the Army!" I said, "Well what are we going to do, just sit here?" "Yes!" he answered. "Well who is going to come and get us?" I argued, and he responded, "I don't know. That's their worry, not mine!" "Are we going to sit here in this bus all night and wait until they notice we haven't arrived and come looking for us? Come on now we have to get a solution to this problem!" I exclaimed.

I remember I got so furious. So I said to the children if they wanted to stretch their legs, stay right by the bus. So they walked around the field and sat down. And two of the boys, I can't recall just who they were, said they had noticed a gas station about a mile back, it was just a one pump deal. So, by God, we walked all of the way back there and since they didn't have a can, we picked up some kind of container. One of the boys, a very bright boy, said: "Mr. Downey how are you going to pour this into the bus without a funnel?"

The people in the station didn't know what a funnel was or have one. So we bought a radiator hose, about 2 feet long. And it is a blessing that we did. When we got back to the bus we found that the neck of the gas tank was way-to-hell underneath there somewhere. So we poured 5 gallons of gas into that tank and that driver started up the bus like nothing had happened!

Well we arrived at Ramey Airfield and got off of the bus. I must admit that we had two very effective chaperones. We had Mrs. Garth Roby and Mrs. Lewis MacNutt. They were outstanding in meeting the people and in controlling the children. These ladies were up front and when we got there they were our representatives. They talked to the school principal. When the school saw our children come out of bus in a

very orderly style they were just flabbergasted. They probably thought we were a local group of kids that had come over to play kick-the-can or something.

So the children went to the various houses where they were supposed to stay. One of the ranking officers, not the commanding officer, came up to me after we had been there one day. He said: "Mr. Downey I have to compliment you, we never expected anything like this. This is almost unbelievable." It happened that Kyle Spitzer was the boy staying at his house. He said: "That boy has been the greatest influence in just that day at our house. And it is going over the whole base like wildfire."

Anyway we started the various activities. It was a beautiful base and beautiful school. They had everything. Their kids were tremendous kids. Our first event was pole vaulting. Our boys jumped over ten feet and their boys jumped about eight feet. Their coach was impressed.

Kyle Spitzer was one of the boys, and I forget the other two boys. We had a couple of boys by the name of Taylor who showed them how to play golf. Their kids didn't come close to them. Our girls played golf very well. When we hit the Bowling Alleys, our kids really did an outstanding job. We had these activities. The kids were on the golf course every week and the bowling alleys every week. The first Basket Ball game we played they beat us. They had a black boy who wasn't very tall, but he was very fast and a tremendous player. For some reason that game didn't sit right with me because this black boy took too much of the play away from everybody. We had another game and this time we tied this boy up and that changed the game.

But one thing did happen. I didn't condone this, but I did accept it in this game. This black boy would come down the middle and every time he went up the referee would blow the whistle "Foul". And this was a repeated - kind of problem. And we had some objections to those calls. The referee said to Jim Roby "What's the matter can't you handle this boy? Is he too good for you?" and Jim told me what he said. I said, "Fellows, look, there is only one way to solve that problem. I don't want to tell you that I condone it, but we are going to do it. When he comes down the middle again, (this was either Pieter Opdyke or Larry Riggs, one of my good centers) go after the ball. Hit the ball and hit it hard and drive it right into him. But keep your hand on the ball and don't touch him." Well, this guy comes down and our man drove the ball right into him. Down he went. Out he went. Well, there could be a question on the type of play but he did not strike him with his hands. He drove the

ball into him because he was so big and the opportunity presented itself. Later on the guy did come back into the ball game. That was the only incident that developed in this area.

All the other games such as track and field went off beautifully. We had a get together and a social dance for the children at a very nice place. We were up there four or five days at least. Well our children impressed the people so much that they couldn't do enough for us and they wanted to put us on a military plane and bring us back to Aruba. We made a very favorable impression and that was one of the high lights of our school activities.

#### **OTHER OFF ISLAND SCHOOL TRIPS**

In addition to that, the school made many trips to Curacao. We played over there many, many times and we also went to Caracas to play there. We went to the military schools. So we had our exposure to outside competition. We went to Surinam and Trinidad. And even some of the ships that came in. When these other teams came over to Aruba they were usually hosted by somebody else but we were a part of their program.

#### **OLYMPIC TEAMS**

Some of the Olympic teams were sent around for games and one time we got a call from Curacao when they were there. They found out that we had a basketball team and they wanted to know if they could come over to Aruba. Local private planes brought this team over. But it happened to be in the summer time and we hadn't been playing basket ball and some of our players were out on vacation. So we have a very small representation of players. The game was rather a disaster, because these were top players and we weren't in condition. I was really upset, not because of the competition, but the way their coach proceeded to put an all out effort and they were leading by 40 points. So I said to the coach, "Why don't we stop this game and your team could give us some lessons. What are you trying to accomplish? We are in no position to play against this team." But we finished the game and they took off again. If they had come when we had all of our team and in condition we would have given a better account of ourselves even though they would probably have beaten us.

#### **SUMMER RECREATION PROGRAMS**

The other big school activity we had of course was the Summer Recreation Program. We had full cooperation from the company and people like Lew MacNutt, Joe Proterra, Bob Turfboer, Bob Vint, Tom Malcolm, Jack Friel - you could go on and name any number of people.

They even brought many young college students to be instructors and assist with the program. One person I remember was Johnny Litwyler who used to play with the St. Louis Cardinals. Later he went to Florida State as a coach and from there he went to Michigan State and from there he retired. He came to Aruba one summer. He was a friend of John Flaherty.

Johnny Litwyler told me the story about when he roomed with Tommy Holms who was a great baseball player for the St. Louis Cardinals. Johnny said one night Tommy went 0 for 4. So he couldn't sleep that night. Tommy said to Johnny; "You didn't have a good day at the plate today." Johnny said, "No, I was an '0 for 4' also." Says Tommy, "So did I. So what are you worried about?" "Yeah, but you're used to it!" retorted Johnny.

Our Summer Recreation Programs were quite an extensive program. There were 200 to 400 children in the program from kindergarten and up. A variety of activities - you name it - special activities - social graces - scuba diving - swimming - and then we terminated the program at the end of the summer with a tremendous aquacade. Bob Turfboer took movies of these activities and I still have several of the movies. They are quite interesting because they show the children as they are growing up. I usually show them at the Aruba Reunions. They see themselves when they were in the first grade and they say; "Is that me?"

### **ATHLETICS AND OTHER INTRAMURALS**

- As far as the Sport Park is concerned it was here when I came. They had a Sport Park Board and committees. Lago took care of that. That was Bert Teagle's job. MacKaya Reyes was the chairman of the activities. He worked for Lago. People were appointed by the Company to serve on a committee like the Golf Club, the Flying Club, and The Esso club. As far as me being personally involved I was like a member of a committee or a participant. I know we set up a baseball team as an island wide competitive team. It was called the Wilson Paints. Earl Cook and a number of fellows played on it. And every Sunday we would go to the various fields in Aruba and play against the other baseball teams.

But it was mainly in the Lago Colony itself that there were Departmental teams as Technical Services, Mechanical, Personnel, Medical, Accounting, etc. We had some great soft ball matches. A lot of the people who came to Aruba were good athletes.

- I was not what you would call an active golf player. I participated; I went to Curacao once with the golf team, but I had a very high



handicap; I never took golf seriously; I never put myself to it. I was more interested in something like soft ball.

The Golf Club was very active. They had beautiful barbecues up there. They kept the Golf Club in A-<sup>#</sup>1 shape.

At the Golf Club one time they were going to plan a "Super Evening." And they had plans to bring a "Dancing Girl" - some said a "Nude" girl and that hit the Colony like Wildfire. Only the men were supposed to attend this party. Unfortunately they advertised it about two months beforehand. It hit the island so hard that they had the government and everybody thinking that we were going to have a little too much vice out there. Next thing the wives of all the husbands got up in arms about it. Management got the word that they had better turn this thing down if they knew what was good for them. So Management had things well under control. Finally the day came and the men got all up there and all of the wives started coming. I can still see the Golf Club smothered with cars. When this poor little innocent woman came out there and did a "Can Can" which could have been done in the middle of the Colony you know there was absolutely nothing at all wrong. The wives got all red faced and started going back home. It was a topic for discussion for months! It must have been around in 1957 or thereabouts.

- I used to go out to the Flying Club an awful lot. I went to the beach for scuba diving, skin diving, sailing, and water skiing. There were people like Tom Lucas, Al Leak, that "were" the Golf Club. I was not the Golf Club. Hans Wolfe, Nelson (from the Marine Department) and I would go with a couple of other fellows to Golf Club on Sunday mornings and just golf.
- I shot skeet, but I didn't join the club. We would go up there on Sunday afternoons after golf and shoot a few birds. I did a lot of bowling. I still have some pictures of the teams with Whitey Riggs, Matheisen, and people like that.
- I bowled a lot every season over the years. We had some outstanding bowlers. Well we had every opportunity for improving our games because the bowling alleys were so handy-dandy. We could just go there and practice as much as we wanted.
- We were very active in tennis over the years. I didn't take part so much in the dramatic field in the Colony. George Cvejanovich and those boys were in the school plays. They put out some interesting plays at the school.

## **THE COLONY**

The Colony was self sufficient in all areas. We could lock that outside gate and get along by ourselves. The Commissary had all of the supplies necessary; and we had our own hospital; we had our own Utopia right there. That was the way it was from 1948 right up to 1960 when we started opening the Colony up a little bit.

Then in 1965 we had Automation and here we are in March of 1985 and on the 31st the refinery will be closed. No one would ever believe that. Today is March the 26th I believe and in about 5 more days 60 years of Lago will be ended. If you go up to Lago today it is a ghost town. And let's hope it will not remain like that.

## **THE ESSO CLUB**

At the Esso Club they had a fellow named Carlisle perform who was supposed to have been a ventriloquist. One particular evening he was putting on his show at the Esso Club, and he brought this donkey on stage. He was going to make the donkey talk. Bob Vint and others were involved in this "surprise" ventriloquist show. J J Horigan, the manager, was there. They had a full house. This Carlisle fellow was strictly amateur. He couldn't really throw his voice that well. So this donkey came on. I guess he was trying to imitate Mr. Horigan's voice. While he was doing this the donkey had to go to the bathroom.

Right there on the stage he unloaded. They didn't have any provisions for sanitation at that time and Bob Vint was going crazy. What the hell do you do? So Mr. Horigan got up and started walking. But he walked towards the stage. I remember there was a side door there. As he walked up people thought that maybe he was going on the stage to help with the sanitation problem, and half the front row jumped on the stage to start cleaning up the mess. Then Mr. Horigan took a left and went out the door and left all of those guys standing there, holding the bag, so to speak! The ventriloquist didn't last too long.

## **ESSO CLUB ENTERTAINMENT**

I remember that Bob Vint was always involved in getting top entertainment for the Club. There were big bands. One was Cab Calloway who was there several times. Louis Armstrong was another. We also had good movies.

## **THE AFRICAN QUEEN**

I had a boat called "The African Queen" which was kind of a landmark for many years. We went out fishing with Father and Son Cub Scout outings.

## ARUBA REUNIONS

Let me give you a little of the background of the origin of the Reunion in Aruba as I look at it. I can't recall what year it started, but in 1964 when so many people left Aruba there was a discussion going on in the Lago Community Church. Marge Oliver was in church activities when someone said wouldn't it be fun if we had a Lago Reunion in Aruba. The immediate response was that that would be too expensive and too difficult to organize. I don't think you would get enough people interested in coming down. Well it was just a thought. And that is where it stopped. But as a few weeks went on the idea still came up in several conversations, so Marge decided she would put in the *Church Chronicle* a little article to see if anyone would be interested in coming to Aruba for a Lago Reunion. People could write in and if there was enough interest maybe we could develop something.

Well Marge almost fell over at the response that they had. They expected something like maybe 50 people but within something like six months 250 to 300 Lago people would be here for the first Lago Reunion. It was quite a hectic getting this thing organized. No one here was really prepared for it. No one anticipated such a big turn out!

None-the-less it went over and activities were made and everyone had a very good time. Following that Reunion, the Olivers left Aruba and then it was pretty well a dead issue as far as organizing the following one.

So before Marge left she said to me something to the effect that we don't know what to do with the *Church Chronicle*. There was something like 100 guilders left over and what to do about publishing this news letter. Otherwise it was going to die. So she got in touch with Ginger Dorwart and Sue Humphreys or one of them. Eventually they agreed to take over the *Church Chronicle*. So they did a beautiful job in taking over this publication.

But there was no one handling the Reunion. I don't recall specifically how I got involved. I guess I got involved in assembling some general information on how this thing should be handled. So I did contact the airlines and I contacted the hotels and I got sufficient information and then we put this into the *Chronicle*. This seemed to be a reasonable approach to the situation. However we did want to get involved in the details so we could choose the least expensive way of doing things. We wanted this to be a nonprofit type of organization. That's how we got it. We got it because there was going to be another agency to take this over. We realized if they took it over it would

probably be quite costly for the Lagoites to get down here and it might not be that attractive to them. So that started our interest in organizing this Reunion.

We originally had told the airlines that we would like to reserve the tickets, but we did not want to handle any money. We said the individuals would make their own arrangements at the special rates that we would quote and arrange their own passage. It's the same way at the hotels. We arranged the best possible buys for them and we made the reservations. The individuals would send their money to the hotels.

However there were some other expenses like the beach parties and transportation, etc. which would have to be paid from the start. So the committee asked everyone to send in \$50, which was supposed to be used for the bus transportation to the Esso Club to the Rogers Beach for the barbecue and the trip around the island. This included their big dinner at the banquet at the hotel at the close of the Reunion. It was all calculated. So we didn't get too involved in heavy finances and we were able to keep expenses down.

Earl Cook worked on the Schedule of activities. We did all of the corresponding here. We were doing most of the contacts through the *Aruba Chronicle*. It worked out quite favorable. We had a wonderful Reunion. Aruba opened up their arms with activities and meeting old employees. It generated such a warm feeling that I believe these Reunions will continue forever.

There was one fellow I had never met by the name of Campbell there in the dark suit joining in. We wondered was he a stranger? Was he lost? What is he doing here? He was sitting on the bar so finally I said to him, "Remember you asked me what time does it start?" Then I asked, "Well did you get an invitation; did you know about it?" He replied, " Well, yes, I knew of it". Pressing on, I countered with, "Well, who are you? I don't think I know you". He matter-of-factly asserted, "I graduated in the first class of Lago High School!" Well, he turned out to be the celebrity of the evening.

## **The Raymond B. & Jane C. Ebbets Story**

### **EARLY LIFE**

I was born in Talara, Peru, South America, August 26, 1918. My father was working for the International Petroleum Company at the time. Jane, my wife, was born in Passaic, N.J. January 22, 1928.

I attended grade school in Talara through sixth grade and then was sent to the States where I was enrolled at the Peddie School in Hightstown, N.J. in 1930 and graduated in 1936. I then attended Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pa. for two years. Jane attended school in Passaic N.J. and then went to Dean Academy in Franklin, Massachusetts, graduating in 1944.

### **ARUBA**

In 1939 I went to the New York office of Standard Oil of New Jersey where I was told they had a Student Operators Program for refinery work in Aruba.

My first trip to Aruba was made on the S/S *Santa Paula* along with seven other passengers bound for Aruba. We left New York City mid-June, 1939. My fellow passengers were Bob Denton, Hank Harley, Walt Gaupsas, Matt Farrell, Paul Nielson and Cliff Nilsen, all of whom were going to Lago. One other passenger aboard was none other than Mr. Furhman of Spritzer & Furhman.

We arrived in Aruba about 8 days later, including stops in Curacao and La Guiara. Our first sight of Aruba was the spheroid tanks, like big white mushrooms, and the stream of smoke. We could not believe that that was where we were going to work. One little old lady, a cruise passenger, said, "You really are not getting off here, are you?" We all shuddered with the same thought.

After docking, we were met by one of the Personnel Department's finest, who cleared us through customs and took us up to the main office (in the middle of all of the smoke). We were assigned to *sheep sheds* between Bachelor Quarters 7 and 8. What a shock that was; communal bathroom and cold, brackish water showers, steam during daylight hours and ice water after dark.

All of us were assigned to the High Pressure Stills for indoctrination. Only three out of the seven had had previous experience in a refinery, namely Bob Denton, Walt Gaupsas, and Matt Farrell. After

three months on the Stills, Hank Harley and I were transferred to the Hydro Poly Department.

It did not take me long to find out how to get to the golf club, which was then located in Savaneta, and to get on one of the baseball teams. Swimming at Rodger's Beach was also a part of life for the "bachelors" especially the "tag" games off the diving dock.

### **LOCAL LEAVE (?)**

Harking back to the first few years on the island, I recall that when we, the group, arrived we were informed that after the completion of one year (12 full months) of service we would be eligible for a two week "local leave." That one year period seemed interminable; but some how we survived. It was then that I had a most unique trip. For my first "local vacation" I decided I wanted to fly back home to New Jersey to visit my mother and family whom I had not seen for two years. What a trip! KLM to Maracaibo, Pan Am (DC-3) to Barranquilla, Colombia stay overnight and catch the "Interamericano", again Pan Am, to Miami, Florida. This plane was one of the first pressurized cabin planes built. From Miami I took Eastern Air Lines which left about 6PM and hedge-hopped up the coast arriving at La Guardia about 6AM. I had one week home and started the reverse procedure back to Miami where I flew out on a Pan Am "Clippership" to Port-au-Prince, Haiti and then on to Maracaibo, Venezuela. Then again after overnight layover, KLM back to Aruba just in time to go back to work on the 4-12 shift that day. I swore then that I would never again repeat that trip.

### **WORLD WAR II**

Two of the most memorable events in my mind were the burning of the old Esso Club and the night of the German Submarine attack. On the night of the latter, Eddie O'Brien and I were on 12-8 shift at the Poly Plant and had just gone outside the control house to have coffee and a sandwich. We had hardly taken a bite when we heard several explosions and then the sky lit up momentarily like somebody had turned on a huge flood light. Our first thoughts were that some unit has exploded in the refinery. However, we soon learned it was the lake tankers outside the reef that had been torpedoed. After blacking-out the unit, we watched the tracers, fired from the submarine deck gun, arch across the sky near the powerhouse smoke stack. Fortunately they really did no harm. We then proceeded to shut down the unit as did the entire refinery.

The U. S. Army forces that had been sent to protect the island had just landed a day or so before and were camped down in Savaneta. It was shortly after the attack that they set up the searchlights down behind

the new Main Office Building and the Radar Unit was set on a high point, to the NE of San Nicholas which they called "Gobblers Knob." The "Long Toms" (155mm) were, of course, set in place on Colorado Point. In addition to all the war equipment, the Army also brought their baseball equipment and a league was formed with Lago. The Teams included: Battery "A", Battery "B", Company "C", H & M Co., and Lago.

Somehow or other I became very good friends with Battery "B" players, Sgt's Jack Driscoll (who was the best man at my wedding after the war, February 1946), Mickey McGovern, Whitey Hasseler, Bob Cole, Harold Katzman and Pvt. Tim McCord. It was at this time in 1942 that I had moved out of the Bachelor Quarters to live with Bill MacKnight, who had sent his wife and daughter home to the States. The guys from Battery "B" were always welcome at the house when they were off duty. Bill and I had hired a maid to do the house cleaning and cooking and she got a big kick out of fixing meals for us and GI's.

#### **LEAVING ARUBA TO JOIN THE WAR**

I left Aruba in March, 1943, to go back to the States to sign up in the service. In New York City I met Stu Wood in the Abbey Hotel. He also had left Aruba and entered the service and was now an Ensign in the Navy's Oil Inspection Department. He suggested I go and meet with his commander who was looking for Oil Inspectors. However, due to the fact that I did not have my original birth certificate or my passport (which was picked up by the Government in Miami) I could not prove I was a citizen and that fell through. So, I was drafted and signed up for the U. S. Navy. After boot camp in Newport, R. I., I asked for and was accepted for Diesel School in Richmond, Virginia. While there, I volunteered for Submarine Duty and was sent to New London, Connecticut where I attended the Basic Submarine School and then Submarine Diesel School, finally graduating in February 1944.

It was while I was in submarine School that I managed to go visit my brother and sister who were then in prep school at Dean Academy, Franklin, Massachusetts and was introduced to a number of their classmates, one of which was Jane Cole, whom I married after the war. Small world isn't it!

After New London, I was sent to Mare Island Naval Shipyard in California. Then, on to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii and from there to Majuro Island in the Marshall Islands on the submarine tender *H. W. Gilmore*.

I volunteered for the *USS Sea Devil* (ss400) in November 1944. She was a "lucky lady" as I put in four successful patrols on her before

the war ended. We ended the war by being sent to Subic Bay in the Philippines. From there about 40 of us, officers and crew were sent back to the States on a troop transport for 30 days leave. It was during this period I decided to call up and see if I could get a date with Jane Cole, the girl I met at Dean Academy. I wound up spending my leave with her at her parents home in Passaic, N. J.

### **RETURN TO ARUBA**

I was discharged from the Navy, January 12, 1946, married Jane on February 16, 1946 and came back to Aruba in March 1946. As was the case in those days I had to line up six months of vacation housing before Jane would be allowed to join me there.

I went back to work in the Hydro Poly Alky Department and was assigned to the Isomerization Plant since the Hydro Plant had been shut down for good before I got back. Jane joined me in late May and after two or three weeks in the Alvah Rarick's vacation house we were assigned our first house on "Birdcage Row" Bungalow 111. From Bungalow 111 we moved to Bungalow 615, then 926 and finally 333.

During the time span 1946 to 1956 (I left in January 1956) Jane and I enjoyed living in Aruba. Our son, David, was born February 1947 and daughter Peggy in January 1949. Speaking of the Hospital, it was there in 1939, shortly after my initial trip to Aruba, that I found that I had at least one person on the island that I knew, Marion Wiley. She had known me years before when I was just a kid in Talara, Peru where she had worked before going to Aruba.

### **TRANSFER TO ANOTHER DEPARTMENT**

It was 1949 or 1950 that I was transferred from the Hydro Poly Alky Department to Technical Services Division to work in #1 Laboratory as a shift supervisor.

### **LEAVING ARUBA AGAIN**

#### **A NEW JOB, VISITING TALARA & RETIREMENT**

As I said before, it was January 1956 that I left Aruba and returned to the States for good. I came up to New London, Connecticut and went to work for the Electric Boat Company as a Project Engineer. My assignment was the construction of two new Peruvian submarines. These were "Diesel Boats" similar to the boats built for the U. S. Navy during W. W. 2, but smaller in size. After the two boats were completed, tested and commissioned into the Peruvian Navy, I traveled with them to Peru as guarantee Engineer in 1957. On the trip down we stopped in Talara, my hometown, and refueled. While the ship refueled, I was gallivanting around visiting some "old friends" including the Fred



Horaceks who had left Aruba to go to Talara. I finished my assignment in May 1958 and came back to New London, moving once in 1960 to Lyme, Connecticut where I am now living. Finally, after 30 years of service with Electric Boat, I retired in 1986 and now spend most of my time on the golf course.



Sunset from the Talk of the Town's terrace

Circa 1976

Photo courtesy V. D. Lopez

# **The John Clarence Every Story**

## **THE BEGINNING**

I was born on October 1, 1911 on the island of Saba, Netherlands Antilles. My father was John Levrock Every, and my mother's name was Bernadina Elizabeth (Hassell) Every. She was an aunt of the wife of Eugenius Hassell who was a long time Director of Apprentice Training in the Training Department of the Lago Oil and Transport Company Ltd.

My mother's ancestors were Danes who had settled in the Virgin Islands, my father was of Scottish and Irish descent, and both were born in Saba.

There were six children in our family. Marie Louise, the eldest, was 81 when she died in Saba, as did Julia Johnson at the age of 81, as did Doris Johnson at the age of 67. Winfred Sonres, who is 77, now lives in Bermuda. Dedric Every is 84 years old and living in Baltimore. I was the baby.

In his youth, my father worked as a diver at the British Naval Dockyard in Summerset, Bermuda. I have boyhood memories of him burning white lime from coral rock that washed up on the beaches. Lime is used in such masonry work as building cisterns to collect the precious rain water that fell on houses. When he was not burning lime, he made charcoal by charring wood in a kiln. He farmed for our daily food supply and we always had a cow or two, some goats, pigs, and chickens on our homestead.

## **SCHOOL**

I attended school in Saba until I was 14 years old, and I was sent to school on the island of Barbados for two years.

## **THREE SISTERS**

At 16 I sailed on a three-masted schooner, the *Three Sisters*, which was owned by four brothers who were my mother's cousins. Ben, Abraham, Tommy, and Carl Hassell were neighbors to us and we grew up calling them uncles. When I sailed on this ship Tommy was Mate and a gentleman by the name of Will Levrock was Captain. He had a First Mate license for steamships and had sailed as First Mate and Captain on American ships. A son of Ben Hassell, John Hassell, was with me on board. The ship traded from Curacao to the Windward Dutch Islands: Saba, San Martin, St. Eustacia. We carried a lot of people who went to

work in the refineries of Curacao and Aruba, and we also carried mail and supplies.

In 1932 the *Three Sisters* was caught in a hurricane west of St. Martin and the storm damaged her rigging. Her captain tried to reach St. Thomas under storm sail, but the ship was unable to be controlled. They ended up in St. Croix, and upon entering the harbor, she grounded on a reef. Ben Hassell came with another of the four brother's vessels, The Rhode Island, to dismantle the *Three Sisters*. She too, was driven ashore on the same reef by a southerly ground swell. Then they came with the *Mary C. Santos* and salvaged both vessels.

At that time the four brothers owned six vessels: *Three Sisters*, *Rhode Island*, *Mona Marie*, *Maisy Hassell*, *Mary C. Santos* and *Dutch Princess*. They traded between British Guiana, Barbados, Trinidad and the other islands. Ben was the eldest of the brothers.

Their father was also named Benjamin and he too was a sea faring man. When I was a little boy he used to sit and carve sailing ships out of pieces of wood for me as Christmas presents.

## **WORKING FOR SHELL, LIVING NEAR INSURGENTS**

When I was 17, a cousin of mine, Johnny Hassell, and I sailed on the *Three Sisters* to Shell refinery in Curacao to look for a job. We worked in the oil inspection lab there for almost three years.

On August 8, 1928, at the request of the Aruban government, a military detachment from Curacao took nine Venezuelan revolutionaries into custody. These men were taken to Curacao and jailed. Led by Rafael Simon Urbina and Jose Maria Fossi, these men had attempted to overthrow Venezuela's dictator, President Juan Vicente Gomez.

Urbina spent some time in Panama, and returned to Curacao on June 8, 1929 when he led a coup attempt on the Curacao Government.

At that time the Shell in Curacao, had two separate labor camps for the refinery laborers: one for the colored people from the English islands, and one for the Venezuelans.

Urbina and a group of Venezuelans invaded Fort Amsterdam in Curacao, seized guns, ammunition, and the guards. Among the prisoners taken, was Leonard A. Fruytier, the Governor of Curacao. The rebels commandeered the Red "D" Liner, the S/S *Maracaibo* and sailed to Venezuela with the governor as hostage. Smits, the *Maracaibo's* Dutch pilot, intended to run the ship aground on the reef outside the harbor, but the governor convinced him to take the rebels to their destination. Once

in Venezuela, they set the governor free.

In 1928, I was living close to the scene of this action. On the morning of the excitement, a friend of mine who worked as a checker on the K.N.S.M. Wharf got me out of bed. He knew I could pilot a motor launch and they wanted me to assist the Shore Captain of the West Wharf in Curacao by ferrying some policemen across to the "Puna" side. The policemen were to hide on the wharf under tarpaulins covering the cargos. They intended to ambush Urbina's group as they crossed a pontoon bridge, and liberate their hostages. By the time I ferried them across, the Venezuelans had boarded the *Maracaibo* and sailed away. All we could do was help clean up. The rebels had played for keeps; one of the military policemen guarding the fort was killed.

After we had worked in the Shell lab for three years, Johnny and I discovered we were on a list of employees to be laid off. There was a crisis in 1930-31 which was brought on by Wall Street's stock market crash and the depression which followed.

### **GOING TO WORK FOR LAGO IN ARUBA**

Johnny found employment in Lago's Sulfur Lab with Freddie Dirkz at Lago. He sent word that I could find a job in Aruba, and I went to Aruba on the *Fidelma*, a two-masted schooner. At reduced sails, we left Curacao in the evening, arriving in Aruba early the next morning. From Curacao to Aruba, sailing ships went before the wind and with the four knot current. A trip from Aruba to Curacao was slower if you relied on the wind for propulsion.

I arrived in Aruba on of May 5, 1931 and the next day I started work. The personnel manager was Harold Atwood and his assistant was Ward Goodwin. I began in the Oil Inspection Lab, and remained until March of 1935.

During those days I was a bachelor and there were five of us who had rented a house in San Nicholas. The other four guys were: Joe Johnson and Willie Petersen, who worked in the Instrument Department, Cleve Hassel, a butcher in the cold storage, who was later lost on the Saba Bank with some others when their boat capsized, and Joseph "Sparkey" Marathon.

It must have been early in 1932 when Jim Lopez came to work with us in the Lab. He spent about six months on our shift, and went back to the states to continue his schooling.

On our shift I did distillation tests on gasoline, diesel oil, kerosene and gas oil. There were other tests from time to time, and I gave a hand

with any of the other tests in the lab.

Joe Johnson took gravities on the fuel oils as well as checking viscosities and running gasoline and gas-oil distillations tests. Like me, he was able to perform any of the tests we did in the lab. On our shift, except for the shift supervisor, we were the most qualified.

Ajax, a dark, well built Aruban fellow in his mid-twenties did the flash tests and took gravity readings on oils. His elderly father was in charge of washing the sample bottles. They were clear, square quart-size bottles with about a 3/4" diameter neck. After they had been emptied out and left to drain in a rack, the bottles were washed in hot, soapy water and rinsed. After they were dry, a cork was installed, and they joined the cases of clean bottles in crates at one end of the bottle washing area. All light ends product bottles received a new cork to avoid contamination. The bottle washing area was on the west side of our lab in a covered porch and the sample boys who brought the samples usually walked through that area to our "Back" door which was on the west side of the building.

I asked for a transfer out of the laboratory to light oils, but it was refused by A. T. Rynalski, who at that time was the superintendent in charge of technical services which included the laboratory. I wanted a transfer because by that time I came to realize that unless you were an American you weren't going anyplace in the laboratory. I had already trained an American, Bob Ballard, who I later found out was going to be my boss.

Mr. Coy C. Cross, the general foreman of the Light Oils Department, had told me to get a transfer and he would put me in the Acid Treating Plant, or the Rerun Stills, or the Caustic Treating Plant, whichever one I selected.

## **WORKING AT EAGLE REFINERY**

I made the acquaintance of the Manager of the Eagle Refinery, a Scotsman by the name of Jock Davidson. This is the same Davidson who married the Lago School teacher, Margarite Fassler. He offered me employment at the Eagle Refinery, which of course was a subsidiary of the Shell Company. He offered me a job in the Laboratory as a Supervisor. This would be a day job. At Lago I was working shift. I was on an hourly basis at Lago and at the Eagle I was offered a contract with monthly base pay; living quarters; and eating in the company mess hall. There was medical attention; social security; and a provident fund (in those days they didn't have a pension fund).

A fellow by the name of Newton was the first manager of the Eagle Refinery. He was a New Zealander and transferred from Shell in Mexico. The Eagle Refinery started up in 1928. The first Unit was a Trumble Unit. This was a "topping unit" that had been enroute to Mexico, from England, but was diverted to Aruba. (A topping unit produced fuel oil, but unlike a "distillation unit" it did not produce other grades of hydrocarbons such as gasoline.)

When I went to the Eagle Refinery in 1935 they had begun construction on a Dubbs cracking and reforming unit. The company was officially called "The N.V. Arend Petroleum Maatschappij". Translated this came out as "The Eagle Petroleum Company". It was a branch of Shell that was operated through London and registered in Canada. It was later amalgamated with Shell in Curacao and just before the war it came under the directors in the Curacao Refinery. The operations were conducted in coordination with the Curacao refinery.

At the Eagle refinery we operated three lake tankers. They were called *San Gasper*, *San Claudia*, and I can't remember the name of the third one. Subsequently these lake tankers became a part of the Curacao Shipping Company which already operated the lake tanker fleet for Shell, Curacao Ltd.

We had a commissary in the Eagle camp where all personnel could buy dry good groceries, liquors, etc., and in the colony we had cold storage where the staff members could buy their meats, vegetables, fruits, etc.

After the lake tankers were no longer needed in the Maracaibo run they were dispatched by the Company for use elsewhere. One was sent to the Falkland Islands to provide bunkering service for the navy. One went to Gibraltar and one to England. They were 3,400 ton ships. This would be a ship that would carry approximately 21,000 barrels. They were in the same class as the S/S *Tia Juana* in the Lago Fleet. The S/S *Andino* of the Lago laker fleet carried 4,500 tons.

## **MARRIAGE**

In 1938, I married Carmen Paulina Herms and we moved into a house in the Eagle Camp in Oranjestad. Herms was originally a Dutch name, but there are very few Dutchmen here in Aruba. My wife is related to the largest and oldest family in Oranjestad, the Arends family.

## **WORLD WAR II**

I worked in the Eagle Refinery until the refinery was closed down in 1942 following the submarine attack on the Lago and Eagle refineries on

the night of February 19, 1942.

After the sub attacked the Lago lake tankers, its captain sailed to the Eagle Pier in Oranjestad and sent a torpedo into the S/S *Arkansas*. This ocean going tanker, which had just arrived from dry-dock in the States, was waiting to be loaded with gasoline. Her tanks were still dry when the torpedo hit aft of the bridge and the officers quarters. Luckily the Inspector, Pete Heeswijk, who had been ordered to go below to inspect the tanks, was still on his way from the colony at the time the ship was hit. The torpedo destroyed one tank, blew a hole where it entered, and blasted the plates on the opposite side outward. The deck was buckled, but the adjoining tanks were secure and remained sealed. The officer of the watch on the bridge, the only casualty, was bounced around but not seriously injured, and there was no fire.

The S/S "Arkansas" later had the holes in both sides trimmed up at Curacao's Shell dry-dock, and she later sailed to Mobile, Alabama, where she was repaired and returned to duty with the tanker fleet.

The submarine had fired two torpedoes. The other one missed and grounded on the beach near the suction inlet of Eagle's salt water pump house--close to the present-day location of the Tamarind Hotel. John Arlington Sloterdijk, a first cousin of mine who was a member of the local Volunteer Militia, was on patrol early that morning and discovered this torpedo.

Members of the Royal Dutch Marines were sent over from Curacao. The next day a sergeant and four marines were in the process of defusing the torpedo when it exploded. An Aruban militiaman under the command of a sergeant was attempting to remove the torpedo's warhead. They had hooked a truck to it with a set of cables, and he was standing by the truck's door awaiting instructions when the explosion took place. He got off with broken ear drums, but was otherwise unharmed.

I was in charge of the refinery's Wartime First Aid Squad the day of the explosion. A Dutchman by the name of Case Catanus and I were sitting in the laboratory having a cup of coffee when it went off. We commandeered a flat bed truck, went to the first aid station for a first aid kit and stretchers, then drove to the beach. When we got there, all we could do was pick up pieces and put them on the stretchers and take them to the San Pedro Hospital. It was horrible. At the time I didn't have any reaction, but I was later unbalanced by it. My wife went into hysterics when she heard the explosion, and ran out of her house to see what had happened.

Despite the nets across the approach, Shell authorities had always felt that the pier of the Eagle Refinery was too exposed. The torpedoing of the *Arkansas* while it was tied to the pier left no doubt.

High octane aviation gasoline was needed in great quantities by the Allied Forces, and since there were no facilities for upgrading the gasoline being produced in the refinery, it was decided to close it down. The majority of the staff was transferred to England, Curacao, and Trinidad. The manager at the time was an Englishman by the name of Griffin.

In addition to my job as head of the Wartime First Aid Squad, I had also been doing shipping inspection work and I was now appointed to take care of the storage capacity, trans-shipment, refueling and loading as well as supervising the oil inspection laboratory.

We had about 50 staff members in the Eagle refinery, including pilots and the labor force of about 200. When we closed down, we were left with a skeleton staff of one marine man, one pilot, a marine clerk, an accountant, and a timekeeper-cashier. (the marine designation was given to those dealing with shipping) Our manager was Samuel W. Merryweather. He was married to Scotty Barber's wife's sister. After the war, Merryweather retired and Scotty became manager.

Immediately after the attack, we conducted all of our night business under strict black-out conditions. Mr. Merryweather, and Joe Hassell, the Chief Accountant of the Arend Petroleum Maatschappij served as black-out wardens for the refinery and the colony.

### **EAGLE REFINERY SHUTS DOWN**

In 1945 we restarted the refinery, and it operated until 1953, when the Venezuelan Government forced the companies to build in Venezuela. Esso built the Amuay Bay Refinery, and Shell Curacao Limited built the Punto Cardon Refinery. These two refineries are only a few miles apart in Amuay Bay.

After the 1953 close down I was again appointed to take care of the storage and shipping and the lab, and I worked in that capacity until 1960 when the final close down of the Eagle refinery took place. Tanks that were built in 1938 were dismantled and sent over to the Punto Cardon refinery.

Before the war the capacity of the Refinery was 36,000 barrels. We had a reformer for making gasoline, a rerun unit, and a topping plant for the heavy Venezuelan crude from Lagunillas and Tia Juana. Some of the residue was shipped to England to be processed into Bitumen (Asphalt).



The residue was also blended into different grades of fuel oil, such as bunker "C", and admiralty fuel. We imported gas oil and during the war we stored for Lago and Shell Curacao. Our fuel oil, gas oil, and diesel oil storage capacity was over three million barrels. Eagle stored only enough gasoline for local use.

After the war we had a staff of 30 men a labor force of about 150. The staff never rose to the numbers we had before the war. For staff with families, we had 31 homes. We had our own hospital, doctors and nurses, and a nine hole golf course. Our golf club used to play with Lago, and some of the Lago old timers used to form teams with Eagle and then went to Curacao for team competition. Al Clark was one guy who participated in these competitions. I recall playing with Al many times.

### **STRIKE AT LAGO**

In 1952 they had a general strike at Lago. The Minister of Justice, Win Lampe, was related to the Eman family by marriage. He enforced a law that called for the Dutch Marines outside of Lago's fence to use bayonets if necessary. Those inside were under the jurisdiction of the Lago Police Department.

We never had a strike at the Eagle Refinery. Eagle's employees were a small group and our pay scale was comparable to Lago's, but our social programs were well ahead of theirs.

### **EAGLE REFINERY PROPERTIES**

After the Eagle Refinery was finally closed down in 1961, ten of us ex-employees bought out the 31 houses and the land on which they stood, ten bachelor quarters, empty lots between the quarters, and the Eagle Club.

Incidentally, this housing had been built before that of Lago Colony. The contractor was the same person who built Lago's houses--Charlie Ross. For the most part, Eagle's were clapboard, wooden walls, similar to the Lago Marine housing on the cliff above Rodger's Beach.

People from Aruba bought most of these houses, and one was a man from Curacao. We paid 320,000 NAfls. We rented out the houses we don't live in to teachers, nurses and government people. This rent allowed us to pay off our mortgage in five years. In 1967 we decided that we could buy the houses we lived in. By 1974, as conditions became better and the value of the housing increased, we decided we could make more money by selling houses, and the open lots. In 1979 the last house, the old manager's house, was sold. Most of these houses

were two- and three-bedroom. Mine was the only four bedroom and two bath house. As my family grew, I had added a fourth bedroom and a second bathroom.

When we rented our houses from the company we had paid 65 guilders a month. Electricity and water were provided free of charge while we were with Eagle, and when they closed down, we got water and electricity from the government. Presently, we pay something like 150 guilders a month for electricity, so I have air conditioning in only one bedroom. My water bill ranges from 80 to 120 guilders a month. There are two pits in my septic system. The second pit, where most of the water is held, has a baffle and I have a pump in it. Twice a week, I use that water on my lawn and garden, and twice a week I use regular drinking water. My laundry water also goes into my septic system. Many people in Oranjestad use this method of irrigation. Normally we do our watering at night so the neighbors don't complain.

### **CURACAO, RETIREMENT**

In 1960 when they closed the Eagle refinery for the last time, I transferred to Shell Curacao and moved there with my family. We weren't happy in our new quarters and I wasn't too pleased in my new job. After three months, I finally decided to put in for my retirement. I wound up taking an early pension when I was 49 years old, and I moved back to Aruba. The company bought five years (in other words gave me credit five more years) and I had to pay 4% from my providence fund into the pension scheme. According to our pension scheme, I was required to work until I had 57 years with the company. I lacked three years although the five years the company bought moved me to 54, and I only received 91% of the full pension. As matter of record, the Shell pension fund started in September 1947.

### **BUILDING CONSTRUCTION IN ARUBA**

I worked a year and a half with "Bal Maatschappij", a construction company, then I joined "Petrona And Croes." My first job was helping build the government administration building where the post office and the radio and telephone company are located. That job fell under the central government of the Dutch colony of the six Netherlands Antilles islands. On the completion of that assignment, I worked on the construction of an addition to the 80 room, and six floor "Aruba-Caribbean Hotel." When that was topped out, I went to work for Al Clark as supervisor of all concrete work on the 201 room, seven floor Sheraton Hotel. I supervised all concrete and masonry work from the foundation to the roof. That hotel, now called "The Aruba-Palm Beach Hotel," has adjoining apartments similar to cabanas, with an East Indian

roof style. The split-level six-plexes were mostly for families with children. Balashi was next, and here we built foundations for government water tanks, and diesel auxiliary units.

The new bridge over the Spanish Lagoon that replaced the existing bridge on the San Nicholas - Oranjestad roadway was next. This bridge is constructed with a curb that extends to the bottom of the Spanish Lagoon, and the center of it is filled with caliche and sand. The finished structure was topped with asphalt.

There was a construction work slump after that, and I went to work for Edmund Ambrose "Chicken" Johnson. He raised chickens at one time; in fact he was into all kinds of businesses. This time he set up a heavy equipment business. I helped him on that endeavor, and we did concrete work on the area where they built the new Hydro-desulphurization plant in Lago. My son, John Rowland, who worked for Lago was later in charge of this complex.

I also worked on the construction of the new 650,000 barrel tanks they built in the west end of the refinery area. These tanks are the same size as those that replaced the spheroids. These were the one that used to be facing the colony. I worked six years with Johnson. We did work for the Parsons Company, who built the hydrolizers, and we also did some work on the addition to the Number One power house of the refinery.

Then I left Johnson and went to work for the McGee Company for a couple of years while they built the Desulphurization Plants. That was when I cut down the old Eagle Pier. This pier was constructed with heavy steel, and we had to use Florida divers to place the special explosive charges used. My boss was the well-known Captain Zee, who is now 86 years old and still an avid tennis player. Zee, a retired Shell Lake Tanker captain, is also a billiard player of considerable repute.

### **DEMISE OF LAKE TANKERS**

After the war, the Venezuelan Government decided to dredge the bar in Maracaibo. Ocean-going tankers were then able to enter Lake Maracaibo and carry out crude. The larger tankers could carry more cargo and trans-shipment was not required for ships not bound for Aruba or Curacao. Lake tankers became obsolete, and they were discontinued.

### **COMPLETELY RETIRED AT LAST**

I finally retired in 1974, and I haven't worked since. I have been pensioned for twenty-five years!

Bernadina Elizabeth, whom we call Bernie, was born April 24, 1939. She studied teaching in Holland, come back to work for four years

as a teacher, returning again to Holland where she studied at the Amsterdam Academy for Dramatic Arts and Expression for four years. For seven years, she worked in Holland with a group called "Torneao," that performs live on stage. She backtracked to Aruba and is now teaching Dramatic Arts and Expression in high school, the teachers college, in the hospital for the nurses, and other groups. Presently, she presides over the Teachers Labor Union, an organization which gives the Aruban government a big headache.

John Rowland Every was born May 30th, 1940. He finished his high school in Holland, and attended Higher Technical College in Eindhoven, Netherlands, graduating with a BSC in Chemistry. In the Netherlands' colleges, seniors work in the industry for a year. Interestingly, John worked at van Gelder, Chemische Fabvriek Naarden, Koninklijke Shell Laboratorium, Koninklijke Hoogovens N.V.

After graduation he worked for Esso in capacities with progressively more responsibility, from Senior Engineer/Operations Supervisor, as manager for operations programming, shipping and marketing Lago Refinery, Aruba into 1985. He is now in a consultant for the Caribbean area with S. S. M., a Dutch concern which deals with energy in various forms. He speaks Spanish, English, Dutch and some German, is married and has three children.

Carmine Louise was born January 22, 1942. She studied in Holland for four years in secretarial work, and returned to Aruba where she worked in the Nederland Bank. She later married Tone Gadella, assistant manager of the Dewitt Brothers. When Dewitts sold out to another company, she left for Holland. She is now teaching Spanish at a university there.

Dedric Andre was born June 13, 1943. After Dedric completed high school, he went to work for Phillips. He then joined the army where he studied computer science. When he completed his tour he went to work for the Xerox Company, where he works today as purchasing and sales comptroller.

Eorrol Anthony was born March 24th 1945. He studied construction engineering in Rotterdam, returned to Aruba and started his own construction equipment business.

Dennis was born the December 23, 1946. He went to trade school in Aruba after completing his regular schooling, and he worked for Lago. He now works with his brother Eorrol.

Ida Lee who was born September 11, 1948. She is married to Jim

Downey. They have a four year old daughter, Dona Lee.

Brenda joined our family October 17, 1952. She finished High School in Aruba, attended Jacksonville University, later transferring to the University of Florida and there she received a Master's degree in economics and in business administration. Her husband, Jack Vansteen also received a PHD in biochemistry, University of Florida. They both went to Holland where Brenda went to work for Pete Marwick and Mitchell. He studied medicine at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam and is now a doctor at the Horacio Oduber Hospital in Oranjestad. Brenda is now the Chamber of Commerce secretary of the island of Aruba.

Frederick Paul was born April 2, 1955. After completing his schooling in Aruba, he attended school a year at Marionapolis in Connecticut. From there he went to Jacksonville University where he studied economics. He now works for the City Bank in Aruba.

Our youngest daughter, Bernadetta "Detta" Marie, was born May 1, 1957. She finished high school in Aruba and studied in Holland to be a physical therapist. Detta has been working at the Horacio Oduber Hospital as a therapist since 1979. Her husband, Lawrence Henriquez is a doctor the same hospital.

Raymond Joseph was born November 19, 1960 and he completed high school in Aruba. He went to the Florida Institute of Technology, transferring to the Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts where he graduated BSME-1984. Returning to Aruba, he was married August 15, 1985 to Geneva Oduber. She is now working in the Horacio Oduber hospital in Oranjestad in the blood bank section. Raymond is the manager of an ice cream plant in Oranjestad.



## **The Robert Spense Ewart Story**

### **THE BEGINNING**

My name is Robert Spense Ewart, and I was born on December 10, 1916. Ewart's the family name of a kid who was born to make a bed. The two mothers just swapped. The other guy is Alfred Ewart Spense.

I lived on the outskirts of Boston. Tom Egan went up on a hiring trip for the job trainers, and he got me and Georgie Molan. Georgie was a carpenter. I don't know what other cities he went to. Frank Griffin came from that area also. He used to say, "Aruber."

I had a chief electrician's job in a plastics plant and it paid \$75 a week. The outfit went broke and then I went to work for a contractor in Boston. I had done my four year apprenticeship with General Electric.

I met a chap on a job, and in '47 things had begun to slow down. He said he was teaching vocational school nights. You had to take a course on teaching methods from the state. They didn't teach you about your trade. If you qualified, you could teach anywhere in the state; you got on the qualified list. He was going to take a full time job teaching. It was depression proof and it paid good money. I took a course and had just about completed it when Tom Eagan came along. There were two of us that Tom had liked. He ruled out the other guy because he was a mulatto. I got the job. That was around Thanksgiving. The day after Christmas I was gone.

### **ARRIVING IN ARUBA**

I was 32 years old when I arrived in Aruba in December 27, 1948. I left home on the 25th. It was a two day flight, and I had to stop in New York on the way down. It took a day to get to Miami on the DC-4's they were flying then.

The day after I got to Aruba, a whole slew of junior engineers came in. Dick Spellman wound up as my roommate. Kurt Weill, Clyde Rodkey. The last I heard of them, they were both about to retire.

I was "baching" for the first six months I was in Aruba. Ruth came down later.

Joe Swingle did a lot of special assignments out of the lab and on the power house. He was a cocky son of a gun. He rubbed many people the wrong way, but he could get the job done.

Dick Busacker, Tom and Dick Toothoil. The two brothers wound up in the lab with Kurt Weill and Dick Spellman. Hugh Knickerbocker, a great big guy, wound up in the working for Busacker in the M & C office. And did he hate it.<sup>5</sup>

Let me tell you about the guy who buzzed the colony. He was a bachelor and he had nothing to pack except his hat. A guy ran off the road, Alex Shaw. He'd had a heart attack and he was blue, 56 or '57 years old. He was coming back from the village. He was inside the Colony.

### **GATE SIX AND THE WATCHMEN**

Gate six reminds me of something funny. Walt Spitzer was a very serious chief of police. They closed gate six and we went out through the tank farm and the Lago Heights gate. That was part of a move to reduce the size of the watching force. Kids got a bright idea. They sawed the padlock off the chain that held the gate closed. Then they put their own padlock on. Every night they opened the gate and went to Sea Grape Grove, have their party, come back and lock it all up again. They got away with that for quite a while before a watchman looked at the lock and saw that it wasn't a Company lock. They rounded the kids and told them if anything more happened like that again, they were in trouble. They made a federal case out of what the Colony thought was a big joke.

They used to give the Watching Service fits at night. One stunt was a party on Rodger's Beach. They called the cops and said the kids were making too much noise. The cops came down in their pickups and went down the steps to the beach. The kids turned the pickups' searchlights to point at their steering wheels, and took the keys out of their ignitions. The cops came back, couldn't start the pickups, and couldn't find the keys. The kids started helping them find the keys, and all of a sudden somebody found them in the trucks. The cops got in their pickups and started up their trucks, and the searchlights hit them in the eyes. They had to sit there for a couple of minutes, until their eyes got readjusted.

### **ADULT SOCIAL LIFE**

We had an adult's party at Rodger's Beach one night. It was a steak cookout put on by the Esso Club. You brought your own bottles. That was one of those parties that took off and went like heck until it was over. Downey had his sailboat there and they kept taking it out for a sail. The whole colony was there. It was a new idea of something to do. Ruth got picked up in her chair, clothes and everything, and she got thrown into the drink. I pulled a ligament in my knee. The next day I had off,

and I went to a doctor. It was a Saturday night party. Nineteen people were casualties that night. It was a new thing and all of them they put on after that weren't the same.<sup>1</sup>

Nearly every Saturday was a party in Aruba, with everybody looking forward to it. Once the Colony shrunk to under a hundred families, there was only drinking. People were depressed; women at bridge at 9:00 a.m. began drinking . . . Would you like a salty dog?<sup>2</sup>

When the Colony was up around 600 families, you could get into groups where you didn't know any of the people. Usually it was best to get into groups that weren't connected to your department. Those who got into departmental groups usually would up with somebody getting into a heavy argument.<sup>3</sup>

At one of the parties at S. Stanley's house, things got to going pretty good, but the hors d'oeuvres weren't flowing fast enough, so Kamma Jensen went into the kitchen and got a bowl of food and ate it. It was a bowl of cat food, but she liked it fine.<sup>4</sup>

#### **ARUBA MEMORIES**

- Up near Schlageter's bungalow there were the three tanks for the hospital. Kids used to go up there and go swimming in the brackish water tank. One night there was a hell of a racket, a kid hollering and screeching. Len Moritz, the rigger, came out of his nearby bungalow and went to see what the trouble. It was a girl in the tank and the level of the water had dropped, and she couldn't get out. Len had to fish her out. A couple of days later they roofed the tank.

Clara Gallacanti had a vacation house up near there, and kids used to string her trash barrels on rope, climb the two tanks, tie them off and cut the two ends of the rope. When you untied the rope, it was too short to let the barrels down.

- We were in BQ number seven. One night George Cvejanovich and I

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<sup>1</sup>*Streeter, the guy from M.I.T., was the only graduate of that year, and they couldn't figure out what to do with him because he couldn't do anything with his hands. They put him to straightening up files.*

<sup>2</sup>*The salty dogs were started over in Venezuela because those people were known for that.*

<sup>3</sup>*People usually invited the boss and made sure he got the thickest steaks and the best service.*

<sup>4</sup>*She was always like that.*



- Decided to go cave prowling near the Chinese Gardens. You had to go at night or they would run you off. We had flashlights and did some looking around, came out and went back to camp. We caught the bacon and eggs thing at the dining hall they had for shift workers. Six Englishmen from the fleet were at the table beside us. There were four of us and we were talking about what we'd done because we'd split up. Danny Streeter reached in his pocket and pulled out a handkerchief and put it on the table. A 12 inch coral snake came out of it. He was damned lucky he didn't get bit by it. The crowd of Englishmen left without eating their breakfast. I guess they were squeamish.<sup>5</sup>
- Queen Juliana visited, and we lived next door to the hospital at that time. Marion Hart was determined to get a picture of the Queen. Prince Bernhardt, her husband, went over to the Colony to look while the Queen went to the Lago Hospital. When the Queen got out of the car Marion was standing there with her camera waiting for her. Marion said, "Look this way, Queen." And she took her picture.

The Boy Scouts had a picnic for the Prince at the other end of the island, and the Girl Scouts had a picnic for the Queen. Bill Norris and I got tagged for it. The first thing we did was to look for transportation at the garage. Ruth was president of the Island Council for Scouting. The first thing she did was jump on Bert Teagle for hot dogs and dining hall stuff such as utensils and plates. We got a big panel truck from the garage and loaded it up with hot dogs and soda pop. We had our one ice pack full of Pepsi. By the time we got to the other side of Oranjestad, we were going pretty good. We got there and found out the local scouts had no idea how to set up a serving line and get it going. They dumped it on us. We set it up and the Prince was the first one through. He asked Bill something, and Bill asked him if he wanted it Coney Island style, and the Prince said, yeah. As time went on, we were going into the storeroom and getting soda pop. It was going too fast, and when we got to checking it out, we found

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<sup>5</sup>*Danny Streeter had a jeep and on Saturday mornings, he would say, let's go to Hooiberg Sunday to one kid. Come Sunday morning, the whole Cub Scout pack was there. He didn't have the heart to tell anybody they couldn't go.*

*We went with him on one of those trips. Danny had so many kids they wouldn't fit on his jeep. We didn't count them or find out whose kids they were. If they had gotten lost, we would have had no way of knowing whose kids they were. They got out and ran up Hooiberg.*

the various scout leaders were taking cases and stashing them for themselves for when the party was over. We reclaimed it and had it all passed out before they knew what had happened. Seven years after that, Bill was at the Prince's inspection at the Cat Plant, in 1954, and he was talking with the Prince about the Scout Picnic. The Prince asked about the friend he had with him at the picnic. Bill told him he wasn't included in the party this time. The Prince told Bill to send him his felicitations. Frank Griffin had a memory like the Prince's.

- Paul had Brown hair, had a bad leg and a limp. He was a general foreman for the Instrument Department. He was in the Navy during the First World War. He broke his leg on a ship. In the early days, transportation was by a motorcycle with a side car. They put their tools in the sidecar. There were three of them, and Jensen rode one of them to work. He was used to starting up and going between two four inch pipe posts. He took off and did that with the sidecar, but it wasn't wide enough.<sup>6</sup>
- Joe Josephson had a 3 wheeled Cushman Motor Scooter with a box on the front two wheels. He run off the road near Bob Schlageter's house at the end of a crossroads, and he hit the pipe alley. He managed to get the three-wheeler off the pipe and tried to start it. It didn't start, so he started talking, and he started cussing, and he started crying. He had a hell of a time with that motor scooter.
- J. Terry Smith left Aruba before I retired.<sup>7</sup>
- Toward the end of our stay in Aruba we had Austin's and Morris's, and they were leased from a dealer. The Morris Oxford was exactly like the Austin Cambridge, right down to the last piece of trim in the inside. We had two Fords in Antigua and they were junk.
- There was a guy who was a pipefitter who had been hurt on the job. That's how he wound up as a mail deliveryman. He got a small English panel truck. It had 1 1/4 inch pipe front and rear bumpers. He used to stop at the high school just before the kids went into class. One day he got in the truck and the kids picked up the rear end of the truck. He put it into first, and let out the clutch. Nothing happened. He put it into second, and still nothing happened. Then they dropped

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<sup>6</sup>*One time he didn't make the corner and went off down a pipe alley.*

<sup>7</sup>*He was the hero of the day at the time of the submarine attack. Everybody was calling the Power Plant. His low deep voice was so calm; it calmed everybody when they called him.*

it and he went fish-tailing across the play ground and he didn't know what was happening. They had a good imagination and they pulled a lot of stunts like that. Usually it was good clean fun.

- Somebody had a little Austin to Aruba in the old days. They parked it in front of the Esso club. The parking lot had six inch pipe railing to keep vehicles from hitting the building. This Austin parked near the big, wide steps leading into the club. Two guys were looking at the little car, and they decided to have some fun. They picked the front end of it up and put it on the railing. The guy came out and started it up and put it gear, but he didn't go anywhere. The two who had done the dirty deed were sitting some distance away watching. It took the driver a while before he figured out what was happening. When he did, he went over to the two culprits and said he knew they were the ones who did it, and he wanted them to lift it off the pipe. They'd had all the fun they could get out of it, so they lifted the Austin off.
- The kids used to give the cops a bad time on the lower road in Aruba. They'd call up the cops when they had rigged the lower road with strings and tin cans from one post to another. And they would say a noisy party was disturbing them. The cops came down and they'd start dragging those tin cans. The kids would be parked on the upper road with their lights out, watching.
- Some people used to fool around and the kids found who it was. One guy had a local date on Colorado Hill one night. One of the kid's cars pulled up in front of his front bumper, and one pulled behind his rear bumper. Another came up beside him and they started talking to him. He's trying to hide the broad all the while.
- The doctor operated on my knee. I hurt it at that beach party that went so wild. I had a month off. They told me to go to the beach and wave that leg in the water. I was in the hospital for a week and down at the beach for three weeks.
- Doc Hendrickson was very wealthy and well thought of down there. People trusted him on any kind of operation he suggested. After he got to be medical director, and George Matthews was acting head of M & C, he went to a staff meeting in G.O.B., and George said, "Hey doc, so-and-so from M & C is being treated in quarters. I was up at the commissary at 10:00 a.m. and I saw him there. What do you think of that?" Doc said, "Well, the minute he got put on treatment, he went on my payroll. He's my worry and not yours."
- Jeff Hoyt used to be a character. He was a line gang foreman and

somebody gave him a parrot that cussed like a trooper. One day in the Bachelor Quarters the parrot cut loose, "Back up that g.d. truck, you stupid S.O.B." Women around the area were shocked.

- There were 19 in the foreign staff when I went down there in the Electrical department. Bennie Dimurro was the assistant general foreman and Jess Dortch was general foreman, O.J. Richardson, Tony Federale, Jeff Hoyt, Bill Rafloski (he left around 1950, and Cecil Drake took his job), Henry Beck (He used to fight all his kids' battles with the neighbor kids. I walked into the office one morning before 7:00 a.m., and I found him with his chin in hand, looking sad as hell. "Those nasty kids were rocking my house last night.")
- Henry was psalm-singer. Koopman came over with Beck. Henry rounded up a group of passengers for psalm singing. He had Henry Gillis for shift man. Gillis would line up 15 year olds for singing, and he called Beck at home. Beck would pretend like it was a big emergency at the plant, and off he would go to the village. Koopman used to laugh at him a lot.

Bill Koopman came to the States and was in Seminole, Oklahoma. He was learning English and he was staying with some American family. Bill said that the woman looked after him like a son. He told her what he'd done and what new words he'd learned. One day he was sitting at the table, and he said, "Pass that son-of-a-bitch sugar."

They did that to Doc Broz. He couldn't speak any English either. The first thing he learned was, "Good morning, you son-of- a-bitch."

- Ken was in Cub Scouts. Bill Norris and I were coaching Cub Scouts. They played by the Jr. Esso Club.
- One time the Company brought a group of young graduate engineers down and they called them "contact" men. They went out to Technical services. They acted liaison. The men used to play tricks on them at the different plants. Jack Hagerman was Process Foreman in the Alky Plant area at the time. A new kid would be sitting there with his back to the office door while he was having his morning meeting. When they'd see his boss coming up the steps to come into the office, Jack would say, "I don't care what you say, I don't think so-and-so is an S.O.B., I think he's a good guy." They kept playing that on every new guy.
- Bill Egan was telling about some assistant shift foreman who was a worry-wart back in the days when they had foreign staff level among the housemen. Every once and a while, they'd see one of these guys

coming, and they'd start running around like there was an emergency. The new guy would come up and say, "What's the trouble, what's the trouble." He was looking for an upset.

## **ANTIGUA**

We left Aruba in '55.<sup>8</sup> I had just turned 50. Schindeler was the guy who helped build the little 30,000 barrel refinery on the island of Antigua, outside of St. Johns. Lou Dill and Joe Tricarico were there. Gator Johnson was head of Process. Fred Kerr worked two contracts in Aruba before he went to Venezuela. That assignment was funny. We stayed in bachelor status until we brought out families. They put us up in the Caribbean Beach Club, and in 1965, the room ran \$50 a day. There was a dining table in a courtyard for each room. Antigua sugar was between brown and white sugar. One of birds picked the top off the container and he couldn't quite get off with the lid. He hit the ground. The Club had a cable car down to the beach and cottages up on a hill. You had to watch what you were going there because of the water situation. Their rainfall was as scant as Aruba's. You could be showering in your \$100 a day hotel room, and bang, no water to wash the soap off with. The soft drink bottling plant worked when the rain filled the reservoirs. It was owned by Amoco. I was a staff electrician.

Fred Kerr, a chemist, used to say a chief's chemist's duty was to make sure there was enough salt water in the bunker fuel so that the Company could make a profit. One day in Antigua I went looking for Fred to get up a golf game for Sunday. I couldn't find Lou. I finally bumped into Fred and asked him where Lou was. He said, "Yeah, he's downtown 'bumping his beads' (saying the rosary)."

Another time we wanted to know what to do for fun. In a W.C. Fields voice he said, "Let's go down to the dock and take pictures of the tourists." They'd see Fred coming. One huge female who was as big as he was said, "Here comes Mr. Lou. He's my kinda man." And Lou yelled back something. He kept up a funny conversation until we were out of earshot.

The golf course was a funny kind of thing. Kids used to play cowboys and Indians on donkeys. We'd be going down the fairway shooting and there'd come cowboys and Indians going like heck, chasing each other. There was a law that you couldn't fence off livestock.

I was there for four months before I quit. It was a chintzy outfit.

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<sup>8</sup>*Schindeler was the guy who got you off.*

They bought a 40 year old barge with DC motors and equipment. One of the main 500 D.C. motors had the old streetcar type controls. A drum attached to the handle. You kept the drum lubricated with Vaseline to keep it from pitting. We tried to order new parts for it, but no luck, it was obsolete. A few days after he got back, the chief engineer came down and looked at the controller with me. He said we would use shim stock. That was completely idiotic. Phosphor bronze is the nearest thing to tempering you can get on bronze. Shim stock is meant for lining up motors and pumps. If you put eight thicknesses of that on it, the first time you would use it, they would stay bent back and wouldn't return to position. I put up an argument, and he told me that if I didn't like that, there was a plane out every day. I said, let's go. I had no use for anybody who keeps throwing that in your face every day.

My furniture had just come from Aruba. It was in a warehouse downtown, and I was just about to get a house when this thing happened. I shipped it back out.

They hired an Englishman who was in town as chief electrician. They tried to fix that thing up and couldn't. They were cutting corners. The first thing I bump in on that, I knew enough about it to recognize that it was going to be a problem. We used that at Westinghouse for all cranes and we also used it for tools that had no accurate speed control for their motors. This small motor kept speeding up and flashing, slowing down, speeding back up and flashing. I'd seen that before. You've got your series fields, and you've got inter poles, and if they're hooked up to the inter poles bucking the series fields, you'll get that phenomena. Many people worked up on it and never figured out the answer. I got that fixed and had a lot of other stuff fixed when the controller blew. They were also trying to run some of their pumps out on the loading dock. They were trying to short cut something and save money. After I left there I ran into Bill and Pat DeMouy. They had about four kids. It turned out Bill had worked for this manager, Delmeyer Devoe. He was close to retirement and they wanted to get him out of the way so they shoved him down there in Antigua. This was Amoco of Indiana. Bill had worked for Devoe up in the Whiting plant. Bill said he was pretty much a loud noise and nothing much else. Bernie Vigneault became active in the Saint Christopher Club. One time he took the kids on a Sunday picnic to the other end of the island. Coming back through Oranjestad, they saw tourists off a ship. They started yelling, "Yankee go home." The cops bagged Bernie. They didn't want any tourists discouraged. The funny thing was that it was American kids hollering. They gave Bernie a bad time for a week. He didn't know whether he was

going to be leaving or not. That's typical of the things kids would get into. Put 80 kids into that atmosphere and surroundings.

I had to go down to the government offices in Antigua several times a week. They had the old English native clerks and clerical system. They had file folder after file folder. They never threw a paper away. We drove on the left side of the street in a second hand Morris Oxford.

At the refinery, I had a war surplus troop carrier of some kind. It had a Rolls Royce engine in it and four wheel drive, and the ignition was encased in water proof armor. The mufflers and tail pipe were up in the air. You could run with that engine practically submerged, and we'd get some gully washers during the rainy season. I used to spend half my day pulling other vehicles out of the mud.

## **FAMILY**

We were damned lucky to raise our kids in the atmosphere we had. Living in a goldfish bowl, and everybody telling you what your kids were doing. Outside of a beer party with the boys you didn't have much to worry about. The girls didn't get outside the gate at night, and you usually knew where they were. You didn't have to worry about drugs. The year before we left, they started picking up seamen with dope. After we left, some of the Colony kids started getting it. We missed a hell of a lot of headaches.

Of my kids, Terrel did pretty well. Pam was a sharpie. She figured everything. If she needed a 79 on a test to pass, she got a 79. If she needed a 64, she got a 64. Ken wasn't much of a scholar. He's a mechanic for Petro Petroleum, who bought out Sun down here in Corpus Christi. It's a pretty small company, but they had no trouble scaring up the \$400 million they needed to buy Sun. They are a private company. They don't have to pay dividends. They can hold onto their money unless their stock holders want them to pay. He likes the varied work. He'd had a number of indoor jobs, but he didn't like them.

Warren Michael was an architect. He was president of the Island Scout Council. That included the Boy and Girl Scouts--the Dutch, British and American Scouts. She took over from Ruth Kilpatrick.

Ken came up to the States to attend 11th and 12th grade. He had four driver's licenses and never took an exam in the States. We went to Antigua and he turned in his Colony license and they gave him an Antiguan license. He went to Arkansas, turned that in to them, and he got his Arkansas license. Turned his Arkansas license in Iowa, and it into Nebraska. He didn't take a U.S. license exam until a year ago when

he got his U.S. commercial license to drive trucks with.

Ruth wasn't in Scouting before she came to Aruba. She, Maggie Norris, and Barbara Malcolm opened up a nursery school. They had fun at it and enjoyed it. I met her one time when she was superintendent of nurses in the Fondren, Alcock Towers. She was making rounds one day and my roommate and I were sitting up playing cards at a table. We started to talk, and finally she mentioned Boston. She trained in New England Baptist. She wanted to see Ruth, so every time we come down we look her up. Now she's a patient's representative. She got sick of the responsibilities of the other jobs and decided to slow down.

Carolyn graduated from the same school that Ruth did. We had three of them matching notes about how the school used to be. She was accepted at Duke, and about three weeks before she was scheduled to take off, she told her mother she wanted to go to Baptist where she had gone. That called for some hurried letter writing, but she got in. She got her RN in Massachusetts. Ken was going to summer camp in Ontario. He and quite a few kids from Aruba went there. She heard about the camp's nurse's job, and being sick of bedside nursing, she took the job for the summer. The other nurse was also a three year RN, and she was thinking of going back to college and getting a degree. She and the other girl roomed together and did that in London, Ontario. First she had to complete grade 13 in Canadian school. There was no getting around it. There was some Canadian history in that grade.

Carolyn got her degree in public health and was in the Arctic Circle for a year. She called me during one of her college years and told me if she signed up for a (bursary), she'd get tuition, books, and spending money, but she had to agree to a year's government service. I advised her that she might have other plans by the time she graduated. I was paying the tuition. She graduated and signed up on her own for the same thing. It was Nubic, Alaska, and it had one road into it. It was an artificial town set up by the government, and a school system was set up there. They collected the Indian national kids in the fall, put them through the school year, and then sent them home to their parents for the summer. Carolyn did the nursing. She stayed sixteen months. She had to set up baby clinics in surrounding Eskimo communities. A bush plane dropped her off in a clinic, and took her to the next town when she was through. She'd be gone for two or three days at a time, depending on how many clinics she had set up. She liked cold weather. One time she called up and said the other girls told her about a herd of reindeer that was crossing the road down at the end, and she took a ride out to see it. They didn't see them, but they got the jeep stuck in the snow, and it was -



65 degrees. They started walking back to town, and the deer herd crossed right in front of them. Another jeep came out and got them. I told her not to go anywhere without telling people where she was going and how long she would be gone. If they lost consciousness, they could freeze to death.

### **LEAVING ARUBA**

I was 49 years old when I retired. I got the Golden Handshake. My move to Antigua wasn't a transfer. We knew what was coming so we built up the maximum amount of vacation--four months. I had a little lay-off allowance. All together I had 17 months before my pension started. It had me retiring with 21 years service even though I didn't work that long. I only worked 17 and one half years. We were on furlough and when we came back, it was happening. Age 50 and 15 years service. They could get their annuity fattened up or they could take a lump sum in cash without it affecting their pension. If they got their annuity fattened up, they'd draw a better pension. If you had a kid in school in the States, they would pay three semesters of tuition. I took the pension and gave Ruth a shot at the survivor benefits. Going out at 50, there is a 50% reduction right there. If you discounted 50% for survivors, that leaves a small pension. I haven't asked her what she thinks of survivor benefits. Another thing you look at is, leave it in the bank. I can get another job. I came back to the states and started working for a contractor. I got my union card and I had a ball. I took anything the company threw at me, sing and whistle all day long. I didn't need to impress anybody. I'd work within 60 or 70 mile radius. I worked construction, power houses, Safeway warehouses and cold storage, in Kansas City, a brand new International Paper plant down in Atlanta, Texas, Firestone plant in Orange, Texas. If I was close enough, I'd drive home weekends. If it wasn't, I'd fly home. Or I'd have Ruth fly in on weekends and we'd see what was around--Memphis. We went to the first zoo we had been to in 30 years. We took one of those paddle wheel rides up the Mississippi. It wasn't a lot of pressure and the money was pretty good. I could work a few months and take a few months off. I knew where the jobs were. I always did like tools better than running the job. I like to do it myself and see how it comes out.

There was one time when we went up through Jamaica. The airport was one small tin garage after a hurricane they had had. It had wiped everything out but the brick buildings, and they were operating out of that tin garage. They were getting one or two of the tanks ready as shelters as the same hurricane approached Aruba. The Company boarded up things, and they took down scaffolding all over the refinery.

Nothing much happened when it came through.

It's a shock when you come back to the States and you are no longer Mr. Ewart. You are just a man on the street. Another thing is when they are counting the change back from a \$20 bill. When they stop at 20, you have to remind yourself that they are counting change for a 20 and not a 25 guilder bill. Going into Burdines in Miami, you find yourself asking the clerk whether the price they quoted you is guilders or dollars. We always converted the guilder price into dollars to remind ourselves how much something was worth.<sup>9</sup>

When we sailed back into New York harbor and I saw the Statue of Liberty, I always got a thrill when I was a kid.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>*The Company used to have a shock program for employees who came back to the States. They told us that two things were not discussed while you were overseas: religion, and politics. And we never did. It seemed like many people overseas were anti American. The only place we found that was pro American was Australia. People were always needling you about what they saw America did in the news. One time we had a New Year's party and people were talking about how the US did. This friend of ours, a drilling superintendent's wife, was an alcoholic we finally figured out. She was a thoughtful, helpful old gal. She finally got disgusted and said at this party, "America is a big g.d. country, and we make big g.d. mistakes."*

<sup>10</sup>*These interviews were made while Bob was in Methodist Hospital in Houston. Bob had informed the doctors that he didn't want any chemotherapy or other such treatment. All he wanted was some pain relievers. He said if they couldn't offer any more than 20% chance of beating the cancer he had then he didn't want to waste any time or money. He didn't want to put his family through the trauma of prolonging his illness. He was very calm about it as he explained his decision. The doctors were impressed with his courage. He had a cancerous growth on his spine in the small of his back. Within a week or so they flew him in a small plane to his home in Arkansas. His wife, Ruth, took care of him at home in his final days.*

## **The William Lawrence Ewart Story**

My name is William Lawrence Ewart and I was born in Lake City, Colorado, November 23, 1902. Lake City (About 56 miles southwest of Gunnison) was a dying mining town at that time.

I graduated from Lake City High School in 1920, by which time the school's enrollment had dwindled to the point where there were only seven students in my graduating class when we sat on the stage for commencement activities. I was the only boy and I was in the middle with girls on either side. We didn't have much extra-curricular activity; there weren't enough students to support a good baseball or football team.

My father died in February of 1920 when I was 17 years old. As the oldest of five in a single parent family it was necessary for me to become the breadwinner as soon as the school term finished. I had been working after school and during summers around the mines and mills, but it became full time.

### **BECOMING AN ELECTRICIAN**

I started a correspondence course in electrical engineering immediately after graduating from high school, and completed the course in 1923. Meanwhile, I managed to get considerable experience more or less helping the millwrights in the mines and mills in the area. By 1922 I was working at a small mine near Lake City when they began having problems meeting their payroll. I later found employment in the town of Kenawata in their deep, hot mines until June of 1923.

### **GONE TO CALIFORNIA**

In California I went to work for the Pan American Petroleum Corporation which was building the refinery from grassroots at a crossroads called Watson, about 7 or 8 miles north of San Pedro. I tell you all this because I refer now to how my career with the oil companies started and straight through to Aruba.

My first job with the Pan American Company was pick-and-shovel work in pipe trenches on a 3:00 to 11:00 shift. This lasted a few days until I was hired as a gunnite inspector on one of these multi-million barrel oil reservoirs the company was building to store fuel oil.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Gunnite is a cement mixture that is sprayed on the area to be sealed as in temporary reservoirs.*

Before it was completed, I managed to transfer to the electrical department and worked there as a helper on the 3:00 to 11:00 shift for six months. Then I was transferred to day work and we put in the wiring on about 25 service stations in Southern California. Those stations were the beginning of the Pan American Company's venture into marketing. While working for them, I took civil service exams to qualify myself for a job with Los Angeles Power and Light Company. The job description said I was an electrical mechanic, but I was really a master electrician.

### **BALTIMORE, MARYLAND BOUND**

The company had decided to build a small paving asphalt refinery in Baltimore to supply product to Germany. This was shortly after WWI in the days when Germany was spending a lot of money on building highways.

The Baltimore refinery was operated by a subsidiary of Pan American, the Mexican Petroleum Corporation. There were plans for building a refinery in Carteret, New Jersey for processing crude oil which was being produced at Quiri-Quiri, Venezuela.

When I went to work at the Baltimore construction project I was put in charge of electrical work. In order to fill the electrical foreman's job it was necessary for me to take a written exam before a Baltimore board of electrical examiners for a master electrician's license.

I remained at the Baltimore refinery for some time after the completion of construction, expecting to be transferred to Carteret for the new project. Pan American had difficulty raising sufficient money to finance this new refinery, and after considerable delay, it was decided to build it either in Venezuela or one of the offshore islands. By that time Standard Oil of Indiana had bought the controlling interest in Pan American.

### **THE ARUBA REFINERY PROJECT**

I began planning the Aruba project's electrical design early in March of 1928. I ordered equipment, tools, and materials for the electrical system. On the drawing board were the proposed drafts for a power house, seven small stills, a crude booster pump house, an acid plant, the beginning of a housing development and a hospital. While I was there, a number of the old timers passed through on their way to Aruba.

One of these old-timers was, Oscar Henschke, Chuck Henschke's uncle, had been employed as a blacksmith in Casper, Wyoming, and he was to supervise the installation of a blacksmith shop with 3 steam hammers. He was to take charge of the shop and to make forging's for

the refinery.

Jim Bluejacket, Jim Crosby, and Gus Cassio were three other old timers who were also on their way to Aruba. Bill Rae went at about the same time, but I didn't see him.

### **MY TRIP TO ARUBA**

As a 26-year-old, I arrived at Aruba June 16, 1928 on the tanker, *S/S Crampton Anderson*. Bea was 24 years old when she arrived in Aruba in 1939, to serve as a 4th grade teacher for the Lago school system.

My recollections of this trip are vague. Over the years I sailed from a number of eastern ports to Aruba on tankers, but I am reasonably sure that on this trip I traveled from Boston, Massachusetts to Aruba. The captain had his wife with him, and there were two other passengers bound for Aruba. The trip took a little over 7 days. Then, the best tankers steamed at about 11 knots and this one wasn't one of the best.

What I remember best about the trip was that the captain was a very garrulous man who didn't believe anybody other than himself knew anything worth telling. A fellow passenger read true detective stories and insisted on entertaining us by recounting them. The second man came from Destrehan, Louisiana to operate a pipe machine. He was about 45 years old and was so homesick that about all he could talk about was how well his family treated him at home and if he ever got back he would never leave again.

When we tied up at the dock in Aruba, there was a tramp freighter on the inside berth which had brought in a load of boiler plates and had been unloading for several weeks with rather primitive gear. It was a coal burning ship and they kept the ashes and cinders from the boilers in bins all over the ship's deck for disposal when they went to sea again. I don't remember how long they took to unload their cargo, but I do remember that the ship's captain passed away before they finished unloading it.

### **OCEAN GOING TANKERS**

Other tankers I traveled on while living in Aruba included the *S/S W. L. Steed*, the *S/S Pan Bolivar*, and the *S/S Pan Aruba*. The *S/S Pan Bolivar* was built in England in 1930, at the cost of \$750,000. Even in 1930 dollars, it was a cheap ship! Among the tankers which used to run to Aruba, one of the more popular ones was the *S/S I. C. White*. Two others were the *S.S Oscar B .Bennet* and the *S/.S Paul Harwood*.

### **POLICEMEN**

When I first arrived, the government employed black policemen who wore khaki uniforms and "lion tamer" (pith) helmets. Although I had

never been there, by my work in planning the refinery I knew where everything was. I took my two suitcases and went down the gangplank. One of these policemen met me at the foot of the gangplank and very officiously demanded to know my name. When I told him, he said, "Oh! All right." I'm sure he had no idea who I was, but he wanted to demonstrate his watchfulness.

### **PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT**

The Personnel Department in those days consisted of one foreign staff person, a strange little man, probably 50 years old, with two Aruban clerks. There were no arrangements for meeting incoming passengers on the docks or helping with providing transportation or their luggage.

### **INTRODUCTION TO THE LIVING AREA**

Since I knew the layout of the project I walked about 3/4 of a mile, from the docks, carrying my suitcases until I reached the area where the *sheep sheds*, my new living quarters were. These buildings were located in the area occupied by the number ten vacuum still several years later. In time, the *sheep sheds* were relocated to the area now occupied by the naphtha fractionating complex, more commonly known as the Alkylation Plant area. The *sheep sheds*, as we called them, were actually bunkhouses. If my memory is correct, there were four rooms in each *sheep shed*, each room had 3 single beds or cots, and for each occupant there was a portable cedar closet for hanging up your spare clothing. The *sheep sheds* were arranged in two rows, and for each there was a community bathhouse in the center.

One *sheep shed* had been modified to include a hallway full length of the building and a bathroom at one end. Each room was occupied by two people. D.J. Smith, Lloyd Smith's brother, was in Aruba on a visit at the time I arrived, and he was living in one of these rooms with Vigor Hansen, the construction superintendent. Other rooms were occupied by E.H. Clendenen, engineer, W.R.C. Miller, a labor foreman by the name of M.C. Cuen, and a carpenter foreman whose name was Frank Hawkins.

### **MATTRESSES**

The company had outfitted the sheep shed beds with hair mattresses and pillows since they had been advised hair was the only material able to withstand the tropical climate. They were so hard and lumpy it was like sleeping on a rock pile. Eventually kapok-filled mattresses and pillows were substituted for the old ones. When I arrived, the newcomers had the old hair mattresses and pillows, but were trading them in as fast as they could get the kapok items.

Don Smith went to New York and I was assigned the bed in the room

where he had been living. Interestingly, this bed had the only Beauty-Rest mattress in Aruba. Hanson, the construction superintendent, looked at me that evening and said, "I know you won't like that mattress, so I would advise you to throw it out and get a regular one." I replied that I would give it a try anyway. Every time we moved somebody tried to get it from me, but I held onto that mattress until they standardized on them.

### **THE DINING HALL**

We ate in an old coral block building we called "The Old White House" down near the head of the "T-docks." This old building was one of those built by the phosphate mining company who operated in Seroco Colorado during the late 1800's. There were rows of long fir tables with benches for the diners. A mess hall was under construction at the site where number 10 crude still was later built. When it was finished we began eating there. In two months that whole camp was turned over to the M.W. Kellogg Company, which was the new contractor for the Cracking Plants. Their company employees were moved into bungalows which were under construction.

### **OLDTIMERS BEFORE ME**

I only know of two people, who are still alive who arrived in Aruba before I did. One was Bill Rae who lives near Casper, Wyoming and C.C. "Buzz" Cross who lives in Calvert, Texas.<sup>1</sup>

### **PERSONNEL WORKING WHEN I ARRIVED**

When I arrived, there were 200 men employed in the area preparing the harbor environs for the refinery development. Heading the list of men were Captain Robert Rodger, Fred Penny, Ralph Watson and J.J.P. Oduber. Captain Rodger lived in a coral block house near the present Naphthenic Acid Unit.

Messrs. Penny and Watson lived in a wooden house that still stands on the road behind the government police station in San Nicholas.

### **LIVING QUARTERS**

While in Aruba, I lived in bungalows number 81, 86, 328, 322, and 67. Bungalows 81 and 86 were located in the area known as "Snob Hill", just north of the bungalows allocated to the top company officials. Bungalows 322 and 328 were close together near the entrance to the caves. Bungalow 67, where I lived last, still stands across the street from the community church.

### **EARLY GOVERNMENT POLICEMEN AND REFINERY GUARDS**

Our first refinery guards were black but I'm not sure if they wore the

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<sup>1</sup> *This interview was conducted in 1982.*

khaki uniforms and lion-tamer helmets. The government police were black and wore uniforms. These government police were very meddlesome and delighted in beating up foreign staff employees if they were found drinking beer in San Nicholas. Their practice of abusing them became so bad we almost had a riot just before Christmas of 1928.

There was a party in Oranjestad, honoring the coming of Lago to Aruba, the 4th anniversary of the construction of the docks. I rode to this party with D.J. Smith, and when we returned at midnight, we met a mob formed of the foreign staff employees. We stopped and D.J. got out and talked to them. They said they were on their way to the San Nicholas, and they intended to beat up the police in retaliation for the beating of two foreign staff, one of which could not be found. D.J. persuaded them to return to camp by promising he would talk to the government officials the following morning, and see that the problem was rectified. He did so, and within a few days the black police were replaced by Dutch police who patrolled the island until the war began.

### **COMMUNISTS**

The communists were trying to take over in Latin America in those days, and one Sunday afternoon, a messenger came to the sheep sheds to tell us a mob was gathering to kill off the Americans because they were responsible for bringing the oil industry to the island, and upsetting the status quo. They were parading and waving red flags, putting on quite a militant demonstration. Guns were not allowed on the island, but Tom Cooke, who represented the owners of the company, was visiting, and he had a hunting rifle. He went to the gate to help hold back the mob. Several others with unregistered guns and the rest carried ball bats. The Dutch marines came and rounded up the mob, holding them near the main gate until they could be put on a schooner and shipped off to Venezuela. The leader of this mob was Urbina, a Venezuelan who later made a lot of trouble in Aruba and Curacao.

### **CAVES**

The largest cave on the island was the one under the colony. I toured in all of the branches of it that were large enough to admit a person, taking a compass and sketch pad to make a map. I used a tape line to measure all of the runs, and was able to lay it out with reasonable accuracy on a surface map.

### **BEACHES**

All of the beaches--Eagle, Baby, B.A, Fontein, and Rodger--consisted of coral sand, which was somewhat coarser sand than was normally used in mixing concrete. This sand came from the grinding



motion of the waves on the offshore coral.

### **EARLY COLONY SCHOOL**

My memory of the early school is sketchy indeed. The first teacher was T. Florey and I believe she used one of the early bungalows for the first school house. Soon after, school houses were built in the colony grounds, and they remained in service until the refinery began to eliminate foreign staff personnel. Other early teachers I recall are: Margaret Fassler, who married the manager of the Eagle Refinery; a Miss Cook; Charlie Green's wife, Jenny; Cary Daly's wife, Eula; Maude Thomas; Myrtle Parham; and a little later; Vina Waltz. My daughter by an earlier marriage, Netta, was in school one year. Other students I recall were, Jimmy Bluejacket, Virginia Work, Claude Dixon, Maurice Featherston, Ian Douglas, Mary Douglas, Patty Hobart, Marylynn Holtane, Forrestine Hughes, Bruce and Ray Immler, Joanne Mechling and Clarence Work.

### **CAMPOUTS**

I did attend several campouts when my son, Billy, was in the scouts at about the same time that the Lopez boys were.

### **FOURTH OF JULY**

I don't remember much about the 4th of July parades, but I do have vivid recollections of a 4th of July when Jack Emory set off the fireworks. Normally Paul Walker set off the fireworks from a barge out in the lagoon each year, but on this occasion he was away. Jack Emory volunteered, and he chose a place on the waterfront directly below the guest house. He decided to group all of the fireworks close together. I was sitting on the steps of the guest house with Paul and Eleanor Linster when Jack lit the first one. When I saw the ignition, I told them I thought the whole thing was going to go off. It did before I finished speaking. Rockets and roman candles began shooting all over the place. Several people were injured including Ev Wade's son, Johnny. One rocket went through the radiator of Ralph Watson's nearby automobile.

### **A NEWSPAPER INTERVIEW**

I was on leave, when the Mock Convention took place at the Esso Club, but I do remember when Harry Mills was interviewed by a newspaper reporter in Pueblo, Colorado while on vacation. I don't know how accurately the reporter covered Harry's comments but when the paper came out it was noticed by some Colony citizen and a copy brought to Aruba. Harry was an operator in the refinery. He evidently indicated that he was General Manager of the refinery - and had charge

of a very large organization!

### **OUR WEATHER CONDITIONS**

We had a prevailing easterly wind running as high as 30 miles an hour during the day and tapering off at night. The direction varied between 90 degrees and 100 degrees from the East. The sun was out nearly every day. Ambient temperatures ran from 68 to 80 degrees. Water temperatures in the lagoon ran from 68 to 73 degrees. Rainfall averaged approximately 10 inches a year. Some years were above 36 inches and others were closer to 3 inches. My first years Aruba I saw land crabs walking all over, as far as 100 yards from the beach. I used to take a walk at night in the area where the first post office was built. One night, I saw a tremendous land crab heading towards me.

### **FISHING**

I didn't do much fishing as I had problems with "mal de mar" but I did observe the natives out fishing with their throw nets. I understood they were catching bait for deep sea fishing. Their fishing boats were very small and they were loaded with rock for ballast. Quite often they became lost and in later years the flying club was often requested to search for them.

I remember the cabin cruiser owned by John Sherman, George Larsen, and Clyde Fletcher. They liked to take A.J. Desollo and me trolling. Occasionally we hooked barracuda and once in a while we caught tuna, but I do believe they enjoyed watching me suffer with sea sickness as much as they did the fishing.

### **PHOSPHATE MINES**

The phosphate mines were quite extensive, and surrounded Colorado flats, extending into the area near the spheroid tank farm. In the early days Lago filled many of the shafts of these old mines with coke, partly to store the coke and partly to make it safe for the children in the area. Unfortunately the coke in many of the shafts caught fire, and we had a smoke problem in the colony until it burned out. Following this, most of the shafts were filled with non-combustible rubble from the refinery.

Apparently some phosphate was mined from old cave bottoms and there was graffiti on the walls of the caves put there by the miners with dates before 1900. The phosphate mining company had a railroad running from the dock area, out to the Seroe Colorado Hill, with branches to the various shafts where they had brought up ore. One of their locomotives was in a shelter near the hospital. There was also a quite large water reservoir of coral rock with a concrete lining. We were told that the old building near the lighthouse had been the residence of

the lighthouse keeper in the days before roads were built. The main line of the phosphate company railroad ran down the grade by where "Bird Cage" houses were later built. (The "Bird Cage" houses were three room bungalows originally intended for newly weds.) It continued from there, its path later paralleled by the refinery road, and branched off near the shop area. From there, it went down the hill to the phosphate company's docks. The mining company had a fairly large white building which served as their headquarters just up from the "T" docks. They also had two other concrete block buildings farther west, one of them used by the government hired port physician, a Doctor Nunes. I've forgotten what the second one was used for.

The phosphate company left two other buildings, one of which was a large concrete block building with a red tile roof. It had been used as a residence, and was renovated and used by Captain Rodger, the company's marine department manager. A large, bunkhouse building was used by the supervisors of the crew which built the marine railways. Later, this structure was used as the process laboratory by the company. I remember Sid Tucker having an office in this building in 1936. The third, a rather small building, was located on a flat tract close to the old dock area later occupied by the welding shop. This small building was being used as the personnel office the day I got off the ship, and continued to be so used for several years afterwards.

### **OIL TERMINAL AND HARBOR**

Captain Rodger was sent to the area about 1924 to select a site for a harbor where small crude tankers from Lake Maracaibo could unload their cargo for transshipment by ocean-going tankers. One tanker, the *George G. Henry*, remained anchored at Oranjestad and was used as a transfer station until the T-docks, tanks and pump house were completed in 1927. There was a skeleton crew on the *George G. Henry*, enough men to operate the boilers and pumps for taking on and discharging cargo. Jimmie Armstrong, who later worked at the power house, was one of those people.

### **RAILROAD TRACKS**

In 1927, railroad tracks were put on the T dock to unload cargo, and in 1928, following additional refinery construction; two more tracks which followed the old phosphate road into the colony were added. From there, they branched off into one of relatively flat areas where cargo from the ships was stored temporarily.

### **UNLOADING CARGO**

This cargo was in charge of the stevedores and they unloaded crates

of machinery and supplies all over the concession by the simple expedient of rolling them off the flatcars. Much of the equipment was so badly damaged replacements had to be ordered.

### **OUR EARLY WATER SYSTEM**

Most if not all of the original brackish water wells were set up by the phosphate company. There were 9 windmill-driven wells scattered around the colony area, each of which had a 40 foot windmill with 10-foot blades. Two or three of these wells were sunk down through the old caves until they reached bedrock. The entire Lago Colony is above a granite intrusion and these wells bottomed well above sea level so the water they produced was relatively pure. The phosphate company used this convenient source of water for their steam operated locomotives.

When I arrived, virtually all of our bath-water came from the Mangle Cora well near the Baby Lagoon. The other wells had no names that I can recall. They turned over the operation of this water system to me. I had two men who went around every day starting and stopping windmills as the wells went dry. In some cases the well was dry in less than a day. The Mangle Cora well had a gasoline powered pump and there were native operators on each shift to operate it. They were there primarily to keep the tank full, and were known to fall asleep after consuming copious quantities of rum, allowing the engine die. The natives had a crude wooden cross on the bank above the well with cloth wrapped around it. This kept the evil spirits away, they informed us. They were so unreliable that we soon put a larger fuel tank on the engine and eliminated the operators. As soon as electric power was available, we installed electrical pumps. The windmill wells were dismantled soon after because it was cheaper to bring fresh water in by tanker.

### **GOLD**

For many years the natives had found gold nuggets in Aruba. It was reported that the largest one, weighing 35 pounds, is in a museum in The Hague. Frequently, after heavy rains, the natives would walk up these gulches on the northeast side of the island and find nuggets. This generated considerable excitement and efforts were made to get permission from the government to mine for gold. Early underground gold mining operations began in Bushiribana area. An extensive network of shafts was dug on Sera Crystal and toward the southwest--up the slope in the direction of Miramar. The mill first erected was at Bushiribana and its foundation remains to this day. Local wags have told tourists it is either an abandoned castle, or an old pirate's fort. After the mines in this area were worked out, the mill was moved to the Spanish Lagoon where mining operations were resumed. Mining also began again at the

Miramar mine on a hilltop north of Yamanota. The old boiler and part of the old hoist still remained at this mine when we first lived on Aruba, and at the Spanish Lagoon, stood an old stamp mill used in crushing the gold ore, and a number of tanks used for process of cyanide extraction by which the gold was separated from the ore. This method of operation was discontinued during WWI when cyanide was no longer available. We know the ore was hauled from the Miramar mine to the Spanish Lagoon knoll in wagons because we found the remains of a fairly good road and loading chutes at the upper end.

At the Bushiribana area, the ore had to have been transported by pack burros as we found no roads in the vicinity of the Sera Crystal Flats.

### **MUSIC**

Information on Aruban music can better be obtained from some other source. I do remember Padu Lampe quite well. In fact he and I sat in a restaurant in Oranjestad when we were in Aruba about 7 years ago.

### **EARLY RELIGIOUS EFFORTS**

In regards to religious efforts on the island I remember Jack Emory very well. He came to Aruba as a carpenter and was on single status part of the time, a result of the housing shortage. He began holding church services in the dining hall.

The effort to develop the church in the colony was led by George Keller and George Wilkins, a shift foreman in the pressure stills. About the committees that resulted in the Lago Community Church eventually being built, I couldn't tell you, but I do know there weren't any churches in the village. I regret not being able to recall the name of the first minister. When our first regular minister moved on, a man named Percy Dawe took his place and held the position for some time. He was away when Bea and I were married in 1944, the pulpit being filled by an Anglican missionary who lived out in the village and conducted regular services in the Anglican church there. The next regular minister was Don Evans, and his wife's name was Kay. He had a son, named Roger and a daughter whose name, I am sorry to say, Bea and I don't remember.

### **THE BEATRICE OLSEN EWART MEMORIES**

I arrived in Aruba on the Grace Line ship, the Santa Paula, September 1st, 1939. Upon disembarking, the first news we learned was that the Germans had entered Poland. Ed Byington was the one who met us at the dock.

The other two new teachers were: Carolyn Morris, the 1st grade teacher; Ann Goode, who had the 2nd grade.

I taught the fourth grade until 1944, and since teachers were forbidden to marry during the school year, Bill and I waited until school was out, June 3rd, 1944.

We have 3 marriage certificates, one in Dutch, issued by the government, one by the American consul and one by the Anglican missionary who married us. We were married in two separate ceremonies. The first was on June 2nd at the government office in Oranjestad, a ceremony presided over by a Dutch judge and witnessed by two local secretaries. We sat at opposite ends of the desk in front of the judge who conducted the ceremony entirely in Dutch. When he finished he stood and offered his hand.

I asked, "Are we married?"

He said, "Yeah."

I asked, "Do I get a wedding ring?"

"Oh! If you wish," he replied.

Then he handed Bill a marriage book, which was written in Dutch, and provided places for the names for twelve children. He said to Bill, "If you have more than twelve, you can get another book! You are allowed to beat your wife, and if you can't do it by yourself, you may get two policemen to help you!"

Our second ceremony was in the Lago Community Church. Etta Williamson was my maid of honor and Rolland Ewart, Bill's brother, was best man. The reception was held at the girl's dormitory. Two weeks prior to our marriage we had made arrangements to spend our wedding night at the old Strand hotel. When we arrived at the Strand we introduced ourselves and asked for our room we were told that no one had made any reservations for us and that they didn't have any rooms. Someone suggested a room down the hall that was not cleaned or made up. Along with the lost reservation, Bill had requested an arrangement of roses, champagne and supper, and of course, none of it was to be had. They did eventually bring champagne and scrambled eggs, make up the beds, after which they said goodnight!

Bill and I have two children, Bill Jr, born May 11, 1945 and Barbara Louise, born July 16, 1947.

### **BEA'S SUBMARINE ATTACK STORY**

I'd like to go back a few years, to February 16, 1942, when the U-boat torpedoed the lake tankers 1:30 a.m. A few of us girls at the dorm had a small party, and retired before 10:00 p.m. About 1:30 a.m, we

heard footsteps racing along the porch corridor, and someone knocked at doors, saying, "Wake up, there's a big wall of fire outside the reef of the big lagoon." We jumped out of bed, put on our robes, and ran down to the front porch. Sure enough, there was a tremendous wall of flames stretching all along the reef. We were bewildered. No one could explain it. A young man I had been dating was on the graveyard shift, and I telephoned him to ask what was going on. He said, "For God's sake, hang up! Turn out your lights, squash all the lighted cigarettes! We are being torpedoed by German submarines! Those are lake tankers on fire!" He hung up.

It wasn't long after that Mr. Kennerty came to the dorm and announced, "This place must be evacuated at once! Don't wait for anything! Just come with me!" Someone asked, "Where are we going?" He replied, "The best place is the community church until further orders come."

Teachers and stenographers in hair curlers, robes, and slippers crept up to the church. We were there until quarter to five in the morning when Mr. and Mrs. Bob Heinze, who lived in a bungalow across from the church, invited us to stay on their enclosed front porch for the rest of the night. They served us coffee and donuts while we watched tankers burn and wondered what was in store for us. About 7:00 a.m. someone came to the Heinze's and told us it was safe to return to the dorm. On the way to school that morning we noticed a large sign on the post office which proclaimed, "Enemy action during the night." It seems we were evacuated from the dorm because it was feared shells from the submarines might be fired on the aviation gasoline tank farm behind the dorm. One did hit a tank, but fortunately, it ricocheted off and no harm was done. This event occurred early that Monday morning.

Early Thursday morning of that week, we were awakened by more explosions! It was still dark when I ran to my window to see what was happening. Looking up into the sky I saw star shells flying over the dormitory and heard loud explosions like big guns firing something! It was one of the most frightening experiences of my life! We discussed the latest bombast in the mess hall over breakfast and wondered what it was all about.

Later at the post office another sign was put up that announced, "Not enemy action! Our own navy thought they spotted a submarine between their ship and the shore, and they fired on it!" I have since wondered why those 5" shells were fired over the dorm. One of them almost demolished the bowling alley and another went tearing through Tex

Schelfhorst's room in the men's bachelor quarters. I cannot recall whose automobile was damaged when the shell hit it. I talked it over with Bill and he explained that they were actually flare shells which were expected to disintegrate high in the air above Colorado Point and release their parachute flares. They failed to function properly, and the damage was the result of the unexploded projectiles falling on the island.

During the war, we saw such slogans as, "Don't Use a Gallon When a Quart Will Do!" A permanent black-out was instituted; headlights on cars were painted dark blue with tiny slits for a small amount of light to illuminate the road. People built mazes around front doors to prevent light from showing when the door was opened; all windows were covered with black or dark curtains. Lighting a cigarette in the open was forbidden. Periodically the big gun on Colorado Point was fired and depth charges were dropped outside the reef. Both of these made such loud explosions school children jumped from their seats and ran to the windows to see what was happening. They were entertained by all of this. After the second "attack" by our own navy, women and children who wished to be evacuated from Aruba were allowed to do so as quickly as possible. Most remained, the school continued to hold classes, and no teachers departed.

Well, this ends some of the history in the '40s from my point of view.

### **THE HOUSING ALLOCATION SYSTEM**

I was on the housing board for many years. In general, bungalows were allocated to the people who were considered most essential to the operation of the refinery, and divided as evenly as possible among the various departments. From time to time there were modifications of the system, but basically it remained intact. Housing was provided for expatriate personnel until about 1938 when the company decided to build 100 houses in the section we called Lago Heights, and a smaller section known as the Intermediate Housing. The latter dwellings were built in hopes that Aruban foremen and key personnel from around the islands would settle in this area close to the refinery and they would be available in case of emergency.

Several bachelors' quarters and a mess hall were also built in the Lago Heights area. They were available to local employees from the surrounding area and during the next work boom in preparation for WWII they filled with temporary employees from Trinidad, Jamaica, British Guiana, and wherever else men could be found who were willing to work in Aruba. The mess hall became a beehive of activity.

In those days people were coming from all over the island to work in



the refinery. Many arrived on burros as much as two hours before work, sleeping in the shade until their shift went on duty. The round trip between Noord to Lago was quite an excursion by itself. There were light trucks with hand-made beds used to haul those men to and from work, but there were not enough of them to accommodate the numbers employed by a long shot. It was believed that the Lago Heights and the Intermediate Housing editions would become popular with the Arubans, but this was not the case. They preferred to live where they had grown up - out in the Cunucu (country), and to somehow find their own way to work. The houses sat there, as useless as television sets without electricity.

We had a large refinery construction program going on in 1938, and these same units were made available for the several hundred temporary employees who were brought in for this program. A theater had also been built at Lago Heights, and there was some use made of it, but not enough to support its operating cost. After the construction program was completed it was decided that these houses should also be offered to locally hired personnel from other areas. There was an immediate demand for them, so we allocated them on the same basis as we had the Expatriate Housing.

One requirement applied to Expatriate housing as well as the housing in Lago Heights--individuals had to be married to be considered for a house.

We had one employee in the Instrument Department from Surinam applying for a house in Lago Heights who had quite a large family. He could have easily been assigned a house but unfortunately he wasn't married, and it was difficult to find a delicate way to tell him that he couldn't have the house because he was not married. He may have jumped over the broomstick in Surinam, but a certificate was required for proof of marriage in the colony. Several months later he came back with his marriage certificate and demanded his house. By this time his house was assigned to someone else and no others were available. He was very bitter about it, feeling we had forced him into getting married and now we would not give him a house.

## **THE INDIANS**

For several years during the commencement of the 1928 construction program, the company had a recruiter by the name of Richardson canvassing the surrounding countries and islands in an attempt to secure personnel with experience in the trades. I remember him quite well. He had a son who later worked in the laboratory.

Among the new employees he rounded up was a tribe of Indians from Colombia. There were twenty of them, including three women. When their schooner unloaded them in Oranjestad they disappeared, spreading out all over the island. The Indians were rounded up and given temporary housing in good frame buildings similar to the original *sheep sheds*. Their quarters extended along the fence near the main gate where the foundry was later built. They cooked out in the open, using a communal fire.

The Indians would walk from their quarters to the job site in single file behind their chief, with the oldest first behind him, and the youngest last. They could not speak anything other than their Indian dialect, but their chief spoke Spanish. When they had to be instructed, an interpreter relayed the orders the chief in Spanish, and the chief translated to his men.

This group was used on the original excavation for the power house. The old chief sat on the edge of the excavation all day and relayed the orders to the braves who did the physical labor. Much of this was dug below sea level, with the excavated material being hauled out by wheelbarrows, up wooden ramps. The Indians were not acquainted with such modern labor-saving devices as wheelbarrows, and had to be taught how to push them up and down the ramps, and how to empty them. They were somewhat lax about getting to work on time until their overall supervisor, Oscar Henske, had a bright idea of offering them cigarettes as a token of appreciation. He broke out Lucky Strikes, gave each man two and explained through the interpreters that, henceforth every morning, when they appeared for work on time, each man would get two cigarettes.

They were on the payroll for about three months, and at one time during their stay, my men and I taught them how to use post hole diggers, and how to set the tall posts that carried our power lines.

This particular labor the Indians thoroughly enjoyed and it became difficult to make them stop working at dusk. But the real problem arose when there were no more posts to be set up. We could not convince them that all the posts were up -- no more were needed. They wanted to continue setting up posts regardless of whether we wanted them or not. Finally, through the chief, we were able to convince them that this work was finished.

After that there was no more tardiness until one day in the spring they all appeared in a bunch in front of the main office, and through the interpreter told the management that they were going back to Colombia.

It was planting time and they weren't going to work any more. In spite of such abrupt notice everything possible was done to get them shipped back to Colombia, and I believe they arrived home safely, in time for the planting season.

### **LAKE TANKER FLEET HOUSING**

Ten three-room houses were built along the waterfront to accommodate the officers of the lake tanker fleet. The captains and the chief engineers of these ships were entitled to houses as they became available. They were more simply constructed than the three-room houses for the American part of the colony; no clothes closets were provided. Clothing was hung on nails driven in the backs of doors. Later these houses were modified to make them more livable and become more like the general housing after the lake tanker fleet was replaced by larger ships.

### **SIZE OF HOUSING**

The Expatriate Housing varied in size from three-room to six-room, with the exception of the guest houses, Captain Rodger's house, and L.G. Smith's "Casa Grande" when it was built. The rules regarding moving from small houses to larger ones either as the family expanded, or under special circumstances, made it possible to move. In my own case, I lived in five different houses.

The policy on maintenance changed somewhat over the years. For a long period houses were scheduled for repainting and refinishing every two years. This policy was later extended a couple of times so that eventually the renovation was done every five years. The earlier dwellings were all wood framed, fitted inside and out with Steeltex material and plastered so that they were stucco outside and smooth plastered walls inside. The practice of using external finish was continued until the last 50 houses were built after WWII, but plastering the inside was discontinued and the use of sheetrock was introduced. The earlier houses had ceilings of Cellotex. This practice was also eliminated and sheetrock substituted after about 200 houses were built.

The policy regarding modifications changed from time to time and was liberalized over the years. Ten years before I left it was agreed that approved modifications would be bought back from the occupants when they left the house. In my case, I had extensive improvements to sell.

Gardens were another problem. It was necessary to have soil hauled in from around the island and they required fresh water; when brackish water was used the resulting plants were inclined to be puny. After 1946 water meters were installed and there was little resistance to using all of

the water you wanted even though it was quite expensive. I found that roses would grow quite well on brackish water.

Furniture was standardized, and in the beginning, living rooms were furnished with what appeared to be rattan furniture. Actually, it was paper twisted over wire and painted. The bedroom furniture was identical for all. There were a few who imported their own furniture.

As years went on, the quality of the furniture supplied by the company improved, and the policy changed so that people could take their furniture with them when they retired, providing certain requirements were met. This was also true of the rugs supplied for the bedrooms and the dining room - living room combination.

### **MEDICAL SERVICES**

In regards to hospitals and clinics--when I first arrived, the government port doctor was the only medical or first aid assistance we had. Shortly afterward, two nurses were brought in from the United States and a temporary clinic was established in the vicinity of where the diesel electric plant was built.

The government doctor came there twice a day to take care of minor injuries and prescribe medications. On one occasion I had a problem at certain times of the year which was referred to by the locals as Bulla Wya. I went to the doctor's home, which was where he maintained his drugstore, and left with a pint beer bottle filled with some sort of solution. He told me to drink it several times a day. When I returned to my room, I found my room-mate had a bottle of the same solution which he had been given for an entirely different complaint.

After two days I decided to try it, and found it worked quite well. I later identified it as a paregoric solution.

The first hospital was a 35 to 50 bed, wood, frame structure whose construction was similar to the bungalows. It stood almost where the cat plant was later built. It was completed during 1929, and two doctors from the U.S. arrived to staff it. Doctor Mailer was the chief physician, and his assistant was a little guy by the name of Shearer. Soon after, a dispensary or clinic was built in the refinery near the head of the lake tanker dock. In the daytime two or more doctors on duty, and under them, there were usually two or three male nurses who primarily treated minor injuries and ailments.

### **RELOCATING THE HOSPITAL**

When it became necessary to move the hospital to clear the site for construction projects early in 1939, Oscar Henske was in charge of its

relocation.

The first site chosen was up where the spheroid tank field was built later, but before the move could be completed, it was decided that the tank field would be better placed in that area. The hospital site was relocated on the hill where it now stands. I had been away from Aruba at that time, and when I came back they were in the process of moving the hospital from the tank field up to the hill.

Not long after, the clinic in the refinery area was outgrown and a much larger building was put up farther west and across the street from where the old commissary used to be. This edifice accommodated several more doctors and was able to handle many more people.

By the end of the war we had a total of approximately 8,000 employees on the payroll at Lago. The company had agreed to care for the families of the local and staff personnel as well as the foreign staff, and the hospital was overloaded. A two-story addition was built on the hill to further accommodate the increasing personnel.

When Bea and I visited Aruba in 1975, this hospital installation had been dismantled and the bulldozers were demolishing the foundations. The only hospitalization available on the island is the government hospital in Oranjestad.

The company did operate a first aid and minor treatment clinic until the refinery was closed down in 1985.

The first company automobile I had in Aruba was a composite of two wrecked Model T Fords assembled by the garage foreman. The front end of one Model T had been wiped out and the rear end of the other, so he welded the two good halves together. It had no fenders, no windshield, and no hood when he completed it.

I was traveling to job sites all over the concession, and I had been covering the ground on foot. I learned that this monstrosity was being assembled, and when it was completed I walked in commandeered it for myself. The garage foreman was very angry as he had planned to use it for himself. He went to the front office to complain, but they decided I needed it worse than he did.

At that time the head of the company was an accountant living in Whiting, Indiana. I no longer remember his name, but he believed renting cars and trucks for transportation for the refinery was cheaper than the company could buy them and import them. The company owned three Chevrolet touring cars, one of which was driven by the general

labor foreman, a man by the name of McCuen. The other was driven by the chief engineer, C. H. Clendenin, and the third was used by W.R.C. Miller. Higher officials had rented cars. There were two chauffeured rental cars provided for the ships' captains to take them to Oranjestad to register the papers required for each trip of their tanker.

I drove the old Ford for several weeks. It possessed a coil ignition system which shorted out every time a little shower came along, the upholstery was smoldering and fires would break out whenever a little breeze would blow through. I would go down the bank and fill a bucket with sea water which I sloshed on the upholstery in an attempt to extinguish the blaze. The smoldering continued until all of the padding was gone out of the upholstery.

One day, when it quit on me during a shower, I pushed it to the side of the road and went to the front office. I told them if I didn't get an automobile to drive, I would take the next boat back to the States. They rented a Pontiac automobile for me, paying \$230 a month for it, and they were responsible for the maintenance and providing the gasoline.

I drove this vehicle for about two months until they located a Ford owned by an Aruban which was available for the sum of \$150 a month. This one, I drove until the company finally began to purchase automobiles. After I abandoned the old Ford, Alex Shaw drove it for awhile. He became fed up with it and gave it to Buzz Cross, who also drove it for some time.

The company eventually bought pick-up trucks for working foremen like Buzz Cross who needed it for transporting tools.

### **HAIR CUTS**

When I first arrived it was necessary to go to San Nicholas to get a haircut. Bungalows became available for bunkhouses, and several company employees began moonlighting as barbers. Pop Fuller was one who continued with it for quite some time in the dining room of a four-room house.

It seems to me like Louie Lopez also did some barbering for a while. I do remember Tony, the barber, who worked in the Pan Am Club barber shop, which was called The Professional Barber Shop. I can't think of his last name.

### **THE CLUBHOUSE**

The club house in Aruba was built when the Pan American Company was operating the property. It had no roof over the dance floor. The low annual rain of Aruba notwithstanding, it seemed to rain every time we

had a dance with the result being that the dance was called off. This went on for two years until an overall roof was built, and at the same time, the floors were sanded and polished. The first dance had many people practicing pratfalls as well as the latest dance steps since they were used to the rough old weather-beaten floor. The Marine Club was later built for officers off the lake tanker fleet, but colony residents were also welcomed.

The original club burned down in 1942. We then had a temporary club near the commissary, built like the sheep sheds for the remainder of the war years. The new Esso Club was built at the end of the war. There was a bus which regularly took housewives to the old commissary. I believe the driver's name was Mario Croes. Some of the boys put on a skit at the Esso Club about this bus trip. George Cleveland played the part of one of the housewives getting onto the bus. It was quite an amusing skit.

### **MARVIN CASE**

Marvin Case was in Aruba working as a confidential secretary in the executive office at the time I arrived there. I believe he was the organizer of the first dance band. He was very proud of the fact that he had played with Fred Waring's Pennsylvanians back in the States.

Some of the band members were: Andy Houge, McDonald, and Tippy Tipton. There were usually five or six instruments in the band. It seems to me that it continued on until about the outbreak of the war, or maybe it disbanded when the club burned. Case went to work for one of the government agencies in the States during the war, and was in Aruba at least once, on official business.

### **THE COMMISSARY**

The original commissary was built in 1925 by the Marine Department, possibly by the same men who built the first dock. It was located near the docks on the right hand side of the road as you went towards San Nicholas, and faced the road. The same building also served as a warehouse for marine supplies and parts for the lake tankers.

The first company-operated commissary was built quite close to this one on the perimeter of the tank farm fence. A road ran in front of it and went out to what finally became the main refinery gate. Across the road from the commissary were the original bakery and the laundry, which were built about the same time. The laundry was built around the fence corner from the commissary, and faced the docks. The British supervised the original commissary and the marine warehouse.

Andy Weatherby was the first company commissary supervisor at the old commissary and was later supervisor of the one built in the colony. His assistant at that time was Charlie Wills.

You could buy almost anything imaginable. If they didn't have it in commissary stock, they would take your order and procure it from the States as soon as possible.

### **THE BAKERY**

Lee Dew came to Aruba to supervise the operation of the original bakery which opened early in 1929. They baked marvelous breads, cakes, pies and rolls. Everything was sold on a price per pound basis.

Tom Brown, who had charge of the accounting department, reasoned that there was no reason to have price differentials between pies, cakes, bread and scrapple. For so much a pound you could buy a loaf of bread or a birthday cake.

### **THE LAUNDRY**

When the laundry began operation, Arthur Krottenauer father was in charge. He had ship laundry experience and had been working for the company in the labor department.

Arthur Krottenauer Sr. was in charge of the laundry for quite some time. I can't recall the circumstances of his departure.

Pop Eveland was only in the laundry for a short time, perhaps as a vacation relief. Pop worked at the power house and was later transferred to Caripito, Venezuela.

Gene Keesler was a pressure still operator who transferred to the laundry and took over following the promotion of Preston Hunt to a job in the colony service.

### **CLUB MEMBERSHIPS**

I did not belong to the Engineers' Club, but I frequently went to the Instrument Society meetings. I belonged to the Yacht Club, the Golf Club, the Skeet Club and the Flying Club for a while.

### **EARLY FLYING**

I first took flying lessons from A.J. Desellio in 1934 using the old mud flat out at Saveneta for a landing strip. We flew in a little biplane which had been brought down by Viana, Jim Nassy, and another welder who worked for the company. They were attempting to get permission from the government to start air service between Aruba and Curacao. Permission was finally granted on a temporary basis in 1936.



### **ARUBA FLYING CLUB**

John McCord and I tried to get permission to have a flying club in Aruba, after Viana's flying service went out of business, but we didn't have any success until the flying club was started in Curacao. Then, with the aid of certain Dutch officials in Aruba, Commander De Vuijst and others, we managed to get permission from the government to charter our own club.

Commander De Vuijst, Burnie Sharon and his wife and Cal Dunahue had many night meetings developing the rules which were put into effect when approved by the government. These were largely plagiarized from the private aircraft regulations in effect in the U.S. at that time.

### **THE ASTRONOMERS CLUB**

Membership in the Astronomers' club included: Alex Shaw, Vernon Turner, Bob Dowart and Joe Gritte. Each of these men built a telescope. There may have been other members--I don't recall. I didn't become involved in the Poker Club although I did watch the plays occasional at the club house. The so-called "refined one" that Halpert and Broz belonged to had quite an extensive membership.

### **THE FIRST AIRPORT ON ARUBA**

It could be argued that the first airport in Aruba was the mud flats near Saveneta. A small, French-built monoplane landed there about two years before the Viana group started, and after the government granted permission to Viana and his friends to fly to Curacao, this mud flat was used for the landing field for the aluminum amphibian plane which was based in Aruba. As one of A.J. Desellio's students, I made several trips to Curacao as copilot in this airplane. Copilots had two functions. One was to wind up the inertia starter for the engine; the other was to remember to put the landing gear down before landing. The Dakota field at Oranjestad was built after KLM opened regular air service to the island.

### **THE FLYING CLUB LANDING STRIP**

The Flying Club landing strip was cleared and smoothed by volunteer help from many of the club's members. I remember spending several Sundays out there drilling and blasting boulders that stuck up in the runway and parking areas.

When Bea and I revisited Aruba in 1975, the Flying Club had dwindled. All, with one exception, were local employees. One man invited us out for a barbecue, but when we arrived there we were not made welcome and felt out of place.

One foreign staff member had been an electrical department

employee who had bought the Cessna which bore the registration letters, WLE. He took us for a ride around the island in it.

### **THE ROAD FROM SAN NICHOLAS TO ORANJESTAD**

I remember the original road to Oranjestad very well. The majority of it was corduroy-surfaced and very rough. If you drove faster than 50 miles an hour, you sort of floated over those areas. You had to watch out for goats and burros every step of the way because they were liable to pop out onto the road at any time. The main road was improved, widened and well paved in 1975, they had raised the speed limit to 90 kilometers, and we were having wrecks due to reckless driving.

### **MATERIAL ORDERS FOUL UPS**

I don't remember the foul up on the order for sheet rock or the mixed nuts that people always talk about, but I remember well the time that they brought in a ship load of cranberries by mistake. These were sold at the commissary until it appeared they were going bad. Amie Mass, who had charge of the dining hall as well as the commissaries, began to serve cranberry pie, cranberry sauce and cranberry jelly in the mess hall until its boarders were about ready to go on strike.

There was a similar situation on matches when an oversupply was ordered and received. I believe they actually built bonfires with some of these matches to get rid of them to minimize the fire hazard.

### **BASEBALL**

A fellow named Van Der Porten was a shift foreman at the power house and loved to play baseball. He was not very good, but he wanted to be a catcher in the worst way. Porten spent a lot of money buying equipment, and bankrolling his own team. The pitcher on his team was a large, left handed fellow by the name of Rich Born, who threw a very fast ball. I believe they would have won some games, but Van Der Porten could not catch Rich's fast ball. Every time Rich threw a hot ball, Van would meet him in the middle of the field and protest. Rich then pitched balls so slowly that the opposition beat them continually.

The earlier ball players I remember by name are: Rebel English, from the accounting department, Harmon Poole, from the electrical department, Lloyd Monroe, from the light oils department (Lloyd was Harmon's nephew). Lloyd's brother, Ricky O'Neil, came somewhat later, and was a pretty good ball player also). Linkogle was one of the earlier players, so was Rae Brown, Single-Barrel and Joe Strong, Herman Bechnel, Jake Walsko, Tommy Jancosec, Dutch Engle. Most of these fellows were good all around athletes and later were active in the basketball games. When the original ball field was required for tank

space, a new ball diamond and bleachers were set up near where the Esso Club was built later. The new one was called Lone Palm Stadium.

Considerable interest in baseball was popular in Venezuela, and some very good teams were developed there. On several occasions, Venezuelan teams came to Aruba and played the Lago teams and I believe our teams played return games with them in Maracaibo and other Venezuelan cities.

### **BASKET BALL**

Basketball was started in the old Pan Am Club shortly after it was built, and there were a number of good teams. Most of the players were the previously mentioned as baseball players. Dr. Reeve, John Mechling and Ward Goodwin were three of the better basketball players. Kenny Meyers was an outstanding player also, but his practicing was mostly done with beer. He was a rather strange figure to see on the basketball court; a spindly fellow with a big water melon belly from all the beer he drank.

### **DOMINOS**

Another activity in the club in those days was dominoes. The less athletically inclined sat around in the evenings and played dominoes in our spare time--if we had any. There was a big chemist, who originally had come from Whiting Indiana, who was very much overweight and quite lame from a previous injury. He enjoyed dominoes and must have drunk about 20 bottles of beer every evening while playing dominoes, but he was still able to go home under his own power.

### **GOLF**

Golf was first started by the Stiehl brothers, Warren and Harry, and they came to Aruba from Tampico in the early 1930's. Working jointly with Viana they acquired a lease of some sort on land near Saveneta and started the first golf course, a nine-hole course with sand greens along the fairways. This course was abandoned when a somewhat improved course was built just east of it, towards the refinery. The new one had longer fairways and quite a bit more area than the first. Golf continued at this site until about 1940. Stewart Harrison became interested in establishing a golf course where the present day course is located. Stewart really was the leader in golf, and he succeeded in obtaining considerable assistance from the company in grading and building, planting grass, etc. I helped Stewart find and develop a source of water for this golf course. When Bea and I were there in 1975, it was still being used, but the irrigation was in decline, and it looked like it wouldn't be long before it would be abandoned for lack of water.

## **TENNIS**

The first tennis court must have been completed early in 1929. Its lights, bought by Don Smith while he was in New York, were not suitable for a court in such a restricted area, but we made the best of it. This court was first surfaced with lightly oiled sand. I tried to learn to play tennis there with the help of George Keller and Bill Morris. Both of them were considerably older than I, but delighted in running me to death chasing their serves.

## **BOWLING**

The bowling alleys were built about 1938. Bea tells me that when our navy fired the flare shells over the colony, one of them went into the bowling alley and did considerable damage, but not too long after that they were going again. I remember going there one afternoon and finding Frank Lynch bowling with two young soldiers. Each time one of them spoke to Frank he called him "Chief." Chief, how did you do that; Chief, where are you going? I've called Frank "Chief" ever since.

## **QUEENS BIRTHDAY**

The queen's birthday was of course the national celebration and the big day of the year. I believe the date was April 30th. When we first went to Aruba, the company observed all of the holidays observed in the U.S, including the 4th of July. Before long, they decided it would be in order to only observe the national holidays of the country in which they were operating, a decision which resulted in the dropping of the 4th of July. There was considerable feeling over this decision. Some Dutch employees were more resentful of it than were the Americans.

## **GERMAN SHIPS SHELTERED IN ARUBA WATERS DURING WWII**

At one point during the war all German ships on the high seas were given orders to proceed to a neutral port where they were to await further orders. Three of them came to Aruba and anchored off the shore near Palm Beach, near Oranjestad. Two of these ships sneaked away, but the largest, a new ship, remained anchored there. When Germany invaded Holland, the commander of the marines in Aruba sent a message out to the captain of this ship instructing him to bring his men ashore, and informing him that Germany had invaded Holland. The captain sent word ashore that he would not leave the ship until after daylight. Between that time and daylight arrangements were made to set the ship on fire. This was done, the sea cocks were opened and the ship sank in about 20 or 25 feet of water off Palm Beach. It came to rest on its side and at low tide; the ship was out of the water about 5 feet on that side.

John McCord, Alex Shaw, Jerry Krastel and I decided to try to raise the ship. I had a plan. The trouble was the government wouldn't let us raise it unless we paid for it. Not long after, I happened to be in New York where I made contact with salvage concerns there, seeking to get them to raise it on a contingency basis--they would get their money after the ship was raised. I was informed that there wasn't much point in it because it was still the property of Germany and if the ship was raised and brought to a harbor in the U.S, the German consul would simply go in and claim the ship as German property. At this point, we gave up the whole idea. The ship is still laying there. When I went to see it in 1975, it was broken in two by tidal action; otherwise it was relatively intact.

### **MAY 10, 1945**

When Holland was liberated there was a big celebration in Aruba. I'm sorry to say I don't remember much of the details. I flew a number of trips to Bonaire after the war and became acquainted with a man named Meir who was one of the prisoners of war. He had decided to remain on Bonaire and was quite an enterprising business man. He operated a little restaurant where the prisoner of war dining room had been, and had renovated a number of the cabins to rent as tourist quarters. He also had one or two automobiles to rent, and I believe he was part owner of the power company on the island. He married a Bonaire woman and had a little boy, about five years old.

### **THE QUEENS OWN CAMERON HIGHLANDERS**

The Cameron Highlanders came in to replace the French marines in 1941. And I think they were there well over a year. The officers were very tall men--well above 6 feet; whereas the privates were all short, stocky fellows. It was quite a sight to see them marching down the street in their kilts. The commander in chief was a tall, rawboned Scotsman, Colonel Barber.

### **CHRISTMAS TIME IN THE COLONY**

At Christmas time L.G. Smith sent out open house invitations indicating that his home would be open from ten to twelve - two to four - and six to eight. I went to the early open house and saw the colonel there. In the evening I was at Paul Gardere's home. The colonel announced he had to leave as he had to go to Smith's house for the last opening of the evening. I guess he thought it obligatory that he attend all three of the open houses that Smith had announced, and I guess he drank his fill at each of them.

Next in line was a Colonel Beggs whose wife had accompanied him to Aruba. All of the other officers were single. The third in the chain of

command was a Major Monroe, a very good looking young man, much admired by the ladies. The chaplain's name was McDonald, and he married a colony girl, Betty Russell. Not too long after their wedding, he was posted to another place, I don't recall where.

### **U.S. ARMY AIR CORPS GROUP**

There was a major in charge, a big man, who didn't do much flying with the flying club. He made the statement that our airplane was so small that he had to take his shoes off to get into it.

I remember the pilots. One young man named Martin, whose father was an official in the Douglas Aircraft Company, made a forced landing in a B-18 between Aruba and Venezuela. The airplane was towed into the Lago harbor, but it sank alongside the company docks when they attempted to lift it out of the water. This very likeable young fellow was called "Meatball" by his fellow pilots.

Lew King was another pilot I knew fairly well, as well as a fellow named McCabe, and there was another named Tom Diefel. These fellows gave free instructions to all flying club members who had not learned to fly.

I had obtained a private pilot's license but did not have an instructor's rating and did not try to give any instructions. Later on I was authorized by the Dutch government to instruct and ultimately I got a license from the U.S. Government.

We taught a great many Dutch nationals to fly. The Dutch government had helped us to get the first airplane. They awarded the flying club the equivalent of \$100 for each Dutch national who soloed and qualified to fly solo around the island. One Dutchman, Radon, flipped the plane over on its back while landing and made it unusable for a good many months. This unfortunate accident grounded the Flying Club for a while. Eventually the government helped us to get two more airplanes through Lend-Lease and they were kept in service until 4 or 5 years after the war when they were declared beyond repair.

Lew King became a B-29 pilot after leaving Aruba, and I believe was in the group from which the "Enola Gay" was chosen to drop the atom bomb on Japan. I am sorry to say that Lew is in poor health. He is living near Lubbock, but he has had strokes and I believe has become an invalid. I haven't seen him for about 10 years.

The first U.S Army group to arrive in Aruba consisted of men from the United States, but later, many of them were replaced by Puerto Ricans. And there was one Puerto Rican nurse in the army hospital

which was established in their camp in Sabeneta.

### **QUEEN JULIANA'S VISIT**

When Queen Juliana visited Aruba, Bea was given the assignment of getting all of the school children to sing the "Wilhelmus", the Dutch National Anthem), and Vina Wals played the piano. The queen did visit the school and this performance was played out for her.

When Eleanor Roosevelt visited Aruba, I don't think anyone saw her except the top military brass. Admiral Clements gave a cocktail party for her in one of the exclusive bungalows where he was living. The school people were very disappointed that she did not visit the school.<sup>2</sup>

### **O.H. SHELTON**

O.H. Shelton was very fond of sports and devoted a good deal of effort to finding good baseball players and basket ball players to fill open jobs of all descriptions. He also tried hard to hire attractive school teachers and nurses. I think this outlines his policy for hiring.

### **ORCHIDS**

I remember that Russ Ewing was in the Engineering Department. He had his orchids in an improvised hot house that he had built just north of number 7 bachelor quarters. There was a depression in the coral over which he had constructed a sort of sunshade roof, and I visited it on one occasion. When Russ left Aruba he took the orchids with him to Florida, and went into the orchid growing business.

### **VARIOUS PERSONNEL**

Johnnie Crawford, a machinist from Texas, was working at number one power house and I had to fire him for beating up Van Der Porten at the refinery gate. Not long after that, I fired Van Der Porten for flooding the pumphouse at number one power house.

Ferrow Himes was a chemist who came from Ingleside, Texas after the union put the refinery there out of business. Jesse Reynolds came from there at the same time.

Leroy Miller was a refugee from Palambang, Sumatra. He worked in the mechanical department as a zone supervisor until he retired, which was shortly before I did.

Eddie McCoart came to Aruba early with the Kellogg Company and later went to work for Lago. He followed a man named George Knight as

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<sup>2</sup> *Mom has a letter from Eleanor Roosevelt apologizing for not coming to see the Lago ladies, explaining that she did not know they were there.*

mason and insulating foreman.

Frank Gladman was his assistant for many years. Eddie McCoart and Harmon Poole were members of the Esso Club Poker Club.

J.F.X. Auer was the manager of the mess hall who succeeded Magner. Magner was later picked up as a German national and sent to Bonaire.

"Army" Armstrong was a clerk in the marine department who worked mostly with ships' papers. He and Esselstein were great drinking companions.

Jimmy Armstrong was an engineer on a tanker before coming to Aruba as a power plant operator. He was the foreman of number two power house when he retired. Actually he was on Aruba before the refinery was built, stationed on the ship which was anchored at Oranjestad as a transfer station for Venezuelan crude.

Scottie Auldie, from Whiting, Indiana, was one of the start-up still men on the low pressure stills where he worked with Sonny Boy Williams from Destrehan. One day he came into the office and said, "Sonny Boy hit me." He was about twice the size of Sonny Boy.

Unless memory fails me, Marcial worked at the dining hall. I believe he was a Peruvian who sold Peruvian silver sets to many people in the colony.

Roberto Garcia, I am sure, was Oscar Henske's interpreter when dealing with Indians in the excavation of number one power house.

I don't remember when Gus Stutzman came to Aruba, but he spent all of his time in the instrument department. He was in the instrument department when he became engaged to a girl in Germany. She came to Aruba on another ship with Al Holsner, another German, who found out about the coming marriage and sent a radio message to Gus that had him in a dither. He thought he was going to lose his girl friend before she got to Aruba.

Fritz Gemelar was a German electrician I interviewed in New York before coming to Aruba. I later hired him for the electrical department.

Charlie Schlechta worked in the instrument department I believe we hired him locally, although I am not completely sure. They all were sent to Bonaire when the Germans invaded Holland.

Al Zucchini, an Italian, had an outstanding technical education, and was a professor in an Italian university. We hired him locally. I don't



know why he left Italy. He was in the electrical department for a short while and spent the remainder of his time in Aruba at the Instrument Department.

C. Pieren was a Dutch electrician hired about 1935 when Shelton was sent to Holland during a recruitment drive. Many of them didn't stay long, although Pieren stayed for a number of years. He was active in the flying club, and he was one of a group who brought in a number of P-50 war surplus fighters after the war.

### **WHAT PEOPLE DID IN THEIR SPARE TIME**

What did people do in their spare time? Jack Schnurr built boats. It is almost unbelievable the number of boats he built. I guess he first built eight stock boats, and after snipe boats became fashionable, he built a number of them.

Scuba diving became popular about the time my son, Bill, reached the age when he could go along with Jack Watkins, Godfrey Frey, Mark Dittle, and two or three others. They preferred to do their diving around Bonaire, so I made a number of flights to Bonaire to take Billy and his friends scuba diving.

I don't recall many active shark fishermen except that a welder, Herbie Call, who in the early days, caught a female shark in the intake channel at number one power house. It was about eight feet long and contained seven baby sharks.

Another Instrument Department man of that period was Cyril Rex, an Englishman, who was hired locally. He had a great deal of fun with Gus and was quite a practical joker. I don't know when he left Aruba, probably while I was away on a trip.

### **BUNGALOW IMPROVEMENTS**

A number of us worked at improving company houses, George Mathews, George Royer, Alex Shaw, and I. George Mathews not only built a large patio, but he built an additional room and classroom on his house, number 222.

I attended several of the Cub Scout and Boy Scout campouts and very well remember Jack Opdyke, Dr. Brace, and Jimmie Lopez. On one occasion when I was with Billy at a Sea Grape Grove campout, the derrick working at number one power house dropped one of the smokestacks on the roof. I went in to see the damage.

I am not sure there is any way to measure how many barrels of oil were recovered from under the island, although there were 7 or 8 small

Sears and Roebuck well pumps used around the tank farm and the refinery to pump it into the slop tanks. This may have been gauged by someone, but most of the oil was trapped by the diversion canal we built around the perimeter, from number 2 power house, to the secondary separator west of number 1 power house. The oil that flowed into this canal was pumped back with the separator slop, and was not gauged separately.

There was so much oil under the island that we had a great deal of trouble at the power house. This was the reason the canal was built.

The early sewers built in 1928 were simply flumes in the coral rock, in many cases, covered with a slab. The engineers did not realize that the acid in the sewer water from the units would eat the coral rock out. There was a concrete flume on the north side of the number 7 low pressure stills which continued to a place where it crossed the road to a point where the number 12 aviation still was later built. This sewer went into operation along with the units before the separator box was completed so the effluent went down over the hillside into the bay adjacent to where the stock oil tanks were later built.

After operating a short time, this flow of acid water cut through the coral and made a waterfall just south of the edge of the road, where it flowed down to sea level and the main sewer canal, and finally discharged into the lagoon.

Soon thereafter the separator was completed and a complete concrete lined flume was built from where this failure occurred, which ran into the separator. Here, the water was reconfined and run through the plant separator, a process during which a considerable volume of oil was recovered. The sewer system including the colony sewers were made part of the utilities department about the time all of these headaches became obvious and kept us busy for a long time checking sewers and getting them repaired.

Many leaks occurred in cases where the acid ate through the concrete bottom between number 1 low pressure still and the road. At one time we found we had a canyon over most of this run which was filled with coral sand and a new heavy concrete flume built on top of it. At this point, the acid water coming from the treating plant was diverted through a tile sewer, which was run parallel to the concrete sewer all the way to the separator box. Unfortunately this tile sewer was put together poorly with ordinary cement and it wasn't long before it was found that many of these joints had eaten out and the water was not reaching the separator box. Again we had a canyon below the sewer system.

In 1938 and 1939 we had an expansion program at number one power house which involved putting in a condenser discharge tunnel the full length of the building. This was built under the firing aisle and it was necessary to operate the boilers over planked decking while the work was in progress. We endeavored to have this work done in small sections so that it could be sealed off properly, with concrete, as the work progressed. We were over-ruled in this matter and full length trenches were dug right down to sea level and the oil seepage came in the full length of the power house. This was believed to save considerable labor and operating cost and construction time, but actually the reverse was the case.

On one occasion the oil floating on this water caught fire. We had a fire the full length of the power house, in front of the boilers in the firing aisle. The aisle that ran the length of the power house in front of the boilers was used by the boiler firemen and was called the "firing aisle". For a brief period we did not have access to the boiler fronts to control the boilers. We succeeded in putting the fire out with foam from portable extinguishers. After quite a struggle we did get it put out and kept on operating. It later became necessary to drill holes to sea level under all of the boilers and pump in grout, since explosive gas mixtures were seeping up, through the coral, underneath the boiler furnaces.

### **LAKE TANKER LA SALINAS BURNED AT LAKER DOCKS**

The tanker which burned at the docks was a La Salinas class tanker. And I think it was either the *La Salinas*, or the *Savaneta*. There was complete confusion in rigging the hoses on the dock. The captain, Captain Wright, ordered the ship to cast off, and moved out near the reef where the high pressure water pumps on the tug succeeded in extinguishing the fire. I am pretty sure this fire occurred in 1932. By the time I drove to the foot of the docks, the Dutch marines had taken control. I had forgotten my badge, and they wouldn't let me on the dock, so I sat on shore near the marine office and watched the frustrating procedure.

### **JITJMTMRT COURSES**

Early in the war there were two instructors sent down from the States to teach us how to better instruct our employees how to plan their work. They ran such courses as "JIT" and "JMT." Everybody went through this I believe from L.G. Smith down, in order that we all would be familiar with it. For a demonstration they used "Underwriters Knots." One person taught the other how to make the "Underwriters Knot," demonstrating that first one and then the other knew how to make the knot. Each person, in turn, had to plan a demonstration.

I remember Stewart Harrison decided to teach Tom Brown how to gauge an oil tank. They pretended they had to climb a stairway up on to the oil tank, and Harrison showed Tom how to raise the hatch and let the tape down to gauge the oil in the tank. At this point, he said, "Tom, are you any dizzy when you are up high like this?" And Don What's-his-name was very upset over this whole affair. The program was very amateurish; apparently the instructor assumed that no one knew anything about what they were doing and they were showing us how to begin training personnel properly.

### **POWER HOUSE PUMP PIT FLOODING**

When the number one power house was put in service, all of the original salt water pumps were installed below sea level so they would have positive suction, and they would be more easily primed and started. In 1934, this arrangement was regretted as we had a flooding of the low area. All of the motors became submerged, which resulted in a partial shutdown of the power plant. I was ready to leave on vacation when things began to go to pieces.

Immediately, I began to attempt to get things back to normal. One of the large service water pumps had been open for repairs, and the shift foreman, very ineptly, decided to open the discharge valve all the way. By the time this mess was straightened out, the pit was flooded. Fortunately there were two or three pumps at each end installed above sea level, and these continued to function. So I believe we had two 4,000 kilowatt units and one 7,500 still operating after this debacle. With these we were able to keep the pressure stills on and supply enough power to effect an orderly shutdown. We washed down the pumps with fresh water, and in some cases it was possible to dry them. In the case of others, they had burned out, and rewinding was necessary. We did not have enough coils in stock to rewind all of them, and an emergency air shipment was made. General Electric and Westinghouse cooperated in getting the coils to us as rapidly as possible. An amphibian aircraft landed in the lagoon in front of the colony to unload these coils. The shift foreman, who ordered this disastrous mistake, Van Der Porten, was no longer in the employ of Esso after that mess.

### **PERSONNEL**

Howard Humphreys and Harry Moore both had relatives on the board of directors of Standard of Indiana, but depended entirely on their own ability to make good on the job.

This was also true of John R. Golden who worked for a while as the

power house clerk. I believe he put in only one contract in Aruba before going back to school.

Jake Walsko spent his time in the accounting department as a bachelor until he married a school teacher in about 1943. Her first name was Grace, but neither Bea nor I can remember her maiden name.

Another man from Whiting, Indiana, Tommy Jancosek, must have come soon after this group. He and Jake played on the accounting department ball team. Jake was an outstanding catcher on that team.

### **INSTRUMENT DEPARTMENT**

In Casper, and in Whiting, the instrument department had come under the technical service department. Initially the thought was that the same arrangement would be used in Aruba, and Gerald Cross was the engineer who ordered the instruments from Whiting for the plants. But when the time came to put them into service, there was no one to do the job. This was the reason for my working in my spare time on the instrumentation. A fellow named Roy G. Wiley came to Aruba from Torrance, Colorado where he had worked in an oil refinery. He had been hired to maintain and adjust instruments, but actually hadn't much experience. Management decided at this time to turn the instrument department over to me as part of the utilities department.

I made arrangements to have Harry Moore transferred from the technical service department to be the first instrument department foreman in Aruba. Harry did an outstanding job and before very long was assisted by Paul Jensen, who came early to Aruba.

## **The Gregorio Frank Story**

Gregory Frank was an 18 year old Aruban boy who worked in our Instrument shop when I first met him in 1934. He was a thin, dark skinned young fellow who spoke very good English. He was the "Tool Room Attendant" although I don't think we even had a title for the job. His last name was originally "Franken" and this was legally changed to "Frank" in 1940 when the government inducted Gregorio's brother into the army. At that time the government found there had been an error in recording the family name.

The tool room in which he operated was really a cubby hole with shelving on both sides and there was a window in the outside wall. The door to the tool-room was a half door with a counter on the lower half. It was so narrow that he could stand with one foot on the shelves on one side of the room and one foot on the shelves on the other side. He always wore a white, cloth cap such as golfers used to wear. That was his trademark. He always seemed even tempered and never lost his cool. He was very agile and he later became noted over the island as Aruba's best soccer player.

He and I became good friends and one time he, Rudi Beaujon, and I worked together on a project to make a loud speaker cabinet for our amplifying systems. We made the cabinets of 3/4" thick Surinam Plywood which had a beautiful grain. We found a circuit diagram in the Popular Mechanics Magazine and we wound our own coils. The cabinets had a 12" bass reflex speaker and three - 5" diameter tweeters. For some reason Rudi couldn't work on his cabinet so I put it together and wound up with two of these cabinets. Greg and I borrowed a pick up truck and took the 4' x 8' plywood sheets down to the carpenter shop in the refinery and cut the pieces we needed. We assembled them at our house in our patio. This was when we lived in Bungalow #366. We found an employee who was from British Guiana who had a saw table that would cut the thin trim strips we used to finish the edges of the cabinets. These strips had four grooves lengthwise which added to the looks of the cabinets.)

### **GOI RELATES HIS STORY IN HIS OWN WORDS:**

(Goi is the diminutive of Gregorio as he is called by friends and family) I began to work with Lago August 23, 1933. Prior to that time, I had completed 2 years of high school, (that's all the schooling we had

available at that time) I applied for a job at the Eman's Bank, now known as the Aruba Bank. Mr. Eman told me the one opening he had was filled just a week before, but he said he would give me a letter of recommendation to Lago, where he had good contacts.

A week after I delivered that letter to the personnel office, I was called by Mr. Balanco, the man in charge of hiring local people, and he told me I should report to work the following day, which was August 23, 1933.

When I reached the Instrument Department, which was called the Combustion Department in those days, I almost ran back home. Number One Power House and the Air Compressor House were making such noises I never heard before. You can imagine what I thought. When I was about 7 years old I first heard the noise of a car. And a little later I heard the noise of an airplane. I came from Noord, where you only hear the noise of a truck maybe three times a day! In addition to that noise, terrible gas fumes were coming from the acid treating plant just east of us. Each time they have an acid or caustic line leak, we had to run out to the ice plant or to the storehouse area!

My brother had started to work 2 weeks before me. He told me to hold on, I would get used to it. He was working for the Engineering Department.

I had a hell of a time with Lou Crippen in that old instrument shop across from No. 1 Power House. At the time I was the "tool room boy," and we had a sort of cooperative lunch arrangement. I had to hide our rolls, lunch meat etc, which we were ordering from the old commissary every morning. He loved them.

I remember when we were working together in the pyrometer room. At the time our shop was located in a steel framed building covered with corrugated galvanized metal. It had been used for something else before the Combustion Department took it over. That was what we were called at that time. The floor space of the building was about 120 feet x 100 feet. The main shop area covered 100 x 100 feet on the south side of the building. The offices covered a strip about 15 feet wide and ran the length of the building on the north side. There was a separate office on the west side that was 15 x 15 feet. This was Mr. W. L. Ewart's office. At the time he was superintendent of the Combustion Department which included the Instrument and Electric Departments, the No 1 Power House, the Compressed Air Plant and the Ice Plant. The latter three elements were located along the coast across the Main East West roadway that ran through the refinery a short distance from the shore of

the Lagoon. These units were just across the road and to the west of our shop.

We were called the Combustion Department in those days. The main shop took up an area 100 x 200 feet on the south side of the building. The offices took up an area of 20 x 200 feet between the shop and the north wall of the building. A 20 x 20 feet office on the west side of the building was where the pyrometer room was located. It had a doorway opening into the general shop area. I was working on the thermocouple bench. Louie Crippen kept touching my back with a large screw driver, and I was unable to do my work on the thermocouples. So one of the times he did that, I gave his hand one of a donkey back kick and the large screw driver flew up and got stuck in the ceiling, missing a large light fixture by a hair thickness. After that there was no horse-play for a long time.

He and Jossy Bislick, a local worker, used to calibrate displacement meters, when the test rack was behind the instrument shop, right by the window of the small tool crib. Jossy liked night life, and therefore came to work half asleep, then any chance he got he would climb into the large water test tank and go to sleep. Whenever the foreman asked for him, we threw some bolts against the tank to wake him up. He was a helper to Crippen at that time. So we decided to stop this nonsense. And one morning when all the foremen were in a meeting, and Mr. Jossy went to take his regular nap, Crippen waited about 20 minutes, and then opened the six inch inlet valve they used for checking six inch displacement meters, and gallons of sea water was rushing into the tank.

It didn't take long that Mr. Jossy came out of that tank, like the Flying Nun, all soaking wet. That was the last day in the tank for him, and up to this date (I see him every day) he never found out who did it. It is a good thing also, because he is a strong fellow and would make two of me!

I remember one day Dwight Fryback was working 4:00 to 12:00 and jumped on one of the work benches, I can almost visualize it like it was yesterday. It was the middle bench against the south wall, and accidentally he knocked over and broke a full bottle of muriatic acid that Charlie Schlehta was using for cleaning Foxboro Controller mechanisms. At this time the displacement meter test rack was still in the middle of the main shop, and the acid went all over the bench. Well, it took poor Fryback only a fraction of a second to sit flat in the six inch displacement meter body, which normally was level full with water. And he sat there with all his bottom and I mean his entire bottom in the



meter body for several seconds. Luckily for him the meter body was full of water at the time. That happened so fast that it took us several minutes before the whole shop burst out laughing. Poor Dwight just smiled, but he didn't say one word. After several minutes, he got into the four to twelve shift's pickup truck and went back home to change clothes and take a shower!

I can't remember much about Cyril Rex except how as shop foreman he hopped around helping his men do their work. He always put an "O" on the end of a word and acted like he thought he was speaking Spanish. He would say, "Come on, hand me that el wrencho and let's turn that el valvo." And being English, he was always bedeviling Gus Stutzman about the "square heads." (Ironic as it seems, I later found Rex was married to a German woman).

Gus Stutzman always called me Shody, but we got along very well until he was picked up and shipped off to concentration camp in Bonaire when Germany invaded Holland.

We called Joe Josephson, Joe Peligroso. He actually did not need a telephone; you could hear him from number 12 viscosity unit, or even the acid plant office! (These units were at the extreme ends of the refinery)

Virgil Emanuel was a local mechanic from Saint Vincent. He was working with Ellie Wilkins on the flow meter bench. One day the poor fellow broke the spindle of a Brown flow meter stuffing box. The spindle, a precision machined shaft made to withstand 500 P.S.I.G, connected the float in the float chamber to the flow pen through a "stuffing box." The "stuffing box" as it was commonly called, provided a seal which prevented process liquid or gas in the float chamber from leaking to the inside of case of the meter. This leak could ruin the paper chart as well as the mechanical (or electric) clock that caused the chart to revolve through a 24 hour period. Wilkins was really mad and poor Emanuel was so scared that he told Wilkins not to tell the boss, that he would make a new spindle. As you remember these came as a "mated" unit with the stuffing box, to prevent any possible leak. In those days we were only allowed to carry one spare set in stock. Believe it or not, using only hand tools, that guy made a spindle to fit the stuffing box, and when it was tested, there was no leak under maximum working pressure. All of the foreign staff mechanics on the benches were surprised at this. Well it didn't take long after that, our Emanuel was made first class mechanic. You know how he had a broad smile with a mouth full of big white teeth.

I only remember Eddy Pfeiffer as a nice quiet person and very polite.

Al Zucchini (our Italian Shop Foreman) was a good, smart and technical man, but he only liked himself and no one else. However I still learned a good bit from him.

Carl Reichart, a nasty German, was caught stealing information from Mr. Ewart's desk, just before the war. He was given 8 hours to leave the island. Later we heard he was a German spy.<sup>10</sup>

Last we heard from Paul Jensen, he was in St. Croix.

I can remember that the very first day after work when I reached home, I told my mother, I will only work in that place for one month; that's all. But I stayed there for 44 years!

Mr. Burbage, the pipe fitter foreman, to me he was always very cooperative when I needed a meter piping installation. He was the one that told me once, that someday we will do our own meter piping. That day came.

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<sup>10</sup>*At the time this happened I had a desk near the doorway to Bill Ewart's office. I remember when this incident took place one evening when no one was in the offices. Everyone heard about it the next day.*

## **The Dwight & Barbara Fryback Story**

I was born on a farm near Thorntown, Indiana 3/31/08. We moved to Frankfort, Indiana when I was five years old. I started grade school there and in 1921 we moved to West Lafayette, Indiana. There I finished grade school and three years of high school. I got a job in Chicago with the Brown Instrument Company and went to night school. I attended Lane Technology School to finish high school. I didn't get to college because of the Depression!

### **GOING TO ARUBA**

I was twenty seven years old when I was hired in New York to go to Aruba; I had to get a map to find out where it was. We sailed from Bayonne, New Jersey on January 2, 1934 on the Paul S. Harwood; there was 10" of snow on the ground and fog for two days and nights and was I sick! My room mate was a pipefitter named Claude Eklund, also sick. It took us 5 1/2 days to get to Aruba.

My salary was 92 1/2 cents an hour which was big money in those days. They put me and Claude in B.Q.4 room 411. I lived in that room until Bobbie and I were married March 22, 1944.

Bobbie Maas was born on June 28, 1912 in El Paso, Texas. She was 16 years old when she went to Aruba with her parents in December of 1931. She says the trip took six days.

Amie Maas went to Aruba as supervisor of the Commissary, Cold Storage, and Dining Hall. They lived in Bungalow 80 and later moved to Bungalow 359.

When Bobbie and I were married we were assigned Bungalow #303 which Bill Weber had just vacated for another Bungalow. Chich Berrisford had been the previous occupant.

Amie Maas had regular poker games at his bungalow. This group included Adolph Halpert, Harmon Poole, Eddie McCoart, Rade Broz, Gilbert Brooks, and three fellows from Oranjestad.

### **THE COLONY**

The original road to Oranjestad went past the *sheep sheds*, around the Tank Farm and through San Nicholas. After going through San Nicholas the road turned to the right just before you got to the Spanish Lagoon. The road went through Frenchman's Pass and then along the East end of the old Air Port and on into Oranjestad.

Our brackish water came from the Magnel Cora Well down the hill southwest of the Seroe Colorado Light House.

The Lago Church services were held in the school house yard and also in the Dining Hall by Jack Emery and George Wilkins. The new church was designed by Norman Shirley.

Our Laundry was first run by Arthur Krottenaur, Sr., then successively by Pop Eveland, Preston Hunt, and Gene Keesler.

When I first arrived in Aruba I met Elmer and Jo Robbins and their daughter Margaret. Margaret found out that I had never been to B. A. Beach. One Sunday she invited me go along with a bunch that was going to the beach. Margaret was wearing a two piece swim suit and warned me to be careful of the rough water and undertow. The breakers were rolling in real high so I sat down on the sand to watch those going in. Margaret and five of them ran out and dived in. The next thing a large breaker caught them and here they came tumbling head over heels and upside down. Margaret landed on the sand right beside me covered with sand. She had lost her bra and didn't know it. You know I never did look for that bra!

The Marine Club was having a big dance and just before the dance they found out that the sewer was plugged to the men's and women's toilets. They called out Joe Josephson from the Colony to unplug it. By this time of night Joe had taken on a few drinks, as usual. He and his men did everything possible to get it unplugged. Finally Joe had his men hook up a fire hose to the fire hydrant downstream from the Club House and connect it to the sewer line. Well they gave it full line pressure and the sewer line was unplugged. The walls and ceiling of the Men's and Women's rest rooms were covered with you know what! That is when the real work started.

The only members of Marv Case's Dance Band that we can remember are Marv and Amy Hogue.

Some of the Basket Ball players that Bobbie and I can remember are: Dr. Reeve, Kenny Springer, Kenny Schulenberg, Henry Becknell, Joe Faulstich, Bob Baum, K. Jelf, R. Linkogle, Frosty Litherland, George Mathews, F. Sandell, Si Yates, Paul Hargrove, Tommy Emmitt, and P. W. Moak.

You have to add Butch Borsch to the list of interesting people of the Colony. He was the Colony Bootlegger for many years when he lived in the B. Q.

Ralph Humphrey was one of the Colony's best photographers for passport pictures, portraits, etc.

Right after the American troops arrived to guard our refinery and Aruba a big Costume Dance was held. The Gun Club put on this dance at the old Esso Club with prizes awarded for the best costumes, etc. As usual at such events during wartime, the officers of the Army were invited but not enlisted men.

## **WORLD WAR II**

Bobbie and I decided to dress up as a soldier and a nurse. So I went to the commissary and bought a pair of khaki pants and a khaki shirt. I already had a pair of brown work shoes which I polished good. Then I went to the Army Camp in Savaneta and borrowed a hat, a canteen and a cartridge belt. Bobbie got a nurses uniform from Miss Marian Wylie, the head nurse at the hospital.

When Bobbie and I went on the dance floor we passed by Dr. Reeves table. The commanding officer and a fellow officer were sitting there. The commanding officer got up and came over to us and said: "Soldier no enlisted men are allowed at this dance, get back to camp!" By this time I was feeling no pain and said: "Yes, Sir!" and danced away from him. He came right after me and said: "Soldier I said get out of here now or I will have the MP's take you out!" Why, I don't know but I reached over and pinched his cheek. He then grabbed me. At this point Mr. Odis Mingus, our refinery manager, who happened to be sitting at Dr. Reeves table also got up and joined us. He explained to the officer that I was a Lago Employee; that I was not wearing a soldier's uniform and that this was a Costume Dance. The officer was still mad as hell when we moved away. Bobbie and I won a prize for having one of the best costumes at the dance. Our pictures are in the February 27, 1942 Aruba Esso News.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*Dwight was promoted to a sub-foreman and then Foreman in the Instrument Department. He was about 5'8" tall and weighed about 175 pounds. He had sandy hair, and reddish complexion. He was muscular and well built as they say. After the war he became the night Mechanical Foreman for the refinery. He worked a steady 4 p.m. to 12 midnight shift. He supervised all of the ten Mechanical Crafts that were working on this shift.*

## **The R. Gene Goley Story**

My parents were living in Enid, Oklahoma at the time I was born. My mother went to be with her mother in Winfield, Kansas at the time of my birth in 1929. I graduated from Enid High School where I played the trumpet in the band. I got a B.S. from the University Of Colorado in 1951. While in college I was a member of the Phi Delta Theta fraternity, and the Engineer's Club.

### **GOING TO ARUBA**

In 1951 Standard Oil of New Jersey was sending recruiters to universities to interview students; they interviewed me and offered me a job in Venezuela. I was all set to go, but just before the departure date, they said they had made a mistake--the job didn't exist. They wanted me to go to Aruba; the company there was planning an expansion at that time. I checked around and was unable to find anyone who had either been to or heard of Aruba.

I was 22 when I flew to Aruba from Miami. On the plane with me was a civil engineer, a fellow by the name of Jim Nagle. We were met in Aruba by Ray Colman. His wife, Connie, was away, and he took us out to dinner that night. He also loaned me enough money to pay duty on some things that I had picked up along the way.

### **HOUSING**

The first bungalow that I rented was number 209, and it's still there. We bachelors usually rented from ship's captains who were away for six month's vacation, but I lived in bachelor quarter's number eight for a long time.

When my wife and I were married in 1961, we moved into bungalow 712. Ruben White had lived in that house prior to us.

### **PERU & POINTS SOUTH**

In 1963, we went to Talara, Peru where we spent three years. In Peru, I was division head of engineering in the mechanical engineering department. My boss there was Hap Young (formerly of Barrancabermeja, Colombia). I'm not sure where Hap went from Talara, but I think it might have been Cartagena. Eventually he wound up in Aruba where he worked in the mechanical department. He had two daughters and his wife, Jean, had red hair. Hap is no longer with us; he died of cancer two years ago.

A geologist friend, whom I knew from Talara, was transferred to Bogota, Colombia, where I later visited him. While I was there, he had to inspect a well that had come in. He and I flew down to Barrancabermeja. Felix De La Mata was manager of that refinery then.

### **AND BACK AGAIN**

My wife and I returned to Aruba in 1966, first moved into bungalow number 1567, and then into 275--where we have lived for seventeen or eighteen years. John Brown, the marine department manager, used to live in 275.

Laura, my wife, is from Virginia. She was married once before, and she had lived in Venezuela. She had two daughters, Kathy and Mittie. We have had two sons, Duval and Frank. Duval is 20 and goes to Tulane University in Louisiana. Frank, the younger son, who just left today, March 18, 1985, goes to Woodbury Forest School in Virginia, north of Charlottesville.

### **JOBS AT ARUBA**

When I came to Aruba, the job they had for me was not the one I had been hired for. But I later worked on several buildings. I designed a new dining hall up on the hill to replace the old one across from the general office building. I designed the Light Oils Finishing building, and I worked on the high school and the auditorium there.

I stayed in the technical department and advanced first to Engineer, grade C, and then to Engineer, grade B.

When we had our first labor strike in August of 1951, I had been here about three weeks. I was so new; I didn't know what a refinery looked like. They took everybody from the offices and put them to work in the refinery to replace the strikers. Finally I was all by myself in the office. A guy came in and asked if I wanted to go to work, and I said, "Sure." They put me on number one combination unit. I remember it had four furnaces. The expatriate operator I had never met who was in charge of this unit said, "Gene, I've got this position of houseman open."

A houseman was the man who went around recording the readings of all the meters on the run sheet on the control room desk.

The expatriate operator on the unit said, "But Bob Eula has been around a long time - do you mind being fireman and let him be houseman?" And I said, "That's fine with me, I don't care." So I think I was houseman for one shift. And then Bob came. The job only took 10 minutes every hour and after you did it a couple of times there was

nothing to it.

Bob Eula, who had been our fireman until I came along, was a fellow who always looked busy. He was another fellow who worked in the office. He carried a clip board and was always writing on it.

When Bob took over, he worked his rear end off. He double checked all of his figures, and checked them again.

At this time Gene Keesler was in charge of the laundry but he was also an old operator and they brought him back on the units. And he said, "Okay, Goley, I am going to take you out and show you how to change a burner." In those days office workers wore white shirts and white pants. He said, "Now see all of these valves. Now we've got to turn this one off, then we've got to turn that one off, and then we turn this one off, and be sure to turn that one off." Then he said, "I'm going to show you how it goes once, and then I want you to do it." So he went on and turned off the first valve, and then he turned off the second one. I noticed he didn't turn off the third valve, but I didn't say anything. He yanked that burner out and of course there was a steady stream of oil coming out the open valve. It splattered all over the ground and it got all over his white pants. He looked at me, threw that burner on the ground, and said, "Well, now you know why it's important to turn off that valve." I was never sure if he did that on purpose. He could have done it to teach me a lesson. I've changed many a burner since then, and I've always thought of Gene when I did.

I'll never forget that he told me that if you keep the chart pen steady on the proper temperature, make it draw a straight line, it would result in a much better product.

At first I overcompensated. It got too hot, too cold, and then it got too hot. Finally I learned; I had the chart pen drawing a straight line. But after a couple of shifts there was not much to do, so the operator had us clean the whole place, and he had us paint it. He was in seventh heaven because the place looked so good.

And the first day the strikers came back to work we were required to overlap one shift. The experienced fireman on this unit couldn't or wouldn't keep that temperature pen drawing a straight line. It seemed to me that he didn't really care. It really irritated me--the man I had replaced was so careless that even an inexperienced novice like me could do a better job than he could.

During the August 1951 strike some of the ladies of the colony operated the post office. They cleaned that place out, found old



undelivered mail, and organized it like it had never been before.

They also went into the Esso Club and cleaned and reorganized it like new. The kids of the colony took on the jobs of waiters and waitresses, and the service was never better. The Chinese cooks lived in because they couldn't go out the gate or the union would get after them.

The Edeleanu plant was down and they had almost finished the turn-around when the 1951 strike took place. After about 3 days, Vance Burbage said if he had the bodies, he would finish the turn-around. He got his people, put the unit back together, and the operating people put the unit back in service.

During the following turn-around, they took the unit apart, and when they went into vessels, they found all kinds of things had been left inside. Scaffolding was found in one vessel. It seems that accountants weren't aware that scaffolding and other materials and equipment had to be removed before the vessels were buttoned back up.

The army wanted me in 1954. When I originally came to Aruba in 1951, the Korean Conflict was at hand, and I had to get permission from the draft board to leave the States. They said, "Oh! Yes! You are going to work for an oil company that is an essential industry. They drafted me when it was over because there were no essential industries without a war. I served a two year hitch in the army, taking my basic training at Fort Bliss in El Paso, Texas. The remainder of my hitch, I spent at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, near Washington, D.C. I was in what was called the Engineering Test Unit in the Engineer Corps. It was interesting work; we tested new equipment before it was adopted officially for use by the Engineer Corps. Malcolm Murray and I were in the same unit. One day I found a note on my bunk from Mac which said, "I'm here!"

When I came back to Aruba in 1966, we modernized Aruba's operations. I worked on our biggest tank, a crude oil storage tank that had a capacity of about 440,000 barrels. The spheroid tanks (designed by Louie Lopez) on the southeast corner of the tank farm above the colony held aviation gasoline during the war. These were replaced with 80,000 to 100,000 barrel tanks because the supporting structure of the older tanks failed. We rebuilt pipe stills 9 and 10, and the combination units 5 through 8. Units 1 through 4 and unit 11 have been dismantled. The new pipe stills are able to process between 80,000 to 100,000 barrels a day. The low and high octane plants are gone, as is the catalytic cracking plant.

## **LIFE IN THE COLONY**

The entrance to the caves in the colony is right next to our bungalow (275). Baby Beach is still as pretty as ever. B.A. Beach is still out there, but it has a little oil on it now. I think most of the sand on our beaches is from coral, and I don't believe you will find any finer beaches anywhere!

In the early days everyone had a two month vacation, and everybody traveled by tanker. There was a fellow in the mechanical department, who for sake of this story we will call Joe. A group of fellows always had a going away party at the Marine Club for one of their buddies who were departing, and they were doing a party for Joe. Somehow Joe always managed to miss his ship when it sailed, and his boss was determined that he wasn't going to miss it this time. He told one of Joe's buddies he was to be responsible for seeing that Joe got on ship before it sailed.

Time of the departure came, and they began to become concerned that he wouldn't make it. The man responsible for seeing Joe off told them not to worry; he had everything under control. This guy took Joe down and put him on the pilot boat that was to pick up the pilot from Joe's ship when it cleared the harbor. That way Joe would be able to party until the last minute; and he would get on his ship when the pilot got off. The hour came, and as planned, Joe was put on the pilot boat. Everyone at the party breathed a sigh of relief, and they got down to the serious business of partying. Some time later, Joe, walked into the Marine Club. The responsible buddy was unbelieving. Somehow, instead of getting on the pilot boat which was to pick up the pilot from the outbound ship, Joe got on the one that was delivering a pilot to an inbound ship. When the ship docked, he got off and returned to the party.

We used to have three types of water in the houses: salt water in the sewer system; brackish water for the gardens; and fresh water for cooking, drinking, washing clothes and bathing. A few years back we discontinued the salt water system because maintenance of lines and equipment was too expensive. Brackish water was substituted.

I worked with Jack Opdyke in Cub Scouting. We later had a Sea Scout post, and Ira Kirkman from the equipment inspection department was its advisor while I was his assistant. We fixed up an old fishing boat with a motor. The Craane family, who owned a hardware store, had a 70 foot sailing boat that traveled among the islands carrying produce. The Sea Scouts and their leaders went on an all day trip with them once. I

have been in scouting for the last 12 years. Lately, I have been the scouting coordinator in Seroe Colorado. We have had a very active program, and our sponsor is the church, which has the troop charters hanging on its walls. There was a gap in the program when there were no active units.

I remember the small narrow gauge railroad was here when I came and they used it to move the hospital up to its final location after I came.

Joe Josephson and his wife, Minn used to live across the street from us. And they were noisy.

The last of the old timers that were here were: Lee Stanley, Clyde Rodkey, George Cvejnovich, and Pete Storey. I think Pete had been here 38 years or something like that.

I am trying to think of the name of a tall, lanky fellow who lived in the two story bachelor quarters. The bachelor quarters were built in the shape of an "H", and each floor had a veranda on the inside of the "H" which acted as a hallway connecting all of the rooms. The veranda had a regular wooden railing, and at each end was a stairway. This fellow, whose name I can't remember, lived on the lower floor. It was his habit to vault over the railing to get to the ground level. One evening he was at a party on the second floor, and when he left the party, he automatically vaulted over the railing, fell two floors and broke both of his legs.

There was a fellow by the name of Boyd Bastian who, with three other fellows, owned a Mooney Mite airplane that they kept at the Flying Club. One of them had forgotten to put down the landing gear and broke a blade off the propeller. One Fourth of July we had a parade and a picnic in the colony, as was our custom. Boyd, a short, stocky laboratory chemist, had a few too many beers as was his custom, and he went out to the Flying Club field and examined the jagged edge of the broken propeller on their plane with an engineer's practical eye. He went home, returned with a saw which he used to remove the jagged edge of the broken propeller. He then sawed off the other blade to match. You can imagine how fast that engine turned over with the propeller missing several inches, and lightened by pounds. Boyd managed to get the thing off the ground and he buzzed the parade and the picnic. By the time he landed at De Vuijst Field, the whole board of the Flying Club was there, and they grabbed him. The police showed up after he had gone and they had 27 counts of reckless flying against him. They found out where he lived, but when they went to his room they couldn't find him. About 2:00 the next morning a cable was received from one of the tanker

captains who said he had a stowaway on board. Bastian! Apparently some of his friends had put him aboard on this tanker to keep him out of the authorities' hands. I heard he later worked for the company up in New York.

Aruban music is one of our favorite forms of entertainment. We are especially fond of the Aruban Waltz. Danny Croes whose Galleria Moderna in Oranjestad stocks Aruban music. He used to work for Lago.

The colony church was designed and built by Norm Shirley in 1939. Ten years ago, the congregation of the church dwindled so drastically that we couldn't support a minister. We searched for retired ministers. We offered them a house, a car, paid their utilities, and paid them as much as they could earn without disqualifying them for Social Security. Bob Stewart, the minister you met at the church this last Sunday, came a year ago last September. He retired August 31st, and September first he came to us. He and his wife, Doris, have been here almost a year and a half now.

Bill Rae, who was also called "Scotty", died about a year ago. His daughter, Joanne Rae, married Peter Storey, and they left about a year ago to live Casper, Wyoming.

We are Presbyterians. My dad is very active in his church back home. He is an elder and his wife is a building elder.

There was one fouled up order that I can remember; the time they re-shingled the church. They ordered new shingles, and the shingles were shipped in bundles on pallets. The Labor Department asked where the storehouse wanted them, and they were told the shingles should be delivered directly to the church. The shingles began arriving, and the Labor Department men kept stacking them on the side of the road near the church. Shingles begin to pile up, and they soon had shingles everywhere. Unfamiliar with how shingles came, those responsible ordered 1,200 squares to cover their 1200 square feet of roof. Twelve hundred squares in roofing parlance actually translate to 1200 times 100 square feet, or 120,000 square feet! They had enough shingles to cover their church 100 times over.

The Schoonmakers were active members of the Colony theater group. They also used to direct plays. George Quakenbos was a fellow who worked in the clinic. He was quite a director, and I used to be in his plays from time to time. He had a habit of throwing out a cue line for the third act when the players were doing the first act. When they realized they were being given the wrong cue, they would shout, "Hey! We're not

in the third act; we're supposed to be in the first act!" He would then throw out the correct line. He did that just for the hell of it, just to keep them on their toes.

In the 50's, before I was married, I directed the play, *Laura*, the one in which Gene Tierney played the lead. We presented the play here in the colony during the Oranjestad Culture Center's month long opening celebration when the culture center was opened in Oranjestad. The house was packed. I remember that Peter Storey was in all our plays.

When Princess Beatrix visited here 25 years ago, the Yacht Club put on a regatta. Norm Driebeck and I had a small catamaran. The princess was very interested in this particular boat. Norm was Dutch, and at the time he must have been 23 years old--a nice looking fellow. One of her aides came over and got into a conversation with Norm. The aide said he would talk to the princess and that she might like to take a sail with him. Every body knows the Dutch are sailors as much of their land has been reclaimed from the sea. The princess was eager to sail on our catamaran, so Norm took her for a sail. Her aides followed in a motor boat, but they weren't prepared for the speed at which our catamarans moved. They had trouble keeping up with it, and were more than a little concerned about her safety.

Norm went to Oklahoma State University as an exchange student. When I arrived in the bachelor quarters the first day, there were a bunch of guys there. I remember at that time there was a difference of a half hour between Aruba and Miami as compared to the one hour we now observe. I was a little confused as to whether it was a half hour later or a half hour earlier so I asked what time it was. One of the guys asked if my name was Gene Goley, and when I replied it was, he questioned if I was from Enid, Oklahoma.

I said, "Sure!"

He continued, "You have a sister named Jodie, who's married to Dean Durrel, don't you?"

I replied eagerly, "Yeah! Where are you from?"

"I'm from Holland!"

"Aw, come on!" I was disbelieving at first, but it turned out that he had gone to Oklahoma State University. Not only was he a fraternity brother of my brother-in-law, but he knew my sister. He had heard I was coming to Aruba, and he chanced to come down two months before I did, so he was looking for me.

I remember one Christmas tree delivery in Aruba. Everybody must remember how we all got excited about the Christmas trees when they arrived, and how they would go down to the club and fight over them. Well, one year the trees were supposed to be there on a Saturday, but they were delayed. When they did get in, the storehouse had a list of the people who ordered trees, and they decided to be innovative by delivering them. That sounded innocent enough in the beginning, but it became more hectic than a Chinese fire drill before it was all over. The word got out about the deliveries, and women began chasing the darned truck from stop to stop, trying to get the best trees. The commissary truck had a terrible time delivering them.

Ed O'Brien of the Safety Department was one of those who got his amateur radio operator's license in Aruba when a whole bunch of guys applied for their license. He used to live next door to me. One night while I was living in bungalow 209, I came in late, and to my surprise, I could hear someone talking in my house. I crept in to catch the culprit who had entered my house without my permission. No one was there. A voice was coming out of my hi-fi set although it was switched off. After that I could always hear Ed transmitting when my hi-fi was turned off and he was busy sending his signals into the ether.

At the crossroads near the still existent bungalows 370 and 371 there are a couple of street signs. One of them says "Colorado Point," and has an arrow pointing up the hill towards the beacon that replaces the old lighthouse. On the right side of the road is a bunch of cement block buildings called the "Seaview Apartments," which overlook the Baby Lagoon. A little further along the road, and just at the bottom of the hill, there is a roadway which bears to the left, leading to less elegant wood apartments with kerosene stoves. The stoves were the cause of occasional fires. This used to be where you lived first while you waited for a regular bungalow. A couple by the name of Randolph lived in them. He got drunk one night, went up the hill, and began to throw rocks at the corrugated roofs of nearby apartments. It made a hell of a racket.

#### **ARUBA & THE COLONY IN 1985**

On the lower end of the refinery, you can see the hydrosulphurization units. At one time we made 300 tons of sulphur a day. The acid plant has been gone for quite some time. Aruba stopped making its own acid and began importing it.

And then I was in the economics and long range planning group. Harold Ashlock, a bachelor, was in that group for years. At present, I am division superintendent of general services.

Land crabs are still around, but hermit crabs are more numerous. They are unwelcome pests who come into our gardens and eat our plants. I found some in my garden just the other night. Hermit crabs, as you know, outgrow their old shells and must change into a larger one.

You will still see the fishermen and their nets catching bait fish in the lagoon in the evenings.

There is a pair of the nine inch owls living in the ground at the old Five Corners and there is another pair across the street from the new playground, next to the sidewalk. There are quite a few in the colony, and we try to protect them in our Seroe Colorado Preserve for Wild Animals. The area, formerly occupied by the 400 row of bungalows, is overgrown with vegetation now and there are many species of wild life there. There is an abundance of quail which are the approximate size of quail found in the States. Our quail have a little tuft on their head, and look more like grouse. I saw some this morning across the street and down from my house, in the vicinity of bungalow 267. I see them crossing the road and coming inland. There are many big iguanas in the colony; we protect them. The natives used to shoot and eat them.

On Colorado Point there is an "altar" built by Billy Ranking as an Eagle Scout project. This memorial was in honor of his stateside Scout Master who died before Billy came to Aruba. This is where our Colony church will have our coming Easter sunrise service. In recent years we have had three Eagle Scouts in our troop. One was Billy Ranking, another was Mark Scheld, whose father was vice president of Lago at the end, and the third is my son, Frank. They both became Eagle Scouts in 1982. Frank's Eagle Scout project was teaching a group of boys to play soccer. He went to the village and rounded up a group of boys who had never played soccer, trained and coached them.

We have a Meals-on-Wheels program here in Aruba. Berger, "Birdie", Viapree, a Methodist who used to work at Lago, is very active in the program. I think he worked in the storehouse.

There are about 78 students in the Lago School System at this time. When Lago ceases to exist, and the school year is over, the parents have formed an association to make this an international school. I believe the high school graduated their last seniors in June of 1966. Since that time they had students through the 9th grade only. The former high school building has been occupied by the general services for 8 years, and I have been here for three and a half years.

There are 186 houses in Seroe Colorado now, and there are forty

foreign staff employees. A year and a half ago there were more than a hundred. We will all be out of here by the end of this June. I think we are to dismantle the refinery, and we hope to sell the houses. The community will continue, and we might keep the church going. We have been completely renovating houses every five years, painting the kitchens and bathrooms every two and a half years. The houses have been extensively modified and modernized. Almost fifty have had central air-conditioning installed and they have been carpeted throughout. Glass windows have replaced the wooden shutters. We've done as many as we thought it would take to house our expatriates.

Since 1963 the occupants have owned their furniture. I don't know what arrangements were made, but since that time people brought their own furniture. We pay the same rates for the utilities that everyone else pays on the island. It is very expensive. My water bill is about \$150.00 a month, and my electric bill is well over \$200.00. We have been purchasing our utilities from the government plant for over 10 years. We used to buy a minimum of 22 megawatts from the government and we could buy more. The company use 50 megawatts, and we generated the balance. The company charges the same for the electricity as the government does.

The hospital has been torn down, but we have a clinic in the north side of the school building. Since the company hospital was dismantled, we go to the old San Pedro hospital in Oranjestad. The Dutch have constructed a new hotel-like hospital, the Horacio Oboder, near the hotels on the north side of Oranjestad, and our son, Frank, was born there. Doctors on its staff are from Aruba, Holland and Colombia.

There was a barbershop near the 200 row of bungalows, and a ball field behind it. In the same area was the commissary, the Boy Scout house and the youth building. The barber shop in the Esso Club is no longer there, but they have a beauty shop where men may get their ears lowered.

The Women's Club is fifty years old this year. Laura is quite active in it. Raisa Wilson, this year's president, lives at Balashi. Her husband is vice president in charge of the Saybolt Inspection Company. One of the founders of the Women's Club was Mrs. L.G. Smith. We know one of their married daughters, Lucy. She lives in Lynchburg, Virginia, Laura's hometown. They sent Lucy and her brother, Gerald, a doctor in Casper, Wyoming, an invitation. Both came down for the celebration and were here for four days.

In Oranjestad there is a culture center on the right just as you enter



from San Nicholas. On its front lawn is a bust of L.G. Smith who was President of Lago Oil and Transport Co. Ltd. when I first came here.

If you drive up to Colorado Point and look back towards the colony you will see a bunch of pipes sticking out of the coral. These pipes are vents for the Mangle Cora well tunnel system which is actually an extensive system for collecting rain water as it falls on the large area below Colorado Point on the colony side. We are phasing this system out so that after Lago pulls out, there will only be fresh water in the colony. The brackish water system was also quickly corroded by the action of the salt in the water; it was too expensive to maintain. It depends on the time of year, but salt content of the brackish system varies between 8,000 parts per million during the dry season and 2,000 parts per million during the rainy season.

There is another brackish water well, known as the Girl's Dormitory Well. It is located right behind the colony gasoline station, and a small fenced in sub-station. One of the nearby tanks leaked oil into it, and we can't use it. The girl's dormitory has been gone for years, but we had an extensive repair program underway to seal the tanks. We have replaced all of the tank bottoms, and we will get the well cleaned up one of these days. The government is very interested in these wells as a golf course is planned in anticipation of an increase in the tourist trade.

There is one well out by the Aruba Golf Club. A cliff behind the club drops down to the pitch pile, and if you drive out the coast road that runs from the Sea Grape Grove gate, you will see a pipe that goes up to a little green building. This well provides the water to irrigate the fairways at the Golf Club. They haven't been maintaining this system very well since the club has been on its own.

I don't know when the Commissary bus system stopped, but I remember that they had it when our kids were in school.

I played the alto horn in the community band, and McReynolds played the tuba. The leader, a Dutchman by the name of Jan Koulman, was the school's music teacher. His American wife, Mary Lou, was also a musician. They now live in Texas. Don Evans was in the band, I think he also played the tuba.

I don't remember what instrument Don Kurtz played. We had a band of about 20 people, and our instruments were supplied by the Lago Community Council. We used to practice once a week and give concerts. We all drew for the instrument we would play. I drew the alto horn.

I think the commissary was discontinued as a company business while we were in Peru, between 1963 and 1966. It was taken over by a guy whose name was Voss or Bach, I don't remember which. He was operating it as a private enterprise, and renting the building. But we had such few people in the colony it finally folded.

Bungalow 712, where we had lived before going to Peru, was one of the houses dismantled while we were gone. My wife was in tears when she learned of it; we had worked hard remodeling it.

The 50/15 plan took place while we were in Peru. This was the company's plan to retire you with a full pension if you were fifty years old and had 15 years of service with the company.

The Yacht Club now is a sailing club, and our sailing fleet consists of 15 Sunfish. The Sunfish is essentially an overgrown surfboard with a brightly colored sail; a one man boat. To sail it, you stand up, and steer the boat by setting the sail. We have races one Sunday a month.

I bought a snipe after I had been here three weeks. McReynolds and I won consistently, but he was always across the finish line first.

Skippy Culver's island is a miniscule island inside the reef, a mile off Rodger's Beach. In the early days people went on a two month vacation every two years. The year they didn't go on vacation they had a two weeks "local vacation." Usually they went to Venezuela, or another island such as Curacao. Those who were so inclined worked in their yard, or pursued their hobbies. Skippy Culver decided to spend his "local vacation" on an island inside the harbor that was uninhabited. He built himself a little shelter and camped on this island for two whole weeks. Since that time it has been called Skippy's Island by colony residents.

Lou MacNutt told me a sailing story that bears repeating. In those days they were racing just about every Sunday in Snipes, and they were racing one Sunday when a big squall came up suddenly. The wind blew, and the sky became so black you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. Lew's boat blew over and he righted it, and bailed it out. By that time the sun had come back out, the sky was clear, and it was a beautiful day. He figured he hadn't a prayer of winning; he could see no boats other than his own, so he decided to finish the course just for the heck of it. When he got into the docks he found that he was the only one who had crossed the finish line. He was the winner by default.

I remember the Yacht Club docks used to have a little shed with a winch. Members used to work on their boats on Saturdays or their off

day if they were shift workers. The usual rule of thumb was you worked on your boat four hours for every hour you sailed it. They had canvas decks which had to be varnished, rigging which required attention and the planks had to be caulked. It was a lot of work, but that was part of sailing as any good sailor will tell you.

Laura and I have a cruising sailboat, and we have sailed to Bonaire, Curacao, and Venezuela. From the tip of Colorado Point to the tip of Curacao is 45 miles, but you need to go another 20 miles to find a place to land, making it a good 60 to 70 mile trip. It is 18 miles to the tip of the Paraguana Peninsula on the Venezuelan coast. You may go either to the Amuay side or around to the opposite coast of the peninsula. The Santa Anna Mountain that you can see from Aruba on a clear day is 90 miles distant.

Every once in a while you can still see the top of the wrecked tug boat, "Captain Rodger" near "B.A." Beach at low tide.

The old bowling alleys are not too far from the General Services Building. I don't remember how many alleys there were in the old days, but there are now six alleys at the Esso Club. They had planned eight, but had funds for only six.

## **The Henry & Claire Goodwin Story**

Henry and Claire arrived in Aruba on August 4, 1945. This was the same day that 50,000 barrels of drinking water was being unloaded from a tanker. A valve was left open and Caustic soda was mixed with the drinking water.

Buck Johnson was having a cup of coffee in Number 3 Lab. When he went to rinse out his cup in a sink the water and coffee mix turned blue. Buck, being a good (and alert) chemist, had the water checked and found the problem. An alarm was sent out and the drinking water system was shut down until the contamination was removed. Buck's quick action prevented anyone getting hurt. Sales of anything drinkable in the commissary hit an all time high. The water was turned back on 3 days later.

Bill and Bud Learned had been kind enough to stock the Goodwin's refrigerator with food, a jug of drinking water and plenty of ice cubes on Friday afternoon - B.C. (before Caustic). When Henry and Claire Goodwin arrived on Saturday afternoon they were the only ones to have drinking water with ice cubes at that time. The Learned's had already invited the Goodwin's to dinner on Sunday with the stipulation that they bring their own ice cubes.

### **GOLFING**

Several of the high school boys became pretty good golfers. The Golf Club finally decided to let them compete with the men in the Golf Championship. The wind up was that the final championship match was between Al Leak Sr. and Al Leak Jr., father and son. It was a tight match all the way with neither doing any favors for the other. Al Leak Jr. won the match and the Championship.

John Preston was a pretty good golfer too, and spent a lot of his time teaching high school boys the game. Al Leak Jr., Bob and Bill Burbage, and Skip Goodwin became very good at the game.

## **The Ward H. Goodwin Story**

Ward was born on November 5 1904 in St. Paul, Minnesota. Goodwin went to McAlister College, St. Paul, Minnesota and graduated with a degree in Physical Education in 1928. Ward was married in St. Paul Minnesota. Their children were daughters June and Shirley, and son W. H. II.

He lived and breathed baseball from early school days. A newspaper clipping shows that in 1922 Goodwin played on a semi-professional baseball team at the age of 16.

He explains that the Manager of the team told him to hang around with the team and if and when someone didn't show up for whatever reason that he would put him in the game. On this particular day the team, "The Bunnies", was playing an Exhibition game in Bunny Park in Cedar Rapids, Minnesota. The Manager split his team up and made two teams, one the "Whites" and one the "Grays." They played five innings and the final score was Whites 4 and Grays 3. Ward played left field for the GRAYS with a box score of zero: at bat, runs, hits, outs, assist, and errors! Obviously they didn't let him do much!

In 1929, 6'2", brown hair, blue-eyed Ward was on The York Nebraska baseball club playing the right field position. After being released from that club in May it finally penetrated his thick skull (He says since this was the sixth or seventh time he had been released by a ball club even HE got the message) and he decided that maybe baseball wasn't going to be his life's work.

He said that at that time he made one of the most important decisions of his life. Although he didn't know it at the time! The stock market crash came in October of 1929... After he had already gotten a job in Aruba! In June of that year he sent in a job application to the New York office of Standard Oil of Indiana (Later it was the Standard Oil of New Jersey). He had heard from a friend about maybe he could get a position from. Sure enough the famous O. H. "Jumbo" Shelton offered him a job as a Second Class Helper in the Stills.

He sailed from Providence, Rhode Island in the middle of September 1929 on the ocean tanker *Paul H. Harwood*. Among his shipmates were George Cleveland, C. Gibson, and an electrician whose name he can't remember. The trip took 11 days.

When he arrived in Aruba he never saw the Stills. He was put in the Warehouse with his immediate boss being W. Lawrence and C. Gibson was in charge. He was there about two months when they transferred him to the Personnel Department. Up to that time he wasn't sure just what the Personnel Department did in the refinery. At the time Marvin Case and Russell King were the wheels in the Personnel Department. Marvin Case was moved out to the Laboratories and Ward took his place in the Personnel Department.

He became active in the Baseball programs and wound up organizing Leagues and getting very active support from all departments of the refinery. He also became very active in the Basket Ball programs and was one of the consistently high scorers playing Guard Position for the Personnel Department most of the time during the 1930 season.

During the 1931 season he played forward for the Accounting Basketball Team and over the years he became well known in both Baseball and Basket ball. He was picked as a member of the second string All Star Team and then a full member. He was very popular with the *Pan Aruban* sportswriters and the fans over the years.

He also became the promoter of the boxing fights presenting his first card at the Aruba Boxing Stadium on July 24, 1937. Teaming up with John LaVega of the Warehouse he put boxing on an organized footing.

In September of 1934 the following appeared in *The Pan Aruban*:

#### OLD WOMAN WHO LIVED IN A SHOE

(Modern Local Version)

He came to Aruba a bach'lor,  
But did not remain one for long.  
The tropics and girls man's no match for  
And soon this poor man had gone wrong.

He was married and went to housekeeping  
In a bungalow built for two.  
His family increased while he was sleeping  
As families quite frequently do.

He moved to a house much more spacious,  
The rooms in it now numbered four.  
Yet his family kept growing - good gracious!  
And the doctors predicted some more.

Then the man took his trouble to Atwood;  
And though suave as that person may be,  
To stop fam-i-lies growing, he's not that good.  
"It's a five-roomer for you, I can see."

To Goodwin the man was referred to.  
Ah, there was a man "in the know."  
But Ward merely shrugged and referred to  
The size of his own bungalow!

At the 1933 end-of-the-season Lago Basketball Banquet a questionnaire was passed out to the guests. These provided some enlightening information when they were collected and read out as part of the program.

One question was: "is Goodwin the fastest man in the league? Please be influenced entirely by your own opinion, not his. Give reasons."

The answer selected was: "Yes, by far the fastest on the lip and also nearest to being fast to the floor."

A memorandum dated August 24, 1937 from the Employees General Advisory Committee and signed H. E. Baker - Secretary, K. E. Dillard - Chairman, Leo W. Baldwin - Vice-Chairman, L. G. Harris, W. E. Brown, W. A. Van Oyen, Harry Weinman, Edwin H. Baxter, Ernest R. Hoffman, Leonard S. McReynolds, M. K. Hamilton, and J. D. Reeves says:

Dear Ward,

It was with the most profound regret that the members of the Employees General Advisory Committee learned of your intended departure from Aruba. We speak not only as individuals, but also as representatives of all contract employees, in saying that we have enjoyed working with you. We have at various times asked for, and you have given, information and advice on problems that have confronted us. We have appreciated information and advice.

Now that the time had come when you are about to leave, we feel a great sense of loss.

We wish you all kinds of success in whatever endeavor you may elect to follow in the future, and add that we hope it will be possible to meet again.

From the San Nicholas newspaper "El Despertador" dated August 14, 1937:

#### MR. WARD H. GOODWIN HAS RESIGNED?

There are rumors in town that Mr. Goodwin, the popular and esteemed friend of the Arubans, who at present is in charge of the Personnel Department of Lago has resigned.

The reason of this resolution is unknown to us, but we are certain that this would be a great discouragement for all of the workmen of San Nicholas as well as the Arubans and the foreigners, who have always received from Mr. Goodwin a very correct and fair treatment.

It is to be hoped that the rumors are false, for the benefit of our workmen, and in case it is true that Mr. Goodwin will again consider and cancel his resignation.

A newspaper clipping explains some of the good work Ward accomplished during his tenure in Lago's Personnel Department.

"The Gleaner" - Kingston, Jamaica, British West Indies - January 10, 1938:

#### SECOND ARUBA LABOR CONTINGENT READY.

100 Men signed on: 50 sail today; 50 to sail Tuesday.

A second contingent of 100 laborers for Aruba has been signed on and is ready to sail. The information has been received from Mr. Ward. H. Goodwin, Assistant Personnel Director of the Lago Oil and Transport Company Ltd. who has been in Kingston during the past three months, recruiting laborers for his principals.

When this last batch goes, Mr. Goodwin's work will be finished here for the time being. He will leave for Santo Domingo and Puerto Rico to complete, in those countries, a labor survey which he has been working on since his arrival in Jamaica. So far he anticipates no changer in his plans.

During his three months stay here, Mr. Goodwin has made himself quite a figure in the city of Kingston by his friendly disposition, his enlivening spirit, and the very kind treatment given to the thousands of men whom he has had occasion to interview in his search for the right kind of employees for the Lago Oil Company.



Our reporter has spoken to quite a few of the men engaged in both contingents, and to a man they agree that Mr. Goodwin is a "Jolly good American." They express the feeling that as Personnel Director of the concern they are going to work for in Aruba, they have in him A REAL FRIEND one who will see that everything is done to make them contented there. "Whether he can use a man or not, he always has a kind and encouraging word for you," one laborer said, yesterday morning.

At his office yesterday, Mr. Goodwin was pleased to state the he had no difficulty in getting the type and quantity of men he desired. He spoke readily on the respectful demeanor of the men he had come in contact with, and said he felt sure they would not fall below expectations.

Mr. Goodwin commented, with appreciation, on the assistance he received in his work from the Police and Immigration Officers, who did everything possible to facilitate the issuance of visas and getting-through of other important papers to enable the men to go.

## **The Donovan Ivan Griffith Story**

I was born November 4, 1921 in Meadowbrook Township, Koochiching County, Minnesota. My father was Ivan Emil Griffith and he was a Mechanic in the Lago power house in Aruba. My mother was Corrine Ashton Griffith who was a Comptometer Operator in the Accounting Department. This was a responsible job and she did most of her work on the foreign staff payroll.

I arrived in Aruba in September, 1930 aboard the tanker *S/S Elisha Walker*. My mother, sister, Mary, and sister, Phyllis traveled with me.

I remember traveling on the Commissary bus to the "old" Commissary which was located near the refinery gate which opened into the village of San Nicholas. Some of us boys used to get off the bus at the refinery gate and visit The Gateway Saloon to get a soda. We used to hear the phonograph there playing as we rode by. The piece I particularly remember was: "Lindy - Fly the Ocean Man." Other establishments were: Nyes' Music Emporium, and the Ben Hop General Store.

When I was 12 years old I joined the Boy Scouts. Andy Guimont was our Scoutmaster. And then we had someone named Read. He had evidently been a boxer and he taught all of us Scouts boxing. Joe Kennerty and I used to fight in preliminary bouts of the boxing cards organized by Ward Goodwin. We each earned \$8 for each round that we fought. And we usually fought three rounds. \$24 was a lot of money for us kids in those days.

I remember that one time Mr. Gilbert Brooks and L. G. Lopez were in charge of a Scout project that we had. We had been studying signaling with signal flags. Scouts were posted on hills along the road from Santa Cruz to the camp. We were to send a Mothers' Day message: "Greetings to Scout Mothers Happy Mothers' day." The only thing was that the signaling got fouled up some way. The message arriving at the Colony end was: "Carl Pattison is a S. O. B." Of course our leaders had to doctor this message up so it came out as originally intended.

When I graduated from the eighth grade the pastor had prepared a commencement address to deliver at the eighth grade graduation ceremony. At the same time there was a lady in the hospital who was dying of septicemia from childbirth. This same pastor had prepared the service he was going to give at this woman's funeral. In the meantime

one of his parents became very ill and he had to go back to the states to be with his parents. So he left his talk with a Dutch pastor whose English wasn't too good. Well, the Dutch pastor took his place and by mistake read the burial service at the commencement ceremony!

Another time Victor Lopez and I went down in the village and bought a bunch of fireworks. At that time a Dutch Marine patrolled the camp on a bicycle. These were the fellows who wore the green wool uniform, Sam Browne belt, brown leather leggings, and wore a varnished straw hat with one side turned up Australian style. Victor and I climbed up on a water tank in the colony. We lighted a "punk" and from that lighted our fire crackers.

The Dutch Marine came along below us and we dropped one of these lighted fire crackers so it fell behind a house. The marine immediately moved around to see what had happened. We watched him and dropped another lighted fire cracker on the side opposite where he was. We could see he was getting agitated so we decided to quit while we were ahead. Finally he gave up trying to figure it out and drove off.

I was 15 when my family left Aruba in 1936. I went to St. Louis with my mother and sister, Mary, for one year of high school and then to McMinnville, Oregon for my senior year of high school.

After I graduated from high school in 1938 I went to St. Louis with my mother and sister, Phyllis. In 1940 when Mary came up from Aruba to Philadelphia for the birth of her son, David, I went to Philadelphia to keep her company. When the baby was born, on the 12th of December, the forceps marks on his head and face made him look terrible. I was worried that he was not a normal baby. Then when Mary was able to travel with the baby my sister, Phyllis, came from St. Louis and we traveled together to Aruba. This was in February of 1941.

Meanwhile my mother had gotten her old job back in Aruba. She was working for T. C. Brown who was the head of the Accounting Department at the time. She was in her old job of Comptometer Operator and again doing the payroll of the Foreign Staff employees. She had met and married Jack Cassell whose wife had died the year before in Aruba.

When Phyllis and I arrived we stayed with my mother and Jack. I was involved in taking photographs and developing film for others.

I went into the Navy in 1942. I was assigned to naval photography training in Pensacola, Florida. Then I was sent to San Diego, California. In 1943 before shipping out on the *S/S Nahenta Bay*, a baby aircraft

carrier, I met Phyllis (my first wife) and we were married.

In 1945 I was in San Diego where my ship was in dry dock. I suffered a severe pain in my abdomen which was diagnosed as appendicitis. However when they operated they found the appendix was in good shape. The doctor removed it anyway to prevent any future problems. Much later I found that I had actually had a kidney stone attack. Then when the doctor was about to release me I decided I didn't want to return to naval photography. I would rather be on a bomber. So I mentioned to the doctor that I didn't feel comfortable on a small aircraft carrier. He diagnosed that as meaning that I had claustrophobia. And then to add to the confusion I became nauseated at my evening meal and went outside and vomited up my whole supper. The doctor happened to pass by and sent me to the mentally disturbed ward. Then after studying my case for some days I finally was given a 10% disability discharge for claustrophobia.

So I entered Linfield College in McMinnville, Oregon. I attended 1945 to 1947. I took general courses for a B. A. Degree. Then I enrolled in the University of Puerto Rico. I took a general language course there in English and Spanish. I worked part time as a reporter/photographer for the *Puerto Rico Herald*. I was there one year, 1947-1948. Then we moved to Miami, Florida where Phyllis worked as a taxi driver and I took whatever work I could get. Mainly I took care of our five children.

I spent the school year of 1949-1950 at the University of Washington in Seattle taking subjects I needed to obtain a teaching certificate. Then I spent the following year at Linfield College doing the same thing.

In 1953 I worked in a saw mill at Tillamook, Oregon. This was a small town 75 miles northwest of McMinnville, near the coast and on the Columbia River.

## **Walter E. & Wilma Gruenberg Story**

Both Walter and Wilma were born in Colorado. They lived for many years in Casper, Wyoming. Wilma worked as a secretary for the Post Master, Assistant Post master and Inspectors in the Casper Post Office before she went to Aruba.

Walter graduated from the University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado in 1936. He worked his way through school during the Great Depression. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering. While in college he was a member of Tau Beta Pi, honorary engineering fraternity and Eta Kappa Nu, an honorary electrical engineering fraternity. Walter arrived in Aruba in 1936 and was assigned to the Engineering Department.

Wilma and Walter were married August 4, 1937. Their Civil ceremony was in Oranjestad and they were also married at the Lago Community Church. Their daughter, Elaine, was born in the Lago Hospital on November 14, 1938. She went through the Lago School system.

The Gruenberg's left Aruba in 1940. Walter worked for the Panama Canal for a year and six months at the Bonneville Power Administration in Portland, Oregon.

Walter returned to Aruba in May of 1942 after receiving a request from the Company.

Edward Gruenberg was born in Casper, Wyoming December 16, 1942. Wilma, Elaine, and Ed returned to Aruba October 1943. Elaine graduated from Cornell University, in Ithaca, New York, majoring in Spanish.

Ed was very active in the Boy Scouts in Aruba. Scoutmaster Jim Lopez remembers that the day Ed was to take his 14 mile hike his mother went with him to verify he had covered the 14 miles. On November 5, 1958 Ed received the Eagle Scout Award in Boy Scouting. Ed was also an avid spear fisherman. He won an unofficial first place trophy in a Bonaire Spear Fishing event in 1958. The award was unofficial because they were under 18 years old.

Ed attended University of Denver for one year and a half and went in the Army Security Agency for three years. Two of those years were at Kagnew Station in Asmara, Ethiopia. Ed returned to University of

Denver graduating with a degree in Mechanical Engineering. He subsequently went to work for the Chicago Bridge Industries. He has been involved in a number of overseas projects for this company.

Wilma and Walter retired from Aruba in 1963. They have kept busy taking courses at the University. They also hike and fish in the region of Ward, Colorado and in the Rollins Pass area.



T-Docks--Yacht Club--Rodger's Beach  
circa 1930-1940

**Photo courtesy M. G. Lopez**

## **The Edwin Milton Harris Story**

Edwin Milton Harris was born in 1896. He was the first son of Samuel and Leola Harris. There were a total of 10 children in that family. Five boys and five girls. He was born in Jersey County, Illinois. His parents were already in the USA. His father worked in Construction. He crossed the Mississippi River in a covered wagon. Later his father worked on the construction of the Scott Air Force Base right across the river from St. Louis in Illinois. His father was one of the main contractors.

Edwin went to work for the company (Standard Oil Company of Indiana) in Alton, Illinois when he was 16. He stoked the furnaces to keep the lines from freezing. He worked at night. Later he had just lost his first wife in childbirth and there were two small children. Clarence was the oldest and then Adair. He was 19 or 20 years old at the time. There was a notice on the Bulletin Board where he worked about a job opening in Aruba. And he went down there. The children stayed with his mother for two or three years.

He was finally able to bring them down to Aruba. I guess there weren't any quarters for a while. Then he brought them down to Aruba. They stayed there through their teens I believe. Then Clarence went off to school. In the meantime when Clarence was 20 and Adair was 17 or 18, our parents married. There was possibly one marriage in between there, but little is known about that. There were no children.

Eleanor, our mother, came down when Adair was about to deliver her first baby, Hudson. Apparently Eleanor came to Aruba once, prior to that time, and visited her father. Her father was Charles Dahlberg. He was there for the construction of the Bungalows. He was a finishing carpenter from Finland. I believe that was when our mother met our father. She went back to New York where she had a job with a bank. We guess they corresponded and she came back to Aruba. She was born in Finland and raised in the Flatbush area of Brooklyn, New York.

Our grandmother, on our mother's side, lived in New York. Her first child was stillborn and she figured New York wasn't a good place to have children. So when she found out she was pregnant again she crossed back across the Atlantic and our mother was born in Borgo, Finland. Our great-aunt still lives on property there near a fishing village. This is right outside of Helsinki. Our mother was 6 weeks old,

when they crossed again to New York. The ship evidently hit an iceberg. This was at the end of February and they were all ill from the cold weather. There apparently wasn't any loss of life. It took them a lot longer to get to New York because they were taken to Newfoundland and then to New York.

Our mother was raised in Brooklyn, New York. Both her brother, Alif (Pete or Steve) Dahlberg and her father, Charles Dahlberg, worked on the construction in Aruba. She came down to visit them.

Our parents were married in 1935 in Oranjestad, and they were in Aruba when my father retired.

Eleanor was born November 20th, 1936 in Aruba in the old hospital which was located west of the mess hall. Myrna Gale was born February 28, 1939 in the new hospital up on the hill just below the light house at Colorado Point. She was the first baby girl born in the new hospital. Gary Edwin (Bucky) was born on January 23, 1941. Mikey was born January 17, 1943. We lived in Bungalow 347.

## **OUR MEMORIES**

### **BUCKY AND MYRNA GAYLE REMEMBER:**

- The soldiers being there. For Thanksgiving we had a whole house-full of soldiers over for dinner. One of them was named "Tish" and we eventually went to his wedding in 1948 either in Minnesota or Wisconsin. We remember the bagpipes and parades of the Scottish soldiers in Aruba. We remember riding with my dad when he took the American soldiers back to their camp in Sabeneta.
- Riding in the bus that went to the Commissary down on the west side of the refinery. We can also remember that you used to be able to call them up on the phone and they would send out your groceries and put them on your kitchen table for you.
- Getting on the bus in the summer time when school was out and taking rides to the commissary and back.
- A very good summer program for the kids. They used to bring in counselors for the various activities. They had aquatic ballets and things like that. They had all kinds of athletic programs and one of our favorites was swimming. Usually you were there for one summer program and then the next summer you would be gone for vacation.
- Eleanor contracted scarlet fever when we were in New York on one vacation. Eleanor was in quarantine in my grandmother's house and my dad took the rest of us to the Hotel Abbey. We went to visit her



every day; playing paper dolls with her under the doorway; and us kids playing with the bell hops in the elevator. We did all of the things that tourists do in New York. We went to see the Rockettes at Radio City. We shopped and shopped to get enough clothes for the next two years. This was the common practice with families that went on vacation in those days. There was a lot of guessing on anticipated shoe and clothing sizes.<sup>1</sup>

- We can remember when they put up the new high school which was on the northern side of the Lago Colony. The old one before that had the slides for fire escapes. We would climb up them and slide down on waxed paper if we could get the paper.

In a baby book at home are written down all of our teachers up through the fifth grade.

- Once in the first or second grade the teacher told us, "Happy Turkey Day!" Someone asked what is a Happy Turkey Day. She said that's Thanksgiving. But we did not have a holiday on that day in Aruba. The dads went to work and we went to school. We always had Thanksgiving dinner, but guess it didn't sink in.
- We always ate our biggest meal at lunch time. Dad was off for an hour and we ate our biggest meal at noon. Then he would go back to work and come home at 4:00 p.m. or 4:30 p.m.
- They had Sunday school in the Church.
- The old school was green and the new school was built of cinder brick and was much more modern. We never went to the new high school: We left at the end of the summer before we got to go there.

Bucky had just finished the 5th grade.

- Elna had gone away to Lady of the Lake School for the 8th and 9th grades. But she came back and went the 10th grade in Lago High School year before we moved away. Elna wanted to stay in the States, but dad said no, so she came back for the year before we left. She would probably remember people's names and things that happened. She went to school with the Mingus, and the Chippendale girls. There was another girl whose last name was White. Her mother was a nurse. She went off to boarding school the same time Elna did.

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<sup>1</sup>*I was full grown before I discovered that you could buy blue jeans in lengths and waist sizes that didn't require you to roll up your pants legs or cinch your waistband till your back pockets came together.*

- It was in 1948 or 49 that we had that Tidal Wave and the water came up where the Yacht Club area was. The water came up almost to the top of the floor. It damaged a lot of the docks and everything. In the area where the stairways went down to the beach the water was all of the way up to the top of the coral. There was a headline in the Miami Herald about the Tidal Wave in Aruba. Some of the beach cabanas along the beach were torn down. We got some rain, but it was the high tide that did the damage. Dad got the Miami Herald at that time and it was in the paper. We had some warning that this wave was coming, because they told everyone to get their boat out of the water or tied down. They didn't expect the water to come up as much as it did.

In the Hurricane Season we would have those calm days, when the water was like glass.

- Bucky and I decided that we were going to go cave exploring and we found a hole in the fence out in the Tank Farm. And we dropped down in this hole to explore this cave. I guess I must have been about ten years old and Bucky was eight. We rode out there on our bicycles and never told anybody where we were going. And we dropped down in this cave. I think we had a flashlight and a candle for light. We never thought how we were going to get back out of that hole. Finally we found a long 2" x 4" board and Bucky shinnied up the 2 x 4 and then he helped me get up out of the hole. It was really scary there for a while.
- When Bucky was going into the first grade, Mom took him down to school and she walked back home. We were about 3 or 4 blocks from the school. She was in the kitchen doing something and she turned around and Bucky was back home. And she said what are you doing back home? And he said I already knew everything that the teacher was teaching. I don't need to go to that school. He had climbed out the window and jumped down and came on back home.
- Tommy Watkins drowning. It seems that other school kids saw them get off the bus together down at the swimming docks. And the two of them were swimming out to the buoys off the shore there. Apparently coming back Tommy got a cramp or something. The other little boy was scared and went home and didn't say anything until the next day. Finally after three days they found his body floating under the swimming docks.
- Admiral Halsey's daughter was there during the War Time. She had married someone who worked in the Refinery. I think she had a child

while she was there.

- In 1946 we went back to the States for the first time after the War. And we picked up a new Hudson Car and drove across country to visit our other grandmother in St. Louis.
- We bought that car from Eman in Aruba. We got it in Aruba put it on a boat and took it to Bayonne. It was a coupe. My father said if we had a four door sedan he couldn't reach us all. So this coupe was so he could keep us all quiet.

When we got back he traded it for a 1949 Chrysler New Yorker sedan. When we left Aruba we had a midnight blue, 1950 Chrysler New Yorker sedan. People would look at the speedometer with the dial in kilometers; and they would say, "Does this car really go 120 miles an hour!?"

- Myrna had a shadow on her lung so she constantly had pneumonia. It was a growth that apparently was from the time she was an egg. The egg was supposed to split and into twins. But it didn't split. Father had twins born in his family. This was the only explanation that the doctors had for this growth. But this thing kept growing along with her body and it kept blocking off more and more lung capacity. She was always a very sickly when a small child. So she would always have pneumonia, but they couldn't do anything except to watch it during the war, because they didn't do lung surgery down in Aruba. It was too dangerous. So in 1945 mother took her to New York. And they stayed for 3 months while Myrna had the surgery. Since that time she has been fine. There is a 17" scar down her back. They went through the back. There were only two places that they did that surgery in the states at that time. One was in St. Louis at The Children's Hospital and the other was at The Children's Hospital in New York. They wrote it up in The Medical Journal because she was the youngest person they had ever performed this operation on. It was at the top of the lung and it wasn't something that would go away. It was blocking the air passage. Therefore if she got just a sniffle the fluid would go into the lung and stay. It was a Dr. Romer in Aruba who said we needed to go do something about this because it kept growing.

They must have taken a hundred X-rays.

- We had a large clothing hamper which we pushed out to the front porch and the Laundry truck would come by and pick it up. They used to do the men's white pants and shirts.

- There were some people named Husing who had a daughter who was about my age and then another about 4 years old. The mother had epilepsy. Both girls had been born in Holland before they came to Aruba.
- One time David Lopez helped Bucky and I with our "mining operation." Dad had built a four foot wall to replace the picket fence that we had before that. So we had all of those pickets back there behind the wall. And we had this bucket and we mined this dirt with those pickets.
- The Fred Quirams had two little girls and one day Mikey, Bucky, Michael, and David were "rocking" these kids. Throwing rocks at them. And then their maid came out to put a stop to this and they rocked her. Fred put up a 6 foot fence and the boys were not allowed to go near that fence.

Bucky confesses, "I'm the one who cut their clothes line."

Dad put a stop to that business. That was before child abuse.

- Bucky can remember Jim Lopez helping him put together a radio. This must have been in 1947 or 48. This was when he was a Cub Scout. This was to get the Lion badge. He never did get into Boy Scouts because we left Aruba and moved to Corpus Christi.

We can remember Momma doing something with the Cub Scouts.

- One time some man came over from Denmark and opened a butcher shop in the village. Everybody was thrilled. He used to make Blinderfinkens. They were good.
- During the strike we had there in 1951 the kids worked everywhere.

Myrna worked in the Club collecting those trays after people had their dinner. One time Mikey went down to the Club and treated all of his friends. Daddy had just gotten a new 20 guilder club book and Mikey was buying ice cream and sodas for all of his friends. Someone at the club called dad and said, "Hey, did you know your son is down here buying everything for everybody?" Mikey suddenly returned home. He couldn't have been more than 6 years old at the time.

- After the War the Von Schlott family came through and put on a concert at the club. We can remember they were on the stage and they sang.
- Princess Beatrix coming to Aruba. Myrna was a Girl Scout and we had to all be in uniform and they had the whole island out to greet her.

Whenever we had a visitor like that the whole island turned out to greet them.

- Mom and dad were great pinochle players. The Descanio's used to come over to play and they would slap that table.
- We can remember when report cards came out and you could hear "Whop - Whop - Whop" as Mae got after the Descanio boys.
- Mom could stand out there and yell all day for us kids to come home for supper and nothing would happen. But, when dad got out there and whistled, we hurried right home.

What we want to know is how those people got permission to build those houses down there on the beach ?

### **ON TO CORPUS CHRISTI**

After we left Aruba we went to Corpus Christi, Texas. Myrna lived there five years; then went away to boarding school for a year. Then got married to an Air Force cryptographer and moved first to Wyoming. Then she moved every so often as service men do. She decided she wasn't moving anymore when he was transferred to Turkey and they got a divorce. She worked for a stock brokerage house, married again and she had three more children for a total of seven. She has six and a half grandchildren right now.

Debbie, born December 29, 1955, is married to a CPA.

Connie, born December 7, 1957, is married and has 3 girls.

Gary, born July 29, 1959, works in medical supplies, has 1 son.

Bruce, born August 29, 1961, is divorced and has 1 son.

Melissa, born January 19, 1960, was not married (at the time).

Sarah, born January 29, 1973, was not married (at the time).

Eric, born July 29, 1974, was not married (at the time).

### **LEAVING ARUBA**

We left Aruba by plane. We flew to Miami and then on to Corpus Christi and bought a house. The address was 4035 West Vanderbilt. Dad had shipped the car to Bayonne on one of the tankers and later he went to New York and drove the car back down to Corpus. I am not really sure why they picked Corpus, however Frank Campbell lived there and my parents had known them.

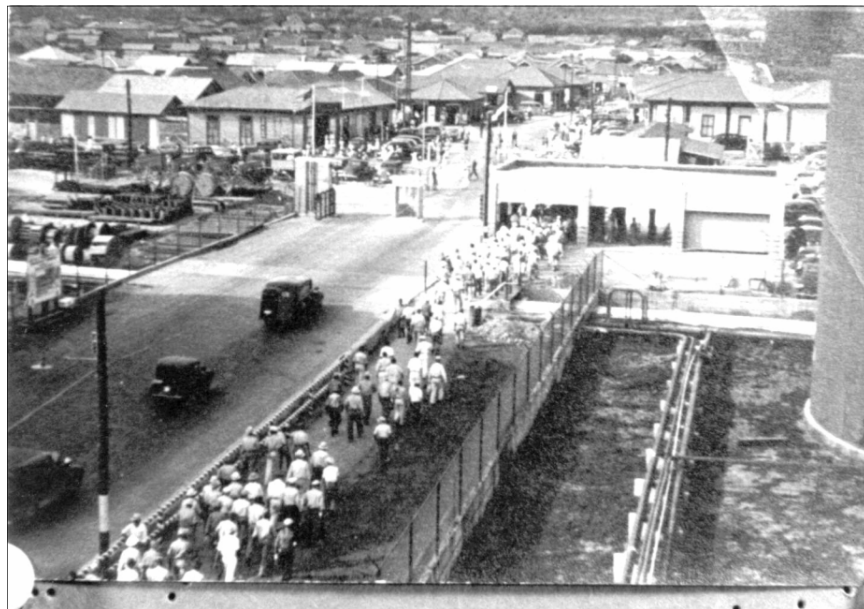
My dad was there for about two years before he left for an overseas job. He built a porch on the back of the house and some shelves. He also worked downtown in a department store for a while. There were some refineries around there and he did try to go to work there, but I

think when you come from overseas the pay differential is just too much less.

When dad went overseas he went to Johannesburg, South Africa to work on a coal gasification plant for M.W. Kellogg. This was about 1953 and he stayed there about 3 or 4 years. Mother went over there in the summer of 1954. The kids all stayed in the states. When she came back from South Africa, we all went back to Corpus and to the W. D. Ray High School there.

When Bucky got out of high school he joined the Air Force. Linda and Bucky were married just before he went into the Air Force. He was there for 4 years. In the Air Force he was in what was called "Crash Rescue." Bucky was with the pipeline part of Coastal. When Coastal divested itself of that part he went with it and it became Valero. He is a vice-president of the Marketing Department; marketing gas throughout the United States.

As told by Myrna Gale and Gary Edwin Harris



Main gate Lago Refinery - - - unknown date

Photo courtesy Joanne Storie

## **The Donald A. & Louise Haase Story**

Don Haase arrived in Aruba in February 1930 to work in the Power House. He signed an eighteen months contract; but due to complications of a hernia operation when death was avoided only because of a dedicated orderly, it was twenty two months before he rejoined his family in Kearney, Nebraska. He returned to Aruba in November 1931 with his wife Louise, and their children, Mary Louise (7), James (6) and Elizabeth Ann (4).

The family's first home was Bungalow #38, a house with a fabulous view and a nice little beach. As Louise couldn't swim the children weren't allowed to use the beach until Corrine Griffith, Mary Lopez's mother, taught them all to swim. Those were the days when all the water faucets in the house flowed with brackish water. The fresh water tap was outside beside the road, but everyone had a good heavy bucket in which to carry it into the house. As the Colony grew and more houses were built, the family moved to Bungalow #340. Later Louise and Don lived in #1537.

Don was active in the Masons and a member of the Eastern Star. He loved the Camera Club and was also a member of the Engineer's Club. He sang in the Lago Church choir, even did tenor solos, and served on the Church Council. He enjoyed golf at the Aruba Golf Club and played as often as he could.

Louise was a charter member of the Mother's Club which was started in 1932 by Mrs. Beshers. Later the Mother's Club became the Woman's Club. She was a member of the Girl Scouts and a leader of the Brownie Scouts for three years. She also sang in the church choir and was a member of the Guild. Louise was active in the Little Theatre and a member of the American Legion Auxiliary. When British troops landed in Aruba Louise baked cakes and made sandwiches for them. Later when American ships docked there Louise and Don often entertained the men in their home. Louise remembers one February when they had twenty six parties. Sometimes there were five men sometimes forty. Their friends, Harriet and Leo Baldwin, owned the magazine concession at the Esso Club. They talked Louise into working for them and serving as Librarian at the Club. Her really fun job was working for her dear friend Helen Leon, at Helen R. Leon's Dress shop in San Nicholas.

Mary graduated in the class of '41 from Lago High School. She

attended Stephens College and came back to Aruba in 1943 where she met William Flippen of Richmond, Virginia. Bill was a Lieutenant with the U. S. Army in Aruba. When he was transferred to Puerto Rico, she joined him and they were married and lived there one year. After the war Bill joined the C.I.A. in Washington, D. C. They lived in Japan and the Philippines before settling down in McLean, Virginia with their three daughters. They are now retired and living in South Carolina.

When Lago High School closed during World War II, both Jim and Libby had to leave Aruba. Jim enrolled in Kemper Military Academy in Missouri, where he roomed with Gene Campbell, a classmate from Aruba. After graduation he served in the Infantry in the Pacific War Theater. After the war he graduated from the University of Virginia and joined the C.I.A. for three years. He then went to work in Venezuela for Creole Petroleum Company in the Accounting Department. Next, he spent seven years in Kuwait with Aminoil. He then joined British Petroleum and worked in New York, San Francisco, Alaska, and Houston. He is now retired and living in California.

Libby also finished high school in the States and graduated from Stephens College before returning to Aruba. She worked for the American Consulate until she married Randolph Chalker of the Engineering Department. Three of their four children were born in Aruba before they left for Holland. After a short stay in Holland Randy left Aramco and they lived in Jacksonville, Florida, Puerto Rico and South Carolina. Randy died in Greenville, South Carolina in 1984 and Libby is now living with Louise in Mexico.

Don was in the Power House February 16, 1942, the night the German submarine attacked the island. At the first shot all the lights in the Colony went on. Mr. L. G. Smith called the Power House and asked, "Don, can't you do something about those lights?" Don answered, "I sure can L. G." He rushed to the switch which was behind a glass panel. With his fist he broke the glass, cutting his wrist, and pulled the switch to cut off power to the Colony. He liked to say that he was wounded in action.

Don suffered a severe heart attack in 1956 forcing his retirement. Don and Louise settled in California, but when Don died in 1972 Louise bought a house on the beach in Mexico. In 1973 the family brought his ashes back to Aruba. Jim and the minister from the Lago Church spread the ashes in the lagoon in front of the Power House.



## **The George P. & Kathleen Hemstreet Jr. Story**

In the fall of 1933, while I was a college student, I had a call from George telling me he was considering a position in Aruba. I listened numbly as he told me where Aruba was, what it was, and why he was going. It was interesting since three years earlier on our second date he asked me if I would be interested in going to South America. Fortunately I said yes. Little did I know what was ahead. George sailed on the *S/S C. G. Black* on February 14, 1934; and his father sent me flowers to mark the date an occasion that created excitement in the dorm and the beginning of what I would term a very interesting life. Four years of letters, cables, excitement tears, depressions, and disappointments followed. Finally, in November of 1937, the signal was sent that it was okay to get married, and that we had a house available. In February of 1938, we were aboard the *Esso Bolivar* with all of our worldly possessions when a radiogram arrived saying we had been assigned Bungalow 187. What excitement aboard the ship!

Bernie Franklin met the ship and said, "What are you two doing on board? You are not expected and your house is not ready." When he saw our big white German shepherd - Oh me! We piled into Bernard's car, and he said we must get to the commissary, as a royal baby is due and all nonessential facilities would be closed down to celebrate. Nipper, our dog, and I were dropped at bungalow 187 while Bernie and George took off. All the louvers were closed and it was hot. The bungalow was a pleasant surprise after the gloomy picture George had painted to prepare me for the worst. The louvers were stuck with paint, and I couldn't open them so I ventured forth with the dog on a leash. I had just rounded the corner of the bungalow when I heard a call I shall never forget, "Kathleen!"

It was Lotje McReynolds. That was when I began to learn that Aruba and its wonderful people combined to make a perfect place to live and raise a family. There is nothing like our "Aruba Family." We have Aruba reunions and meetings all over the world.

I remember the free kerosene the company delivered for our wonderful stoves on certain days. If you were baking a cake and saw the flame going out, you could dash to any neighbor with kerosene bottle in hand. Trying to light the stove with the trade winds blowing was a

chore. You could cook a roast beef so that it was rare on one end and well done on the other by regulating the burners, a feat making it possible to please all who set up to your table.

The domestic help when they first arrived on the island and our efforts to get used to their ways and their efforts to get used to our ways is a memory that is still fresh in my mind. One of them wishing to compliment her employer made a copy of her mistress' dress and wore it to serve at a dinner party.

Superstitions abounded. Not ironing after cleaning the refrigerator was one. I recall my first encounter with the Caribbean delicacy, fresh fish heads - cooked on my stove in a coffee can.

There was a big wedding when Mary Harrison married Neal Griffin. At the airport one of the bridesmaids had a wild ride in a luggage cart. Mary's father, Stuart Harrison, had been a colonel in the army in the First World War and still had that bearing. In Aruba he was the Process Department Superintendent and always directed all firefighting efforts at refinery conflagrations.

Picnics were important events to me. One time George was lying on the beach at dusk and a pelican decided George had his spot. The pelican came in for a landing and narrowly missed George. Another time Nipper chased a goat into a well. The owner wanted five guilders for his goat. Instead George got a rope, got it around the goat somehow and pulled it out of the well. George patted the goat's rump and he was off and away. George told the owner, "There goes your five guilders." We also recall a picnic among the rocks at Ajo. Phil, our son, started to toot his trombone. Slowly but surely native children appeared from out of nowhere to listen to the American pied piper.

I recall being at the Scout House when Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt arrived on her unpublicized trip during the war. I also recall being in front of the main office building when the Queen arrived on her celebrated visit. I also remember how disappointed the children were that she didn't have a crown. The sugar flower basket for the centerpiece on this occasion had to be kept in the refrigerator until the last minute because of the humidity.

Local authorities ordered those responsible to paint the fronts of all the buildings in the village along the route the dignitaries would travel.

George and Kathleen were blessed with two children -- George III (known as Phil in Aruba) in 1941 and Pamela in 1945. They attended Lago Colony schools and say they had the happiest childhood anyone

could have. They loved the life and the wonderful summer programs and other opportunities. Phil is now Doctor George, and Pamela received her Masters degree in Guidance. Since their marriage there are now eight grandchildren.

### **WAR YEARS MEMORIES**

The night of the German submarine attack on the refinery - February 16, 1942, I was one of the guilty ones that used the telephone to keep in touch with Delores Nixon. Jim Nixon of the Marine Department had called George to go with him to the beach to aid the survivors of the damaged and sunken Lake Tankers. Those who had managed to swim to the beach were covered with crude oil. The wives of the Lake Tanker officers who lived in the housing immediately above the beach assisted in the same effort. The survivors were transported to the hospital for emergency treatment. I also recalled seeing star shells from our navy going over the island. I called George every time I saw one. He would come outside, look, and then he went back to bed. On the last one, he said, "Honey, that's the morning star, not a star shell. You can quit calling me, Go back to bed." Years later, a spent shell was found in Captain Fernando's bungalow, the one across from ours.

After the attack, when the company offered to send anyone back to the States. George was in the Transportation Department at that time and he handled transportation arrangements for all families, labor recruits, etc. All wishing to leave were evacuated to other ports in four days time. I didn't think of leaving George after those long years of separation we had had, and besides, I was busy with our new baby. I didn't really realize so many people were leaving. When we received word that unidentified planes were headed our way. I was scared. The realization that we had no place to run to on our island if the enemy did land was what really bothered me. Several hours later, the alert was lifted.

We either had a feast or famine on commissary supplies, a condition caused by the company ordering double shipments to make sure we did receive enough supplies.

Like everyone else in the colony we invited members of the armed services to our house for dinners at various times. These were the soldiers sent to Aruba to protect us, and we did appreciate their presence.

For 18 months, during the black-out, outdoor fires were banned. At the time of the submarine attack there were electric lights at various locations around the tank farms and colony. These were shot out by patrolmen when they couldn't locate their on and off switches.

I often think of the all of the things the company did for the Aruban community - upgrading of educational and living conditions with playgrounds, and various programs. On our return trip in 1973, although I felt the colony looked terrible, we received a warm reception. I am sure the Aruban people appreciated what the company had done for the island community.

In 1960 I was astounded when I bought a basket of cocktail tomatoes in New York that were marked "Grown in Aruba." This was a result of the hydroponics program.

The summer recreation program for all our young people was a wonderful thing. College students who were home for the summer participated as instructors.

When you look back on all of the activities that were going on in the Colony it is amazing how many clubs were organized and the events each club sponsored. The Women's Club had beautiful flower shows which were organized in spite of the difficulty of getting dirt, making flower beds, and water shortages.

Fashion shows with all of those elegantly dressed housewives as models were given. The Little Theatre group that found all kinds of talent in the Colony.

We were very fortunate that the island was practically free of childhood diseases. Not much was known about polio back then, but it was everywhere in the States. There were no reported cases on the island. We hated to go to the States when we vacationed, but most of us had relatives there.

When our Phil went north to enter high school as a junior, he came up with measles and chicken pox. That was when George's ham radio was really put to use. His call letters were PJ2AO. Phil later got his U.S. ham license and we could keep in touch that way.

One of the things I noticed was that the Dutch children never spoke Dutch while they were in the Colony. The children told me they were to learn English. I think it was a shame that we never learned to speak Dutch. Dr. Schendstok was told by one of his patients that she had a nasal problem, and he began to examine her navel!

I often think about the Yacht Club's great Sunday sailboat races that were organized by Paul Jensen, Jack Schnur, the MacNutts, Charlie Ross, the Lloyd Smiths and I can't recall who else. Charlie Ross was the one who built the bachelor quarters, the old Pan Am Club, the bungalows

in the Lago and Eagle Colonies {the name "C.C. ROSS" was imprinted in the concrete slab at the foot of the porch stairs on each bungalow}. These racing boats were Aruban built Snipes. {Jack Schnur built most of the Snipe-class boats of the Yacht Club, and their deck hardware was made in the foundry operated by him.}

After the popularity of the Snipe-class of boats dwindled, Sailfish became fashionable. These surfboard-like craft carried one person who stood on the deck holding on to the mast. The sails were of course smaller than those on the Snipe. Later we had motorboats that towed water skiers.

Dick Turposl, a cousin of George's was temporarily in Aruba on a construction assignment with the Nage Company, and he started to build a motorboat in a bachelor quarters carport. He shaped the wood by steaming it in the shower. This was the "Susan T. Penguin." George and Phil finished the job. Later it was shipped to Long Island and then to the Pocono Mountains where it is now stored.

When the Radio Club had their field exercises we enjoyed the outings. In the late 1950's members of the club set up their stations at various points around the island. The goal of the exercise was to see how many other stations around the world could be contacted in a 24 hour period. All radios were set up to operate on batteries as there was no power available at the outlying points.

George's other love was ham radio. His station's call letters were, legally PJ2AO although he did use the illegal call letters PJ2AF. He, Stan Chapman, and Lloyd McBurney were the pioneers and worked with the Dutch government in Curacao to make ham radio operation legal. There were many Ham Club field trips and many wonderful contacts on the airways were made over the years. One outstanding contact was connecting the Greens' son, who was in Antarctica, with his father in Aruba. Another time, Dr. Van Ogtrop's son, was returning from a stateside school to vacation on the island and he did not arrive. George was able to trace him down and get the family together. There were no phone connections in those early years so the radio club helped many families keep in touch.

Following his disability retirement, George maintained his interest in Ham Radio and became active in the Scranton, PA Radio Club where he taught some courses.

George P. Hemstreet, Jr. was born in Hastings on the Hudson, New York. He attended Wyoming Seminary and New York University

School of Engineering. George sailed for Aruba, via tanker February 14, 1934. He went to work in the Lago refinery and shortly moved to the Safety Department (a part of the Personnel Department). At the time Gordon Owen was in charge of the Safety Department.

Later he joined the Personnel Department, and he headed the Department of Transportation for several years during the war. He remained in Personnel until his disability retirement in 1960. He valued the many years he worked for Exxon and appreciated the opportunities afforded him.

In 1976 when he moved to Venice, Florida his love of boating led him to serve as Fleet Captain of the Venice Power Squadron. Upon his death in 1987 the Power Squadron honored him by participating in his Memorial Service.



## **The Glenn G. Hendrickson Story**

I was born on October 8, 1914 in a little place called The Valley, Kentucky.

Beth and I were in Charlotte, South Carolina and I was partners with a doctor by the name of R. B. McKnight. Our specialty was thyroid surgery. All was not well; the job I was doing was not what I had envisioned when I studied in medical school. I didn't care for Dr. McKnight's ethics, I contributed little to his practice, and we had a less than cordial relationship. After a miserable 11 months with my partner I saw an ad in the American Medical Association Journal for a surgeon at large, a title which had me visualizing travel in exotic locations. I sent the Standard Oil of New Jersey Company a resume, and their personnel department invited Beth and I to New York for an interview. The interview was a resounding success; they offered me a job as surgeon at Lago Oil Company in Aruba, Netherlands West Indies. Without much effort I convinced Beth and myself to take them up on their offer for at least a couple of years until we could save the money to enter private practice. To reach our goal, we had to live on an unknown island. Aruba, where was Aruba, we wondered. It was difficult to locate on a map, but Rand McNally assured us that such a place did actually exist.

Beth's family in Georgia and mine in Kentucky had to be visited before we left. Like many other new employees of S.O.N.J. who went to New York in the spring of 1947, we stayed at the old Abbey Hotel. The Aruba bound Hendrickson family consisted of Beth and I, our young daughter and a little black dog with bristles like a pig.

At the Abbey, mountains of luggage cluttered up our room although we had shipped most of our belongings before setting out. We had continued to collect knick-knacks on the way through Georgia and Kentucky, some of which were things that wouldn't fit in the luggage. Those we just threw in the car. In a little Maryland town I was compelled to purchase more bags to pack the knick-knacks.

We were driving a Dodge that we planned to take with us to our new home. I had delivered it to Bayonne, New Jersey, and from there it was shipped on a tanker to Aruba.

Our dog must have picked up every tick between South Carolina and New York, but she was going with us; she was family. The mongrel

was so housebroken that I had to walk her around the dock before she could do her business.

On the tanker we met Johnny Pfaff, who was honeymooning with his second wife, and he was complaining about how hot it had been at the non-air-conditioned Abbey Hotel. I remember wondering what I was getting my family into. If it was that hot there, how hot would it be in Aruba? When Johnny was finished griping about how hot the Abbey was, I asked if it was hotter in Aruba. Johnny replied, Oh, no! It's not that hot. I was somewhat relieved, but felt compelled to apply the old adage, believe nothing of what you hear, and only half of what you see. I was doubtful that any place as close to the equator could fail to be hot.

We had a pleasant trip down to Aruba on the Esso Bolivar with Captain Ray. On board with us was a woman who had some obstetrical problem. In the early days having a baby on the island was quite a production, and this woman had a bad time during her pregnancy. She did not have good things to say about Lago Oil's medical staff. Captain Ray warned me to beware of them. When I got there I learned Dr. John Borbonus had just recently been put in charge of obstetrics in the Lago Hospital, but I could not believe he was the ogre Captain Ray suggested. I considered the ways they might take advantage of me, but I was 32, and felt competent as a physician. How could they hurt me?

We enjoyed the trip down. I remember as we pulled into the harbor and looked at the refinery with its smoke and pollution that it looked a little desolate. As I looked over the rail of the ship, I saw a guy on the dock with a cast on his arm. I knew the island had to have at least one qualified medical person on duty.

The first night they put us in a guest house between the old bachelor quarters and the dining hall. To be sure she was properly equipped for a foreign land; Beth had brought a supply of nylon stockings. To her dismay, the roaches ate them while we slept.

Let me digress a minute to explain how the bungalows were protected from the tropics' invading insects. They were equipped with screens of course, and the buildings' foundations were set in oil pots to stop the crawling bugs. Roaches could unknowingly be carried into the house in grocery bags, or boxes--you know how that goes. In those days we didn't have the modern products to zap them with we have now. You had to rely on that good old standby, the all-purpose broom, or a kerosene-smelling spray pumped out of your Flit gun.

Fifteen minutes after we arrived, while we were looking the place



over, our two and a half year old daughter found the oil pots, and her new yellow sun suit was a candidate for the rag box.

We were invited to a party at Charlie Garber's house but declined. Beth was uncomfortable in the first trimester of her pregnancy, we were overtired from traveling, and we had no babysitter, so we declined. A couple of nights later we were invited to a party in Bungalow 69 by Odis Mingus, the refinery superintendent. It was a large gathering, and although I met at least 150 people at Bungalow 71 that night, I remember only Mrs. Chippendale as her name reminded me of the furniture by the same name.

Our first night on the island, we went from the guest house to the dining hall. I can still remember how gracious the dining room staff was to us, providing a high chair for our daughter, doting over her like she was one of their nieces.

There was an awkward time when I had an automobile only when I was on call, before my car arrived. I was on call every other night there for a while, so I had a car often. My work at Lago took off with a bang. I was greeted by Barney Mazell, a New York trained temporary replacement who had been in Aruba only a month. Mazell took me on ward rounds, showed me the ropes, and he was gone in less than a week. Before he left, I had to treat him for an unusual disorder. At a party, he ate as many jalapeno peppers as he could to prove how macho he was. At his bungalow I gave him an intravenous infusion to re-hydrate him. He was losing fluids at both ends at a furious rate.

The physician I replaced, the young man before Barney, had had a drinking problem. I think he had trained in the military and it was very difficult for him to cope with surgery involving civilians. It is serious enough business when you are well trained, but it was a real hardship in Aruba because you were practically by yourself, and the responsibility was heavy on your shoulders.

Everett D. Biddle, the chief anesthetist, was leaving for his vacation when I arrived. Fortunately, there were other anesthetists available. Biddle was a nice guy; he came by the bungalow and asked if I wanted to buy a trinket in the village for my parents. I remember buying a souvenir which he took back with him. We were in the old hospital then, not the one down in the refinery, but the south-facing two story part up on the hill. It was section B, C, D, and E. We weren't organized into services very well, with the exception of Borbonus' obstetrical service. I initiated the surgical service and Dr. J. D. Schendstok kicked off the medical service. Our goal was to train people in our specialty to give us depth in

our organization. Instead of having just one man on call at night, we would have one man on general call and various specialists on call to back him up. It was some time before we got people trained but it worked out very well when we did. Some caught on quickly and became quite good at what they were doing; others seemed to have no passion for it.

The following years seemed to be a parade of exciting events, one after another. They added the three story wing on the back of the hospital. We experienced more than our share of elevator trouble, and I continued to ask Dr. Russell C. Carrell, the administrator, to get us better elevators. Finally he told me if I would just quit nagging him about it, I could have my patients on the first floor, and I wouldn't have to worry about it. There was an endless amount of work to be done. One of the staff, Dr. J.B.M. Van Ogtrop, a stalwart fellow, was especially friendly and helpful to me.

Beth and I were **promised** in New York that we were going to have a bungalow overlooking the ocean. When we got there, the housing people denied having such a bungalow. Dr. Van Ogtrop and his five kids were living in one on the lower road which matched that description exactly. He had seniority, he was there, and he was in it--a fine example of that eternal axiom, possession is nine tenths of the law. The first bungalow they showed us was the former marine department manager's. It was sitting quite high on its oil pots, and looked like a nightmare. And my wife said it was reminiscent of a Georgia "mill house," and that all it needed, to complete the impression was an old pig wallowing under it. We finally settled on Bungalow 641 and stayed there about a year. Our second daughter, Anna Katherine, was born in Bungalow 549 on December 21, 1947.

A few days after moving into our new bungalow, I went to general services to ask them to move our lattice work. I didn't want it where it was. Binky Fuller, the man I talked to, advised me in his inimitable style that the company liked the lattice where it was. He said that if I wished it moved, I'd be obliged to move it myself. I didn't object to its location that much, so I left it where it was.

After several months the four of us and our dog moved to Bungalow 547. This bungalow was occupied some time previously, by Mr. Joseph Abadie who was in charge of general services. It had a marvelous wall around the yard and crushed coral on the driveway. Mr. Abadie sent word that he wanted to see me one day. So I went by the general service offices, and he told me he wanted to sell me the crushed coral on the

drive. I was younger and feistier in those days, so I told poor Mr. Abadie I liked the crushed coral where it was and if he wanted it moved he would have to move it himself!

## **FAMILY**

Dr. Borbonus delivered my son, Glenn Gordon. It was a good thing he came to Aruba. I understand they were having a lot of trouble with the obstetrics down there. Most obstetrics is easy, but if you have a difficult case it can turn into a nightmare fast. You need trained people who know what to do. Dr. Borbonus was a competent, board certified obstetrician who trained Dr. Jack De Ruyter, the obstetrician under him. At the same time Dr. Bill Lee came down from Connecticut, worked with me a couple of years, and went back stateside where he worked for the Stanley Tool Company. I had several people work with me, but Dr. van Schouwen turned out to be the most competent. I worked him into the system slowly. He started with minor procedures, and worked his way into the more difficult ones. In my latter years I became more and more involved in administration while he did a lion's share of work.

We lived in Bungalow 547 until Frank Griffin moved out of Bungalow 72 in 1959, paying to have the front porch made into a room. I intended to do it inexpensively, but Beth objected. The floor was raised level with the living/dining room to make it one long room. It was a three bedroom with beautiful hardwood floors, and its dining room and maid's quarters had been converted into bedrooms.

The process of naming our children was a daunting one, but we managed to get good ideas from our environment. I was at the University of Virginia teaching anatomy and surgery to nurses and surgical techniques to doctors when I got my inspiration for a name. While grading papers, I saw the names of many nurses. I remember sitting in the maternity ward with my wife, looking at a list of these names, and how we decided Patricia was the right name for our new daughter. We had no such trouble settling on a name for either our son, Glenn Gordon Hendrickson Jr., born September 12, 1951, or our daughter, Helen, born on March 3, 1954.

## **WORK EXPERIENCE**

When I think back on my early years in Aruba, it was amazing how little social life I had. I was working continuously, day and night. Much of my time was occupied by studying for the American Board, a certification in my specialty. I had taken the first half of it after completing my resident training, and I was due to take the second part of it in December of 1947. I went to Aruba with the understanding that

Lago would allow me to return to Johns Hopkins to take my exams. My first six months with Lago were occupied by my day and night shifts, and my studies for the American Board Exams. The island had no facility where I could review anatomy, so I left a day or two early and went by the University of Virginia. From there, I proceeded to Johns Hopkins at Baltimore and took my exam.

I remember a mountain of hard work during those early years, but it was as rewarding of an experience as I have ever had. I had a good organization, good nurses, and good helpers. We ran our own show; we didn't have to worry about how much to charge people, or any such commonplace considerations. If people needed an operation they damned well got it. We had good public relations--our patients had confidence in us and accepted our work. Malpractice suits were unheard of, or least I never was the subject of one. The years rolled by and our progress was marked by case after dramatic case.

That first six months, I was so busy with work and studying, events went by in a blur. I don't remember much, but I am able to recall some of my more difficult cases. While driving through the refinery to pick up a maid one night, one poor man ran into a crane boom. He suffered massive chest and head injuries. He and his distraught wife are still in my mind.

I called the job at Lago a glorified residency. I was in charge, I had a good organization, good help, and I was able to do what I felt necessary to improve the quality of medicine and surgery I practiced. It was a remote location, but I had the majority of the equipment I required, and I had a good anesthetist, and a good operating staff.

As planned, we returned to the States on vacation after two years in Aruba. I had job opportunities lined up in South Carolina and Arkansas. The most promising of them was a new hospital in Georgetown, South Carolina. They were offering a place for a certified surgeon--his offices were right in the hospital--similar to my arrangement in Aruba. The hospital in South Carolina was as hot as Aruba's climate, and the acid smell of a nearby paper mill hung in the air. We thought long and hard about it and when our vacation was over, we went back to Aruba to stay, and we have never regretted our decision.

We cultivated good friends, I worked with an excellent group of people, and the patients were marvelous. I have only pleasant memories of my stay in Aruba. As one would expect, I had experiences with deaths of good friends resulting from cancer, and I operated on personal friends with critical ailments more frequently than I would have liked.

Once, I took out part of the stomach of a bridge partner with a bleeding ulcer, under emergency conditions. During the procedure he received more than a dozen pints of blood.

Most hospitals transfer terminal cancer patients to a medical service or a tumor service of some kind, but I have always preferred to keep them on my own floor. If they were mine, I stayed with them until the end. I didn't pass them off to someone else, even within my own organization. We didn't have many cancer patients, and I can recall every one. One of my first, a relatively young man from Martinique, had carcinoma of the pancreas, a debilitating, terminal illness.

One couple from Lago Heights who went to Canada returned for a visit ten years later. She had carcinoma of the breasts and I removed them. Now, ten years later, I could see she was doing fine.

In one of my cases, a young man's cancer was undiagnosed until it showed up in the skin of his leg. The cancer had spread from his pancreas to his leg. The only thing you can do for them is keep them comfortable. I always hoped that if I had the misfortune to contract cancer I would be as dignified as they were.

In the new hospital we had about 150 beds, some of which were on large porches. In case of a disaster we could slip in more beds. We had a well set up Delivery Room on the third floor. The second floor was Medicine and Pediatrics. Surgery was on the ground floor. It ran full blast for two or three years, then, in its final days, we closed the third floor as the patient load dropped. After we closed the second floor, everything was on the ground floor.

I knew all of the Walkers at one time: Carl, Paul, and Dwayne. Dwayne told me that he was a deputy sheriff during prohibition, and he said they targeted bootleggers coming from Canada. Sometimes Dwayne would taste their booze to check its quality, and if it was prime stuff, he might let it through. He went prospecting one year, covering a range of hills, back and forth. At the end of the summer, when the weather turned cold, they quit without finding a trace of pay dirt. Not long after, a prospector made a sensational strike just a few yards above their stopping place. That sort of thing was typical of Dwayne's luck.

He had Dupycans Contractis in his right hand, and he asked me for a second opinion. I told him that was what it was, and I explained the condition to him. Dwayne had been in an industrial accident, and had burns on his hand. I explained to him that Dupycans Contractis was not the same thing. It is about as common to office workers as it is to

laborers. I had laryngitis that time, could barely talk, and had written my instructions and explanations on paper.

Three months later Dr. Carrell asked me to verify what I had told Walker. I asked what he was talking about. He said Dwayne told him that, in my opinion, the condition of his hand was the result of an industrial accident. It took a minute for what he was saying to sink in. I told him what was said, and Carrell insisted Dwayne understood me to say his condition was industrial in origin.

In those days I took notes on scrap paper and I threw them on my dresser, where they lay until they were transferred to a drawer. I didn't need to argue; I went home, dug through the notes until I found those from my meeting with Dwayne. I returned to the hospital with the records, and handed them to Dr. Carrell. He sorted it out from there. When confronted with the evidence, Dwayne decided it must have been van Schouwen that told him about the cause of his hand's condition.

Dupycans Contractis affects the fibrous tissue in the palm of the hand down below the skin. It usually affects the ring finger, forming a scar there, which over a period of time, causes it to contract slowly. I saw it often in Aruba, and it seemed to be more commonly present in men and women who were the heaviest drinkers. Without any research to back my theory, I toyed with the idea that it was alcohol related. A woman on the lower colony road, and another in my neighborhood had it, and both were heavy drinkers. It appeared to be unusual in such a small group. On the other hand, I reasoned that Aruba's population tended to drink more heavily than other groups I was familiar with, and I couldn't be sure. Several years later a paper on the subject was published, and it supported my position. I hadn't written it up because I hadn't enough research to determine whether there was a definite relationship between drinkers and the condition.

When we opened up our little Outpatient Clinic we had Dr. De Ruyter, Meiners, Waasdorp, Beerman and myself. Waasdorp and Beerman ran the employee group, Dr. Meiners took care of family members, and De Ruyter helped both groups. I was responsible for the special clinic and keeping up with the local doctors.

Years ago there was an old Marine Clinic. It was replaced by a medical center down in the refinery they called it The Dispensary. Later, when New York wanted to emphasize industrial medicine, they built the Medical Center. It proved too expensive to operate both the Marine Clinic and the Medical Center, and they eliminated the former. At one time the Marine Department had their own doctor. He was a congenial

fellow, an older man I remember as easy going.

They disbanded that Lake Tanker fleet in the 1950's when Lake Maracaibo was dredged to allow the passage of ocean going tankers, and the Marine Department dwindled in size. Soon after, they consolidated the Marine Clinic and the Medical Center. The Medical Center was a bustling place at one time. I was on duty on Tuesday and Friday afternoons. When I arrived, there would be as many as 50 patients waiting. We had it set up like an assembly line. They were screened, a nurse had them dressed or undressed whichever was required. Another nurse wrote up the case, listing who referred it, and its tentative disposition. Yet another nurse translated Papiamento for the locals who didn't speak English. Dr. Brace had the whole thing organized so that I could see a sizeable number of patients, and select those who needed surgery. It was an efficient operation but it didn't always work.

A Papiamento speaking man was sent in and his file indicated he had hemorrhoids. Dr. Brace had a blackboard set up which had a drawing to show the patient how he was to lay on his side for the examination. The Aruban lay down, taking the position for the examination as indicated on the blackboard. And I examined him and I failed to see any sign of hemorrhoids. I asked who had sent the man in for a hemorrhoids exam when he obviously didn't have them. While examining the man, I noticed he kept looking back over his shoulder at me like an old mule would regard a teamster checking his harness. He was apprehensive although he didn't know what was going on. The nurses finally found the error. He had been referred for a tonsillectomy! The things that must have been going through that poor man's head. He must have thought we were no better than voodoo witch doctors. What a way to get to your tonsils.

Tonsillitis in adults was my worst problem. It wasn't possible to operate on local employees using a local anesthetic. Most foreign staff adults receiving tonsillectomies were administered only local anesthetic. We used deep anesthesia for local employees until I decided to try a local anesthetic. I failed to see why these people would be any less cooperative than anyone else. It worked; we had no problems.

It took me a year to get to understand those people. They were the most cooperative patients I have ever had--stoical, cooperative and very loyal. They didn't nitpick about their treatment. I did all I could to please them, and they were always grateful. Ninety-nine point nine percent of them had good results.

When I first went to Aruba I thought I would be seeing a lot of

tropical diseases. That didn't prove to be the case. When I arrived there was a huge backlog of cases to be operated on. Dr. van Ogtrop warned me there was a lot of pathology required on Aruba, but they wouldn't come in for their operation. Arubans were unwilling to have surgery, fearing loss of life or limb, until we performed a few successful cases. After that, the Aruban grapevine swung into action, and we had all of the business we could handle. Essentially, surgery and hospitalization was provided free to employees. For members of his family, he was charged between 15 and 50 guilders for surgery, and two guilders a day for a hospital bed. If they were in the lowest pay scale they didn't have to pay even that; it was completely subsidized by the company.

Before the new hospital was built, obstetrics was taken care of in old Section E. We had careful checks on everything we did. We not only knew the patients, but we checked their name against the procedure for transfusions. For instance, if we had someone with a kidney stone, we would take an X-ray just he went to the operating room to be sure that the stone hadn't moved. The side the stone was on was carefully verified to avoid operating on the wrong side. Our methods worked--we never had that problem.

The nearest I came to blowing it was when I examined the wrong end of that Aruban man. Not getting paid for operations prevented performing unnecessary operations for profit. We were paid to do a good job, and that was it.

I mentioned about the patients being under stress. In the early 50's we had 8 or 10 post-partum cases lined up side by side, with just a small space between each bed. Many women had one baby after another. At first I thought Dr. Borbonus kept them in the hospital 8 or 9 days just to give them a rest between kids. His reasons were more complex than I first thought. Usually there was no one to take care of them when they got home. I remember I had one patient whose husband was a Marine Department fellow from Suriname. This husband called me, and politely asked when his wife could come home. He thanked me when I gave him my prognosis, and said he would be pleased if she came home as soon as possible. They had 9 children, and they were running around like wild animals.

I had frequently done thyroid surgery before going to Aruba. Now my first such experience was going to be put to use in Aruba. Howdeshell had a thyroidectomy at that time. And I was waiting for Ev Biddle to come back from vacation to give the anesthesia unless it was an emergency. And I remember that Ev Biddle gave the anesthesia just



like they did up at the university. He always had the patients under good control. I remember that one of my chief concerns had always been the administering of anesthesia. It was important to have a competent anesthetist. The operating room staff were all nice. The man, who was actually my predecessor, had his surgical problems. Dr. Mazell, who was on loan from New York was somewhat domineering. Frankly, he had the operating room staff and nursing staff intimidated. I remember he once told me every time he went into the operating room; he made it a practice to find something to gripe about. Well that made him an easy act to follow; I didn't subscribe to that philosophy. And the people were better adapted to work with me.

One of my earlier misfortunes in Aruba was something I had a hard time living down. It concerned an agreeable nurse who had been helping me in the operating room and another who had been an orthopedic nurse, who was in charge of the operating room. One day, before an operation during which we intended to put a plate in a hip, I asked the woman in charge if she was going to scrub for the case. The next day, my regular nurse wouldn't speak, and was beside herself. When I asked the reason, she said she had been told that I had asked for the other nurse to do it. Immediately I told her that wasn't the case. In the past she had scrubbed on orthopedic cases and the other nurse had scrubbed on general surgical cases. I had made no such stipulation. I never knew whether she refused to believe me or she intended to leave before the mix-up, but she left shortly after. I hated to have an experienced scrub nurse to leave under those unhappy circumstances, but I couldn't do anything about it. I tried to talk to her three times, but she refused to answer.

During the last years of our hospital we had local nurses in the operating room. At the end I had only one foreign staff nurse in the whole building--the Nursing Director. The local people were good at everything except supervising themselves. They were unable or unwilling to separate their personal lives from their professional lives. We had British trained nurses, Dutch-trained nurses, and Lago trained nurses. We had a little nursing school of our own for a while, but most of them were Dutch toward the end. The British-trained nurses were good, and the best of them was a male nurse from British Guiana who took out Aruban citizenship. Aldrich Guildhouse was intelligent, and had a good eye for the patients. When I had a critically ill patient and they needed special attention, I assigned Guildhouse to the case. Having Guildhouse on the case was like having an extra doctor in the hospital.

Howdeshell was the head of Medical Clinical Laboratory. Howdeshell was a very careful fellow; an alcoholic, but he didn't drink

on the job.

We didn't have many burn cases, but one dock fire was a lollapalooza. We had two serious and 16 moderately burned patients from that one. And I put them all up on one floor and I stayed with them for two nights. We had three bad burn cases at the same time. One was a fellow by the name of Cellaire, a local newspaper reporter who was burned in a plane wreck. He was very proud of the fact that he was an international news reporter. He was wearing a pair of shorts and that was the only part of him that wasn't burned. He was brought directly from De Vuijst Field to the hospital, and we couldn't stabilize him enough to transfer him to the San Pedro Hospital in Oranjestad. Within 15 minutes, he was actually delirious from his burns. He didn't want to leave, and I didn't want him to go because I had gotten too involved in the case. We had to give his medication intravenously through his abdominal region, the only area where he was unburned. He lived 50 days. It was a sad thing; he had a large family.

In the gasoline dock fire they had a blind (A blank metal disk, with matching bolt holes, which is fitted over the flange at the end of a run of pipe.) on a line and they were doing some welding on the dock. It was a hot day, the pipe was closed at both ends, and it began to leak when the gasoline in the pipe expanded. An old Aruban fitter tightened the flanges holding the blind, and from what we could figure out later, this caused the gasket to break and the joint leaked even more. A spark from a welding machine set it off and he was incinerated in the resulting explosion and fire. Three others that were badly burned survived, but they were out of circulation for months. I have some pictures of firefighters earning their pay in one of my photo albums, and it still looks hair-raising.

And then there was another fellow who was involved with a torch of some kind at the end of the pier; his clothing caught fire, and instead of jumping into the ocean, he ran all of the way back to the head of the pier. He died very shortly.

To tell you the truth when that refinery emergency whistle blew it always chilled me. All of us who heard it could picture a process unit being on fire. We had good luck except for the man who ran the length of the pier. He died within an hour. And of course the man who was incinerated was D.O.A.

Dr. Carrell left in the summer of 1962, and I became the hospital administrator, and I continued to perform most of the surgery. The administrative work was not as tough as I expected it would be. Our

hospital had developed a solid organization.

Bill Minier, an American male nurse who worked in the wards in the hospital, left in the sixties. Arthur Meiners, a Dutch doctor, was our most qualified physician. He closed down Lago's Medical Department. After I left De Ruyter was in charge and he was supposed to leave in a few years because he was almost 60, but then they extended his time. When he retired Arthur Meiners took over. He and Waasdorp and Beerman closed the place down. They were all conscientious physicians. Meiners' father had been the governor of St. Marten some years before. These three remaining Dutch doctors were all very competent. Arthur was an intellectual, and was most considerate of his patients. He took care of my family while I was there. Often, when you went into his office he would be speaking Papiamento to some Aruban woman and he treated her as graciously as he would Queen Juliana.

Interestingly enough, Dr. Turfboer started an Alcoholics Anonymous Program in Aruba, and when he came to the States he became an industrial psychiatrist. I didn't think his Alcoholic Anonymous program would ever last when he left, but Dr. Turfboer had trained a very dedicated man who carried on for him for some years. I have given a lot of thought to the problem of alcoholism, and I find I'm more intolerant than I should be. Dupont had a very lenient policy where alcoholics were given six months of paid absence and treatment before they were put back to work. If they fell off the wagon again, they would let them go. We didn't have a policy that generous, but I will say that when the 50/15 program came along, a lot of alcoholics took the offer. Many of those people who drank heavily were hard workers. For some people it was a way to live through something boring. They would use the excuse of going to any sort of celebration to get drunk. Our American Indians are a good example of that. It seemed as the refinery got older, the people became older. There were more local people in the jobs, and there was less drinking.

### **LIFE IN THE COLONY**

Over the years we had a number of loyal maids. One, a girl from Grenada, was with us at 549 and 547. Then we had a girl from Surinam. In Bungalow 72, we had two, one helping with the ironing and heavy work. One of them lived in before we converted the maid's quarters to a bedroom for our children, and one came in from the village every day. We are still in contact with them. We had a letter from one just the other day. The other is now working in Holland to earn an annuity and retire to Aruba. Her five big boys are working in Holland, so she will be there a while. Yet another of our girls is retired in St. Marten.

Since the young man who preceded me had been an alcoholic, I reasoned that the community might be ready for a non-drinking doctor. I was a teetotaler, rarely drinking even coffee, but I thought I had better start holding something in my hand at parties. I started drinking Coke. The only people to urge me to drink were those who drank excessively and wanted someone to drink with. They finally stopped worrying about whether I drank or not, and I think the others were delighted that I didn't.

The same waiters worked these parties year in and year out, and they were probably a little embarrassed for me. My antisocial abstinence was awkward for them, but as they got to know me, they brought Cokes for me without being asked. They would come by with their trays and say that one's for Doc, pointing to the one they had whomped up for me. Those waiters eventually worked at the hospital. Food Services was under General Services, and in the shrinking colony, that fell under the jurisdiction of the Mechanical Department. They had some arrangement where they handled our hospital kitchen. In a bizarre turn of events for a surgeon, I came to be in charge of the cooks, chefs and kitchen workers. There weren't many of them by that time, but I remember Romney and his boys, the waiters who worked for us. They were at almost every party, giving each gathering a well ordered atmosphere. I remember having St. Aubyn as a patient--he was a well liked man who died before his time while I was on vacation. And I don't believe he was working for the company at the time; he was a contract worker. St. Aubyn died of appendicitis or some similar affliction.

I remember those old club coupon books, and I think I may even have one somewhere. They made great birthday presents. I was fond of those social institutions we nurtured.

One Christmas, Fran Garber, Odis Mingus and I were sitting at a party. The two of them were feeling mellow and reminiscing. One said, "Remember so-and-so who was drinking and crying and homesick? The other said, "Yeah! Yeah! We put him on a tanker." And Odis said, "Yeah, and he didn't even have any shoes on!" And Fran said, "That's right!" They had put that guy on a tanker and shipped him home that night, and now, 20 years later they just got around to wondering what happened to him.

In 1964 the Company was offering Foreign Staff employees a lay-off policy for those who were 50 years old and had 15 years of service. It was called the "50/15 Lay-off Policy". An attractive package included a weeks pay for each year of service. The alternative was to be laid off at any time after the cut-off date, in 1965, without any of the benefits

being offered at this time.

Van Ogtrop was a very decent fellow, and I kept him as long as I could. It was interesting to note, that by whipsawing someone with my personal attention and my standing in the community, I could finagle things so that people could leave when they wanted. That way, they got a better layoff allowance and annuity. The whole bunch managed to leave without any significant problems. One I remember quite vividly was a man who worked in the office, Bob Grossman. Bob had been there for a long time. One of his people had asked me a question about an upcoming event in the organization. I had told him what I knew about it, and he took exception. He had been in a line organization for a long time and I should have told him to tell the other guy. I realized he was right, and I explained that it had to do with company policy. I think it was about a rumor that was going around. Rumors always abound in hospitals--like buzzards circling dying livestock. I told him he shouldn't be so rough with me, and that I was trying to be receptive to his needs, trying to keep him on the job as long as I could. It had never dawned on him that he was even considered for a layoff. I said it could be arranged, and that just pleased him no end. He wanted to know when. Here I had worried about what to do for him for a year. I had no idea that he would want to leave. We even found jobs for the local people who were laid off. There were a few hardship cases, but none too cataclysmic to bear.

In 1964 there were about 300 employees in the Medical Department. We let 64 go in 1964. The exact number just happens to stick in my mind. There was a lay-off program for local employees, which was similar to the 50/15 program for Foreign Staff employees. Some of them wanted to go to the States; some wanted to go to Holland. There was one nice nurse, a popular lad, who was unfortunately a non-national. The non-nationals had to go first. He was from one of the British islands, a tall type, who looked as if he should belong to a basketball team. I hated to let him go, but as one of the last non-nationals, it was inevitable. A male nurse is not quite as flexible as his female counterpart. They couldn't be used in as many rooms.

One morning he practically ran into my office and wanted to know if he could have the layoff. After listening to him, I found that he had gotten in trouble with someone's wife, and he really needed to leave. He got his wish.

The local people had to have 15 years of service to receive their annuity, and I made every effort to keep them until they could accumulate their 15 years. I had cases where a supervisor got angry with

a 14 year employee, and wanted to get rid of him, and I kept him until he had his 15 years. I thought most of the time their anger was a personal problem, rather than job related. So we kept most of those people so they could get 15 years of service. Some of them were older and close to retirement age and those locals got what amounted to an early retirement upon their departure.

The last doctors were van Schouwen, De Ruyter, Meiners, Waasdorp, and Beerman. We closed the hospital on December 31, 1972, and that was when van Schouwen left. Schendstok and Borbonus had left some years before, and Brace had taken his leave in 1964 during the 50/15 Layoff Program. Brace expressed interest in the layoff and I told him he could have one if he wanted. I wanted him to finish the summer, but I told him if he wanted to go immediately I'd understand. He went home and checked with his wife and they decided to leave immediately.

The layoff program gave me a lot of headaches, and I was plagued with people unable to leave when they wanted. Early on I adopted the system whereby anyone asking for a layoff would get it. We made do with what we had until we could work out other arrangements. Brace wanted to go, and I cut him loose. I will say this for Brace: he never complained, never said he regretted going earlier.

## **RETIREMENT**

I retired September 30, 1974, and departed Aruba a month later, on October 31. Most who left the island stopped working six weeks ahead of time to wrap up their affairs. To tell the truth, I wasn't anxious to leave, and I wasn't anxious to stop working, so I asked to be allowed to work right up to the last day, and for them to give me a month to get ready to leave afterward. The hospital staff was down to a skeleton crew and each of them did double duty.

We stayed a month to do the packing, and we took a little trip over to Bonaire. Those remaining Lagoites threw us the customary celebrations they saluted departing people with, and we partied for a whole month. We flew over to Bonaire, and visited Curacao. The grapevine was working overtime, and some of the local people told their friends. There was a little informal reception. Several people met us at the airport when we landed. We stayed at an almost deserted hotel whose dining room was on a covered patio-type of thing overlooking the ocean. The open air facility had little birds flying around in its rafters.

Our Patricia had married a few years before, and Anna K had married the summer we were leaving. The schools were closed down for the upper grades then, and Gordon and Helen went off to school. They

went to Nottingham Academy, a prep school in Maryland. There was just the two of us and my mother, and we still had two maids. We didn't need them, but they were part of the family by that time.



Lago Community Church - circa 1937

Photo courtesy M. G. Lopez

## **The Kenneth Hewlett Story**

I was 27 when arrived in Aruba in 1933. I was married but they wouldn't send my wife. It was a year before I could get a house. I had been working for Baytown. I worked for your father. We'd try to run him off, but we couldn't.

My father lived until he was 94. He was about average size. I guess you can't grow very big when you work in the coal mines. I got him out of the coal mines when he was 73. That's the reason we brought him out of it. He'd been covered up several times.

After you took your clothes off, took your shower, the Gas Plant didn't smell too bad.

The boat, the *Prometheus* was being overhauled. It took us 12 days to get to Aruba. Two other fellas were with me, and one was almost as good as I was. Both were Texans. Marteen had muscles. He'd get in a fight and get his head beat off. He was strong but wasn't very quick. I don't remember the other guy's name.

I was in Alaska working, in 1943, in a little plant that made airplane gasoline for planes being delivered to Russia. I was borrowed to bring up that little plant. Doug Peoples and the big man, Jim French, were there with me. It was a Dubs Unit, a cracking unit for Standard Oil of California. My family was in Lake Charles. We brought that up and California got me from Exxon and sent me to Alaska.

All they had there was nobody who knew nothing about bringing that plant up. I just happened to walk up on them and they were waiting for the airplane to let me off. The next morning they were gone. They weren't going to stay there and help me. It was September they "threw" me out there and put me in the hotel and told me to keep my clothes on. I had no winter clothes at all. They took me out in a jeep. They took me to a place for coffee that had heads that looked like bears in it they were wearing so many clothes. They looked at me and told me I was crazy for wearing such light clothing.

It was so cold I like to have died. Two wolf hide coats couldn't keep me warm. I had one guy that had ever done anything and he watched the plant while I slept. I was on call at all times. We got steam up and even underground. We made a path over to the valves on the tanks. The gasoline had two percent water in the feed tube. We never



made a bit of no-knock gasoline. We had a high octane plane but we didn't have sulfuric acid. We couldn't get the water out of the hydrochloric acid, so no good gas. We kept it running, but I couldn't stand the cold weather so they got me a bed in there.

Those guys didn't get another job after they didn't stay to help me get the unit up. We had two fellas from Union Oil that I could ask questions. They were just advisors, but they couldn't do anything. We managed to get the plant up. They got their crude laying on the ground in Alaska. There was plenty of it.

We were making good gasoline for those Russian planes. It didn't have any smoke because we took the smoke out of the fuel. Those big old fat Russian gals would come in and get in those little planes and fly off. They were built like a peanut. This fighter plane fit you like a kayak. That's about all the plane you had.

I was there long enough for them to let me come home. I had to get back to Aruba so I could get warm. I got home three days after New Years and I was in Aruba the next day. The only thing I did while I was in Alaska was catch some of those fish that couldn't get out of the rapids. I enjoyed it after I had gone.

I retired from Aruba in 1960. I had a farm and that's where my family was when I was in Alaska. I went to Vancouver from Alaska, and by train from there to Houston. My wife picked me up from there.

Ken's daughter says, "Ken was from Indiana, mother's from Georgia, they met in Michigan, got married in Ohio, had me in Texas, and they moved to Aruba." She continues, "I was born in 1935".

My wife's name was Martha half the time and Mattie the other half. Her name before she was married was Mattie Milner Iliey.

I had a garden in Aruba. We furnished flowers for the church every Sunday that I was in Aruba: Roses, gladiolas, four sets of fern.

His son adds, "For my driver's test, two Dutch policemen got in the car with me, one in the front and one in the back. You drove for a kilometer, backed up about that far, put your foot on the brake, and that was it." <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Apologies to the Hewlett family, but the tape malfunctioned and part of the story was lost. What remained is offered forth.*

## **The Helen Humphreys Family Story**

(Helen Humphreys tells the story of her family's history) <sup>1</sup>

In the afternoon of the 29th I went down to Clear Lake to take a book back to Helen Humphreys that I had borrowed *Ships of the Esso Fleet in World War II*. We were talking about different things and I ask her not to throw any photographs away as she once threatened to do when I was there. She started bringing out pictures of her grandparents and a bible and started telling me a story. I wish I had my tape recorder with me.

Helen's maternal grandmother, Mary Elizabeth Kindred, was born September 9, 1847. She had "fevers" when she was born that left her a deaf mute. They later sent her to learn to read and learn sign language. They also gave her some voice lessons, but in those days there was not as much emphasis on learning to speak as there is today. And in those days a handicapped child was considered a burden. No one wanted them. She had 4 sisters.

Her maternal grandfather, George W. Baker, was born December 3, 1826. When he was 15 he had some kind of disease that left him deaf. However he was able to talk. When he was 39 years old he showed up one day at the farm of the parents of the grandmother. They later encouraged him to marry Mary Elizabeth who was 18 years old at the time.

In the small Bible Helen showed me there are 3 blank pages with names and dates of family members. One list shows when they were born and another shows when they died. There is an old envelope containing the Marriage Certificate for Mary and George as well as the written instructions used during their Wedding Ceremony.

They were married on October 23, 1865 and their Marriage Certificate was signed by George W. Williams who was Justice of Peace. Their Marriage Certificate says: State of Illinois, Warren County. Because they were both deaf there are four notes written on lined note paper. Apparently the notes were for the benefit of George and Mary to allow them to follow the Marriage Ceremony. (The following are copies of these notes.)

The first slip says: George: *Will you have this woman to be your wedded wife to live together in the holy state of matrimony and love,*

*honor, cherish and keep her in sickness and in health forsaking all others keeping thee only unto her so long as you both shall live? (They were both instructed to nod their heads in answer to the questions.)*

A second slip says: Mary: *Will you have this man to be your wedded husband to live together in Holy matrimony to love, cherish, serve, honor, obey and keep him in sickness and in health forsaking all others keeping thee only unto him so long as you both shall live?*

A third slip says: *You will join your right hands.*

A fourth slip says: *By this act of joining hands you take upon yourselves the relation of husband and wife; and inasmuch as you have consented together in Holy wedlock in the presence of these witnesses I do in accordance to the laws of the State of Illinois pronounce you husband and wife.*

George was some kind of traveling Salesman who sold soap. They traveled all across the United States. George and Mary had 5 girls:

Alice Cora born February 27, 1867  
Jane Lorinda born October 9, 187  
Katie born December 26, 1872  
Susan Francis born May 27, 1875  
Malvina born June 12, 1880.

One day George left and never came back. Mary Elizabeth finally went to live with daughter, Jennie and her family.

Helen's mother, Jane Lorinda, went through life being called Jennie. Jennie went through grammar school and when she graduated from the 8th grade she became a teacher. She taught for 10 years and then took business courses, learning shorthand and typing. She first went to work for a men's clothing factory and became an executive secretary. Then she went with a dry goods store and became a buyer. She lived outside of Chicago and took a commuter train for 60 miles each day into Chicago.

Helen's father, Frank Taylor, was born September 15, 1860. Meanwhile he was working for a railroad and used to travel the same train to work every day. One day they were introduced and later became married. Jennie continued to work for 6 years after they were married because she was helping support two sisters and her mother. George was supporting his parents. Finally they were able to get a small home in the city. They later moved to a small home in the country, but later moved back to the city. They lost two boy babies at birth and Jennie was 40

years old when Helen was born. This was on November 15, 1910. Later they moved to the country again where they had a small farm with a house, barn, and farm animals. Helen has a picture of her, riding a horse, when she was in the 8th grade. She says she rode a horse for 8 miles every day to school. The grandmother, Mary Elizabeth, lived with Helen's family for 20 years until she died at 82 in 1929. Helen was 20 at the time, she says.

As a child Helen learned some of the deaf sign language and could talk to her grandmother. Her grandmother could make sounds and had a hearty laugh. But she did not sound words. Apparently her training hadn't gone far enough.

Helen says she can remember as a child that they traveled around quite a lot at vacation time because her father, as a railroad employee, had free "passes" for the family.

There is a picture of her grandmother, Mary Elizabeth, holding a 2 month old Helen on her lap. It shows a smiling old lady, all dressed up and wearing rimless glasses. She is a nice looking old lady.

There is another picture of George and Augusta Taylor, the parents of Helen's father. Helen says they were from Massachusetts.

There is another larger, black Bible that evidently belonged to the Taylor side of the family. It contains various notes and memos. One of these Memos is evidently written by Frank Taylor, Helen's father, with a pencil. In this note he lists members of his side of the family with their birthdates. Helen says he claimed he had traced his family back to Zachary Taylor and before his time. This Zachary Taylor was born November 24, 1784 in Orange County, Virginia; was the 12th President of the United States; was a National Hero and he died in office. Helen says she has never tried to verify this claim. The handwriting is clear but does show signs of Palsy.

## **The Howard William Humphreys Story**

### **HOWARD WILLIAM HUMPHREYS III**

I was 27 years old when I arrived in Aruba, and the records show that my employment with the company in Aruba began November 13, 1930. The first tanker I sailed on was the Harold Walker; my third trip was on the Elisha Walker.

I retired from Exxon in 1963 when I was 60. The official date of my retirement was March 1, 1963, but I left three months before they offered me the "Golden Handshake" deal.

### **HELEN HUMPHREYS**

I knew one fellow by the name of Red who sort of looked like forty miles of bad road. He came out of the mess hall one night and a bunch of us were standing around at Baldwin's magazine stand just outside of the door. Red walked up, picked up a magazine and began to look at it. He mentioned something about his wife's coming to Aruba in the near future. Somebody was making cracks about the fact that Red was no beauty to look at. Red, who always called it like it was, was used to their snide remarks and didn't give a darn. Finally he turned around to one of the wisecrackers and said, "Hey, wait until you see my wife." We did see her when she came, and you know, she made Ma Kettle look like Mae West by comparison.

I sailed to Aruba on the *Howard Walker*. Other ships I sailed to Aruba on were: *Elisha Walker*, *Eso Aruba*, *Eso Standard*, *Pan Aruba*, *Eso Hartford*, *Canadolite*, *Cerro Azul*, *Cerro Ebano*, *Santa Rosa*.

Although I never had anything to do with the Boy Scouts or Cub Scouts, I became involved with the Girl Scouts.

For lighting at their camps they would install a borrowed Company lantern on a post. On two sides of it were palm fronds, and the other two sides were glass. I always hated to take that stuff down. It was always loaded with centipedes. If they had known about the bugs, the girls wouldn't have stayed in those tents.

Audrey Thomas, a shift worker's wife, worked on the new church committee with me. They started the Women's Guild. It was supposed to be for all denominations. They had divided the colony into three sections, and they had a circle in each section that met once or twice a

month, and once a month they all got together at the church. I was named chairman of the membership committee. It was up to me to call on all the women in the colony to invite them to join. I had two or three people on my committee and Audrey Thomas was one of them. She and I were the only ones who did any work. Nobody else did a thing.

## **LIFE IN THE COLONY**

### **HOUSING**

When I first saw the Colony what really struck me was that there were no chimneys on any of the houses. We lived in Bungalow #231, and a Dutch pharmacist, was in the bungalow next door. He threw the wildest parties for the other Dutch nationals and their wives. These people all had family that were living under the German occupation during WWII. They were very supportive of each other.

Pressure still operator J.J. "Slim" Braud from Baton Rouge lived next to us in Number 232. He returned to Baton Rouge in 1940 when they started building those air raid shelters. Years later, we were driving along in Gonzalez, Louisiana, saw his name on a mail box, and we visited him.

I am still thinking about those bungalows to the east of us on our street. Chippendale was in the end bungalow, and old man Seeley (A carpenter supervisor) was in the bungalow on the corner. I can tell you where everybody lived.

Hatfield, the fellow who had the chicken farm and sold fresh eggs, lived just in the next block from us."

I guess Hatfield was the cause of me getting a telephone. Whenever there was a problem at the Acid or Edeleanu Plant I was called. He had a telephone and I didn't. At the plant they knew he lived near me so they always called his phone number. I think he must have complained because he was always having to come and get me when they had a problem. And we were always having problems.

Rental cost was an on again and off again situation. They charged \$25 a month for a three bedroom house. For a while the commissary took only cash. Then they went to credit. They went back and forth. When they had to pay cash, people were eating in the mess hall and they were stealing food right and left to feed their families.

A lot of student engineers came down and they didn't rate houses. John Denton for one and Rolph was another one. They were married before they left the States, but they didn't tell it. When they got to Aruba they sent for their wives. Still there were no houses, so they either had to

live outside in the village or lived in vacation houses.

We had iguanas around us because we lived in Bungalow Number 231 on the north side of the street. Ours was the second one from the corner of Seventh street (which ran north and south), and Second Avenue. Second Avenue was the same street the church was on, and ran east and west along the edge of a cliff. The Chippendales bungalow number was 274, and was the one at the east end of Seventh Street. We could see the Caribbean from our front porch. Al Leak lived in Bungalow Number 230 on the corner.

I had a roommate once, Slim Low, who was crazy. He'd open a beer at night and put it under the bed. In the morning when he'd wake up, he'd guzzle that beer. If he didn't have a beer, he'd reach in the closet for his bottle, and get a great big swig of whiskey. Every pay day he was taking his pay in guilders, taking them to the Aruba Trading Bank, trading them in for dollars and he made enough money on the deal each time to buy a bottle of whiskey. When he got laid off, I did not realize his condition.

#### ISLAND LIFE

I had always heard about land crabs, and Helen and I had a chance to find out about large land crabs when we went camping. One of their claws was a large heavy thing that rattled and clattered when they dragged them over the coral. Boy, those crabs made a rattling racket at night.

Helen says: "I wouldn't sleep all night. I kept hearing all those noises in the dark."

Helen wasn't involved with the crabs much. They were almost gone by 1938, the time of her arrival in Aruba. But I remember those durned things. Coming home off 4 p.m. - 12 midnight shift, we didn't have any street lights. The path to the *sheep-sheds* was overrun by those big red crabs, and you had to be careful where you stepped.

Yes, when I first went down there, the caves in the Colony were still open. Hell, they were open for a long time.

Fontein was a palm grove, a garden and a cave over on the north side of the island. It was near the north shore by the sand dunes, just past the Chinese Gardens.

Says Helen, wistfully, "The moonlight in Aruba was beautiful. No smog. When Hump came home at night, we'd go for a drive clear across Aruba, as far as the roads went. In the moonlight, riding with the top

down. We'd turn on the radio; we'd listen to Chicago, Miami and many stations we couldn't get in the house."

#### SCHOOLS

The school was already organized when I got there in 1930. They had six or eight teachers. I remember Ms. Florey. What was the name of the one who wore the great big hat? No one would go in the mess hall to eat supper until the teachers came down the road. Unfortunately the sun was never behind them (no outline of their form) because it set in the west. When they came down the hill they were coming from the east.

Helen says, "It was well known that one of the teachers carried her liquid refreshments in her purse. She was a substitute teacher, the wife of that boiler-maker from Texas. They lived on the waterfront right close to the refinery - about the second or third house. She was a little thing, thin and her face was wrinkled. She could give her classes for about twenty minutes before she had to take her bulky purse and go to the rest room. Out of sight of the children, she'd take a healthy swig and return to the classroom properly fortified.

There were an awful lot of alcoholics in Aruba. I believe this is true about any group of people overseas, away from their country and serving: The Navy, the Army and other government or private companies. Homesickness, loneliness, and culture shock were enough to send many people looking for any distraction, any way to minimize the differences or numb their senses."

#### SHOPPING

Eugene Spitz, an acid plant worker, had to do his family's grocery shopping because his Hungarian wife couldn't speak English. Spitz usually stopped at the commissary on the way to work. If they needed perishable goods, he shopped on the way home.

The art of shopping in those days was not quite like it is today. People didn't wait on themselves; a clerk waited on you at the counter. They went back into the warehouse with your order, loaded it into bags, went back to the counter and rang up your charges. When you had paid the cashier for it, they gave it to you. One afternoon while he was shopping, Spitz was on the way to the cash register when something bit him. The second time it bit him, he shed his pants right there in front of God and everybody. It was a good thing he did, because he had a scorpion up his pants leg. Their bite was known to sting like the dickens, but as far as I know nobody ever died of it.

I met Viana in the barbershop one day, and was grumbling to him



about the unavailability of cars. He told me to come to see him at the garage when I was finished with my haircut. I did, we talked, and he sold me a car.

Women were always complaining. One of the things they complained about was the bread. To me, the company bakery bread was the best I have ever eaten as far as white bread goes. The white bread we have here in the States is nothing but air. You bite on it and a whole slice wads up in a little ball.

I didn't know what store-bought bread tasted like for many years. My mother made bread every day. At my Grandparent's house they would sooner think of sending their clothes to the laundry than they would think to buy store-bought bread. We had biscuits, bread, and rolls every day. Sarabelle, my step mother, used to bake bread, but she soon tired of that. My dad came home from work and he and I would finished off a whole loaf of bread. She made biscuits three times a week, and dad liked to carry them to work with him. He never ate them all. They came home in his lunch basket and I ate his leftovers. Holy Christmas, did those biscuits taste like the refinery.

#### ENTERTAINMENT

Sometime in 1931, fifteen or twenty of us in bachelor quarters number three took to going on picnics together. We would put two or three cases of beer on ice, and buy a pile of tenderloin steaks. Old Doc Case, who used to be in the labor department, borrowed one of the company trucks and we set up camp at the other end of the island near the lighthouse. We spent the whole damn day cooking and eating steaks, swimming, getting a suntan, and drinking beer.

The Company issued the orders that baseball and basket ball players should be recruited for Aruba. The men were leaving darned near as fast as they got hired in because there wasn't anything for them to do when they weren't working. That's why Harmon Poole, and Jim Reeves were hired. Base ball games used to be played at the old Esso Club "house." There was a makeshift field laid out to the north and west of the club. In my time they put a cooler of beer at second base. You didn't rate a beer unless you got a two base hit.

Heinze organized a team from the Acid Plant. Bob had to play second base because we didn't have enough men off shift at one time. Jake Walsko was our pitcher. Bob asked me to catch. We lost more games by one run. I threw the ball to second one time and Bob caught it on the end of his finger. He was hollering for a week.

Helen interjects, "I was new there and I wasn't used to ball games. If I ever watched a ball game, it was kids playing. When Hump got up to bat they just laughed at him, and when he was running they would holler, 'Hey, you're running too long in one spot. Get that piano off your back!' I was ready to cry I was so embarrassed."

Now this was in the days when we played behind that temporary club they put up near the commissary. This was before the club burned down. But the ball diamond and bleachers were near the Junior Esso Club and barber shop building near the new commissary. Al Leak, Coy Cross, a few others and I were playing one night, and I hit a homer way out past the fence. That dadgum Tom Eagan ran out between the cars and caught the danged ball. Once in my life I was about to make a home run, and he spoiled it!

We played basketball one year without winning a game. They finally voted our team the best sportsmen of the year - we never got into any fights. There was Bob Heinze, Joe Getts, Jim Dollar, and others. We formed a team just to fill out the league. We were out there for fun. You know, we never did get too many young college basket ball players down there. Jake Walsko was a doggone good ball handler. Doc Reeves also played. Warren and Harry Steihl, George Mathews didn't play.

Jake Walsko told me that he had a little collection of gold basketballs. These were the ones they gave to each member of the winning basketball team. However he never played in a single game. He couldn't catch the ball worth a darn. He was on one of the office teams, and he showed up at every game, but they never let him play. This was the team made up of guys like Jake Walsko and Dutch Engle.

About the time they installed the first bowling alleys the Esso Club served food. This must have been in 1938 or 1939. They had a hamburger bar, and you could order steaks.

#### GOLF

Helen learned to play golf the hard way. At the Aruba Colony Golf Club, number 2 hole was near a fence made up of vertical Arizona cactus. This was the typical Aruba Cactus fence. Helen was standing with her back to the fence. She stooped over to address the ball, and backed into that big old cactus fence. Poor Helen had cactus sticking out of her rear end like you wouldn't believe.

Helen says, "Yeah! I couldn't continue playing. I had to go to the clubhouse. My rear end was full of fine needles for two weeks. You

couldn't even see the needles they were so fine."

Helen explained that those women in the golf club were playing all the time, and they were actually quite good. Ida Cross, Gilbert Uhr's wife, and Pearl Ogden were three golfers that she remembers well. They weren't interested in wasting their time playing with someone who didn't know how to play. They used to play lowest score won a golf ball. They gave her a handicap and she was out there with them. They had an annoying habit of moving their ball to improve their lay. She didn't think that was "cricket". She preferred bowling; where everybody could see there was no cheating. You were encouraged to move your ball to improve your lay in the golf game they played. Ida and Pearl didn't count their strokes when they were in the rough. She quit playing with them.

Helen says, "There was a family by the name of Scott who lived in Mundinger's old five-room house in the 1940's. The wife, a tiny little thing, was quite a golfer. The women always teed off in the mornings. She came by at eight o'clock one morning because she heard I was interested in the sport. I told her Hump was coming home for breakfast, and I couldn't walk out and leave him with no breakfast. She asked if I couldn't put the food on the stove and leave him to get his own. After coming by three mornings in a row she gave up on me. I didn't believe in walking out like that on your husband."

I taught Harmon Poole, the baseball player, how to play golf. After he learned to play golf you couldn't get him away from it, and he got good at it. He didn't swing at the ball, he bunted it. Harmon was a comical sight to see when he was learning. On one occasion, he had a concrete block between his ball and the green. I showed him how to loft the ball with a wedge. He tried it, and he cut the ball in two. One day he and I were playing, and we had a bet on that the loser would buy supper. The first hole, I birdied. Harmon got a par. The second and third holes were the same. The next hole we both birdied. By the ninth hole I was still two strokes up on him. Pool beat me in the last nine holes. Coy Cross did the same thing to me later on.

At a tournament I was playing Bill Meyers in the final round. He beat me on the last hole both times we went around the nine hole course. That's about when I gave up playing golf.

#### SWIMMING

I didn't get too far beyond the mess hall for a long time. To go swimming at B.A. Beach we used to follow the railroad tracks that led out to the old phosphate mines up near where the new hospital was later

located. Out in that area there were no houses at all. Even the tank farm wasn't there at that time. We used to walk on the ties of the railroad track to avoid walking on the coral that was so darn hard on our bare feet.

### **OTHER FUN THINGS IN ARUBA**

- We went to Rudi Beaujon's wedding when he was married to that girl whose father published the Funk and Wagnall's Dictionary. (Sally Funk and her father Wilfred.)
- I remember when Curley Minton's wife had been gone for quite a while and she was coming back. We sat up drinking with him almost all night, and when the ship showed up Curly discovered he didn't have any shoes to wear to go meet her. I had a brand new pair of them in the quarters and he got them.
- A guy landed in the hospital one day and he was really hurting. They messed around with him for a couple of days. One ear was killing him and he wasn't getting any sleep. A nurse got a magnifying glass and looked at it. He had a cockroach leg stuck in there. She pulled it out and all his troubles were over.
- Remember the school principal they brought in who decided that the bar and the club were making too much money because the government set the price too high? You couldn't sell beer for less than two bits a bottle. This happened when they moved the bar to the middle of the club house. Can't remember the date.
- "I can remember it being so cold in Aruba one time that I had to turn the kerosene stove oven on. We had a period when the sun didn't shine for four days, something highly unusual for the island. We wore sweaters in the daytime. For a long time we didn't have electrical storms, and then we began having them. Years later in the States, I experienced an electrical storm and it scared me because I had forgotten what they were like," Helen relates.
- Continuing, "In 1955, as we returned from a vacation, a hurricane kept our plane from landing. It flew around Aruba, over the Paraguana Peninsula, and landed in Curacao where we sat around for hours. We finally took off at eight o'clock at night. Well we weren't very anxious to go I'm telling you. In the vicinity of the island we saw that kind of orange haze that accompanies a hurricane. In Aruba, Hump met us at the airport with our car. The next day we heard that the bridge by Nemi's Garage had washed away, flash floods happened all over the island, and the area around Santa Cruz and Noord was

flooded.”

- She further relates, “We had those old style kitchen cabinets when I first went to Aruba. My cabinets were new and had a built in flour sifter and the lower cupboards were for pot and pan storage. One day, when I opened a door to reach for a pan, I was staring at a great big Cockroach. At the time I didn't know what it was. I screamed bloody murder, ran around the corner and down the street to Bungalow Number 217, Mae Descanio's house. I asked her if she would come over and help me get the (What is it?) out of the house, and although she was busy cooking, she was good enough to help me with my problem.”
- After a heavy rain a large puddle of water always formed on Main Street. This puddle always formed where the surfaced road dropped off about three feet. This drop off was where the asphalt topped street abruptly ended. The street was still being upgraded from a sandy rock filled thoroughfare. I can remember a rain in 1932 that filled the area with water and overflowed the partially completed street. This was indeed news on the island of Aruba since the average rainfall, up until that time, was 36 inches per year.
- In 1930, along the main street in San Nicholas, there was Danceland, Dragger's, Fanny's, Annie Caliper's, and Blondie's Moose Hall. The Lago concession fence extended on West down past the Acid Plant and other areas that were company property. San Nicholas village paralleled the fence. There was a street that ran along on the village side of the fence. On the village side of the street there was The Hija Del Dia, a house of ill repute. The Hija Del Noche, another establishment in the same trade, was on down the street to the west.

## **VOYAGES**

In 1938, when I was coming back from the States where Helen and I had been married, I sailed back on the old *Standard*. A sizeable group of men, including "Plough" Huffman, had been attending a training session, and were assigned to sail back to Aruba on Esso's new ships. The *Standard* was the training ship for the Esso fleet. Breakfast was served very early each morning, and at 9:30 or 10:00 o'clock, the captain met with his officers in the dining room. As the only passenger, I was routinely asked to sit in on these meetings, more as an effort to provide some kind of entertainment I think. It was usually late before they concluded their business. They had high tea at 4:00 p.m., at 6:00 o'clock they had supper, and sandwiches were available later in the evening.

I remember Koostra; he was a Nazi. I was on his ship before the

war, and all but a few of the ship's crew were Nazi. I can't remember who was with me at the time, but we were disturbed I can tell you. The men who weren't Nazis wouldn't give the Nazi salute, and they were beaten, and I don't mean verbally. Koostra was angry at us for playing our radio during the voyage. He claimed the radio interfered with his compass, and we had thrown the ship several miles off course. As soon as we docked, I headed for the office to complain about Koostra.

Sue and Helen and I went aboard the *Santa Rosa* when it was docked at Oranjestad one time. People took advantage of visiting tour ships, often going aboard to have a drink at the bar or a meal. Eman was there, and he came over to have a drink with us while we were sitting at the bar. Somehow he got to talking politics and government with Sue. He must have spent an hour talking with her.

### **SOCIAL SECURITY COMES TO LAGO**

In 1957 Lago introduced the concept of social security to its employees. The U.S. government required that there be 100% participation before it could be applied to us Americans in Aruba. A Standard Oil man from New York explained it to us in detail, and after he did so, not all were willing to join the program. Standard was concerned for us, and after some consideration, they agreed to give us an increase in our paycheck to cover our payment. What they didn't tell us was that they were going to force us to take it whether we wanted it or not.

### **PLANTS AND PLANT LIFE**

One time Hugh Beshers was barreling down the road on his way to a fire in the Pressure Stills, and when he came to the main gate he couldn't stop. He hit the gate and knocked it off its hinges. A bottle rolling around on the floorboard of his car got under the brake pedal.

Nobody knew much about an acid plant except the boss, Bob Heinze. When I arrived on the scene there were only four Hungarians, and George Larson. Eventually we had a total of 13 people. Gene Spitz and Ed Weiss were my right hand men in the Acid Plant. Spitz was a banker, and he was darned good with figures.

There was no Edeleanu Plant until 1938. In the Acid Plant I had all of those men listed. Let's see there were Reed, Slick, Dickson, Spec Bacon, M.C. Bates, Lee Reese, Ed Weiss, Tony Descanio, the Stirl brothers, Eugene Spitz, Gruber Greenbaum, and Dick Palmer.

I remember T-Gar Smith. He and Gilbert Smith were two Cleanout Foremen. When I got there van der What's-his-name was the Chief

Watchman. The company fired him, and Charlie Høglund tried to get me to apply for that job. Man, they were searching everywhere for a replacement. I had only been there for a few days, but Charlie took me all over creation showing me the different gates and explaining how the job went. I told him I wasn't interested.

A few days later Gilbert Brook got the job. T-Gar transferred to the Operating Department, although he didn't last there too long. When they opened the new restaurant at the club, he was made manager of it. Smith was later sent to Havana, Cuba to the little Esso refinery we had there.

I remember I was in the hospital the time the fireworks on the barge blew up. The Wade boy was brought into the hospital shaking so bad he couldn't hold a glass of water. Doctor Mayer finally administered a couple of shots of scotch to him and sent him home.

I remember when the Lake Tanker burned at the docks in 1932. I was still in the hospital. They opened a hatch that had been closed for a long time and it was full of gas. Something set it off, and one Chinaman was badly burned. At the hospital they tried to get him to lie down in bed. He wasn't having any part of it. The man said, "If I lay down I'll die."

I remember Ray Imler. J.W. Harrison was sent down from the New York office as an assistant operator to check up on the guys in the refinery. At one time he was sent by Imler down to a ship at the dock with a wheelbarrow to pick up a case of milk. Later on when Harrison was officially introduced to the operating people he was made the Process Superintendent for the High Pressure Stills. One of the first things he did was bust Imler to Operator. What goes around comes around.

At the time they had that Mock Convention in 1936 I was working all hours. At times I was a lead burner, and at other times I was an operator.

When I wanted to get married there was a tank up in the Poly Plant that was not being put together properly. I had watched a foreign staff lead burner working on a tank in the Poly Plant.

I complained to Heinze that they were using hydrogen instead of acetylene to do their job. I told him the work being done would not hold up, and that the tank would have to be done over. Sure as hell, when I got my leave to get married (I was taking George Larson's place while he was on vacation.) Heinze told me, "Hump before you can get married, you've got to reline that tank." I had Benny Benschaut, a Lithuanian, and

an Aruban working for me. As luck would have it I had a huge stack of lead on hand. We cut it to the sizes we wanted, took all of the old lead out of the tank, painted the inside of it, and boy did we ever bolt the new strips into it. We hung it all in one day. I put bands around the middle - everything went up like clockwork. Two black fellows came in early and they had the equipment in place by the time we got there.

It was the practice of the Company's Aruban 12:p.m. to 8:a.m. shift work employees to leave home early in the evening to get away from their doggone families. They slept on the finished part of the street until it was time to go to work.

At night the same men caught up on their sleep at the Aruba Trading Company store while it was under construction and they continued to do so for a long time after it opened. You could see them sleeping on that nice clean driveway of that building after 11:00 pm. After midnight some of the men on the 4 p.m. to 12 midnight shift who didn't have transportation home slept there on the concrete until the next morning. This was a usual practice since any rainfall was uncommon.

When you went out the "new" main gate, the Aruba Trading Company store was on one side. On the other was the "Brooklyn Bar," and next to it was another bar whose name I cannot remember. Across the street was another bar with a restaurant upstairs with pretty good food.

The Aruba Trading Company was located in a little offset, triangular piece of ground, just outside the Main Gate. Next to the Aruba Trading building was the Lago Refinery fence. There was a cyclone fence around the Lago concession. Also next to Aruba Trading there were a good number of black tanks that made up the Crude Oil Tank Farm. One of the refinery main roads and a ground level "pipe alley" ran along the west side of this tank farm.

The main gate when I got there was by the Acid Plant, and then it moved up where it is now. Before they built the Cat Plant and the Alky Plant, the road ran straight up, right through the tank farm. The Lago Church services were held in the school yard and also in the dining hall by Jack Emery and George Wilkins. The new church was designed by Norm Shirley, and the guy from the foundry, Jack Schnur cast the lights for the church. Jack Schnur was a damn good foundry-man. Not having all of the ingredients he needed for the top grade iron, he used a little extra iron, which meant that we did eat up a lot of it. We saved every dadgum scrap of that stuff. He was the guy who cast the little bronze medallions for the Billion Barrel Day celebration.



Speaking of gates, one time Jake Walsko and his wife and I went to a wedding somewhere in the Colony. We decided to go to the village to get something to eat, and we headed back for the Colony about 10:00 O'clock. The guard stopped us at the gate and wanted to see my badge. I didn't have it with me because I never wore one with my good clothes, and he wasn't going to let me in. I got out of the car and chased him way down the road, came back and kicked the gate open, and drove through it. The next morning boy oh boy was Chief Watchman Brook mad. That happened immediately following the WWII when they were very strict about security.

I was working on a turnaround at the Edeleanu Plant and they had just finished packing an extractor and I crawled in it to inspect the thing and it wasn't right. I hurried out of it because it was almost noon, and I was trying to catch a ride. I was too late; everybody had left for lunch. I jumped in my car and took off to eat at home. At the first gate, I realized I had lost my badge in the tower sure as hell, so I told the Dutch guard to call our office and identify me so I could get through. On the way back from lunch I picked up a temporary pass. I later went back in the tower and recovered my badge.

### **MEDICINE**

I had a shoulder problem and Dr. Hendrickson recommended that I go to the company's New York medical facilities. I wasn't satisfied with the price of the treatment, and I suggested they send me to the Winston Salem Medical School. There, my doctor there told me the treatment would take a while, so I asked him to write a letter to Dr. Hendrickson in Aruba. Hendrickson passed the letter to the personnel department. They put me on medical leave, but they did not offer to pay the hospital bill. By the fourth treatment, unable to contain his curiosity any longer, my doctor asked how I managed to wangle an appointment to see him. He thought he wasn't supposed to see any new patients. I showed him the letter I had from New York Medical Department.

He did a hellava good job, and I was never troubled with it again. As you know, when you get older you lose lubrication in your joints.

### **BUNGALOWS**

In the early days the Company decided they had better check up on the houses that were being built. They sent a company carpenter supervisor, Art Heard, to investigate. That didn't set very well with some of the construction workers. After inspecting five houses he reported to his boss, the overall refinery superintendent, Ed Bartells, saying, "We've got to fasten the roofs to the houses." All the houses had heavy steel

wire that extended from the roof down to the studs below, and they had forgotten to fasten down the loose end of this wire!

Charlie Ross, the contractor building the bungalows made a fortune on those jobs. Three room houses cost about \$7,000.00 each to build, and the four room houses ran about \$9,000.00. The company utilities group had company pipe fitters run the water and sewer lines to each bungalow. There was a hellava difference in the amount of pipe required for the three and the 4, 5, and 6 room houses. The three room bungalows had one bath room. Four and five room bungalows had two bathrooms. Six room bungalows had three bathrooms. Piping for drains and sewer; Fresh, brackish and salt water had to be installed accordingly.

Helen remembers during the war that we sifted the flour through a silk stocking to get rid of the weevils. John Keller used to tell about how the weevils got into the flour in his dad's store. This was the store he had back in the States. They took the flour up on the roof, spread it out on paper where the sun drove the weevils out of it and then they put the flour back in the bags and sold it.

Opines Helen, "I always figured that a weevil or two isn't going to kill you. When it is cooked you don't even know the difference. When I was a kid we lived out in the country, and we had a cellar where we kept the food. Bacon, eggs, cheese, bread, donuts, produce and everything was kept in there. One day when I was in my late twenties I had fixed a meal, and I was out in the kitchen eating a piece of cheese. All of a sudden I took a good look at it, and saw it was crawling with worms. I left the table, trying hard not throw up. Dad laughed and laughed, and the more he laughed, the madder I got. He thought it was the biggest joke, saying, a few worms wouldn't hurt you. He lived to be 92, and he must have eaten a few in his life time.

My folks never threw anything out. If it got real bad they gave it to the dog and the cats. My mother never threw any food out, and to this day I don't either."

## **The Edgar Jackson Story**

My full name is Edgar Jackson. I was born on March 20, 1902 in Chicago, Illinois at the corner of 63rd street and Evans Avenue. My father was an engineer in the press room of the Chicago Tribune. When I was about four years old my parents moved to East Chicago, Indiana, where my father became superintendent of the electric and ice plant, later going into the building business. East Chicago was a growing industrial city, between Whiting and Gary. I attended schools there and graduated from Washington High School, the only one in town at that time in 1919. World War I was winding down, and in 1918 many of the teachers were drafted or joined up, and the ones who took their places likewise. That was how I started teaching biology and English, my last semester, at \$1.65 an hour of classroom time, a good wage then.

### **ATHLETICS**

I played football and basketball and got my letter in each and a big cardinal and white cardigan sweater with two white stripes on each arm. That meant a lot to me then. I was editor-in-chief of the annual. The war had created a lot of shortages and we had to scratch to get materials for it. Everything in it, except the photos and cuts, was composed in the school print shop and, printed by the students.

### **RESERVE OFFICERS TRAINING CORPS**

I attended the University of Illinois in 1919-1920. At that time R.O.T.C. was compulsory. At the end of the year I entered the Hazelton competition and came out number two. The winner was a graduate of a military academy.

### **WORKING IN THE DE-TINNING PLANT**

There was a short sharp recession in 1920 - 1921, and my fathers business failed. I went to work in a de-tinning plant, where I had worked during vacations previously. Eleven hours on day shift and thirteen hours nights, seven days a week. Every other week you worked 24 hours on weekends and the other weekend you had 24 hours off. The eight hour day was just coming into fashion, first in the steel mills, later at Ford Motor Company. Although the pay was good, there wasn't much social life.

### **WORKING AS A CHEMIST IN A LEAD SMELTER**

After two years I had the opportunity to begin work as a chemist in

the lab of a lead smelter in Hammond, Indiana. After becoming acquainted with the work, I went on the 4-12 shift and was able to take some classes in the mornings at Armour Institute of Technology (Now the Illinois Institute of Technology), on the south side of Chicago. I liked the work, but was moved to change when I got pneumonia from bromine gas poisoning, and I was afraid of chronic lead poisoning also.

### **WORKING FOR SINCLAIR OIL COMPANY**

Sinclair Oil Company in East Chicago was hiring men to man some new cracking stills they were building. I applied for a job and was hired for the Labor Department. Everyone on the stills had to start in the Labor Department. The General Labor Foreman was Jack Barnes; He was the older brother of Grover Barnes who worked in Aruba. I worked with Grover Barnes in Aruba at a later date. When extra help was needed on the stills, Jack would assign men from the labor gang and I soon had a job as coal passer on the Rerun Stills. This was winter time and the work was tough. These stills burned coal and you would have to thaw it out in the overhead hoppers, then run down below the stills and siphon the ashes into a collecting pit. There were 20 shell stills, ten on each side. The side re-running the treated gasoline had fractionating towers sitting on the shells. The side re-running the crude bottoms for "bright-stock" or wax tailings for wax didn't have the towers. It was mainly a seat-of-the pants operation, not many instruments, and the stillman had a lot of discretion in the operations. I was fortunate in working for stillmen who weren't afraid to divulge their trade secrets. The units I worked on were what you could call a semi-continuous operation. One battery had the cooler on one end and products could be gravitated to the other battery. There were five of them in a row. In one battery we received the gasoline that had been processed in another part of the refinery and reran it and gave it a light treatment of caustic soda and so on. That was one of the batch systems I worked on.

### **MAKING LUBE OIL**

We also made some lube oil. I remember a very heavy one that they called an Onyx Compound. It was about 1500 viscosity. You had to be very careful when you got down toward the high viscosity end of the run. You kept lowering the fire as the viscosity went up. You had to pump it out before it reached the solidifying point and send it down to the wax plant where it was further processed.

### **CAST IRON VALVE PROBLEMS**

Cast iron valves were used where we pumped out the bottoms. In the winter time you would get one of these cock valves about a quarter turn open and it would freeze in that position. You couldn't shut it off. One time I had four of these cast iron valves break in the flanges. Right away we had to go to emergency. When one of these valves cracked you had to pump out the unit some other way. The operator had to know more about operations than the operator on the continuous pipe stills in Aruba really!

### **WORKING UP TO THE GRADE OF STILLMAN**

I worked for a stillman named Paddy Keran. He was Irish. He kind of took a shine to me and he helped me a lot. He had retired from Standard of Indiana at the age of 70 and he didn't want to retire. But they made him retire. Then he came over to Sinclair and they hired him. He was a good old fellow; a good old Irishman.

I worked up to stillman in a comparatively short time. This was temporary stillman, used to spell men on vacation, sick leave, etc. It seemed like it would be some time before a permanent rating would be awarded.

When I went to Aruba, my refinery experience had been with this kind of advanced batch process.

### **A JOB OFFER BY PAN AMERICAN PETROLEUM COMPANY**

In the fall of 1928 I saw an ad in the Oil & Gas Journal, placed by the Pan American Petroleum Company, for operators to go to Aruba for a new refinery being built there. Standard Oil Company of Indiana had bought Pan American and its subsidiaries a few years before and had visions of entering the foreign markets in Mexico, Germany and other countries. Pan American's offices were in New York. I applied for a job and was offered the position of first class helper at \$185.00 a month, with board, room, laundry and medical attention. That was less cash than I was receiving at Sinclair, but I wasn't saving much. So I accepted the offer. I had received a good recommendation from the Sinclair plant manager.

Early in 1929 I was told to go to the Whiting Refinery of Standard of Indiana for a physical exam. I was examined by a future brother-in-law, Dr. Bryce Reeve, who was plant physician at that time at Whiting.

### **ON OUR WAY TO ARUBA**

Evidently he found nothing wrong, for I received instructions in March of 1929 to report to the New York office with my passport.

About this time I heard that another Sinclair man was also going. It was "Sparky" Roebuck. I knew him slightly. He worked as top man on the coke stills, and we both bowled in the Sinclair bowling league. We decided to go to New York together, first class of course, and we stopped overnight at Niagara Falls, neither of us having seen it before, Frank being a Kansas farm boy. In New York we were put up in the Lincoln Hotel. A group of us were assembled in the Pan Am office and Tom Cook, the general manager of this operation, gave us a pep talk. Some of the operators asked about the seven-day week they were signing up for. He said, "Fellows, as soon as we have the stills running you will all go on six-day week." It was about 1937 before that went into effect in Aruba. It never went into effect in Mexico while I was there.

#### THE WATER CARGO

We were to go to Aruba on the ocean going tanker *S/S Crampton Anderson*, Peter Johnson, master. It had just come out of dry-dock, and we were to sail from Tompkinsville, on Staten Island. It was taking a load of water to Aruba, some of it drinking water. After we got out to sea, it was found that the drinking water tanks had been painted with the wrong kind of paint. It looked like red lead. I'm not sure it wasn't, but we all survived.

There was some hold up in sailing, and we had to spend a couple of nights on the ship. I saw my first talking picture in a storefront in Tompkinsville: Al Jolson in *Sonny Boy*. We also rode the Staten Island ferry, and the railroad.

We went on the payroll when the ship sailed on April 1, 1929. There were about twelve of us on board. Besides Roebuck, the only other one I remember going to Aruba was Bill Brown. I remember him because he became so seasick. Georges Ordonez, the son of the famous Mexican geologist, was on board. He was going to Venezuela.

Captain Johnson was a gentleman. He saw that we were a bunch of green horns, and gave us some good advice, delivered in a kindly manner.

#### ARUBA & ACCOMMODATIONS

I was 27 years of age when we landed in Aruba on April 1, 1929. I've forgotten the personnel man who met us as the ship docked, but it was probably Marvin Case or Tommy Johnson. They assigned me a room with Lunn Easten in what they called the "old" hospital. There were several Marine Department employees, one of whom I remember named Frazier. Easten, Frazier, a Scotsman named Stewart, and I used to buy a case of Scotch on payday, and other types of liquors in between.

Another resident was Lortentzen, a young engineer, and I think Gus Stutzman. Lorentzen was of German descent and he and Gus pal-ed around together. They knew another German who worked in the power house. They were always on hand when we were breaking out drinks.

#### **THE HOSPITAL FACILITIES**

The hospital facilities had been relocated to a larger building just south of the newly erected dining hall, a.k.a. the mess hall. The latter building was about a half mile to the east of where I was located. This "old" hospital building, where we were living was a bungalow housing about ten or twelve people across the road, south, from number one Rerun Still and a little west of what was becoming number one Power House. The Rerun stills were built in a east-west row, with number one being on the west end and number eight being on the east end. From the rerun stills we watched them building the Power House which was about three city blocks to the south at the edge of the lagoon. Our bungalow was located where the Combustion Department building later was built. To orient this building for the old timers: this building was built in an east-west direction and parallel to Rerun Stills one through five and just north across the main road from Number One Power House. This later became the Instrument Department. I lived in these quarters for about seven months.

#### **EARLY HOUSING ARRANGEMENTS**

Across the road, to the west of where I was living, was a bungalow housing the offices of the Crandall Engineering, which was building the dry-dock, and three other bungalows, one of which housed three girl clerks, one of whom was Lotje Gravenstein, who later married L. S. McReynolds. One was one of the nurses, Jo, who later married Bob Baum. Lyle Redfoot's sister was another one. She was a red headed girl. There was another that one of the fellows called "BFN." Margaret Reeve, who later became my wife, also worked in the hospital. She was an operating room nurse and worked for Doctor Mailer who became Lago's doctor after Doctor Nunes left for Holland. I didn't meet her until later. I never had to go to the Hospital so I never met Ms Marian Wyle, the Hospital Administrator. I think that Kay Tucker worked for her.

#### **1929 TRIP TO LA SALINA AND MARACAIBO**

I made a trip, with another fellow, to Venezuela in 1929 when Coy Cross gave me three days off for the overtime I had worked. I went over on a Lake Tanker. They let us off in La Salinas. I remember when we arrived at the entrance to Lake Maracaibo we had to wait overnight until high tide before the ship could cross the sandbar. At 5:00 a.m. there was

a knock at our door and there was a Chinaman with two cups of tea with milk in them! At La Salina there was a small unit that produced fuel oil, I guess, and the ship was met by a personnel type who arranged for us to get off the ship and the ship went on in to load up its crude cargo.

This fellow showed us around Maracaibo. I always remember how many catfish there were around where the sewers and the slaughter houses emptied into the lake.

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

When I arrived there I was assigned to the Light Oils Finishing Department and worked on the Rerun Stills. I had signed up to go to the Cracking Plant, but they weren't ready for the operators at that time. The units were still being built and the Rerun Stills were being used as Crude Stills in the meantime.

Bill Morris was in charge and his shift foremen was Bob Ellis, Pollock (not Earl), and another with a name something like McNamara. Morris was soon sent over to the Cracking Plant as General Foreman and Coy Cross took over the Light Oils Department. I liked Coy.

The Cracking Plant, or the "High Pressure Stills" as they were called to distinguish between them and the "Low Pressure Stills" or the Rerun Stills, was being built to the east of the Rerun Stills.

About a week before we arrived, the head of an accumulator, on number one Rerun Unit, had blown off and killed two men. The company hadn't anticipated starting up the stills so soon and they were being manned mainly by painters, carpenters, pipefitters, etc. One of these men was Virgil McNamara, who later became a Light Oils Shift Foreman. Another was Mr. Brewer, the father of Faye and the Brewer boys.

I knew Blanket Heath, who was, later, an operator on the Light Oils Units. Blanket was his first name; it wasn't a nickname as a lot of people thought! I believe he was an Oklahoma Indian. Alton Hatfield was working in the Light Oils when I arrived there. He was a helper I remember and helpers spent most of their time walking up and down the overhead walkway which ran the length of the Rerun Stills. Others working in the Light Oils at the time were three McGrew's and a brother-in-law of theirs. There was a cousin of Klaus Dillard, named Dillard, and others whom I can't recall their names at this time. John Mechling and Freddy Beaujon were machinists watching the new centrifugal hot tar pumps. John later in his career became a Mechanical Department Zone Supervisor. Fred later in his life became the Head Cashier in the



Accounting Department. He was the one who gave us our pay each payday. Much later he became Lieutenant Governor of the Island of Aruba.

#### THE WHITE HOUSE

At the time we were living in the “old” hospital building we ate in the White House, at the head of the docks, along with the Crandall Engineering and Marine Department employees. The White House had originally been a store downstairs and living quarters upstairs. It belonged to one of the Emans. Before it became our dining hall it had been used as an office building. The cooks were Chinese. The food was supposed to be better than that in the Mess Hall near the *sheep sheds*. I ate there until I moved into number one Bachelor Quarters.

#### NIGHT FIRE

One night while I was sleeping in the “old” hospital the top blew off a Kerosene Treater just west of the number one Rerun Still. It landed on a transformer bank nearby and the treater caught fire. There was a stairway up the side of the tank and I remember Butch Borsch and another fellow carried a Foamite hose up to the top of the tank to extinguish the fire.

#### BLASTING HAZARDS

Another time I was sleeping in the daytime and blasting was going on near the Power House. A two foot square of coral came down through the roof in our living room, along with some smaller pieces. Some one had forgotten to count the dynamite sticks in the blasting operations going on nearby!

#### NUMBER ONE BACHELOR QUARTERS

When they closed the “old” hospital building I was moved into number one Bachelor Quarters. At first craft tradesmen and operators were put in the same room. There was a bathroom with a shower between each two rooms. Three people were assigned to each room. I was, for a short time, in a room with Christianson, a blacksmith, and Johnny Gibbons, a Mason. Gibbons followed the stock market and would get a stack of financial times every two weeks. Both were good fellows but it soon became apparent that a shift worker interfered with a day worker's days off. So we were able to change around and I was in a room with Ronnie Nunn and Lee Campbell, whose brother, Oliver, I had known while working at Sinclair in Chicago. Ronnie had worked for Frank Campbell in the laboratory in the refinery in Casper, Wyoming. The two Campbell's were not related.

#### IMPORTING LABORERS

I remember a schooner docking below the Power House and Captain Allen leading about thirty blacks up the road. He had been recruiting around the islands. He was the father of Paria who later ran a Beauty Shop for the ladies in the Colony.

#### KELLOGG, CHICAGO BRIDGE, C.C.ROSS, CRANDALL ENGINEERING

There were about four main contractors working at that time. Mr. Watson (no relative of Ralph Watson) headed up Kellogg; Mr. Nelson was in charge of Chicago Bridge; Charlie Ross was building living quarters, and Mr. Butterfield was in charge of Crandall Engineering. He had a tough bunch of Boston divers working for him, but he kept them under control. He would only give them a small amount to squander in the village and would send the rest back to Boston. Mr. Butterfield also sold perfumes and Chinese linens & silks as a side line. He also had Andy Tully under his wing. Andy was young and just out from England, and lived in the Crandall building.

I worked on the Rerun Stills about seven months. When the first Cracking Units were about to start up, I kept badgering Coy Cross to be transferred and he finally gave in. There wasn't enough to do on the reruns, and it was deadly dull.

#### **A 1930 EXCURSION TO VENEZUELA**

I remember one time, in 1930 I think it was, an excursion was organized for a group of us to go from Aruba to La Guaira and then by car to Caracas and return. A friend of mine, an American by the name of Lloyd English of the receiving and shipping department and I decided to go together on this trip. He had worked for the company over in east Africa or some place in the production department before coming to Aruba. He later married and lived in the Colony. I got off for three days I think it was because I had been working some overtime and some kind of holiday was involved. In those days they didn't pay for overtime, they gave you time off. I signed up to go and paid whoever was organizing the excursion. I forget how much it was. We sailed over on the *Liberador*, a small passenger ship. There was a special meal on board the ship the night before we sailed. Lloyd and I went down and ate and I was about half sick from the champagne we drank the night before. Anyway that was the first time in my life I was ever seasick on a sea voyage. It came on all of a sudden and I was on a second tier deck. I heaved over the side not worrying about those below!

We arrived in La Guaira and went up to Caracas by the old road.

This was a real winding roadway up the mountains. In Caracas we stayed at a nice hotel which was in the French style with all of the ornate furniture. The following evening they had a celebration in an auditorium and there was dancing. In our group was Margaret Robbins who had come with some lady friend as chaperon. And here comes the president of Venezuela who at the time was Juan Vicente Gomez. By coup d'etat he came into power when he deposed the previous dictator, Cipriano Castro, in 1908. He never accepted the title of president when he was re-elected in 1929 but ruled as commander in chief of the army; he was considered a "dictator" too. Anyway here came Gomez and his entourage. He evidently saw the girls in our party dancing and he asked if he could dance with Margaret Robbins. She danced a couple of dances with him!

#### EXPLORING THE PHOSPHATE MINE

One time in Aruba I had worked the 12 midnight to 8:a.m. shift when I went exploring with two of the day workers who had the day off. We were going to explore the phosphate mine. This was located up in the area near the Colorado Light House and where the new hospital building was located in later years. One of the shafts west of the lighthouse was wide open, an old skip hoist cage lay on the bottom and an 8" x 8" timber lay across the shaft and a heavy rope was fastened to it and extended to the bottom, maybe forty or fifty feet. We soon located the main excavation, a large room. It had two levels and rail tracks ran to the upper level where a locomotive and some dump cars stood. We spent the entire day exploring the tunnels running out from the main room. It was a tight squeeze getting through some of them and we were amazed at how far they extended. Some of them had ventilation holes open to the sky, but no way to get out. We went back to where we entered, and the other two didn't have too much trouble climbing the rope and swinging up on the timber. Came my turn and I could make it to the top but was too tired to pull myself up on the timber. The other two finally stretched out on the timber and gave me a hand; I think one of them was Ronnie Nunn.

#### AN ISLAND HIKE

Another time when we had 24 hours off some of us decided to walk up the north coast to Oranjestad. There was no road and it was rough going. We soon ran out of water and stopped at Dos Bocas, where there was a palm grove. The Aruban caretaker climbed some of the trees and cracked some coconuts, so we could drink the water. I had started to get blisters on my feet, as had some of the others, so we started back. We

made it, painfully. I had calluses two inches in diameter come completely off.

#### A FISHING EXPERIENCE

Ole Bergan, a stillman I worked for on the Cracking Units, and I got seven or eight fellows together, and we hired a Venezuelan fisherman to take us fishing in his sailboat. This fellow only had one hand. He had a little dog on board, and as we went out the harbor by the Power House and met the swells, the dog heaved up on the deck. That set off everyone except Ole and I. Doc Coffman became so sick we had to keep him from falling overboard and finally put him below the deck on the rock ballast. We rounded the point at the lighthouse on the east end of the island and were about even with B.A. Beach, when the line holding the mainsail broke, letting the sail come down. I could just see us drifting on to the rocks, but the skipper, with one hand, fastened on a new line and climbed the mast to run it through the block. As I remember it we didn't catch any fish with our hand lines.

#### SAILBOAT EXPERIENCE

Later on, with help from Lunn Easten, I bought an Aruban fishing boat, and kept it below the tennis courts to sail it outside the lagoon. It was a lot easier coming in than going out.

I learned then that a sail boat takes a lot of work to keep it up. Frank Campbell's young sons used to come down and watch me work on it, as did Captain Young's boys, Sidney and George.

Bert Mathews, who worked in the Cracking Plant, had a boat built about this time. Some of the boys borrowed it one day and got T.F.X. Kelly to sail it. Kelley had been an officer on tankers before he came ashore to work on the stills. They were tacking merrily up the lagoon when they landed on top of a "coral head", the boat tipped over and they had to scramble. After that Kelley was called Shipwreck Kelly.

Among others, Charlie Ross, the housing contractor, was interested in sailing. Later on, I think he was responsible for importing a star class boat, or maybe several. They were really too large for just sailing in the lagoon, and had too much sail for the waters outside, so smaller boats were later used.

As the eight Cracking Units were put on stream some of the Kellogg construction men switched over to work for Pan Am. I think Whitey Riggs and Steve Joyce of the rigging crew were a couple. Also Ralph "Spike" Ogden. Eddie McCourt, of the insulators was another. I think Jim Bluejacket worked for Pan Am. Skip Culver worked for Pan Am.

He drove the ice truck and delivered ice to colony residents at first.

#### **EIGHT BACHELOR QUARTERS**

Eight Bachelor Quarters were built and the shift workers eventually ended up in number Eight, upwind, and supposedly quieter.

#### **BOXING**

A boxing ring was set up between Bachelor Quarters no. 6 and no. 8 and the boxing hopefuls used to practice there, also the wrestlers, such as Butch Borsch and Doug Peebles and Hump Humphreys. Some of the boxers used to fight in the village. Kirby Norris had hopes, but I don't think he ever made it.

#### **HANDBALL AND SWIMMING**

There was a single wall handball court between the mess hall and the post office. I used to enjoy it. Tommy Jancosek was the champ. Frank Campbell played and a Dr. Tanner, a chemist, was a contender. Johnny Breen was a regular player.

Then there were some swimmers who really worked at it. Jim French and Johnny Breen, and later Charlie Green hardly missed a day.

#### **APPENDIX REMOVED 1931**

In 1931 Doctor Mailer removed my appendix. At the time the hospital was just to the west of the mess hall. His assistant was Doctor Sher, a Jewish doctor, who later went to California and became a pediatrician specializing in child care. At the time Doctor Mailer said he wasn't sure, but he thought it was my appendix and I told him to go in and do whatever he thought was necessary. As it turned out the appendix had wrapped itself around the intestine. The ceiling fan in the operating room couldn't be used while they were operating because it stirred up the dust. So there was a nurse standing by the doctor mopping the perspiration off his forehead and face all during the operation! Margaret said afterwards that she was nervous when Doctor Mailer operated because his procedures tended to be unorthodox. She didn't care for his type of surgery.

#### **ASSIGNMENT TAMPICO 1932-1938**

In 1932, in my third 18 month contract in Aruba, Jim French, Miles Eppler and I were transferred to Tampico, Mexico, to start up a new combination unit being built there. The job was supposed to last a couple of years, and lasted six, until 1938, when the Mexican government took over. While we were there Standard Oil Company of New Jersey took over Pan American. Margaret Reeve, dentist doctor Virgil Reeve's sister and I were married in Tampico in 1933. While in

Mexico I became pretty fluent in Spanish.

While in Mexico I met Eduardo Dorsey, a Mexican. He was born in the United States, spoke English, and had returned to Mexico with his father and mother. We became very good friends and when he married later he had two sons. He named one of his sons Edgar and I became his godfather. He always insisted that the boys name was "Edgar" and would not have the name Latinized to "Edgardo." Rose, my present wife, and I went to visit Eduardo and his family in Tampico, Mexico one time and he organized a banquet for us. He invited old friends who had worked with me in the refinery there. It was quite a reunion.

While living here in Florida Eduardo came to visit us and presented me with a 100 Peso gold piece which I value very highly.

### **RETURN TO ARUBA IN 1938**

We returned to Aruba on June 1, 1938 (according to what it says on my retirement scroll), so I missed six years of what occurred in Aruba. I retired from Lago on February 21, 1962.

### **BOWLING**

When bowling came to Aruba I already knew something about the game, but I didn't get in much bowling because I was working shift work. I did bowl in the mixed bowling league. I remember Martha Walker was one of the team members.

### **THE SKEET CLUB**

I later became a member of the Skeet Club; however I didn't get to be very active because I was working shift work. Then later on I became Maintenance Supervisor in the Cracking Department; worked days; and had Sundays off. Some times we would have Odis Mingus and some of the visiting "wheels" from the New York office take part in our Sunday morning activities. I also remember that Harmon Poole was a pretty good skeet shooter. He would lay his gun on the stand at the gun position, call, pull. Harmon then picked up his gun and shot the clay bird as it took off! He had wonderful coordination.

### **GAS TESTING IN THE EARLY DAYS**

It wasn't until sometime after the refinery was in operation that we begun to have gas testing equipment and gas tests done on the units. I can remember going up to an open manhole in a tower with a welder. I would stand on one side of the open manhole and the welder on the other and he would light his welding torch and hold it in front of the manhole to see if it was going to flash. We could pretty much tell by our noses whether there were any hazardous gases present. We never had one flash

when the welder held his torch in front of the open manhole!

### **RETIREMENT**

When I retired on February 21, 1962 I finally wound up here at Light House Point, Pompano Beach. We were quite taken with this house. It has a screened in, red tiled, porch that looks out on a canal. Most of our neighbors have a cruiser of some kind tied up at their private docks. I had brought a Lignum Vitae tree seed from Aruba and have a nice 15 year old tree growing (1985) in my front yard. There is a tall palm tree, next to the canal, in the two front corners of my front yard. My hobby these days has been my plants and flowers I have put in the beds and around my house. Every year or so I put in new Rose plants. The horticulturists say the plants wear out. Some trees that I have are: Black Olive, Zapadillo, Meyers Lemon, Mango, Kumquat, Gumbo Limbo and National Plum. Plants are: Gardenia, Garlic Lily, Tipenchine (purple flowers), Snap Dragons (Rocket Mix), Bird of Paradise, Dwarf Bamboo, Nanderina, Begonia, Orange Jasmine, Charde Daisy, Dahlias, African Gerbera Daisy, Plumbago, Bonita (red bell flowers), Carnations, Dracaena Polarama, Parsley, Pansy, Allemande, Geranium, Dwarf Gardenia, Crown of Thorns, Spider Plant, Jatropha, Dracaena Magenell, and Thryallias.



Santa Cruz Church—circa 1940

Photo courtesy M. G. Lopez



## **The Rose Jackson Story**

My mother was Hungarian and my father was German. I still have some cousins in Hungary, and I was there to visit with them a few years ago. My maiden name was Wegerbauer. I do know the translation of the word "weger" is road, but I don't know what the word "bauer" means.

When I visited in Hungary they told me that my father's family had settled, before WWI, in the town of Shotion where Franz Joseph Hayden, Austrian composer and one of the great masters of classical music was born. Geographically, Shotion is 65 miles from Vienna. This was when the region of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was known as Bavaria. The country of Germany was unheard of.

They had a vigorous road building program then, and as they finished a section of it, the government left behind a number of men to maintain it. My great-great grandfather was left in Shotion. He later married a Hungarian, and that is how my German ancestors got there in that part of the country. I have returned to the very spot where they raised grapes, and I found the major crop now grown there is onions. If I hear Hungarian spoken, I have a faint idea of what they are talking about. Some common phrases I can understand are: how are you; happy birthday. I heard the language spoken by my parents when I was a child, but I haven't heard Hungarian spoken anywhere else. My parents spoke it in our home in the United States, but when I speak it, I have to think before saying anything. When I was in Hungary, the husband of one of my cousins was a railroad engineer from Shotion to Vienna, and he knew a little English. Another of my relations had picked up some English from the newspaper in Budapest that employed him.

When I asked for more wine I used the word for glass that Hungarians used to refer to a window. They informed me with some amusement that I was asking for another "window" of wine. My choice of words sometimes caused confusion. I wanted to take them all out for dinner one night, and I asked them if they would take me where they had gypsies. They said that was fine. Their car was so small, that when the taxi arrived to pick us up, I thought we were taking it also since I didn't think all of us could fit into their car. We had a fine dinner with gypsy music and after the evening was over, they asked where else I wanted to go. When I said, back home, they told me they understood I wanted to stay out all night. They had been concerned that they would be too tipsy to drive home.

To explain how Ed and I happened to meet, I must tell you that I worked in a small business in South Bend, Indiana that offered no opportunity for promotion. One day, as I was talking to my boss, he suggested that I go to Chicago, 90 miles distant. Goodyear Rubber Company had an opening in their accounting department.

That was how I happened to be there before they merged. In 1939, they went to IBM computers, and this proved quite interesting to me. World War II began when I was acting chief clerk of the accounting department. There was no such thing, in those days, of getting either the salary or the recognition I felt I deserved. I could see the handwriting on the wall. After the war, I was sure to be demoted and that didn't appeal to me in the least. Bill Hewin, the man in South Bend who had originally hired me for Goodyear, made a lot of money during the war. He bought up parking lots, a number of buildings downtown, and the Goodyear distributorship there. He hired seven employees from Goodyear, and I was one of them. I returned to South Bend in an entirely different capacity; I was his emporium office manager. Another person he pirated from Goodyear was Ed's brother, who became one of his sales representatives. His name was Wilbur "Bill" Jackson. I had known him just very casually while working in the Chicago accounting office. And he was another one to move his whole family to South Bend. We got to talking one day in 1950, and I said, "You know Bill, now the war is ended and all of that excitement is over, I am very sorry that I never joined the WACS or the WAVES." Bill asked me if I were interested in living out of the country, to which I replied, I couldn't think of anything more exciting. He suggested I make an acquaintance with his brother who lived on Aruba. Ed and I started corresponding sometime during August.

By some strange coincidence, my girl friend, Lena Desntile, and I were planning a trip down to the Caribbean. We planned to stop in Florida, Jamaica, and Haiti. Lena is a lovely Frenchwoman from Belgium.

My nephew, who was there for a visit, attended Indiana State University. He had to work for his tuition; my sister had five children and they didn't have enough to send him. His office for the part time job in the publicity department was next door to that of Helen Reeve. Helen was the dean of women and the sister of Dr. Virgil Reeve, Aruba's dentist.

I told my nephew at Christmas that year I was going to meet Bill Jackson's brother in the Caribbean on my vacation. I remarked that Ed

had been previously married to a Margaret Reeve, who later lived in Terra Haute with her family. My nephew asked if Margaret had sister named Helen. When I said she did, he told me Margaret's sister, Helen, had the office next door. I was told that if I knew anyone who belonged to the Reeve family, I should grab him while he was still available.

When I met Helen, she decided since my nephew was such a nice person, I had to be okay. Bill Jackson and his family used to come to our house before I even knew he had a brother. I helped him sell his house when he moved to South Bend. When I was helping him look for a new one, he came over to my sister's and had dinner with us. By the time his family came we knew all about the Jackson's.

In one of my letters to Ed, I mentioned that I would be down that way sometime in February, and he asked me to visit him. I said, "Oh, no, I could never do that." He asked me to meet him on the island of Curacao when he had some time off. We had been writing for six months, and Ed was a good letter writer. That's what got me to agree. Meanwhile Christmas arrived, along with flowers from Africa, and "Christmas Night" perfume. Ed wrote that he might have to go to New York on a business trip and that if I felt like it, he'd see about arranging a transfer to Africa for me. All of this was right up my alley.

Lena and I had a marvelous time in Jamaica before we continued on to Haiti. She stayed in Haiti while I went to Curacao to meet Ed. Ed and I were supposed to have three days together in Curacao. Unfortunately I forgot my birth certificate, and KLM wouldn't let me on their plane in Florida. I lost one of the three days I had planned to be with Ed.

Ed and I felt as if we knew each other because we had been writing for such a long time. I will never forget that day, when we got up, and, contrary to Aruba's average weather, it was raining. I was staying in the Piscadera Bay Club.

Ed said, "I know what we can do. We'll go to Spritzer and Fuhrman, and I'll buy you a diamond ring." I said I'd have to think it over. He told me he'd buy the ring and that I could think it over. If I changed my mind, and don't want to marry him, I could send it back. There was no way I was going to send that ring back.

We married the following May, and I stayed with Jack and Madeleine Friel while on Aruba for the seven day period required before the ceremony could be performed. People have asked me the reason for leaving my friend in Haiti before coming to Aruba, and to that I have always replied, "Very simple! She was better looking!"

We have been married 32 years, and I was married 18 years before, so I have been a married man for 50 years.

Before leaving Aruba we lived in Bungalow 1522, one of the Weed houses overlooking the sea.<sup>1</sup>

#### **THE HYDROPONICS GARDEN**

There was an experimental hydroponics garden just below us on the sea side where they raised tomatoes, and other vegetables. It was dismantled in 1957.

#### **THE ORCHID SOCIETY OF ARUBA**

It was in 1957 that a group of us started the Orchid Society of Aruba. Charter members were Nellie Mingus, Preston Hunt, Jack Groom and Rose Jackson. About four others were members, but I don't recall their names. The studies resulted in quite a few plants at the Jackson's. As expected, Ed eventually inherited the care and raising of orchids. There was sizable orchid house in the Mingus garden. Jack Groom raised enough plants so that he was able to sell some.

#### **THE ARUBA EXPLORERS STOCK CLUB**

In February 1958, I received an invitation to join an investment club that was being formed. I am really so grateful for the experience and the knowledge that came to me through membership in that club. I still have a copy of the articles of agreement as well as a report of one of the meetings.

The original officers were: president, Mrs. Gilbert Uhr (Francis); vice president, Mrs. Clyde Moyer (Margaret); secretary, Kay Fodermaier; treasurer, Clara Hull (wife of Captain Hull); treasurer elect, Mrs. Edgar Jackson (Rose). Other members were: B. Anderson; K. Cutting; J. Donohue; N. Donovan; E. Harth; D. Richardson; M. Proterra; E. Reeve; C. Vint; G. Post. Another member, Tom McAuliffe, a broker at Draper, Sears & Co. was a one-time employee of Lago who we felt would give us good tips on the market. Of course, we did not invest enough so that any profits or losses, after being divided among the members, could benefit anyone. The experience was invaluable since each member was assigned a different subject each month. Some of the subjects were; puts and calls; margin buying; p/e ratios. I remember one

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<sup>1</sup>*This refers to the then new concrete block houses that were built in the early 50's, which were designed and built by the Miami, Florida construction firm of Robert Law Weed. Bungalows built before these times were wood frame with stucco exteriors.*

of the first stocks we bought, Chromolloy, doubled in price within six months. We were certain we were following in the footsteps of Hetty Green.

According to the articles of agreement we paid monthly dues of fls 27.00. Membership was to be made up of female U.S. citizens. Meetings were held at 7:30 p.m. after payday each month at the homes of the members.

When we left in February of 1962, the club's shares were worth almost \$6,000. There was a net profit of 9%. Considering that for a couple of years the club experimented only with "cats and dogs," that was a good showing.

#### **EXERCISE CLASSES**

We had an exercise class with about 30 members. The meetings of which were held at 9:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. every other morning in the patio of Dr. Brace's house. Marian Brace conducted the exercises and we kept records. The first order of business was everyone weighed in.

Of course, we came in all ages and sizes. The rumor was that the renovations on the next door houses of Jack Friel and Les Seekins took just a little longer than normal because of the interest the workmen took in our efforts.

#### **INDONESIAN COOKING CLASSES**

Indonesian cooking classes were conducted by Mrs. Bartels who, with her husband, operated the floating Bali restaurant in Oranjstad. Her husband at one time operated a tourist bureau there. Both were in concentration camps in Indonesia during the Japanese occupation of that country.

We were first introduced to the spices used and the Indonesian method of preparing foods. No mixers, or blenders were allowed. All chopping of the foodstuffs had to be done by hand, even red hot peppers. When some complained about the burning of skin and eyes experienced when handling red peppers, Mrs. Bartels said anyone could become accustomed to eating them uncooked. She credited the great nutritional value in them as saving their lives while they were on the starvation diet they endured in the concentration camps.

In addition to the chopping and slicing we learned how to obtain real coconut milk (not the juice) by cleaning and chopping the meat of the coconut. After learning the tedious methods of food preparation by the Indonesians we felt like real natives.

One result of these classes was that we wound up with some 50

recipes. We also learned how to cook rice and "put it to bed." This was a way to keep rice warm for up to 12 hours when all burners on the stove were needed to cook other dishes for East Indian Rijstaffel. After completing these classes we put on a Rijstaffel for our husbands and had a great party.

A number of times over the years, some of us have prepared a Rijstaffel for about 30 persons. Cooks were Phyllis Boyack, Ans Schindeler, Jeannette Faucett, and Rose Jackson. Today we are able to get all of the spices, even the "krupak" (dried shrimp). It's lots of work, but Indonesian cooking can be fun.

### **ART CLASSES**

Art classes were given by John Pandellis, a Greek, who was our local professional artist. He was married to an Indonesian lady. John's daughter, Lislotte, worked in Fanny's shop in the village. A number of colony residents took lessons from him and many had John's paintings on their walls.

One of John Pandellis large paintings shows the Sea grape Grove during its better days. It has the sea as a background, and a moon peeps through the branches. This painting was seen hanging on a wall in the hall of the colony service administration building in March of 1985.

Dr. Stritch, who was on the Lago hospital staff, gave up his medical practice and became a full time painter. A number of his paintings were sold to colony residents.

For a time there were annual art shows held at the Esso Club.

## **The Rudolph J. Janecek Story**

Rudy said his degree was in forestry and he really liked the outdoors. He was a teacher before coming to Aruba. He was a very nice fellow, soft spoken and I could see where he would make a good teacher. He seemed out of place in a refinery crowd; he was just too nice. His wife, Letty, was very knowledgeable. Rudy had a very thin head of brown, hair and wore wire rim glasses. He was a lanky built individual.

Red Ward, the brother of his wife, Letty, was instrumental in getting him down to Aruba in the first place. Red was in the Aruba refinery Engineering Department. He had been discharged from the army after 30 months in the European Theatre of Operations and Red asked if Rudy would be interested in a job in Aruba. After much talk, Letty and Rudy agreed that it would be nice for a couple of years. Red had the New York office contact Rudy. After a long wait during which Letty and Rudy packed their car in preparation for returning to his old teaching job at Oregon State College, a letter finally arrived from New York. He was told to report to the New York office for an interview. All went well and he was soon on his way to Aruba.

He said he could still feel the heat that assailed him upon descending from the KLM plane at the Aruba airport. At the time he remembers thinking how dry the island is. Prior to arriving, he heard about the beautiful beaches and blue waters surrounding the island and the picturesque Divi Divi trees.

Rudy Janecek appeared upon the scene in Aruba in April of 1946 and was assigned as a Field Engineer to "Pop" Hudson. Pop was an older fellow with grey hair.

Rudy's first few days were spent in the *sheep sheds* as was the policy for young engineers in those days. When Letty arrived, a few weeks later, they were assigned one of the barracks at the east end of the colony. They were called the "Sea View Apartments". They had been converted into small homes and used as temporary housing because of a shortage of regular bungalows.

Letty was pregnant at the time of her arrival so they made arrangements with Frank Flaherty to stay in his assigned bungalow while he and his wife were on vacation in the states. This worked out so well that they made similar arrangements with others several times. Sixteen

months later they were assigned bungalow #641, which was located near the hospital. It was their home for the rest of their stay in Aruba. Just about all of the bungalows were sitting atop concrete supports on top of hard corral. Each support had built around it an oil pot to keep out the insects such as cockroaches which thrived on the island. Colony Service people would occasionally come by to refill these pots.

Their son, David, was born in Aruba on December 1, 1946, at the Lago Hospital. Dr. Borbonus was the attending physician. At the time, Pop Hudson was tough on letting people have time off, even for a birth in the family, if you couldn't give him the exact date on which the baby would be born. Everyone knew this rule couldn't be enforced but Letty gave Rudy the date about two weeks in advance and David arrived right on schedule. Pop said they were lucky that time. But the same thing happened when Douglas was born. When Letty hit the date just right for Joyce's date of birth, Pop gave up heckling for a date for the next one. Most of the people at the office thought it was hilarious.

Rudy's work, at this stage, consisted of surveying for new installations, staking out for new pipelines through the refinery and colony, and setting elevations for concrete pours. Much of Rudy's guidance came from Paul Hollyfield. Closed and corrected traverse surveys were seldom necessary but Rudy enjoyed performing them for the 50 New Houses Project and the Harbor Sweeping Program.

While he wasn't working, Letty and Rudy enjoyed going to the local shopping spots such as the Aruba Trading Company, and Spritzer and Fuhrmann, and to the docks in Oranjestad to buy fish, bananas, papaya and other fruit from Venezuela. They loved spending time with the children down in the little lagoon just playing in the sand and snorkeling. Rudy said he had never seen a kid more excited than when they first took David snorkeling and he saw the beautiful fish beneath him. It is such a different world under the water. Rudy enjoyed going fishing once in a while but spent a lot more time spearing rock lobster along and under the various reefs throughout the little lagoon and the big lagoon. His spears were made by friends at the refinery shops.

Son, Douglas, was born November 16, 1949. Rudy and Letty had taken a short local vacation to Barranquilla when David was about 18 months old but when Doug came along they stayed fairly close to home. Rudy paid to have flower beds and a high concrete block wall built around their front yard. Truckloads of good dirt from the other end of the island were hauled in to fill the beds. More dirt was hauled in to prepare for a lawn. Letty and Rudy spent hours and hours planting



Bermuda grass that grew quite rapidly if watered. Then they planted bananas, papaya, bougainvillea, and other flowering plants in the beds. Everything grew beautifully and soon they had one of the prettiest front yards on the island. The family spent many happy hours playing there with neighborhood children.

Rudy said they never felt like strangers on Aruba because Red Ward, Letty's brother had worked there several years before their arrival. Red, his wife Trudi and their children Ginger, Carol, and Tommy were close family members. And, Letty's sister, Dina (Pud) and Reginald Storie had lived there several years before our arrival. Their son, Peter, was always a constant companion to our two boys. So, we had a big family in Aruba. Reg was Captain Storie of the Lake Tanker Fleet so we were invited to many of the nice parties given by the British Colony given at the Marine Club.

Joyce, their first daughter, was born on October 30, 1952 and family chores increased again but Letty took it all in stride although at times it was quite hectic. Letty and Rudy had taken up bridge with a vengeance. Sometimes Rudy would rush home after work, shower and shave, and help feed the babies while Letty was busy preparing dinner. After eating quickly, they would stick the kids in bed and Rudy would make the cocktails. They mixed their own in a little hand shaken mixer and preferred frozen daiquiris. Long drinks were served during the bridge playing. They joined the duplicated bridge club and eventually became directors of the club. Rudy also played highly competitive bridge with a gang of men that included John Mechling, Obie Whiteley, Doc Hendrickson and several others. That was fun.

When Jeanne was born on November 16, 1952, Red Ward came by and asked Rudy and Letty if they knew yet what was causing the babies to be coming along like rabbits. By now, Rudy had been transferred to the Equipment Inspection Section where he said he learned a lot of things that kept him well employed for the remainder of his working days. This was an excellent training ground for Inspectors in the Exxon circuit. Hands on inspection during turn-arounds gave insight into many of the erosion/corrosion problems within a refinery. Becoming the lead inspector on the turn around of a major operating unit within the refinery was a highly responsible assignment. The inspectors had to work very closely with all company departments; especially the Operating Department, the Mechanical Department, the Technical Service Department, and the Materials Department. Training was ongoing with courses being taught in Safety, X-ray, Magnaflux, Process and Mechanical Design, Dye-Checking, Report Writing, etc.

Rudy said he had, however, become somewhat tired of the little island of Aruba with all of its goat trails, hard coral, salty breezes. There appeared to be little promise of great job advancement so Rudy decided to ask for a transfer to some other affiliate. While waiting for a transfer, Rudy kept thinking of the many other memories they would have of Aruba such as:

- Dancing at the Esso Club with their many friends.
- Outdoor barbecues at Red Ward's.
- Being pulled up by four old men and inspecting the chimney at an elevation of about 150 feet.
- Playing bridge with Al and Winnie Lake.
- Picnics among the sea-grape trees at B. A. Beach.
- The Inspection Section picnic at Little Lagoon.
- The screeching parakeets.
- Exploring the caves with our boys.
- Cleaning eye glass lenses every ten minutes to remove salt deposited by the cool, salt-laden, evening air.
- Wandering around the old gold mine area at Frenchman's Pass.

Finally in April, 1954 Rudy was offered an assignment in Barrancabermeja, Colombia with Esso's affiliate, Ecopetrol. He accepted the offer and the Janeceks were soon on their way to a new life in the tropical jungles of the Magdalena Valley. It was quite a change. Saying good-bye to family and friends in Aruba was not easy.

## **The Paul Emil, Kamma & Daniel Jensen Story**

Paul was born in Svengborg, Denmark, October 9, 1900. His mother died when he was very young and his father remarried when Paul was 13 years old. At that age he was sent to sea to work on ships and worked his way up to be an electrician on the Moore-McCormack Line running between New York City and Los Angeles, stopping in Havana and then through the Panama Canal.

When World War I broke out the ship he was on, the *S/S California*, was drafted, sent to New Orleans and converted to a troop transport. Paul was a Dane and told to get off the ship. His story was that in a couple of days the Navy looked him up and offered him U. S. citizenship and a commission in the Navy to come back to the ship as Chief Electrician. He accepted.

While he was on the *S/S California* he fell down a ladder while it was under Navy command and broke his leg. The ship was enroute to Panama and through the canal. His leg was set and put in a cast in Panama and he rejoined the ship. The leg never healed properly and a year later the Navy put him in a Navy hospital in New York where they broke the leg and reset it but it also was not successful. The leg was a problem for him all his life and as he got older and particularly after retirement.

In 1927 he was working for Brown Instrument Company in Philadelphia. In later years this company became the Minneapolis-Honeywell and then just Honeywell Instrument Company. Anyway, they were going to send him to Russia on some installation they had going on over there. The Russians' refused him a visa so Honeywell said, "No problem, we'll send you to Aruba." Paul had no idea where Aruba was and it took him half a day in the New York library to find where it was because all reference to Aruba was filed under Curacao.

Paul was sent to Aruba by Brown Instrument Company in 1928. He worked on installing the new instrumentation for less than a year when he joined Lago.

Kamma was also from Svengborg, Denmark and first met Paul in New York City at a mutual Danish friend's home. They had not known each other previously. She joined Paul in Aruba in 1929. She always

said she was the 23rd wife to arrive in Aruba.

In the early days Paul was assigned a motorcycle with a side car to carry tools and instruments around. Elmer Wheeler was the General foreman of the Instrument Department. Paul was his assistant.

Paul became General Foreman of the Instrument Department in 1937. There is no doubt that Paul's shipboard experience translated into his General Foreman abilities. Edgar J. Hillstead was his Assistant. Paul was the one you talked to at your annual salary review. When the budget didn't allow a raise you received a very good review and when you did receive a 5% raise you were reminded of all of your faults. He had some definite ideas of what was right and what was wrong.

Jim Lopez was a 14 year old high school kid when he first met Paul and Kamma. Paul introduced Jim to stamp collecting and gave him an album and a number of stamps. Some of these stamps were issued in Germany during World War I. Jim still has the album and stamps.

Paul was one of the founding fathers of the El Sol Naciente Masonic Lodge in Oranjestad along with his life long friend, L. G. Lopez.

In the early days because of his shipboard experience he had the assignment of "shooting the sun" with his seaman's sextant. He used the results he obtained for setting the master clock in the Power House. This was the clock to which all of the time clocks around the refinery were connected. Later he initiated the use of the National Bureau of Standards "time ticks" for checking the clocks in the Refinery and Colony. These signals were received via short wave from station WWV in Virginia. Our time was one half hour later than New York time.

Every morning he sat in his patio with his cup of coffee and his pipe and planned his work day. He was a strong believer in "planning your work and budgeting your time."

He was a conference leader in the company's Modern Supervisory Practices program. He was also a conference leader in the Effective Discussion program. Over the years these programs were given to refinery supervisors.

He was the president and active member of the Lago Colony Yacht Club. He was an active member of the Instrument Society of Aruba. He fostered the activities of the Instrument Department off the job. He was active in Colony Red Cross drives and the Lago Community Council.

When Paul retired from Lago he and Kamma settled in St. Croix, U. S. Virgin Islands. They picked this as their retirement location because,

they wanted to stay in the West Indies; the islands had been Danish and still had some Danish influence; they wanted to remain under the U. S. Flag. St. Croix seemed to fit the bill.

### **DANIEL'S STORY**

Their son Daniel was born in Aruba and went through schooling at the Lago School there through the first 3 years of Lago Community High School. When his parents retired he spent his senior high school year in Florida. He then attended the University of Florida where he studied Building Construction. After graduation he worked a year in Orlando. When his father died he got a job in St. Croix with a West Palm Beach construction company, he moved to St. Croix with his wife, Lee, in 1963. In 1966 his company sent him to Barbados to set up the islands first Ready Mix concrete plant. They lived in Barbados for three years, during which time their two children were born.

The company moved them back to St. Croix in 1969 and Dan became General Manager of St. Croix and St. Thomas. In 1969 Dan and Lee purchased a travel agency and Lee managed it. Due to a downturn in the concrete business in 1971 the company decided to close their office in the Virgin Islands. Paul decided to leave the company and started a hardware store.

In 1979 Dan and Lee decided to move to the States so the children could attend stateside schools. They sold their businesses and moved to Madison, Georgia, more for climate and location than any other reason.

Both children went through high school in Madison and then attended Berry College in Rome, Georgia. After graduation their son, Paul, married and settled in the Atlanta area. Their daughter Lise lives in Atlanta. He says having two children in college wasn't what you could call good family planning.

When the children went to college Dan became a building inspector for the local county government until they graduated. Dan and Lee both missed the water having lived in Aruba and St. Croix for all of those years. He applied for a job as Director of Planning and Building for Camden County, on the Georgia coast. At this time, September, 1991 they have been there for two years and enjoy it.

## **The William Arnold Frederick Koopman Family Story**

"Bill", as most people called him, was born on November 22, 1907 in Delft, Holland. He went to a radio school in Rotterdam. Upon graduation he became a radio operator at the Municipal Airport.

In 1929 he joined the Nederlandse Koloniale Petroleum Maatschappij (N. K. P. M.) as a Student Field Engineer. This was a subsidiary of Standard Oil Company of New Jersey. This company sent him for a one year of on-the-job training with the Carter Oil Company in Seminole, Oklahoma. At the time Seminole was a famous oil field. Bill learned about the oil fields and American English. He had his meals every day at a boarding house run by a motherly type who looked after Bill. Fellow workers taught him to preface every dinner table request with a swear word. But "Ma" made sure that he knew the correct words to use. He said he was fortunate to have board and room with her. His recollection of his stay in Seminole ran something like this: Mud - hospitality - mud - tough men - mud - Indians - mud.

After a year in Oklahoma he returned to Holland and found that he had been assigned to the oil fields in Sumatra, Indonesia in Dutch East Indies. While there he learned some of the Malayan language. He said the work there was quite interesting, but he had no desire to return. After two years in the Mechanical Department there he returned to Holland and the Great Depression.

Bill was lucky that Standard Oil Company of New Jersey was in The Hague hiring people for Lago Oil & Transport Co. Ltd. in Aruba. He joined Jan Moller, Tex Schelfhorst, Herman Couzy, and Jack Wevers.

Bill turned up in Aruba in 1932 as a Pipe Department employee of the Lago Oil and Transport Co. Ltd. At the end of two years he was offered a job with the Eagle Refinery on the other end of the island. The position was as General Foreman of the Pipe and Instrument Department. After nine months Bill got tired of talking to himself (no men to supervise). So he joined the Instrument Department of the Lago Oil and Transport Company Ltd. He made a name for himself as the job training instructor. He was a natural for that job. He had a way of talking with the apprentices and others in his classes that produced good results. He demonstrated enthusiasm for his job; he was a stern taskmaster and the students did their best to make any project they were working on a

success. He naturally filled the role of a "Dutch Uncle."

Bill had an inquiring mind which was one of the requirements for a good Instrument Technician. He said that one time he decided to pop some popcorn. He used a regular pot with a lid. He heard the corn popping and took the lid off to see what was going on. He wound up with popped corn all over the floor. One of Bill's favorite expressions was: "Do you mind if I have an idea?"

He was handy with his hands. One time the Esso Club had a fair. This was when Vic Schultz was the Club Manager. The Instrument Society of Aruba had a booth which included several things. One was a recording potentiometer which was connected to a thermocouple. When you held the thermocouple temperature sensitive end in your hand you could see the temperature record move up scale on the recorder chart. This demonstrated what a thermocouple does.

Bill had rounded up some silver fuse wire from the island electric company. He had made himself a little mold and had a little gas torch. He had a hand full of Dutch ten cent pieces. He would put one ten cent piece in the mold and give it a smack with the rounded head of a ball peen hammer. Next with a little jig he would twist a length of fuse wire. Then with the little gas torch he would weld one end of the silver fuse wire to the bent ten cent piece and, *voilà*, he had produced a unique silver spoon! As I remember it people paid a guilder for one of these spoons. He had trouble keeping up with the demand.

In 1946 the foreign staff of the Instrument Department began a united effort to learn more about electronics. Our General Foreman advised us in a staff meeting that electronic type instrumentation transmission and control systems were being developed. He said this meant we would all have to study electronics to prepare ourselves for this new instrumentation.

Bill was quite happy that this was a chance for him to refresh his memory. He and Jim Lopez set up a shop in Jim's garage at bungalow #510. A basic radio book was obtained and hands-on experience was going to come about by way of repairs of radios, amplifiers and record players. Subsequently Bill also took on the job of organizing his garage for repairing and overhauling office machines from John Eman's Bank and the Aruba Trading Company.

On request amplifiers and speakers were ordered and installed in people's homes and patios. Any money received for repair work was used to buy equipment and "Ryders Service Manuals". These manuals

contained circuit diagrams of just about every American-made radio. The complete set must have been made up of 30 or so manuals. Each manual had pages a little larger than 8 1/2 x 11" and were 2" or 3" thick. The cost per manual was about \$20.00. Eventually there were 10 or so of these manuals on hand. It was interesting to see that some automobile manufacturers also manufactured radios.

When casinos came to Aruba they found they needed someone to fix their slot machines. Bill was a natural for taking on this project. When he left Aruba on retirement he had already trained one of his former apprentices to take over from him.

Along with Art MacNutt and Jim Lopez, Bill was one of three founders of the Instrument Society of Aruba; this organization was established in 1946 modeled after and later affiliated with The Instrument Society of America. Its purpose was to improve the efficiency of its members in their daily work.

One job, in the I. S. A., that appealed to Bill and no one else could have done it, as he would say, more-better. The I. S. A. printed and mailed out a monthly *Bulletin*.

The I. S. A. had permission to use the mimeograph machine in the Instrument Department. Stencils, ink, and paper were paid for by advertisers. It was a sight to see Bill each month with stencil ink up to his elbows and paper knee deep on the floor. After every "run", there (figuratively) would be Bill on his knees on his little prayer rug, bowing to the four main points of the compass; asking for just a little newer model of the mimeograph machine. The *Bulletin* was published for 8 years - from 1946-55. Bill made a gadget with two staplers mounted on a wood base to more efficiently staple the *Bulletins*. Then he drafted his daughters Nancy and Loesje and the Lopez boys David, Michael and Victor to staple, fold, address, stamp and put the completed *Bulletin* in the mail.

Since Bill had served the required time in armed forces in Holland he was called to duty in Aruba on September 1, 1939. He was given the rank of a sergeant in the Marines. All Dutchmen called back to duty in Aruba were inducted into the Marines. This was in spite of the fact that their previous compulsory service may have been in the Army.

Two years before he retired in 1959 he was transferred from the Instrument Department to the Pipe Department. This was because they badly needed a job trainer and his background and previous Pipe Department service made him a logical choice for the job.



Bill enjoyed the family gatherings in Oranjestad. He became a member of the "Three Kings" group that brought Christmas to the children of the Eagle Refinery employees. There was Gaspar, Melchor, and Bill. Bill was "Black Peter." Since there were no camels in Aruba the kings arrived on the scene on donkeys. It was customary to warm up with a few Bols Gins before their performance. This was a very delicate procedure. Several narrow escapes were experienced. After all the three kings were expected to dismount from their donkeys right side up!

When Bill and Els retired to Holland in 1959 they were looking for a house. They were fortunate to find one complete with garden. Bill built his dark room in the attic and became the treasurer for his church. Bill had medium blonde hair and blue eyes. In his later years his hair turned snow-white.

### **ELSIE HENRIQUEZ KOOPMAN**

Bill's wife, Elsie Henriquez, was born in 1910. The family called her "Els". She was one of eight sisters and four brothers. Her father was Leonardo Johan Meadus Henriquez whose parents were Benjamin and Regina Henriquez Refrigerio. Her mother was Elizabeth Croes whose parents were Frans Croes and Margaretha Quant. There were originally two Croes families who came from Holland. Elizabeth was a descendent of the Johan Croes family who were Jewish.

Elsie's father died when he was 82 and her mother died two weeks later. Elsie's sister, Aida, is married to William "Scotty" Barbour and they still live in Oranjestad.

Elsie's sister, Clothilde, was married to Sidney Merryweather and they had retired to live in England. Merryweather died in May, 1984 when he was 82 years old. Barbour and Merryweather were each at one time managers of the Eagle Refinery west of Oranjestad. This refinery was a subsidiary of the Shell Oil Company and came under the direction of the Shell refinery in Curacao.

L. J. M. Henriquez was one of the all Aruban management of the Aruba Goud Maatscappij which conducted gold mining operations from 1901 to 1915. Previous gold mining companies had been managed by foreigners. Operations of this company ceased when World War I broke out. Shortages of critical supplies caused operations to cease.

### **NANCY (KOOPMAN) KRULLAARS**

Nancy Koopman was born at the San Pedro Hospital in Oranjestad while her father was still working for the Eagle Refinery. She graduated from the Lago Colony High School and married and lived in Oranjestad

with her husband, Gerry Kruellers. Gerry worked in the Ammonia Fertilizer Plant located near the airport in Oranjestad. After they divorced, she now lives in Holland with her two children.

### **LOESJE MARIE ELIZABETH (KOOPMAN) SINT**

Loesje was born in 1938 in the Lago Hospital. She remembers going to kindergarten in a building next to where the Junior Esso Club once was - in the lot next to the wartime Esso Club.

Loesje learned to dance when Mr. Jim Downey taught all of the 6th and 7th grades kids ballroom dancing in the old auditorium on the second floor. Downey was also the Physical Education teacher. Loesje says he was a great coach. He was a great disciplinarian. He doesn't smoke and he didn't allow any of the school kids to smoke. Any smoking that was done had to be done on the sly. Parents didn't allow their children to smoke either. Loesje says she didn't smoke until she went to college.

Loesje says the Koopman family lived in bungalow 526. She says she has a picture somewhere which shows their yard with just the coral, some pipelines, the house and the beginning of a garden. When she graduated from high school they had two patios, a nice garden, and a fish pond.

The new Lago Colony High School was opened in 1951. It had louvers and no air conditioning. There were 30 in her class when she graduated from this High School in 1956.

She says her father's garage was a sight to see when he retired to Holland in 1959. He used to do all of his own plumbing and the neighbors used to call him instead of a plumber. He also had his dark room built up in the attic and developed all of his film there.

Loesje had two years of college in Gainesville, Florida and the same year her parents retired she married. She and her husband, who was a Dutch pilot, lived in bungalow 134 and then bungalow 164, just above the upper tennis courts. Finally she moved to Bungalow 203 which was directly across from guest house 90.

Loesje was on the Lago Community Church board of governors for two years before she went to Holland. When she and her husband were divorced she went to Holland to live. Her oldest daughter, Joyce, is married and lives there. Loesje brought her two younger daughters back to Aruba to live after spending two years in Holland. In 1985 she lived in Oranjestad across the street from Mr. Downey. She considers herself one of the Lago Colony residents who lived the longest in the Colony: First as a child and then as a mother.

Loesje's son Billy graduated from the University of Clemson, South Carolina with a degree in Chemical Engineering. He worked for Lago for a couple of years and transferred to the Baton Rouge Refinery in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.



Oranjestad harbor  
(with a Grace Line ship at the docks)

Photo courtesy A. S. MacNutt

## **The Johannes & Mary Lou Koulman Story**

Johannes (Jan) Koulman is remembered in Aruba for his work with the students in the Lago school music program, the church choir, and certainly as the director of the Lago community band. He was born June 6, 1913, in Utrecht, the Netherlands; was a professional musician in Europe, traveling as a trombonist and arranger with big bands during the 1930's and 40's. He lived in Holland during the war and occupation and had his share of stories of life during those hectic days.

Jan came to Aruba in 1948 as a car salesman for Ecury in Oranjestad who at that time had the Ford agency. Charlie Overstreet remembers that he purchased a Ford from him in 1949.

Mary Lou Farr, was born December 9, 1927 in Syracuse, New York and was graduated from the Crane School Of Music, in Potsdam, New York (just 30 miles south of the Canadian border), in 1949. She came to Aruba, from Canastota, New York in 1952 and started the instrumental music program in Lago High School where she taught 3 years.

Jan met and married Mary Lou in 1954. And as she laughingly says, "Then he took my job away from me," because Jan became "musical instrument" teacher in Lago High School in 1955, serving until 1965. At that time the School policy was that married female teachers were not allowed. There were exceptions as an emergency or temporary arrangement. In 1965 he joined the faculty of the Crane School of Music where he taught until retirement in 1981.

Jan was the director of the Lago Community Band for several years. He also formed the "Dixielanders" dance band which performed for dances at the Esso Club. He was also a member of a Chamber Music group.

Over this same period of time Jan managed to earn a bachelor's degree from the University of Indiana and a master's degree at Crane School of Music in Potsdam.

He was well known as a teacher devoted to bringing each individual student to his or her full potential, and for generosity in providing time, attention, and encouragement. Even in retirement he was constantly sought out by grateful students who felt themselves enriched by his wise counsel and support. As a teacher he wrote much of his own music for

class work, and many of these arrangements have subsequently been published. He conducted the church choir in Aruba and wrote many of the anthems for the choir.

Mary Lou returned to teaching in 1966 in Massena, New York and retired from this post in 1984. Jan's death came just 6 days after his 72nd birthday, in 1985.

Their three children were all born in the Aruba hospital. None are married as of about 1985. Daughter Susan works with the mentally retarded in Potsdam; son Casey, lives in Boston and works at Lincoln Labs which are affiliated with M.I.T. Son Bryan is a professional dancer and lives in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.



Esso Club Fire - June, 1942

Photo courtesy *Aruba Esso News*

## **The George Larson Story**

George was a tall, 6-foot-plus Swede with a shock of sandy-colored hair. He weighed over 200 lbs. but carried his weight well. George came to Aruba with the Chemco Company when they built the Acid Plant. He was a welder with the specialty of "Lead Burning". He was in charge of installing lead sheeting inside steel tanks and vessels used in processing Acid solutions. The tanks or vessel were first built of steel and George would come along and install the lead sheeting inside the tank or vessel. He would hang the lead sheeting from the top of the tank, installing supporting brackets as necessary. Lead sheeting was rated according to the weight of a square foot. 20# sheeting was usually used inside of certain tanks or vessels requiring this amount of protection. The lead sheeting would be melted with an Acetylene torch as necessary to join the pieces together.

George Larsen used to go rabbit hunting in Aruba. There were a few rabbits on the island for a while. One day he was talking about rabbits, and Tony Descanio wanted to know if George would get him a couple. George got him a couple, cleaned them, and turned them over to Tony. Someone spread the word around the plant that they were actually cats from around the plant. When Tony finally heard the rumor, he really jumped on Larsen. Nobody ever convinced Tony that they didn't taste like and weren't in fact cats.

### **A BET AND A PRICE**

Gabor was a Hungarian who worked in the Acid Plant. He was muscularly built and in fact was in several boxing matches.

One day while he was hanging around and getting in everyone's way, he made some remark about being able to pick up the 200 pound anvil in our Acid Plant shop with one hand. One thing led to another, and pretty soon they had a bet that he couldn't move that anvil with both hands. Poor Gabor failed to lift the anvil and he had to pay off.

A few days later Larson was bragging about winning that bet off Gabor. Gabor, who had always admired Larson's gold pocket watch, asked Larson how much he would sell it for. Larson looked at him, scratched his head and thought about it. Finally he said, "You give me \$20, and I'll sell you the watch."

The next morning Gabor walked in, handed George \$20 dollars, and said, "Here's your money, now gimme the watch."

Larsen looked at him incredulously and said, "What are you talking about - give you the watch? I'm not giving you this watch for a measly \$20. If you want this watch, I need another \$200."

Gabor said: "Ah-ah! I distinctly remember you saying you would sell me the watch for \$20!"

Larsen said: "All I said was, 'If you gave me \$20 I would sell it to you.'"

Gabor stomped into our boss's office to demand justice.

Bob Heinze explained that the transaction was a perfectly legal deal. There wasn't anything that he could do about it. Gabor walked away madder than hell. George let him seethe for several days before returning the \$20.

#### **MAKING A COPPER FRYING PAN**

One of the first things I remember about George Larsen was him making a copper fish pan. He had caught a red snapper off a pier and he had given it to Heinze for his wife, Mame, to bake. Any good cook knows how imposing red snappers are when they are baked and put on the table in one piece. There wasn't a large enough pan among the utensils the company supplied to do the job, and Bob was disgruntled about this glaring oversight. George agreed to make a suitable pan. He said a proper cook could always use one. His pan looked so handy, I made one for myself. It took a sheet of copper, and much hammering was required to shape it. I had repaired a few race car bodies in my life and I was familiar with sheet metal work.

We had what passed for home refrigeration in those days - the wooden ice boxes that you loaded with blocks of ice. You couldn't keep perishables very long in them, especially fish, so Mame cooked it the next day. George and I helped them eat it, and it was d e e elish.

You know that copper we used to make those baking pans was industrial grade, pure copper, and you could get copper poisoning right fast from cooking with it. Normally, they use a cookware version to prevent sulfate build up.

#### **GEORGE'S FARM**

In 1932, when George went home on his first vacation, he heard that the government had raided a big farm in New Jersey that was involved in illegal liquor manufacturing, confiscated it and was offering it at auction. This was during the depression when real estate prices were very low. George made a bid on it and got it. He paid for that farm with the money he won in all of those poker games he played in Aruba. The farm came

with a great big house, a good apple orchard, and a barn. So he put Weldon, his brother, on the farm, and rented a post office box in Cranberry, New Jersey. I don't know who owns it now; I imagine they got rid of it.

That's where George retired. His brother and his whole family had been living there, harvesting apples from the orchard and selling them. Then the brother decided to go to Florida to retire. His niece and her husband stayed there. The husband worked nights as a dispatcher for a trucking company. They had a good tractor.

They couldn't make enough on the apples. By the time they sprayed them, hired some one to pick them and pack them there was almost no profit. They finally quit the apple business and didn't do anything. The taxes went up as it became a valuable property by virtue of the town spreading to include it.

The city reclassified it as an industrial property, and the taxes got all out of proportion. They had to pay \$100,000 a year, and he couldn't afford that. I think they sold it after George died in 1964.

#### **GEORGE'S MOTORCYCLE**

Larsen was riding a motor cycle when he was in Whiting. He lost control of it and it went through a couple of barbed wire fences and wrapped him around a tree. His leg was injured and the bone became infected. It didn't heal until 1950 in Aruba.

#### **GEORGE'S BACKGROUND**

George Larson was from New Jersey. He had two brothers and two sisters. One of the sisters never married, and George was a bachelor as was one of his brothers. One brother, Fred, was a state trooper, and was married once.

George was a cowboy in Wyoming for several years and a welder in Bayonne before going to Aruba. He had done a little bit of everything. He used to go out west and help harvest wheat.

Yes, George got to drinking; he was an alcoholic. He woke up one morning in his yard and said, "This can't go on." He packed his clothes, and caught a freight train back to New Jersey, where he went to work for Chemco. From there he went to Aruba. He couldn't work on the Eastern Seaboard because he was blackballed with the union. George was quite a poker player in Aruba, and he played with the top gang down there, winning himself a lot of money in the process. George would get in a poker game and before it was over he was making more money than he made on the job.



Al High, the Chemco Construction Superintendent, was supposed to stay with Lago when the Acid Plant construction was completed. He wouldn't, so Heinze had George transferred from Chemco to Lago. At the time H. V. Heinze was in charge of the Acid Plant.

### **GEORGE'S FISHING BOAT**

George Larson, Dutch Engle, and Jake Walsko built their boat right down there below the mess hall in that big crevice. This was in the early days. What a hell of a time they had launching it. I volunteered to carry the beer for them and that was it as far as I was concerned. We took two cases of beer and put one on each side of the boat. Dutch and Larsen went to the mess hall and said they needed help to launch their boat. They offered free beer, and by gosh, we got a hellava slew of people down there - so many that they picked the heavy boat up and carried it out into the water. It was five o'clock in the afternoon by the time we got it into the water and started its Sperry marine engine. I forget how many were aboard for its maiden voyage, but I know there were too darn many. Somebody forgot to secure a line and the loose end of it fell overboard. I was afraid that the doggone thing was going to get into the propeller, so I tried to get it back on board. I slipped and fell, and George Larsen grabbed one of my feet as I fell overboard. I dangled there with my head under water for a minute, trying to kick loose. Finally they got me back into the boat, stopped the engine, and secured the rope.

One afternoon several months later George registered the boat and christened it the *Laura Ann*. George kept the papers on the board the boat all the time. The first time George started out; a Dutch official boarded it and demanded the papers. George told them, "No, I'll keep them on the boat." They said, "No, you will keep them in our safe, and when you want to go out, you will have to clear it with us." George had to make it official by turning them over to the officials.

We went fishing. George had misunderstood the guy and so had everybody else. He didn't get the papers before we sailed; we just went fishing outside the harbor. When we returned to the harbor we proceeded towards our anchorage. I looked back and saw a Dutch gun boat following us. We anchored the boat, and as we were getting in the rowboat to go ashore the gunboat pulled up and boy did they give us the dickens for going outside the harbor without papers. George went to Oranjestad and straightened it all out so he didn't have to mess with the papers every time he went fishing.

That old boat, launched in 1935, saw a lot of service. George put a

second engine in that boat in 1938. George almost lost the boat one day during the War. The engine caught fire one day while fishing with a group off the Seroe Colorado point. Luckily Larson was able to fix it before ending up on the rocks. George said he didn't want to take any more chances, and he changed out the whole works, replacing them with two side by side engines with two separate propeller shafts.

#### **GEORGE'S FINAL DAYS**

Let's see he left Aruba in 1951, and he returned twice. The first time he had a heart attack, and the Company footed the bill for his stay in the hospital.

The first time he came back to Aruba he stayed with John and Julia Sherman's. The second time he came he stayed with the Humphreys for about six weeks. The last time he came was in the late 50's. He loved to play cards. He was a good bridge player and a good pinochle player.

George stopped at the home of Howard and Helen Humphreys in Clear Lake, Texas on his way to Florida (he almost always wintered in Florida). He would spend a couple of days with his brother and then he stayed with Julia Sherman. When George stopped at our Humphreys house he didn't look well, so Humphreys offered to travel with him on the drive down to Florida. He said, "Nah, I'll be all right."

The next day I got a phone call from New York from Chemco to pack a bag and get out to Fresno, California. They had a plant half way up and everybody was sick. I was only in Fresno a couple of days when Helen called me to tell me Julia Sherman had told her that George had died. I was alone on a plant in the middle of a start-up. I couldn't leave.

George fell out of the chair he was sitting in at Julia's brother's Gulf filling station, and the brother picked him up. He offered to take George to the hospital, but George didn't want to go. While the brother went about his work, George fell out of his chair again, and died right there.

Helen and I felt bad about George's death. It made them feel terrible because he had stopped at their house. They saw he wasn't feeling good, but he was bound and determined to drive on.

**As told by his best friend, Howard "Hump" Humphreys.**

## **The Lucien Lecluse Story**

I was born October 24, 1906. My father was a school principal in a very small village near Roermond, Holland. This was close to the German border. My mother was born in Belgium. My parents spoke only French in our house. My older brother called me Frere (brother) so everybody called me by that name.

Of course I went to my father's grammar school and we did our writing on a slate because paper was too expensive. We received paper to write on in the 5th grade. There was no electricity, only street lamps with gas and cooking on gas burners. My father was the only one in our village who rode a bicycle. He needed it, because he gave instruction far away to the farmers in other villages, at night. When he arrived home at 9:30 at night, he picked up his books and started to study until 1 o'clock in the morning for just another subject. There was no radio or other music, but my mother sang very beautiful French songs while she did her housework. My father died at the age of 47. I was 17 years old and still in college. I had to leave school and could not get a job; first I cut firewood for a bakery where they baked bread in wood heated furnaces. I earned 25 pennies a day plus 2 cigarettes.

While I was in school I attended military training every Saturday afternoon. Thus it was that when I was called in the army for compulsory military service, I only had to serve a short time.

Then I bicycled 25 kilometers a day to a garage in Germany to study for auto mechanic and driver's license.

Germany hardly had any good cars after the First World War. So the owner of the garage looked every week in the newspapers to see if there were any second hand cars for sale. He would buy one and take it to his garage. We apprentices had to take the motor apart and make a good car out of it. This turned out to be very good experience later on in my life.

The Germans did not have any coffee after the war. They offered me something they called ersatz (surrogate) coffee made of roasted corn and peas. I told the wife of the garage owner that I would bring them a package of good coffee from Holland. We had no war in 1914-1918 like the Germans. They were so glad with my coffee that they paid me double what I paid for it at the bakery where I bought it. The next day I smuggled 10 packages of coffee but had to be careful that the German

Customs would not stop me at the border. So I crossed the border at 5:a.m. in the morning when the customs people were still asleep. Thus I arrived early at the garage.

The brother of the garage owner had a business right next door. He made concrete tiles and pipe. I observed his work and when there was nothing to do in the garage I helped him mix concrete, sand, etc. with the shovel and filled the forms for the tiles etc. As I arrived very early for work I started to work with the cement.

There were busses parked in the garage by their Chauffeurs. I watched them preparing their busses to make their daily rounds. In a few days I was preparing these busses before the Chauffeurs arrived. It was hard work, because I had to crank the big motors by hand using a large copper crank at the front of the busses. When the Chauffeurs arrived they could start their rounds immediately because everything was ready for them. I was never lazy, just ambitious.

We had to take driving lessons in the afternoon. There were 4 German boys besides me. One day one of the German boys was driving and Heinrich Finken, the instructor, was sitting next to him. I was sitting in the back seat with the other two German boys. Apparently the driver passed too close to a lady with a baby carriage. Finken shouted, "Halt, Heraus." They both left the car and Finken smacked the German boy with his big hand right in the face. The boy fell in the road. Finken shouted, "Never come to my car any more!" I was the second victim. I drove very carefully, and most of the time I watched that big hand next to me.

This was the best lesson I ever had in my life. Be careful. After a week I was considered a good driver. They sent me with two drivers in a truck and I was given the job of driving. Driving was difficult at the time. There was no rear view mirror. The throttle was located at the top of the steering wheel. The gearshift and the brake were on the running board outside of cab. However they were very pleased with my driving and my repair work in the garage work shop. After four months I received my driver's license. This was 6 years before driver's licenses were issued in Holland.

I finally got a job in an office in Holland. Then I was a traveling salesman. Then I became a supervisor unloading fertilizer from ships on the canals. My wages were pitiful; 30 guilders a month. I had to drive a motorcycle in the summer and in freezing weather in the winter. During this time I was involved in two serious accidents. (A guardian angel must have been watching over me.) In one accident I was riding a horse

on a hot summer day. The sky darkened and a big thunderstorm came up. Suddenly a bolt of lightening struck about ten feet away on my right. When the lightening hit me I only felt as if somebody had hit me lightly with his fist against my chest. However the horse died with blood streaming from his nose.

The second accident occurred while I was riding my motorcycle on a real cold day. I took one hand off of the handle bars of the motorcycle to wipe the tears out of my eyes. At that moment I lost control of the motorcycle and hit the roadway 4 or 5 times. Every time I hit the ground I heard hi-hi from the back of my head. When I got up on my feet I was about 40 feet from where I first hit the road. I didn't know from which direction I had come. I saw my hat and picked it up. My motorcycle was 20 feet further down the road. My former colleague had been killed riding the same motorcycle. I found I only had a scratch on the back of my left hand and another small scratch on the back of my head. I can't explain why I wasn't more seriously injured.

When I was supervisor of the unloading of fertilizer ships I was still a young man. But I was successful, without any help, in stopping 2 strikes. I found out that if the ship was delayed one day it would cost the owners of the business 320 guilders. A fiesta was being celebrated next door to where the ship was being un-loaded.

The workers were shoveling the cargo of loose potassium salt into burlap bags. Then they would carry the bags up a ladder from the hold of the ship up to the deck. From the deck they carried the bags down a gangplank to the dock. At the dock the bags were loaded on a street car wagon. After two hours they stopped work and were drinking beer in a nearby bar. They informed me that they were finished for the day and would be back the next day. I became very angry knowing that it would cost my boss more than 300 guilders for each day of delay. I told them if you won't unload it I will do it myself.

I started to take off my jacket and grabbed a shovel. They said No sir, No sir we will unload it. I then went to the bar and bought a whole milk can of beer. (This would have been about 5 gallons of beer.) This cost me only 30 guilders. I had the bar-keeper bring the beer next to the gang plank going on board the ship. They worked and drank their beer. I went to look once in a while and saw a few workers fall down on the potassium salt in the hold of the ship. By 10 o'clock that evening the ship was empty. I then went into the bar and had another drink with them. That's the way I settled my first strike. I was very disappointed that my bosses did not appreciate what I had done. I had saved them

over 300 guilders and I didn't receive one penny.

Business was terrible and unemployment was high. I was told that there were golden opportunities in the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia). But the problem was how I was going to get there. I had only saved 320 guilders and that wasn't enough for my passage.

I really was ashamed what I did then, but no one knew about it. At the time there was the Dutch Indonesian Army. This was a shameful bunch of soldiers like the French Foreign Legion. Every crook or murderer was welcomed; nationality did not mean anything. Members were from Russia, Germany and Poland and of course Dutchmen. They were all just a bunch of crooks. I never told my mother or my girl friend and went to enlist in this army. I was issued that terrible uniform. When I was a salesman there were certain bars where I used to eat. When I entered these places in this uniform they refused to serve me a drink and politely asked me to leave.

My army pay was Fls. 1.40 a week; the round trip train fare to my mother's house and my girl friend's house was Fls. 1.80. So I could only visit them every other week-end. When I was hungry I would not spend a penny to buy food. I kept the Fls. 320 that I had saved as emergency fund. In case I found a good paying job this would buy my way out of the army.

In those days they had black and white movies with no sound. They were looking for someone to play the piano during the movie. I volunteered and that paid me Fls. 3 guilders a week. I could go home every week with this addition to my soldiers pay. On the train I would change into civilian clothes in the toilet and put my uniform in a suitcase. On the return trip I would again change back into that terrible uniforms; nobody knew about my secret life. I bought a text book to learn the Malayan language to be prepared for the job in the East Indies. We slept on straw mattresses which was certainly bad when I compared it with the nice mattress I slept on when I was home. I learned to eat Indonesian food and once a week we had long marches. We were being held until they had enough volunteers to go to Indonesia.

This went on for four months until early in 1929 there was an alert. Communications was very poor, but we heard that a bunch of revolutionaries under Venezuelan General Urbina had captured the fort in Curacao. They had killed six Dutch army men, and taken the governor, Fruitier and the Army Captain as hostage. They had taken all of the arms and ammunition from the Fort and their hostages and commandeered the American ship, the *S/S Trujillo* which was in the

harbor. They forced the captain of the *Trujillo* to take them to Venezuela. They were trying to depose the Venezuelan dictator President Juan Vicente Gomez. When the arms and ammunition and the men were unloaded they freed the ship and the hostages.

The governor of Curacao notified the government in Holland that they needed replacement armament. The Dutch Queen Wilhelmina asked the Dutch army to send 50 volunteers and replacement armament to Curacao. I was one of the volunteers. The requirements were that we had to be 21 years old and had served in the Army. I had never served in the Army but I had a little army training while I was in school. So I said I had been in the Landstorm (like the U. S. National Guard); this was of course a lie but a sergeant who heard me grabbed me by my arm and pushed me with the group.

We received a round trip train ticket to say good bye to family and be back the same evening. That evening in the barracks everybody was drunk except me. The government loaded cases of beer and wine on the *S/S Rotterdam* which was a large Dutch freighter and we were told we could have whatever we wanted - free. The next day we marched to the train station with the army band in front. At the station the band gave us a special goodbye salute. Then we went by train to Amsterdam. When we arrived there we were lined up at the train station and we were ordered "present arms" as they do for dignitaries. This was holding the rifle in front of us with the barrel pointing upwards. Then a group of Amsterdam girls put a rose in the barrels of our rifles. Crazy!

As we passed through the Dutch canal I sat on the railing and played army songs with my banjo. At the end of the canal the Amsterdam boys were yelling at us, "Soldiers, bring us a little monkey!" When we arrived at sea I became very seasick. I never saw any free wine or beer!

Thus it was that we arrived in the hot Caribbean. There we were in our hot woolen uniforms. It was terribly hot below in the hold of the ship so I climbed up on the top where I found a row of life boats with their nice canvas covers. I discovered that I could make a nice hammock of a life boat cover. So in the evenings I disappeared and lay in my hammock looking at the beautiful stars above me. The masts of the ship were rolling from side to side as the ship rolled. It was a beautiful sight.

When we arrived in Curacao it was bloody hot in our woolen uniforms when we walked to the water front. Here we were immediately issued nice tropical cotton uniforms. Then we assembled and were asked who had a driver's license. Of course I was the only one!

They gave me a kind of moving van and I had the task of transporting the families in the fort to houses in the countryside. I did not have to carry anything; I just sat behind the steering wheel. When everything was unloaded I took two friends with me and we toured the island. The second day we were again called together and were asked who could speak English. The other soldiers could only speak Dutch and Indonesian Malay as they had already served in Indonesia. Again I was the only one who spoke English. They picked 19 other soldiers and we were sent to Aruba.

In Aruba they only had black policemen from Surinam in San Nicholas. The American construction workers had nothing to do after working hours but drink and visit the houses of the prostitutes. When they were drunk they staggered back to their barracks and were often jailed by these policemen. One day a couple of the workers were jailed and their comrades asked that they be released. The policemen refused to release them. The comrades came back with a flat bed truck with some cases of dynamite. They told the policemen to let their comrades out immediately or they would blow up them and their police station. The two jailed men were released and the construction company asked for white policemen. Since there were none in Aruba they called on us in Curacao.

A Dutch lieutenant, Weyerman, and the 20 soldiers that had been selected, including me, were sent to Aruba. We traveled on a Dutch Navy ship, the *S/S Hertog Hendrik*. I had never heard of the island of Aruba. On board the ship we had to stand in line with the sailors and we were served pea soup in metal soup plates. When we arrived off shore of Oranjestad, the capital of Aruba, the ship dropped anchor. There was no unloading dock. The sailors lowered life boats and we had to step into these boats with our suitcases. Near the shore the water was not deep enough for the life boats to pull right up to the shore. When we stepped out of the life boats with our suitcases on our shoulders we found ourselves knee deep in water. Thus it was that I arrived in Aruba where I lived over 30 years.

The 20 black policemen we were replacing were lined up on shore and boarded the ship we had just left. Once on shore we were lined up and appointed policemen on the spot. A small house was rented from an old German and 19 of us were crammed into small house. To reach your cot you had to climb over the other people; it was hot. Our Lieutenant Weyerman took one older soldier, Dirk, as his servant in a house near the governor's house. There was a large room where Dirk had his cot. In the corner was a large concrete tank containing rainwater. The governor's



new blue Buick stood on the other side. I was put in charge of this Buick, so Dirk asked me to join him in that large building so I could be close to the Buick. I was also put in charge of an old Model T Ford to haul food supplies for the men. At the end of the day my uniform was practically white with perspiration. I made good use of the water tank, cleaning my green uniform every day.

Every one of us received about one and a half gallons of drinking water a day. If we needed more we could buy it for two and a half guilders a gallon. The beer in the village was cheaper than drinking water, but it was warm. Some German barkeepers put the bottles of Amstel beer in a burlap sack, kept it wet with sea water and hung it in the wind to cool the beer. We had two army cooks and our food was terrible.

Louis Posner, a Jew, had the only store in town where you could buy food stuff. Most of his stock was small old cans of sardines and small cans of watery frankfurter (also called "Chinese Fingers"). He also had sour bread, onions and potatoes. Our menu depended on what we could buy. Every day we had sour bread, which I hated, for breakfast. There was a large milk can with a mixture of tea, milk and sugar. We were doled out this tea in a metal mug in the kitchen. One day we would have frankfurters and the next day we would have sardines. The onions and potatoes were cooked in the form of a stew. On Sundays we received a banana. I ate in the large garage with Dirk. He carried the same meals as we had to our Lieutenant who never complained. All over the island there were hungry goats and donkeys. I only ate the crust of the sour bread and gave the rest to a donkey who came often to look for food in the garage. One day I was painting the wheels of the Buick with red lead paint to prevent rusting. The donkey was standing near me. I thought what beautiful white hoofs he had. I painted his hoofs red and then chased him into town. I thought he looked like a lady with red lipstick on. I was always ready for a joke, not to make life miserable.

The next day I was detailed to deliver a letter from governor Wagemaker to Captain Rodger in San Nicholas. As I was passing through San Nicholas the Americans seeing me hailed me as a white cop and asked me to join them in the dining hall, which was one of their wooden barracks. At Rodger's house I was served with real English Tea. The Captain lived there with his assistant, Farquharson. They had two Chinese servants. When he looked at the letter in Dutch he asked me to translate it for him. And then he offered me a job working for him. I could not do this because I had a 3 year contract with the army. On my way home I stopped at the dining hall and ate the best meal I had in

years. Of course I never mentioned this to the other soldiers when I got back to Oranjestad. I did not want to make anyone jealous.

At that time there was no road between Oranjestad and San Nicholas. I had to make my way to Santa Cruz over a donkey path. From Santa Cruz I had to make my way over sharp volcanic rocks. Almost every day I had two or more flat tires. (There were only two spares for this car) If I had more than two flats I had to repair them on the spot. The heat was terrible. I had to remove the tire, find the hole, patch it, put the tire back on the wheel and pump it up with a hand pump. I don't believe anyone in the whole world could have done this. My training in the garage in Germany prepared me for this job. Except in Germany the temperature was more agreeable. One day I counted seven flats in one day, which must have been a record.<sup>1</sup> I also had many broken springs, as in those days they had not yet invented shock absorbers. I had to buy new springs just about every month. I never complained, I just tried to reach San Nicholas everyday at meal time. On my way I often saw vultures circling around over some poor goat that was starving to death. These birds would swoop down and eat the cadaver. When I came back by there was only a heap of bones left. The next day these bones were all white from the baking sun. On the beach under a roof was a slaughter house. There was always a swarm of lizards around this place. This was where our cook bought meat for our meals.

While I was making these trips between Oranjestad and San Nicholas the rest of the soldiers were doing their assigned work. This was running a telephone from Oranjestad to Santa Cruz. There it was connected to the priest's house. From Santa Cruz the telephone lines were run by the way of Frenchmen's Pass to the priest's house in San Nicholas. The priest in San Nicholas was Father Hendricks and he lived next to the old Police Station.

There were only five telephones in Oranjestad. There was a gasoline driven generator on the edge of town that provided electricity for the city. At 6:30 they would start up this generator which could be heard all over the city.

San Nicholas had many abandoned houses and several bars and a few stores that stocked odds and ends that might attract the construction men.

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<sup>1</sup> *Phoey. I had 27 patches on my bicycle inner tube at one time. It looked like one big patch, but I rode those tires until I was riding on the cord and out of patches. I got so I could push it home from school at lunch time, fix it, eat and be back before the bell.*

One day as I was driving through San Nicholas I was stopped by a Portuguese man (M. Viana). He asked if he could polish my Buick for me for Fls. 2.50. He lived in one of the abandoned houses in the village at the time. He had been a mess boy on one of the tankers. He had abandoned his ship and decided to improve his lot in Aruba. A few weeks later he asked if he could buy a couple of tires for the Buick. The governor gave his permission because the tires were full of holes. Viana could earn Fls. 5.00 that way. He was later a millionaire Chrysler dealer and garage owner. He also owned a bus company.

One day I ask Lieutenant Weyerman how I could earn some more money. He told me that I would have to take exams. For mastering English I could earn 60 guilders a month; for Spanish I could earn 60 guilders a month more and for law another 60 guilders. This would be in addition to my pay which was 140 builders a month. I immediately ordered a Spanish text book from Curacao. I figured that I had sufficient knowledge of English to be able to pass the exam.

Captain Rodger complained to the governor that too many sailors left their ships looking for higher wages with the construction companies. This left the ships short of crew. There were also many stowaways coming in on the ships. The governor decided to establish an Immigration office in San Nicholas. I was transferred to San Nicholas and put in charge of this work. I was assigned a blue Buick and an old pilot boat with the motor in the center and a rudder in the back. It was built for a crew of two. The company furnished three barracks for us and a shower with brackish water. I was furnished a dock and free gasoline because I was helping them in the harbor.

At first there were three Lake Tankers and later there were six. Once in a while a large tanker would come in and load crude oil for England. Usually the ships came in at 6:30 in the morning, and I would be free most of the day.

I operated the pilot boat and carried a government doctor (doctor Ludwig Cornelius Nunes) to clear every tanker that arrived. We heard the same words every time. The captain of the tanker said, "No passengers, no stowaways, no sick crew members." The doctor would say, "Okay you can take the 'quarantine flag' down." This was the yellow 'quarantine flag' that the ships always hoisted when coming into harbor. No one was allowed off the ship until the doctor came on board and spoke to the ship's captain. If the captain reported any sick crew members they had to be examined for contagious diseases. The doctor notified the captain when he could lower the 'quarantine flag' and the

crew could go ashore. The Dutch government doctor was of Portuguese extraction originally from Surinam. He received his medical training in Surinam and Holland. His wife was of French extraction and was born on the French side of San Martin. We always spoke English in our conversations.

Some of the larger tankers from the States also brought passengers for the new company. As it was difficult for me to handle the throttle lever in the middle of the pilot boat and the rudder in the back I decided to do something. I thought of my experience in the garage back there in Germany. The company had a storehouse full of parts. I found a steering wheel from an old van, mounted this in the middle of the boat. I fastened two cables to the steering post and ran one along each side of the boat with pulleys to the rudder. I was able to steer the boat from the center near the gas throttle.

At noon the Dutch doctor would say to the ship's captain, "Do you have anything good to eat?" And of course the steward served us a delicious meal. After the meal the doctor would ask the captain if he had any fresh fruit for his sick wife (she was like the rest of us sick of doing without fresh fruits and vegetables.) And then on the way back to shore the doctor would say to me: "Lecluse I could give you some of this fruit, but I know the police may not accept gifts." (That was a dirty trick he played on me.)

We only received mail once every ten days from Curacao. This mail came via sailing schooner, the *Fedelma*. This schooner also brought the only newspaper in Papiamento. I tried my best to understand it. Little by little I began to understand more and more. I found an Aruban girl, Nicomeda Tijssen, who was an assistant teacher with the nuns at the school in San Nicholas. On Sunday I went to her house. She spoke a little Dutch and had a gramophone that you had to wind up after each record was played. She had only had records that contained Spanish songs. I learned the words and music quickly. Some I still remember. *Quisiera llorar, quisiera morir de pensamiento*. Most probably I made mistakes but it sounded so good and then she explained the words. *Llorar* meant cry and *morir* is just like French to die. Lots of words resembled my mother's language, French. This went along alright except on weekdays she was at school and I had no teacher. I could learn the words, but not the pronunciation.

Many of the bars had South American bar maids. They had nothing to do all day until the customers came in the evening. So they just sat on the stairways of the bars sunbathing. I took my Spanish book to them

and started to read. They laughed and laughed at me, but they also corrected me so I had a free lesson every day.

The English language was another thing. I had no trouble talking with Captain Rodger and others. But on the docks, especially with the crews off the tankers I had a terrible time. I could hardly understand anyone. Finally I found out they were cursing, and using dirty words which I had never heard before. Just for example I was a @#\$%\$# square head, others were S. O. B.'s. And then there were the limeys (Englishmen), frogs (Frenchmen), wops (Italians), krauts (Germans), hunkies (Hungarians), etc. Of course the @#\$%\$# word always prefaced these words. No wonder English was so difficult for me. The Yankees even had different words for each state. Georgia crackers, Oklahoma blankets. I learned all of these words over the years.

Four months after I arrived in Aruba I offered myself for English and Spanish language examinations. These examinations were conducted in Oranjestad by the head school master, Mr. Lampe, Miss Henriquez, the secretary to the governor and an army officer from Curacao. I passed the tests and this almost doubled my monthly salary. The next exam was to be for law. I would have to know the whole book. I went to the Minister of Justice in Oranjestad, a Mr. Planz. He said he had only one copy of the law book that I needed and he needed it for himself. I begged him to loan it to me. I bought a Remington Rand Portable typewriter in the Arends store in Oranjestad. And sitting on my cot in my bedroom I copied the whole book. Everyone thought I was doing work for my job at the harbor so nobody bothered me. In two months I had the whole book copied and almost knew it by heart. At 6 o'clock in the morning while everything was quiet on the street leading to the harbor I learned the most difficult words by speaking them aloud. So seven months after arriving in Aruba I was able to take the law exam. There was no one else ready to take this exam when I was ready. The S/S *Liberatador* was a new passenger ship going between Aruba and Curacao. They sent me to Curacao on this ship for my final exam. I passed the exam successfully and now my salary was 320 guilders a month.

When I returned to Aruba they ask me if I would take the job of governor of the island of Saba, another Dutch island in the West Indies. I asked how much salary I would get as governor. They told me the same as our two Ministers in Aruba. I asked them how much that would be. They said it would be 320 guilders a month. That was what I was earning now after taking all of those exams. Besides in Saba a sailing schooner only called once a month. Now Aruba had this new passenger

ship that came every two days. So I turned that job down and returned to my job at the harbor where I had lots of spare time, no supervision, I was my own boss and enjoyed good food.

However because of passing the Law exams I was given an additional job of being a kind of judge. I did not handle court cases in the courthouse, but directly in the street or in the hospital in cases involving death, fatal accidents or public health. This turned out to be a job with a lot of responsibility. I had several terrible cases. The very first one I can mention now because the culprit died long ago. The director of the hospital and chief surgeon had amputated the arm of a construction worker. The arm was thrown in a garbage barrel. I had to tell him that this was forbidden. Another one was a fellow who while drunk had accidentally run over a Chinese man with his car. I thought about this case. I knew the fellow had a wife and daughter in the States. The Chinese man had no family. According to my law book the sentence should be 6 months in jail for death by negligence. I ruled that the Chinese man was drunk and ran under the Americans car.

A third case was a fellow who accidentally ran over and killed his friend. There was a farewell party and the culprit was driving his car. All of participants in the party were everywhere on the car. His friend was standing on the front bumper of the car. They were going somewhere and the friend fell off the bumper and was run over. The culprit was crying at the hospital about killing his best friend. My investigation produced a "no fault" ruling. My judgment resulted in no paperwork. I believed he had enough punishment - so again there was no sentence. I could never put anybody in jail with those Negroes who were in the jail at the time. Most of them had bad venereal diseases. Later both of the men involved in the last two cases were my bosses in the refinery. They never recognized me and I never took any advantage because of this knowledge. No one ever had any idea that I was the man who handled their cases as the judge at the scene.

The company needed more laborers so two men from the personnel office, Ward Goodwin and Harold Attwood, went on a recruiting trip to the British islands in the Caribbean. Some of the Negro men they met would come if they could bring their families. So the company furnished them with building materials and that was how the Negro village was built in San Nicholas. In those days they had no indoor plumbing and unless they blasted there was no way they could build outdoor toilets. The result was that every morning there was a parade of women with buckets on their heads going to the beach. They emptied their buckets down below where the Acid Plant was built. In the early days most of

the Aruban men were in Cuba working in the sugar cane fields. The airport in Oranjestad that was later built was laid out in the middle of a large aloe field. The juice of the aloes grown in Aruba was sold in a cake form after processing. Aloe juice was used for medicinal purposes.

In 1930 I was summoned to Curacao. The head of the Curacao Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.) was leaving and they needed someone to replace him. His replacement had to be able to speak, read, and write several languages. There was Lecluse in Aruba: My high living days were over. I was met at the ship when I arrived in Curacao by two Dutch Marines. They took me to a Navy officer, the Adjutant to the Governor. He was to be my supervisor. He assigned me to a big office next to his and on the floor above the Governor's office. I was given money to buy civilian clothes, shoes and a hat. No one was to know that I had anything to do with the police. I reported to the Adjutant.

My job included reading all of the Spanish language newspapers from Venezuela and the islands in the Caribbean. I was to pay particular attention to any revolutions or uprisings. This was the first thing I did every morning. After two hours of reading I went into town to the bars and restaurants in the narrow streets. I drank coffee, I drank beer, and I made friends with revolutionaries. Often I paid for their drinks and made friends all over the island. I had a car at my disposal, but I preferred to travel by bus. Every Friday I made my report to the Governor. On Friday's I was reimbursed for all of my expenses and received my salary.

While on this assignment I obtained pictures of General Rafael Simon Urbina and his aid Machado. (I still have these pictures as a souvenir of those days.) I also have pictures that I took of the then Venezuelan dictator, Juan Vicente Gomez, in his palace in Caracas. I noticed that the policemen in Caracas wore brown uniforms and had no shoes. The weapon they carried was a whip. I once visited a camp of the dangerous Motilone Indians between Maracaibo and the border with Colombia.

Actually this assignment was dangerous work, but I wasn't afraid. I took Sundays off. One day the Captain of the Police called me into his office. He told me that they were very pleased with my excellent work and planned to give me a promotion. But then he said inspectors were coming over from The Hague in Holland. The inspectors had a contract for six years and my contract was for 3 years. He said he would be very gratified if I would sign this new contract for 6 years. I told him that I had promised my mother and my girlfriend that I would return to Holland in 3 years. I told him that I would fulfill my 3 year contract and

after that maybe I would prolong my contract. The Captain became very angry and told me to get out and he didn't want to see me again.

I went to my bedroom and sat on my bed thinking when a military policeman came into my room. He told me that I was to report for duty in 15 minutes in uniform. My uniform was wrinkled and moldy and in a box under my bed. My shoes were covered with the white mildew that attacks leather in the tropics. So I borrowed a uniform from another policeman and reported to the sergeant of the police for duty.

I was put in the center of town directing traffic. This was a job I had never done before. That day was the day of the official opening of the session of the government. While standing there the open car of the governor in his white uniform approached. In the car with him was his aide who was my boss in the C.I.A. Instead of directing traffic I called the attention of the aide to my uniform.

After the ceremony was over, he called me to his office. He said, "But Lecluse what have you done? Now everybody knows you are with the police." I said, "If I go into town those rebels will kill me. I want to get out." He agreed and the governor sent a cable to Holland for an honorable discharge for me. I stayed in my room reading until news came from Holland accepting my resignation. I still had to pay Fls. 311.67 which was the fee for buying your way out of the army. I went to the bank and withdrew all of my savings and the Fls. 311.67. Then I booked my passage on a passenger boat to Aruba that evening.

Next I went to the police office and they were laughing. They said "We have seen the cable, but Lecluse does not have the money." I showed them the money, but demanded a receipt before I gave it to them. When I had the receipt in my hand I told them including the officer in charge you can all go to hell, I am a free man.

I went down to the harbor and sat down at table at a sidewalk cafe. I was drinking a cup of coffee when I saw people running together. I went down to see what was happening. There was a man lying on the ground bleeding and there was another man with a knife in his hand running away. I was unarmed but I ran after him. He ran into a side street and crawled under a desk in a little store. I told him to get up and drop the knife. He got up but he did not drop the knife. I grabbed the arm of the hand holding the knife and walked him to the police station. There a police sergeant hit him on the arm so the knife fell. He asked me to make a report on this crime. I told him I was no longer connected with the police.



Because the victim and the culprit were both Portuguese they asked me to go to the hospital with them. At the hospital I asked the victim if the man they were holding was the one who stabbed him. He nodded his head yes and then he died. This was the way I ended 16 months of public service in government. It was a strange but interesting time and I had learned a lot in my 24 years.

When I arrived back in Aruba the next day I went to work for the Pan American Petroleum Co, as it was called in those days. I had already did some work from them indirectly. Before I had gone to Curacao I had heard that there was a strike of all of the Chinese Cooks and waiters. There had been riots in the dining halls and the construction workers were looking for their meals. Some of the American men had volunteered to go into the kitchen and try to cook the meals. They had hired some of the Negro girls from the villager to be waitresses. But there was too much confusion. I saw the Governor of Aruba, the Chief of Police, and the refinery management representatives in the harbor area. Of course they were having difficulty understanding each other. I happened to see the boss of the Chinese, Sha Sawai, and I ask him what the trouble was. He said the government wanted 500 guilders deposit from each of the Chinese to guarantee their return passage in case they left before their contract was up. I made some quick calculation and told Sha Sawai that I would arrange that this money would be taken out of their pay, a small amount at a time and it would be returned to them if they stayed their full contract. We shook hands on that agreement and all of the Chinese saw us shake hands. After a few moments all of the Chinese went back to work. I then explained to the Governor and the company representatives what I had promised and they all agreed with that solution to the problem.

The Company was called The Pan American Petroleum and Transport Company. Then it became The Standard Oil Company of Indiana. Next it became Standard Oil Company of New Jersey, then Esso, and finally Lago Oil and Transport Co. Ltd. In the early days we were paid every month with 5, 10 and 20 dollar gold pieces. We were paid in gold because the natives didn't trust paper money.

When I went to work in the refinery I reported to Mr. Coy Cross in the Light Oils Department. Mr. "P." was my shift foreman. In the Sweetening and Treating Plants they used caustic and sulfuric acid in the process. I had an idea whereby the Company could save a lot of money by changing the way they used these chemicals. A lot of this material was being wasted, besides it was eating up the lines and vessels unnecessarily. Mr. P. became very angry at my trying to tell him how to

run his job. So he and I didn't get along. For four miserable years I was on his shift. He lived across the street from me in the Colony.

Three months after I began working for Lago I sent a letter to Dutch Queen Wilhemina in Holland. Three weeks later Mr. Coy Cross informed me that the Governor wanted to see me in his office in Oranjestad at once. I notice a Dutch warship in the harbor in Oranjestad when I arrived. This may have been the first time a Dutch warship had ever visited Aruba since my initial visit there. In the office of the governor there was the hated captain from the police in Curacao. He had come to apologize to me. He said that in the name of her Majesty he to hand me this money: 311 guilders and 11 cents. This was my revenge for the mistreatment I had received from this fellow.

At Lago I still existed with Mr. P. as my shift foreman. I was fortunate that I had Mr. Tiry Harrod as the operator on my shift.

In March of 1932 I went on my first vacation to Holland via Paris. I arrived in Paris at 5:a.m. and it was freezing cold. I was still wearing tropical clothes. I sat near the coal stove in the railroad station until the metro started running at 7:a.m. I took the metro to my aunt and uncle's house. They served me a bacon and egg breakfast. They had no coffee but cold red wine. My aunt took be by car to the best dress shop in Paris to buy warm clothes. When I returned to Aruba from that vacation we had a 10% cut in wages due to the depression.

It wasn't until 1937 that Frank Griffin became the head of the Light Oils Department and I finally received a promotion. He promoted me to operator in 1938. Mr. P. was transferred to another job and eventually was shipped out when he went crazy. I always thought God had seen the injustice I had received at the hands of this man and caused this to happen.

It was then Mr. Robert Heinze introduced the "Coin-Your-Ideas" plan in the refinery. This was the plan developed by the company to encourage employees to submit ideas for improving refinery operations. A committee of knowledgeable refinery people examined each idea and determined how valuable it was to the company. I received more than 22 awards under this program. In 1937 I received the first Capital Award. I received a letter from the President of Standard Oil Company of New Jersey whose office was in New York. He informed me that my idea was considered the best of those submitted from all of the company refineries world wide.

On June 11, 1941 I traveled from Curacao to New York on the

Grace Lines' Santa Paula with Louis G. Lopez and Mrs. Consuelo Lopez. In Curacao at the American Embassy they insulted Louis in my presence. On this trip my wife and I won First Prize in a dancing contest.

I kept sending in Coin-Your-Ideas until in 1952 I received such a large award that I made a trip around the world. I made the first trip ever in propeller driven planes around the world. In Hawaii girls hung flower leis around my neck. I traveled to Indonesia, Baghdad, Egypt and Holland. I returned to Aruba via Scotland, Newfoundland, Montreal, New York and Cuba. This was a voyage you might dream about. The papers were full of the story with my pictures.

After returning to Aruba I was promoted to shift foreman in the Light Oils Department. Since I was a supervisor I was no longer eligible to receive Coin-Your-Ideas awards. Never-the-less I had one of my most successful ideas. It would save the company millions. Since I couldn't receive any award I gave it to Tiry Harrod and he received credit for it. I later wrote a recommendation to the Queen of Holland for a Royal Decoration for Tiry. This was the only one of its kind given in Aruba.

In 1962 I put two daughters in a Swiss boarding school with children of movie stars. When I returned to Aruba I recommended an idea to management that was my best idea yet. They were about to give me a huge increase in wages, but I decided to resign instead. I went with my wife to Holland to join my children. I had become a millionaire and no one knew it.

We have three children, all born in Lago Hospital in Aruba: John born January 30, 1936, Jeannine born August 8, 1940, and Mitzie born August 8, 1944.

Since 1962 I have spent my time enjoying life. I retired completely. I went a couple of times to Washington, D. C. when my daughter and then my son were married there. My daughter, Jeannine had an Ambassador's wedding. Her husband is Jon van Houten. It was exciting. I met lots of Congressmen and President Kennedy. My daughter's husband is an executive with the IMF. He had an office in Bolivia for three years; in Paraguay for one year; in Paris for three years. His office is now in Washington, D. C. and he is involved in finances worldwide. They live in McLean, Virginia. They have seven children and one grandchild.

I was present in the room when Eisenhower received his honorary Doctorate Degree at Georgetown University.

I lived next to President Roosevelt when he was on his farm in

Hyde Park, New York. I lived in the next vacation farm. Roosevelt's Chauffeur came every evening to our place to have a drink.

President Roosevelt did not allow drinking at his home. I took movies of the Roosevelt family until his Secret Service guard told me it was prohibited. He was as small as a boy because of the infantile paralysis he had suffered as a young man. That was why no one was allowed to take pictures. But I took his picture. I happened to be there when the attack on Pearl Harbor happened. I have been in the Roosevelt Library and have seen his childhood toys, roller skates, and everything.

I made money everywhere, even in Washington. One time I worked for two days in the Library of Congress, behind the White House. I translated a letter that the famous Berlitz people couldn't do. It was a Dutch patent to make plastic paint. I received good pay for doing this. I bought a house in Bethesda and still use my checks from the Bank of Bethesda. My wife sold this house making a good profit.

In Aruba I received twice as much income as the President of Lago, Horigan, Mingus, etc. I was always lucky. I owned seven houses in Aruba. I was a notary. I lived in Bungalow Number 3 in 1936 when my son was born. I later lived in Bungalow 83 next door to Odis Mingus. Frank Griffin had the bungalow on the other side. Bungalow 83 became a beautiful house and I was the first to install air conditioning.

After retirement I first lived in Switzerland near the movie stars. My neighbors included: Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, David Niven and Roger Moore (who became a good friend), and others.

## **The James Louis & Mary Griffith Lopez Story**

My father, Louis G. Lopez, arrived in Aruba as one of the pioneers in the Aruba Refinery project in February 1928. He was Assistant Division Superintendent Light Ends when he retired in August of 1953.

My mother was Margaret Tibbets Lopez. She was an adopted child whose parents were killed in an accident. She never learned what happened. The census records did show she had a brother, named Arthur, but was never able to find him.

I was born June 18, 1915 in Drumright, Oklahoma. The Drumright oil field was at its peak and produced 73,000,000 barrels. Oklahoma was the number one oil producing state in the nation. Drumright was the oil capital of the world. It is no wonder I wound up in the oil business.

### **THE TRIP TO CATCH OUR SHIP**

My mother and brother, Victor, and I packed up our black, 1928, 2 door, wire wheeled, Plymouth Sedan for this trip. Every nook and cranny was filled including the trunk on the back. Our destination was Tampa, Florida where we were to meet the ship that was to take us to Aruba.

We left Drumright, Oklahoma, early one morning and the next thing I knew I was driving. The third day we arrived in Tampa, Florida. There we were informed that the ship we were to catch had been rerouted to Galveston, Texas. The third day after we left Tampa we arrived in Galveston only to be informed that the ship had been diverted to Destrehan, Louisiana. So we backtracked around the Gulf of Mexico to Destrehan. If you look at a road map you will see that we covered a lot of territory around the Gulf of Mexico trying to catch that ship. Destrehan is on the east bank of the Mississippi River upriver near New Orleans. My main recollection is that the Port of Destrehan was out in the middle of nowhere. The dock was a very simple one when compared with some I saw later. The strong, pungent smell of crude oil became a part of our lives.

### **THE TANKER TRIP**

In June of 1929, along with our car, we boarded the *S/S Crampton Anderson*. This was the first time we had ever been on a ship of any size let alone an ocean going oil tanker. I managed to be slightly sea sick for

a couple of days, while my mother and brother were in bed for a couple of days. Fortunately the trip was relatively smooth. I finally decided that the place to be was on deck. Seasickness wasn't a problem if you were in the open air. As a result I spent most of my time in a deck chair out on the boat deck which we occupied during the trip. It didn't take me long to locate the ship's library and I spent most of the trip reading books. I found I had already read many of those books.

The Captain was afraid Victor, my 7 year-old brother, would fall overboard. As a safety measure he had the ship's carpenter sew up some canvas strips, about 36" wide. These were then laced to the railing along the sides of the boat deck. A life boat was hung on each side of this deck. These canvas "screens" effectively covered the railing on both sides and were just the thing because Victor was always climbing on the railing. The only passengers, we were occupying the first mate's cabin on this trip. More or less confined to the boat deck because of Victor, we eventually toured the whole ship.

In the dining room we were seated at the Captain's table along with the Chief Engineer. In those days it was customary for the passengers to sit at the Captain's table. We found we were expected to "dress" particularly for supper. The men were expected to wear ties and of course the women dressed as if going out to a good restaurant in any city. Breakfast and lunch were usually informal. The meals were simple and usually you had a choice such as different meats, three different vegetables, two different deserts, such as fruit or some bakery items. The menu of the meals depended on the nationality of the officers and crewmen of the ship. The crews of each ship usually were made up of one nationality, American, English, Dutch, German, Belgian, Greek, and Scandinavian nationalities predominantly.

I was an excited 14 year-old and standing on the deck right under the navigational bridge, when I first saw the island of Aruba. Columbus couldn't have been more excited when he first sighted America. On the horizon I could see a dark blue haze with some lighter colored clouds hanging over it. The Captain had explained at the dinner table the evening before that we would be sighting the island early in the morning. He said we would probably be docking before noon if they had a berth for us.

#### **ARRIVAL IN ARUBA**

It was in June of 1929 when our ship entered the San Nicholas harbor and tied up at a berth. My father, Louis G. Lopez, was waiting on the pier for the ship to finally dock; the gang plank to be installed and

immigration and health authorities to complete their checking of the crew and passengers. In those days these officials were very formal. Finally we were allowed to disembark and found our legs were a little wobbly after our long week at sea. We were quite surprised to find that we still had the sensation that the ground was "rocking and rolling" when actually it wasn't.

My father had borrowed a car to take us and our luggage to our new home. Our personal car, which was on the ship, was unloaded sometime later.

### **OUR NEW NEIGHBORHOOD**

Our new home turned out to be Bungalow 16. This was one of the few houses that were ready for families at that time. These houses were located in the area which was later occupied by the Main Office Building and The Number Two Power House. There was a row of houses that blocked our view of the sea, otherwise we would have been able to look out our living room window and see the reef, located about 3/4 mile from the shoreline. Our house was some 300 yards from the shore line and we were about 12 or 15 feet above the high tide level.

The roadways were all topped with heavy fuel oil. The drive-ways, such as to our bungalows and the "alley" between our row of bungalows and the row between us and the sea were caliche. Another surprise for us was the fact that the surface of the area where we were located, except for the caliche and oil covered areas, was of a coral rock formation. However this formation had been exposed to the elements for so many centuries that it was a dull grey eroded so badly that the kids had to wear shoes all of the time when outdoors. Much later, when the soles of their feet adapted to the uneven surface, which was filled with many sharp edges, some of the kids managed to walk across the coral in their bare feet if they paid attention to where they were walking. When you looked out across a bare area the surface was a dingy, dark, gray in color. If you found any vegetation, it was liable to be cactus of the round leaf variety. The coral surface had many holes, some a few inches deep and others a foot or two deep. The only soil was found in flower beds around the bungalows. These flower beds were surrounded by 12 or 18" high by 4 or 6" thick walls constructed of concrete blocks. These concrete "boxes" were filled with dirt. There were darn few of these flower beds when we got there and as I look back the place looked desolate!

### **OUR BUNGALOW #16**

Because there was my brother and I, plus my parents, we were assigned a two-bedroom bungalow. The living room/dining room ran

along the South side of the house. The kitchen was about 12 feet x 24 feet, running along the West side of the house. The two 12 feet x 15 feet bedrooms, separated by a bathroom, ran the length of the house on the North side. Each bedroom had a clothes closet, one wall of which was common with the other closet. And both closets had a common wall with the living-dining room. The opposite wall of the closets was common with the bathroom. An open porch, with a wooden railing, extended across the East wall of the living room. The front door opened out on this porch as well as two living room windows. Six wooden steps with a handrail, on each side, extended from the west end of the porch down to a small concrete slab at ground level. At each home you could see this slab with the name of the contractor who built the bungalow, "C.C.ROSS," imprinted in the cement.

There were two windows in each of the bedrooms and one in the bathroom. The living room also had two windows in the East wall, one in the West wall and two in the South wall.

The living-dining room and the two bedrooms had varnished hardwood floors. There were carpets on the living-dining room floor and a linoleum covered floor in the kitchen. There was wicker furniture in the living room and standard dining room furniture. A white enameled, metal topped, table was in the kitchen and four, wooden, kitchen chairs. There were twin beds in the bedrooms as well as a dresser with two small drawers and four large drawers and a large mirror.

Another surprise for us was the fact that the house sat on concrete piers and there was a little "moat" part of each pier. In some cases the houses sat 2 to 3 feet, or more, above the uneven surface of the coral. Other houses were high enough above the coral that children could play under them. These "moats" were filled with a heavy fuel oil and were intended to keep out the ants and roaches. These insects became the bane of everyone's life. Actually most of the mothers grew to hate these "moats" because all of the kids, played in them and got oil all over their clothes.

Our bungalows outside walls were stucco covered with about a 3/8" thick layer of concrete with a uniformly rough finish. This stucco was sprayed on a heavy wire mesh which was backed on the inside with a tough cardboard. The wire mesh was mounted on the bungalow walls before the stucco was sprayed on. The inside walls of the houses were plaster (Later plans called for 3/4" sheetrock.). The ceilings were about 10 feet high and were covered with sheets of 3/4" thick sheetrock. The roof had a high peak so it was later possible to install attics where a man



under 6' tall could stand up in them. These had a flooring of wooden planking and a ladder was fastened to the wall and an opening cut in the ceiling of the large front walk-in closet. This attic became a storage area where you could put your luggage and junk you always manage to collect over the years. The large walk-in front closet had one wall common with the bedroom located in the northeast corner of the house. The other side wall of the closet was common with the front porch wall. The back wall of this closet was common with the outside wall on the east side of the house. The roof overhang left about a 3 foot opening all around the eaves of the house. This opening was covered with screen wire to keep out larger insects and lizards.<sup>2</sup>

My mother found that all cooking was done on kerosene stoves with four burners. While on an automobile trip in 1988 we passed through the western part of Oklahoma. In the town of Elkhart, when we visited a museum where we saw a kerosene stove similar to what we used in those long ago days. A removable, box-like oven could be placed over two of the four burners of the stove. It was found that a 20 pound turkey could be cooked in that oven (Provided one could be found in the commissary). The only thing was it took some practice to get used to cleaning the wicks of the burners, adjusting for the right temperatures, and remembering to keep the 1 gallon, glass, supply bottle filled with kerosene. There was a, maybe, 5" diameter "chimney" which sat over each burner to direct the heat upwards to the grill where the cooking utensils sat. Each "chimney" had a little window, covered with Mica, which allowed you to see the flame as you adjusted it. There was a little wheel with a long stem which allowed you to raise and lower the donut shaped wick and thus raise and lower the flame. There was a little handle made of tightly coiled wire which was located near the bottom of the chimney. This handle allowed you to tip the chimney so you could position your lighted, wooden, match near the wick to light the burner. The coiled wire handle was designed to remain relatively cool while the burner was in operation.

Another surprise was that there were no glass windows in the bungalow. The windows were screened on the outside and could be closed on the inside with wooden shutters. Each of the shutter slats were about 2-1/2 inches wide by maybe 13-1/2 inches long and installed on

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<sup>2</sup> *The attic was a good place for kids to play. Also good for hiding out or checking what treasures accumulated up there. The screened eaves, with a few licks with a saw, provided strategically located trap doors to get in when you got locked out and your folks re-latched the screens you left unlatched on purpose for emergencies.*

the inside of the window. Each window was about 30 inches wide, but there was a vertical divider about 3 inches wide that divided the window into two equal halves. A little wedge made from a piece of slat was kept in each window to close the shutters.

The outside of the house was a pastel beige color; and the peaked roof was covered with a red "sanded tar-paper". The plastered walls, inside, were a pale pastel green color. The ceilings were white.

The bungalows all had showers instead of bathtubs. Brackish water was piped to the shower. The brackish water was salty enough that you didn't want to drink it. Sea water was piped to the toilet. Fresh water was piped to a faucet outside the kitchen door. There was no hot water heater. The bungalows came completely furnished except for the bed linen, towels, wash cloths, and shower curtains.

#### **THE COMMISSARY**

Food and other expendable items were available in the company store, called the Commissary. A free bus service was established so the ladies of the Colony could ride to the Commissary during the day. Mr. Roberto Garcia was the Commissary Manager. He was transferred from the Huasteca Petroleum Company in Tampico, Mexico which was a subsidiary of Esso at the time.

The Commissary was located down near the main gate on the west side of the refinery. The original Commissary was a wooden building with a porch on the East and South sides. The front of the commissary had wide set of steps and a double door for customers to enter. The porch on the East side opened into the Butcher Department. The sides of beef, wrapped in burlap, were propped up against the wall to partially thaw out before the butchers took them inside. Fortunately the trade winds took care of mosquitoes and flies so they were never a problem. The preparation of the meat was done in the "cold room". The butcher department was surrounded on three sides by a counter. The left side of the Commissary was devoted to "dry goods". These were items in cans, packages, boxes. Clerks took the orders of the customers at a counter that ran down the left side of the building. Every thing was charged against your payroll account. Shelves displayed what was available. Fresh produce was occasionally available but as Mrs. Lise Nunes said, "My can opener was my best friend!"

#### **OUR FIRST NIGHT IN ARUBA - 1929**

There are two things that stand out in my memory about the first night we spent in Aruba. One of these was that after dark we heard this clicking noise outside the house and went out with a flashlight to

investigate. There was a big "flock" of land crabs looking for something to eat. The clicking noise was made by their large claws dragging across the coral.

And the other happening was the steady "singing" of the East to West Trade Wind through the window screens. It took us several weeks before we could get use to that constant sound which seemed to be magnified in bed at night.

### **OUR NEIGHBORS**

The first family that my mother, brother Victor and I met was the John F. Whitney family. He was tall, with dark red hair. He was born in County Wicklow, Ireland January 12, 1892 so when I first met him he was 37 years young. His wife was born in Dublin on June 2, 1898. John Frederick, better known as "Sandy", Samuel James (Buster), Arthur Vene, and Donald Sidney were the boys I became acquainted with right off the bat. Bennett S. was not with the family at that time. He was at home going to school.

We boys used to spend a lot of our time down at the water's edge and we managed to put together a boat from lumber scrounged from housing being built at the time. As I remember it the boat would hold two boys at a time and we had about 2" of freeboard. So we couldn't venture too far out or we would be swamped by the little waves. We explored the shore line and did some cautious wading and swimming.

At that time it was the custom to hitch a ride with some one who had a pickup truck to the swimming area. This came to be called "Baby Beach". It had shallow water and had such wonderful sandy beaches. This was where all of mothers took their babies to play in the water before it became too hot. One area of the beach on the east side had pink sand. In those early days people went swimming as a family.

### **SAN NICHOLAS**

I remember our family made a trip to San Nicholas to look for a gift to take to a friend in the States. The main street of San Nicholas was unpaved, sandy and had some large boulders in it. The stores we went into had all sorts of goods in one big pile on the shelves. We had to search through the piles of wares. We saw a many interesting things: cameras, spools of thread, needles, perfumes, watches, bolts of materials, clocks, buttons, paint brushes, dishes, hand soaps, figures carved of ivory: All sorts of strange things.

Another time we visited an outdoor refreshment bar that catered to families. There were rough tables and chairs in a patio like atmosphere. Open on all sides: A slight breeze blowing. This was my first taste

of Canada Dry ginger ale. I thought it was great. This was down west of where the Acid Plant was established. It was on sandy ground and you could see a little beach and the water. It was near sundown on a cool, cloudy day.

### **SCHOOLING - 1929-30**

I was in the school building as the classes were being formed. Because there was no 10th Grade in the High School when I arrived I had to return to Drumright for schooling the 1929/1930 school year. I left Aruba on August 31, 1929 on the *S/S Danzig* bound for the company docks in Bayonne, New Jersey. One of the original Engineers, Mr. C. H. Clendenin, was scheduled to go to New York on a business trip. My dad asked him to see that I got on the train in New York's Grand Central Station headed for Tulsa, Oklahoma. I remember my wide eyed wonder at New York City. A friend of Mr. Clendenin met us at the ship with a car and drove us to Grand Central. I thought sure we were going to have a wreck several times before we got there.

In Drumright I stayed with family friends, Ora and Meiggs Ellison at Stanolind Gas Compression Plant #4. This plant was four miles east of Drumright. I was in the 10th grade in Drumright High School.

In the early years, in Aruba, several young people had problems with the schooling being available. Vida Hughes, whose father, Leroy, was our Fire Marshal, received her 9th and 10th grade schooling in the U.S. Vida then waited in Aruba during 1930 and 1931 until others were ready for the 11th grade in 1932/33. I understand she worked in the Main Office while she was waiting. Then she had to wait until 1934 before there were enough students for the 12th grade and she finally graduated there in 1935.

### **SECOND TIME IN ARUBA - 1930**

I spent the summer of 1930 in Aruba with my family. There is a picture in our family album of my brother, Victor, me and my masterpiece. This was the small one-masted sailboat I had made that summer. I managed to put together several layers of the thin wood of an orange crate. I used a hack saw blade and sandpaper to shape the bottom the same as the sailboats I had seen. When I put it into the water at the swimming docks it sailed to the reef 3/4 of a mile away. (Some one found it and returned it to me later.)

### **ACTIVITIES OF KIDS IN ARUBA- 1929-32**

When we youngsters became a little braver we walked along the shoreline, past Rodger's Beach which was the school kids and adult swimming area, the T-dock area, the Yacht Club anchorage, the "new"

club house area, the bath house at Baby Beach, the Company Picnic Grounds and around the rough shore line and up the hill to the Colorado Point Light House. In those days the plain, four sided, concrete structure had four steps up to a locked door, and the light "house" could be seen on top. Some one later said there was a man who came every day to service the kerosene light. None of the kids reported seeing him.

We were always discovering something new and strange in the water, particularly at low tide, such as starfish, garfish (They jumped when you directed the beam of a flash light on them at night), sea urchins, hermit crabs, sea snails, sea worms, plants in the water which tried to trap small fish. Also found were serpentine star fish, eels, and all kinds of fish, including parrot fish, noted for their many teeth. There were also many small fish with various markings and in various colors. The kids spent many engrossing hours exploring the shore line and catching many of these wonders with their bare hands. The kids' hair was bleached and their skin became a burnt brown in color.

Some of the kids spent a good part of the day at the swimming dock below Captain Rodger's house on "Knob Hill," as it was sometimes called. This was the highest point in the colony and was where the upper management of the refinery lived. "Casa Grande," the Manager's house, was built off by itself east of "Nob Hill," out at the east end of First Avenue.

In those days they were constructing the three room bungalows along what was later called "Birdcage Row" because it was mostly occupied by newly married couples. It was said some one dreamed up this name based on the song "Only a Bird in a Gilded Cage." These houses had a small kitchen which had the back door of the house. A doorway from the kitchen opened into the living-dining room. A screen door opened from the living-dining room onto a covered front porch, along the side of the living-dining room, with a wooden railing and there were three or four steps leading down to the ground at the "front" of the house; a bedroom, which had a common wall with the kitchen, opened out into the living-dining room area and there was a bathroom opening off the bedroom at the rear of the house. These houses were numbered 103 through 131. Others were added later. This row of houses extended up the main street through the camp to what was later referred to as "Five Corners" where five streets met. They were also building four-room bungalows numbered 41 through 48. These houses were along under the cliff just below the 3-room bungalows.

Just after the sun went down and it became dark, these houses

attracted all of the kids in the area. It was great to play hide and seek all through these unfinished buildings and around through the unfinished attics. Fortunately not too many kids stepped off of the beams and through the ceilings so we didn't attract forbidding adult attention!

### **OKLAHOMA MILITARY ACADEMY 1930 - 31**

In the fall of 1930 I entered the 11th grade at the Oklahoma Military Academy, "OMA," in Claremore, Oklahoma. It had 4 years of high school and 2 years of junior college. Graduates of the junior college at OMA, with four years of military training, were eligible to be commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the United States Army Reserves. I was in the senior ROTC (Reserve Officers Training Corps) Cavalry Unit which was being offered for the first time at OMA. Since its beginning it had been an accredited Junior ROTC Infantry training school. That year it became a Senior ROTC school with Infantry and Cavalry training. The horses were "remounts" which meant they were specially selected for the regular Cavalry Units. (We always thought they were rejects because of the strange behavior of some of them).

A contingent of regular cavalry non-commissioned officers served as our instructors in the feeding, currying, drill, and riding the horses. Major Philip C. Clayton was the Professor of Military Science and Tactics for cavalry and Lieutenant L. R. Hamilton was the P. M. S. and T. for the infantry.

All of the other professors at the academy held a military rank in the National Guard and/or were on the governor's staff. They all wore U.S. Army uniforms.

The following year our woolen uniforms were replaced with poplin. At the same time our woolen "wrap leggings" were replaced with lace boots.

### **THIRD TRIP TO ARUBA - 1931**

In the spring of 1931 I again returned to Aruba and spent the next 13 months there. They still didn't have a 12th grade in the Lago High School. I worked for six months on the local payroll in the Commissary, where Mr. Roberto Garcia was in charge. I spent three months in the dry goods department and 3 months in the butcher department.

I really learned about the fickle general public. I cut a round steak for one lady and she loudly voiced her disappointment. She called for the butcher, Jim Jenkins. Jim was a little bald headed guy who reminded me of Jimmie Gleason in the old movies. He even had a Brooklyn accent. He said: "Come on Jim, let's go back in the freezer and see what we can do about this." So we went in the freezer and he said to me: "I'll

show you what we do in a case like this in New York." So he put the same steak on a new piece of butcher paper, sliced off a piece of a nearby ham and shared it with me. After five minutes or so he said, "Come on, let's make the lady happy." So I carried the same steak back to the lady. Jenkins said to the lady, "Now Mrs. xxxx, I believe you will like this steak!" Sure enough, she said, "Now why couldn't I have gotten that in the first place?"

Next I worked 8 hour shifts for six months in the Oil Inspection Laboratory. We changed shift every week. One week we would get 8 hours off; the next change we got 16 hours off; the next change we got 32 hours off. We repeated this change schedule.

In the lab we checked the incoming crude oils and outgoing hydrocarbon products being manufactured in the refinery. We measured gravity, made flash tests, we checked viscosity and ran distillation checks on the various hydrocarbon products; and I learned a great deal. There were probably very few instrument mechanics that had the opportunity to learn this much about refinery products.

It was there I met 19 year old John Clarence Every from the Dutch island of Saba. He was one of those who taught me all about their test work. I really got acquainted with islanders "Flick" Maduro, Claude Peterson, William Johnson, Ajax (with Arawak Indian background), and others. Hank DeSpain was our shift foreman.

### **MY FUTURE BOSS**

Paul and Kamma Jensen were good friends of my dad and mother. Paul and my dad were Masons. They were the founding fathers of the El Sol Naciente Lodge in Oranjestad. One time when I was at Paul's home he showed me his stamp collection. He gave me stamps of several different nations. One was a set of stamps issued during the World War I in Germany. He gave me a stamp book and a stamp catalogue. I was introduced to the world of stamps. I never had any idea that years later he would be my boss.

I was with my dad and Paul when they were looking over a building located near the Spanish Lagoon on the west side of the road to Oranjestad. It looked like it had been a club house. It was across the inlet from where the salt water distillation plant is now located. A small sailboat something like the Snipe-class boats was tied up at the little dock. Paul asked me if I wanted to sail. When I said yes he ran up the sails; I climbed in and he shoved me off from the dock. Never having sailed before I did all right until I had to "come about". The boat capsized and I had to swim ashore.

### **THIRD TRIP FROM ARUBA - 1932**

On August 4, 1932 I sailed with my family from Aruba and landed in Boston on August 14. My dad had shipped his car to Bayonne so we went to the hotel in New York and picked up our car and left the next day for Oklahoma. I attended Oklahoma Military Academy - 1932-1934. I completed high school and my freshman year in junior college. In the summer of 1934 I had six weeks of Reserve Officers Cavalry Training at Fort Clark, near Brackettville, Texas. Meanwhile, I lost track of J. C. Every and my other Oil Inspection Laboratory friends.

### **THE INSTRUMENT DEPARTMENT 1934 - 36**

Then in October of 1934 I returned to Aruba and worked for 18 months in the Instrument Department. My first assignment was to prepare bundles of circular charts, changed daily, for the operating units. This was done on a monthly basis. I delivered them to the control rooms around the refinery. We had a mix of various manufacturers of instruments and their charts. My starting salary was fls.75 (\$.30) an hour (The rate of exchange at the time was 2-1/2 Guilders to the Dollar). I learned about the industrial instrument business from the ground up. I was earning money for my last school year.

In those days the Instrument Shop was housed in a steel framed building covered with corrugated sheet iron. The wide shop door faced the Power House which was across the main refinery road. This main road ran East and West near the water on the South side of the refinery area. Originally we were called the Combustion Department. I suppose the name arose from the fact that we were involved with the efficiency testing of the boilers in the Power House. Bill Ewart was the Superintendent over the Power House, Utilities, Electric, and Instrument Departments. Bill was the first instrument man. He said at his request Harry F. Moore was sent down from New York to assist him in this work. Harry stayed until the Department was organized.

At the time our Department was a very cosmopolitan group of people:

- Gus Stutzman was a bald, square-headed German. He was a field mechanic with a very loud voice and German accent. When he got on the phone you couldn't hear yourself think. He would say "Vat?" - "Vy is dat?" He wholeheartedly supported Hitler. He said the Nazi's would straighten out the world. This of course didn't endear him with the plant operators in the refinery. Many of them were members of the American Legion. One of them once said to Gus, "Gus, the best job I ever had only paid \$30 a month." Gus said, "Vot kind of job



was that vich only paid \$30 a month?" The operator said, "In the War - shooting the rear end off of guys like you!"

- Cyril Rex was a short, slight built Englishman with a mustache and black hair - turning grey. He had been an engineer with various steam ship lines. Rex was our shop foreman. He was always joking with the local employees. He would pretend he thought he was speaking Spanish. He would say things like, "Take el wrencho and turn el valvo". He acted like he thought putting an "O" on the end of a word turned it into a Spanish word.

When Gus and Rex sat at their desks in the shop they were facing each other. Rex was always in a heated debate with Gus. It sounded like a lot of it was based on the World War I.

The shop was separated from our offices by a wall filled with paned glass windows that could be swung open.

- Elmer Wheeler was a husky MIT graduate who wore glasses. He seemed to spend a good deal of his time at his desk examining parts from the latest instruments. He was our General Foreman. His office was in the northeast corner of our building.
- Elmer shared his office with Paul Jensen, a blonde, weathered-face Dane who was our Assistant General Foreman. He had served in the American Navy in World War I and earned U.S. citizenship.

The rest of us were in a general office. This extended along the north wall of the building and between the northeast and northwest corners of the building. Bill Ewart had his office in the northwest corner of the building.

- Jim Jordan was a rosy cheeked American Engineer, a graduate of Annapolis who wore glasses.
- John McBrady with a degree in literature, from Chicago, was our original office supervisor.
- Art Krottenauer was a field mechanic. He had worked with a contractor before joining Lago.
- Karl Schlageter, an older fellow from Czechoslovakia was another field mechanic. He once said he was afraid of what Gus Stutzman might have done to his family back in the home country. (He indicated he was not one of Hitler's admirers but he was careful not to antagonize Gus.)
- Ben Whittpen was another American mechanic.

- Art MacNutt a Junior College graduate from Redondo Beach California was a field mechanic.
- George Cunningham was a Mechanical Engineering graduate of Lehigh University. He was a thin young man who one of his peers called "Scabbard Legs" because he was so thin.

Bill Ewart was keeping a close eye on the Power House operations. He was monitoring steam and water flows from the Power House to various areas of the refinery. Our department read the charts of a number of flow meter including those from the Power House boilers. The amount of flow over each 24 hour period was recorded in Utility record books that we maintained.

- Emmy Suylen joined the Instrument Department in 1935. He was a thin, short little Dutch man whose hair was turning grey. He was an old time accountant. We all marveled at how he could add a page full of figures in a matter of seconds. He kept all of the figures in head and his pencil moved down each column at a fast pace. One day Ben Whittpen challenged him. Ben was using a hand operated adding machine. Ben thought he was pretty good, but Emmy beat him easily.
- Stan Chapman was a mechanical engineer from New Hampshire.
- Carl P. Forester was a mechanical engineer from Boston.
- 18 year old Gregorio Frank, an Aruban of Arawak Indian extraction, was our "Tool Room Attendant." He had his "office" in a narrow cubby hole which was the store room in the shop. His job was keeping track of small tools checked out by the mechanics. He also issued all small parts used in industrial instrument work. He could span his work area by standing on the shelves on opposite sides of the room. You could say he was our first on-the-job apprentice in the shop.
- Adolph Halpert, a Hungarian, was a watchmaker by trade. He was the mechanic in charge of the Pyrometer Room.
- Louie N. Crippen worked with Halpert. Crippen was a son of Ira Crippen, a carpenter in the refinery.
- Greg Frank was also in the Pyrometer Room. One of his jobs was making Thermocouples for measuring temperature.

The Pyrometer Room was a room partitioned off in the west end of the shop to provide a relatively clean, quiet place for mechanics to work on some of the more delicate instrumentation. Pyrometers,

potentiometers, millivolt meter temperature measuring instruments and clocks were repaired here. The Pyrometer Room people were always up to something. Their chairs were the wooden kitchen type chairs. Every day Louie kept finding one leg of his chair was shorter than the other three. He would cut the other three to make his chair sit level. This went on until there were hardly any legs left so he had to get a new chair. He suspected Halpert. One noon Louie applied a coat of shellac to the seat of Halpert's chair while he was out to lunch. When Halpert sat down revenge was sweet. Halpert had a good idea who had done it. But these mysterious happenings stopped. Something exciting, comical, educational, was always happening in this atmosphere. All members of the department were involved in ordering, application, installation, maintenance and/or repairs.

Our 4:00 p.m. quitting time at the end of the regular day shift was preceded with a warning whistle at five minutes to four. This was to allow the mechanics time to put away their tools and wash their hands before the final whistle. As soon as the warning whistle blew Jordan would make a production of getting ready for the final whistle. He would stand by his desk and say, "Man your benches Men!" Nobody would pay any attention because they were busy clearing off their desks.

At the end of the day all of the young fellows gathered in the general offices. They all wore white shirts and examined each others shirts. Any that had a small tear was promptly pointed out and somehow a finger would get caught in the defect and before you knew it the shirt would be in shreds. Everyone seemed to make haircut appointments at the club right at four o'clock. One time Carl Forester's shirt seemed to have so many defects that he wound up with just the collar and the buttons down the front. He had an appointment at the barber shop for four o'clock. He wound up at the club, in his newly designed shirt, on time for his appointment. I often wondered what the barber thought about these young fellows who were always trying to steal each other's haircut appointments.

### **BACK TO SCHOOL 1936**

On August 22, 1936 I Left Aruba bound for Bayonne, New Jersey on the *S/S H.H. Rogers*. My fellow passenger was Lincoln Perry who had attended Annapolis but was not granted a commission because he had flat feet. He was not happy in Aruba. We arrived in Bayonne on August 26 after making a record run of 7 days.

I went back to the Oklahoma Military Academy and graduated from Junior College in 1937. I was a cadet captain and one of the lieutenants

in my troop, Troop D, was Edwin Price Ramsey. Ed wound up in the Philippines when the Japanese attacked there in 1941. He led what was the last Cavalry Charge in U. S. Army history.

I took Basic courses in Engineering, during my two years in Junior College. I put this knowledge to good use when I returned to Aruba in 1937 and went on the “overseas” payroll in the Instrument Department at 92 cents (U.S.) per hour.

#### **MARY GRIFFITH LOPEZ FAMILY**

Mary was born on May 1, 1920 in Happyland, Minnesota. Her brother, Donovan was born on November 5, 1921. Her sister, Phyllis, was born on January 13, 1924. Mary's mother, Corrine, traveled to Aruba on the *S/S Elisha Walker* in September of 1930 with her three children. Mary says the ship was caught in a hurricane and their suitcases were floating in water in their stateroom. They were all seasick as well as fellow passengers Mrs. Wayne Richey and her two small daughters. The captain had to take care of the two little girls because their mother was incapacitated.

Mary's father, Ivan Griffith, a mechanic in the Power House had arrived in late 1929. Corrine subsequently became a comptometer operator in the Accounting Department. She did the overseas payroll. The overseas payroll was made up of those who had been hired through the New York personnel office. The professional Dutch citizens were on the Guilder payroll. The locally hired citizens from Aruba and surrounding French and Dutch islands were on the local payroll.

After 1 year in the Lago Community School, Mary went to Bryan Hill Grammar School in St. Louis for the school years 1931-33. She returned to Aruba and re-entered Lago Community High School. Mary and I met in 1934 while she was going to Lago High School. Her father was one of those laid off in 1936 and the family returned to the U.S. where Mary graduated from High School in St. Louis in 1937. Ivan went to Oregon and bought a house in his home town. Corrine took a beautician course, in St. Louis, and joined Ivan in July, 1937. Ivan died of peritonitis in October of that year.

#### **MARRIAGE IN ST LOUIS & TRAINING IN PHILADELPHIA**

Mary and I were married on June 12, 1937 in St. Louis. A few days later the company sent me to the Brown Instrument Company Training School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Most of my classmates were Brown Instrument Company sales engineers. Mary visited her father during the latter part of June. She joined me in July. We roomed with Mrs. John Williams, a Pennsylvania Dutch lady. She “adopted” Mary

and helped her achieve "Domestic Engineering" skills that lasted a lifetime.

In September I finished the Training Course at Brown Instrument Company and went to Aruba on the S/S *Pan Aruba* (later called the *Esso Bolivar*) without Mary. The New York Medical Department held up Mary's departure until a medical problem was cleared up.

Mary left New York December 5 on the Imperial Oil Company Tanker M/v *Canadolite* and arrived in Aruba December 12, 1937. In those days all of the passengers were carried on the ships manifest as crew members. I think this had something to do with insurance laws. Mary still has her merchant seaman discharge certificate from that voyage.

### **MY CAREER WITH STANDARD OIL COMPANY (N.J.)**

I arrived in Aruba on September 8, 1937 and my Dad met me and put me up at his house. Since we had not been assigned a house my father suggested that Mary and I live with him and Consuelo until we could make other arrangements. We stayed with them 3 or 4 months.

At the time there was a housing shortage in Lago Colony. We made arrangements to live in bungalows of people during their two months vacation. One time we had to move the day after Christmas. Ken Hewlett shared his bungalow while Mrs. Hewlett and family were in the states for the birth of their son, Rob.

This went on for about a year. During that time we shared a five room bungalow #47 with Cass and Lois Wood. Cass was also in the Instrument Department. They were from Mississippi and had a *deep* Southern accent. He was a noted winner of poker games. Every month he mailed home more than he made on the job. At the end of that two month period Mary had a deep Southern accent and sounded like a native Mississippian.

During this year or so when we had no house Mary was working in the Typing Department in the main office. There were some strange terms used in the material she was typing. One was "orange peel bucket." She finally found that this was the name used for a large, heavy steel bucket that was used with a crane. It was round like an orange and had four "sections" that opened up like a "claw." Mary was glad to have that mystery cleared for her.

We had a picnic lunch at the beach every day. We managed to finally rent a house, in the village of San Nicholas. It was next door to the East of the Rainbow Bakery. We lived there for a year. There were

no screen doors and goats liked to visit. Adair Sonnenberg and her small son, Hudson, lived with us for several months. Adair was expecting their second child. Her husband, Hudson, was a mechanic in the Instrument Department. They were also awaiting assignment to a bungalow in Lago Colony, affectionately known as "the colony".

#### **OUR FIRST BUNGALOW IN LAGO COLONY**

Three-room bungalow #153 was our first housing in the colony. This bungalow used to be at "Five Corners" and across from the Chief Watchman, Gilbert Brook and his family.

We had a little white dog with one black eye: "Poochie." Elizabeth Dickey, one of the secretaries, received a gift of a small monkey. She lived in the Girls Dormitory and had no place to keep it so she gave it to us. It was housed in a little wooden bird cage which was very confining. So I proceeded to build a larger cage. In the meantime we established a routine of letting the little monkey out on our front porch for an hour or so every afternoon. The puppy and the monkey liked to play together. The monkey moved from place to place in hops. The puppy adopted this mode of travel. He never did walk like an ordinary dog after that. When I drove home from work he always came hopping down the drive way to meet me. People kept asking what was wrong with that dog - hopping like that.

One day Mary called me at work and I had to come home. The monkey had accidentally hanged himself on a piece of string that was fastened at the top of the cage.

#### **NEW BUILDING**

During 1937 a number of changes took place in the refinery. The new Instrument and Electrical Shops were completed to the North of the dining hall and the main office building. The two buildings were much larger than previous quarters and were separated by a small roadway with their main doors facing each other. These were two-story buildings. The instrument building had small offices upstairs over the store room on the end of the building. The main shop area occupied a little over half of the building.

#### **INSTRUMENT DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES**

During this period of time someone in the instrument department dreamed up the idea of having a "going away party" before going on vacation. At first it was just for the men. Ellie (L. E.) Wilkins had a "shack" near the beach, not far from where the Yacht Club was later located. This was a handy place to have beach parties. These were usually hamburger and beer affairs. Ellie Wilkins and Bill Hughes

considered themselves gourmet cooks. They tried to outdo each other on the meals they prepared when it came their turn. They used an electric roaster and cooked their roasts very slowly. They used all kinds of spices. The meat was in shreds and each person made a super sandwich by hollowing out a Vienna Roll and filling it with the roast they had prepared. Corn on the cob, vegetables and salads contributed to long remembered feasts.

Then Carl Forester's vacation came along. He said, "Hell no! I am not going to have a party." Ellie Wilkins and Bill Hughes decided, well okay, we will throw one for you. So a little committee was formed and everyone got busy. The best Scotch and beer at the club was ordered. Also there were bottles of boneless chicken, pickles, olives, sirloin steak, bakery goods, etc. When we arrived at Ellie's shack about five o'clock the first thing they did was tie Carl Forester up in a deck chair. Bill Hughes told Carl that since he didn't furnish the party he would have to eat last. Carl was quite surprised at the elaborate layout of foodstuffs and liquors and was agreeable. Finally after everyone was had served himself they turned Carl loose and he really enjoyed the repast. In those days it was customary that the person going on vacation went down to the accounting office cashier to settle his accounts and receive his vacation pay the day he was leaving. About 9:00 o'clock here came Forester barging into the office. "You bastards!!!" he said as he threw down the bills he had received from the commissary and club for all of the makings for the party. Everybody laughed. They had no mercy on the suffering fellow worker.

Later on the wives were included in these parties. We had some grand meals. Each wife tried to outdo the others. Pies, cakes, and cookies began to appear. Mary remembers that when it came her turn to prepare the meal the dining hall chef prepared the meal for us.

Meanwhile the "Pan Aruban" kept us up to date on the happenings in the colony. There were regular seasons of basketball, softball, bowling, tennis, and golf. The flying club gave flying lessons. The members of the Shell refinery golf and tennis clubs visited to play the Lago golf and tennis club members. And our people went over there to play. Of course there was a big party the day before the games to try to get the competition to "party" too much and throw them off their games the next day.

Bridge parties and dinners were faithfully reported in our community newspaper, the Pan Aruban. New arrivals were dutifully welcomed and those leaving on vacation or permanently were bid

farewell. The Royal Order of Blackened Eyes announced new members after Saturday night altercations.

### **JOB EXPERIENCES**

In 1938 construction of the Edeleanu Plant began. The control valves used on this plant were from the Belfield Control Valve Company. This was a subsidiary of The Brown Instrument Company. Apparently their inspection of these valves before shipment was very poor. The pistons were binding in the bottom guide. They all had to be corrected on our instrument shop lathes. This of course held up the installation and check out of this equipment at the new plant. A lot of overtime was required. W. (Bill) F. Hughes was in charge of installing the instrumentation on this job.

An operators training program was initiated by the Training Division for all refinery units. The mechanics from the instrument department were also scheduled to receive this training to help us be more efficient on the job. We all received some excellent training.

During 1939 the instrument department made a concerted effort to have a set of instructions put together for the edification of all in the department. All instrumentation that came to be installed and maintained by the instrument department was received with a manufacturer's instruction booklet. However these usually only contained a list of parts and their part numbers for ordering purposes. We were sadly in need of factory instructions. Everyone in the department received an assignment to study and prepare instructions for overhaul and calibration of the instruments we handled.

The companies ordering instrumentation were trying to encourage the manufacturers. Aruba became a proving ground for all types of new equipment. Instrument engineering in the New York offices were responsible for shipping some of the new models to us. Our completed assignments were prepared on tracing paper and a book was assembled with a copy for each of us. There was even a cabinet prepared for keeping our copy of this book. We wound up with a ledger type book with the pages that could be removed for use in our work. This book was very useful.

One of my assignments was preparing manuals of drawings and text material for the chlorinators we used for treating the colony fresh water system. The research and preparation work I did was a great help in the work I did in the field. Particularly some 20 years later when I found myself responsible for 11 chlorinator installations in the oil fields in South Iran.



Frederick S. Rich was in the instrument department during this time. He came to us from the Foxboro Instrument Company. He left in 1941 and was later in charge of the instrument department that he organized at the Oak Ridge, Tennessee Atomic Bomb Project. He said that he had to train women and farm workers and his copy of this book contributed to his successful efforts.

In 1940 the supervisors in the instrument department put their heads together and initiated an instrument job training program. This was mainly for local employees. It covered some physics and math, as it applied to instrumentation. George Cunningham had this job for a while. Text material had to be prepared. Some basic physics and math had to be covered in the classroom.

Since our department had so many young engineers called to service Bill Hughes and I were kept busy. We were trying to fill in on the technical side of instrumentation where we could. In my own case I felt the experience I gained during this time was of great benefit to me and the company. I was classified as a second class mechanic and my pay was \$0.90 cents an hour when I started out on the overseas payroll in 1937. We picked our time cards up at the main gate between the colony and the refinery. In those days we received job order tickets the day before we were supposed to do routine maintenance work. This was so we could plan our work and be prepared to get an early start on our jobs. One of my assignments was to organize this program.

On November 15, 1944 I was sent to La Salinas, Venezuela to take charge of the Instrument work during a routine shutdown. I returned to Aruba on December 18th.

In 1946 we formed The Instrument Society of Aruba. Bill Koopman, Art MacNutt, and I were the founding fathers. This was made up of all of the overseas staff in the instrument department. We modeled it after the recently formed Instrument Society of America. The purpose of this organization was to advance the instrumentation, discipline. Later we became a chapter of the I.S.A. We published a monthly "I. S. A. Bulletin." Since we were not dependent on any monetary assistance by any instrument manufacturer we were able to say a lot of things in our Bulletin that the other chapters couldn't. At that time we were the only overseas chapter of the Instrument Society of America.

I became quite involved in this organization and our instrument department was like a team. We held beach parties and had fish fries and any time one of our bachelor's (such as Dwight Fryback, or Louie Crippen) married we had a bachelor party for them. Of course we gave

them all kinds of useless advice.

Bill Koopman and I were the ones who organized and printed "The ISA Bulletin." His daughters, Loesje and Nancy, and my sons, David, Michael and Victor were drafted to help us assemble it, address it, and mail it. Besides members in Aruba we had members in Venezuela, Curacao, Trinidad, Holland, and England. We exchanged monthly Bulletins with the Society of Instrument Technology in London. We also mailed a copy to every Chapter (at that time 45) in the U.S.A. as well as the general foremen of every department and the upper management of Lago. We supported the Bulletin by obtaining advertising from some merchants in San Nicholas. We had a great time publishing the Bulletin. I still have a complete set of file copies put out during the 8 years we published it. I still get a chuckle when I read one.

At one of our ISA meetings in '48 our general foreman, Paul Jensen, suggested that we had all better be studying electronics, what with instrumentation being developed which depended on electronics only. So we set up a radio course, because this was as close as we could come to the required teaching. We had young engineer members with radio and electronics backgrounds. Some of the guys in the group were interested in amateur radio, so our classes helped us not only on the job, but in our hobbies. One knowledgeable instrument engineer, Stan Chapman, organized a Morse code course. After much palavering, a number of the colony residents obtained amateur radio licenses to operate on the island.

Bill Koopman and I set up a radio repair shop in my garage when we lived in bungalow 510. Later we moved it to our "maid's quarters" (we had no maid) at bungalow #366. We repaired radios, record players, amplifiers, tape recorders. We also ordered and installed amplifiers, record players, and speakers in people's patios. Any money we got for our work we put into a set of "Ryder's Manuals". These were filled with diagrams and instructions for the repairs of just about every American radio made in those days. We also bought test equipment and tools. Bill Koopman organized a shop in his garage where he overhauled and repaired business machines from the banks. Ultimately he took care of slot machines for the gambling casinos in Oranjestad.

On January 13, 1955 I was loaned to the Creole Petroleum Amuay Bay Refinery in Venezuela. I was involved in the installation of instrumentation and the start-up of a new Hydroformer Unit they were building. On April 29, 1955 I flew back to Aruba from Maracaibo at the conclusion of that assignment. We had 3 intermediate trips between

Venezuela and Aruba by way of the ocean tankers that were shuttling back and forth carrying crude to Aruba. Mary managed to travel on one of those tankers and visit me in Amuay Bay on one of these trips: Nothing like coming down a ladder to a pilot boat in a dress billowing in the wind.

Over the years I learned the Instrument business and worked in just about every position including that of Instrument Job Trainer. One day in 1954 the Manager, Fred J. Wellington, of the Barrancabermeja Refinery of our affiliate, International Petroleum Company (Colombia) Ltd., was visiting Aruba and he observed me doing my Instrument Job Training work. I had no idea who he was.

Shortly thereafter I was invited to Barrancabermeja for an interview and to look over a position (actually replacing Leroy Bonbrest). I enjoyed the 6 day visit; and enjoyed the mostly Canadian crew there very much. This was to be my next job-posting

## **WORLD WAR II**

All Dutch men who had served in the armed services in Holland (as conscripts) were called to duty on September 1, 1939 when WWII broke out. They retained the rank they had while conscripts. Those from the Instrument Department included John Moller who was a Sergeant in charge of training of local Aruban citizens. Nick Schindeler and Bill Koopman were sergeants. John ten Houte Delange was a corporal. They reported to their posts in the morning and returned to their bungalows and their families at the end of the day. There were no barracks.

When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor December 7, 1941, the American Consul in Aruba was swamped with applications for enlisting in the American armed services. Major John Resler, my chemistry professor back there at OMA, was chairman of the draft board in Claremore, Oklahoma. I was registered with this draft board. However the company had already had too many fellows called up, and our oldest was born December 12, 1940. Major Resler classified me as being in an essential industry. So I was deferred as well as a number of others.

After being called to duty by the U.S. Army Lieutenant George Echelson was sent back to Aruba to supervise radar installations on the island. He couldn't discuss his work, but he visited all of his friends while in Aruba.

At the beginning of World War II magnetic mines were sinking Allied ships. These mines were laid by German submarines. When a ship made of metal came near one of these mines the mine was attracted

to the ship and exploded on contact. A degaussing system was developed to neutralize the magnetic attraction of the mines. A cable was arranged around the periphery of the ship. This cable was hooked up to some kind of electrical circuit. The exact hook up was a military secret.

Cornelius Perin of the electric department was the technician called to repair the degaussing systems aboard various ships. Since these systems were a military secret he could not view any schematics or drawings. This was no deterrent. He made his own drawings. His assignments sometimes meant he sailed with an outbound ship. His wife wouldn't know where he was, but eventually he was sent back on an inward bound ship.

I was a shift supervisor in the instrument department in 1942. I felt like I was helping to produce the aviation gasoline used by our Air Corps over Germany. My radio operator-gunner brother, Victor, was being supported by my contributions in supplying fuel for his B-24.<sup>1</sup>

#### **OUR AUTOMOBILES**

When Mary and I were first married we had to depend on others for transportation. For a couple of months we were loaned a Ford sedan by a Mr. Jenkins who happened to be the father of a friend of Mary's. Then we bought a used Dodge coupe from M Viana who was the Dodge dealer in San Nicholas. In 1940 we traded for a new Plymouth sedan which we picked up in Bayonne, New Jersey when we went on vacation in early May of that year.

The Company equipped some of their ships to accommodate automobiles shipped to and from Aruba. These ships that were on a regular schedule between Aruba and Bayonne, New Jersey carried the automobiles of employees at no cost. All materials and automobiles shipped to Aruba were handled by the company warehouse near the company docks in Bayonne. As you went on vacation you shipped your car to Bayonne to be there when you arrived. When you returned you left your car at the Bayonne warehouse for shipping to Aruba.

#### **VACATION - 1940**

At the end of April, in 1940, Mary and I left on vacation via the

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<sup>1</sup>*Pop never did put any good anecdotes in here, like when the German sub attacked in February of 1942 ma was expecting my older brother Michael and woke up scared. After some shoving, she woke pa up and alarmed, he crawled under the bed and advised her to do the same. After several tries she realized she was too pregnant and crawled under a card table. Some protection that was.*

Grace Line's S/S *Santa Rosa*. Mary didn't enjoy the cruise very much because she was "expecting" our oldest son, David. We stopped in La Guaiara and Caracas.

After arriving in New York City we stayed at the Lincoln Hotel. That particular year it was rather chilly in New York City. We were quite intrigued to hear the music of the day being played on the ships radio as we approached New York harbor. One of the songs that Mary remembers is "Stone Cold Dead in The Market." We never heard it again!

As I was taking a walk that night on 42nd street I was obviously a stranger to town because of my light grey suit and no topcoat. I was approached by a well dressed man, recently shaved, wearing a black topcoat. He said he was a used car dealer who was from Boston. He had come to New York on business and the night before he had been celebrating in some bar and was "rolled" and all of his money was taken. He wanted me to stake him to a bus fare to get back to Boston. I had just read an article in some magazine about the various approaches used by "con" men so I was immediately suspicious. I asked him several questions. I noticed we were walking into a little corner with a building on the street. Out of the corner of my eye I noticed another well dressed man was keeping step with us and seemed to be waiting for something. Somehow things didn't appear right to me and the answers he was giving weren't very convincing. I told him to contact the police for help. Then I hurried away and when I looked back a few moments later neither man was in sight.

The next day we picked up our new Plymouth (We had ordered it before leaving Aruba) in Bayonne, New Jersey just outside of New York, and drove south. We were on our way to Miami, Florida where my mother was living at the time. On May 10th as we were leaving our motel we heard on our car radio that Holland had been invaded by the German Army. Chills ran up and down our spines. It took a while for us to digest this news and we slowly began to realize what this would mean to us as we began reading the papers and talking about it.

At the end of our vacation we returned to Aruba by an ocean going oil tanker. We had to leave our car at the company warehouse in Bayonne, New Jersey for future shipment.

#### **FIRST BORN DECEMBER 12, 1940**

Dr. Sanvos was in charge of the Lago Hospital in those days. He was German and didn't believe in using any sedatives for the mother when a baby was born. They used to call it "Twilight Sleep". Many of

the new mothers went back to the States to have their first baby. Mary made arrangements to go to Philadelphia Lying In Hospital. She went up to Philadelphia in September.

She stayed with the same Mrs. John Williams we had stayed with when I was going to the Brown Instrument Training School. Our first born, David Louis, was born on December 12, 1940. Mary's brother, Donovan, came from St. Louis and was with her when she went to the hospital.

In the later part of January of 1941 Mary and Donovan were met at Abby Hotel in New York by their sister, Phyllis. The next day they boarded a tanker in Bayonne, New Jersey. Seven days later they were in Aruba. At that time we were living in bungalow #343 (number later changed to #345) at the corner of Fifth Avenue and 7th Street. Directly across 7th Street the Ed Harris family lived in bungalow #347. My dad lived in bungalow #509 which was just around the corner and five houses down on Sixth Avenue.

Then in 1952 our David entered the Boy Scouts and in a short while I found myself the Scoutmaster of the Boy Scouts of America Troop 1 in the Lago Colony. John Opdyke was Cubmaster for more than 17 years. I will never forget pitching tents in the sand near the beaches. Tent pegs were held down with big rocks.

## **The Louis G. Lopez Story**

Louie was born on December 30, 1891 although for most of his life he mistakenly believed he had been born in 1894. He said he failed to learn his true birth date until after he retired. Louie had returned to the Church of San Francisco in his home town, the city of Celaya, in the state of Guanajuato in Mexico to look up his birth record. A copy of birth records is also kept by the civil authorities.

His paternal grandfather was a Spaniard and his paternal grandmother was an Otomi Indian; he was one quarter Otomi Indian. Apparently he was rather close to his grandmother because she taught him the Otomi language. One day after he had retired and built his home in Mexico City an Indian woman came by selling produce and he found himself conversing with her in Otomi. He said that until that moment he did not realize he retained any of the language because he had neither spoken nor heard Otomi spoken since he was a child!

It is interesting to note is that the first time Louie went to a dentist in the United States, the man routinely counted his teeth, did a double take and counted them again. He said, "I've never seen this before. You have two more teeth than the thirty two most people have!" Louie explained that this was one of the characteristics of the Otomi Indians.

Apparently his mother was unable to nurse Louie, and a "wet nurse" was needed. He and the wet nurse's baby boy grew up almost like brothers.

Years later, in June of 1956, when I visited him in Mexico City after his retirement, he took me to visit his "brother," the son of the "wet nurse". We sat in the kitchen of the small thin man's home, drinking coffee while he and my father recited poetry remembered from their younger days--one would recite a line, the other reciting the succeeding line. Their recital continued for about two hours. They got a kick out of that as did I, although I must confess my Spanish was somewhat lacking. We visited for some time and learned that his "brother" was a retired teacher.

Louie had a marvelous memory. No doubt about it; this was a valuable asset of which he made good use.

In his early teens he and his brother, Augustin, studied for the priesthood in the San Franciscan Seminary in Cholula, a town six miles

north of Puebla, and 90 miles south of Mexico City. It was while he was here that his beloved mother died. His father had died some years before. The church decided the boys didn't need to know of their mother's death. When Louis learned of it, he left the seminary and went home to Celaya, where he discovered his relatives had divided up his mother's property among themselves, leaving him and his brother nothing. As he was a minor, he had no legal recourse. He left Celaya, vowing to have nothing more to do with his treacherous family. He also decided the head of the seminary had treated the boys badly by not informing them of the death of their mother.

Although he never said so, it appears that late in 1911, Louie briefly joined up with the Mexican Revolutionist, Doroteo Arango, a.k.a. Pancho Villa. One story goes that Villa became a bandit when he killed the son of the rich ranch owner for raping Pancho's sister. From that time, Pancho robbed from the rich land owners and helped the impoverished peons who he felt were helpless victims of social injustice. The government, as dictated by Porfirio Diaz, put a price on Villa's head. In 1910 Villa joined forces with Francisco Madero in his bid to oust Diaz in an election. Villa was an admirer of Madero, and believed in his plans for a democratic form of government. When Villa learned General Huerta was treacherously plotting to have him executed on false charges, he sought refuge in the U.S. By this time Louie had decided the life of a revolutionary was not for him. There was no future in Pancho Villa's army.

Louie once remarked that he learned the barber trade in the army. Later he regularly cut the hair of his two sons, Victor and James. He also put this skill to good use during his early years in Aruba. He did this to accommodate fellow workers and to pass the time while his family was not in Aruba.

When I visited him in Mexico in 1956 he took my brother-in-law, Flavio Carlos, and me to see the San Franciscan Seminary in Cholula. As soon as our car was parked he hopped out, told us to wait, went inside, and was there for what seemed like an hour. When he returned he said he had found the roster book with his name in it and had taken a quick tour of the school. At that time of day we were not allowed to go where he had gone. As of 1984 this same roster book had been sent, together with other old files, to a store room of the church in Mexico City. This latter church was the one where the daughters of my step-sister, Adrianna, were married. Someday I hope to find this book to verify some facts and dates.



Later in his life Louie saw the movie, "Pancho Villa," with Wallace Beery and got a big kick out of it. He said the movie reminded him of bygone days. He was keen on "Viva Zapata!" with Brando, too.

During my first visit with him in Mexico City, after his retirement, Louie pointed out the monument to the Mexican Revolution, and said, "How do you like OUR monument?" In 1976 Villa's body was moved from the small cemetery in Parral and entombed in the monument with other heroes of the revolution.

### **CATARACTS AND CITIZENSHIP**

When Louis took a Physical Examination in 1914 it was found that he had a cataract on his left eye. He went to Kansas City, Missouri for an eye operation in September, returning to Drumright in November. He wore corrective lenses since the vision in his left eye was less than normal.

Louis showed interest in obtaining citizenship papers, and obtained the sponsorship of the Superintendent of Schools in Drumright, who schooled him in English, American Government, and U.S. history. His excellent command of the English language was apparent to all who heard him speak, and his knowledge of American Government and History was excellent. As a result of his studies in the San Franciscan seminary, he was able to recite freely from the Bible and quote passages to fit any occasion.

On June 27, 1923 Louie petitioned for naturalization. He received a 57-question form from the Chief Naturalization Examiner, M. E. Bevington.

On this form he stated he was known as Luis G. Lopez in Mexico, and he was petitioning under the name of Louis G. Lopez. At the time he was residing in Drumright, Creek County, Oklahoma. He declared he was born on December 30, 1894, in the town of Celaya in the State of Guanajuato, Mexico. He entered the U.S. by way of El Paso, Texas on April 17, 1912, settled in Stillwater, Payne County, Oklahoma, and lived there until November of the same year. His father's name was Manuel Lopez Zamudio and his mother's maiden name was Maria Ines Flores. Question #52 on the naturalization form asked why he wished to become a citizen. His answer: "Because America was good enough for me and mine at this or any other time."

In 1924 he went before a judge in Sapulpa, Oklahoma to get his certificate of naturalization, and become a citizen of the United States of America. The date on his naturalization papers was January 30, 1924. In

those days an oral examination was given by the examining judge, and it often took hours.

He said when he first left Mexico in April for the United States he bought a railroad ticket from El Paso, Texas to Stillwater, Oklahoma. That was as far as he could afford to go. When he stepped off the train, he saw snow for the first time. The mountains in Mexico had white-topped peaks, but he had never seen the phenomena of snow up close before.

## **FIRST JOBS**

Louie arrived in Stillwater, Oklahoma in April of 1912. As soon as he stepped off the train he realized that with only 50 cents in his pocket, he needed a job. As he was walking down the road, he saw a gang of men digging a ditch. There was a pick lying on the ground, and no one was using it, so he picked it up and started to work. The crew digging the ditch was Hungarians and thought it was funny and encouraged him. At mealtime they shared their sack lunches with him. The foreman ran up and began to berate him in a loud voice, waving his arms and demanding that he leave at once. Louie's English vocabulary was limited. All he could reply to the foreman's blustering and threats was yes, and for an occasional variation, he would say, no.

As he later learned, the men were digging the ditch for a pipeline, and the work was scheduled to continue for some time. At the end of the first week the Hungarians informed the foreman that the only fair thing to do was pay Louie since he had done as much work as they had. Later, when Louie's English improved to a level that made conversation possible, the foreman told him that he had been trying to fire him all day long, but Louis just wouldn't fire. Because he was a good steady worker, the foreman kept him until the ditch was finished.

Louie went to Payne County, Oklahoma in November 1912 and lived in Cushing until March, 1913. It was here that he worked in a funeral home, although he never got used to being around the dead, particularly at night.

In March, 1913, he went to Drumright, Creek County, Oklahoma where he resided until September 1914. When World War I came along he attempted to join the American Armed Forces. It was then that he learned he had a cataract in his left eye and surgery was needed.

In September of 1914 Louie went to Kansas City Kansas to have the cataract removed from his left eye. In November of 1914 Louie returned to Drumright.

And on Saint Patrick's Day, March 17 of 1912, Wheeler Number 1 Oil Well came in, spraying oil 50 to 200 feet high in what was later called the Drumright Oil Field. The nearby town was not officially designated as Drumright until December 28, 1912. It was named after Aaron Drumright whose 120 acre farm, combined with the 120 acres belonging to Harley and J.W. Fulkerson became the townsite. (No doubt this was land that had been claimed during the opening of Oklahoma during the land rush in 1908.) Because Drumright was not named when the Wheeler number 1 oil well came in, the production field was referred to as a part of the Cushing Oil Field which was 10 miles to the west.

## **MARRIAGE**

On November 19, 1913, a 22-year-old Louie Lopez, and an 18-year-old Maggie Tibbets were married in Chandler, Lincoln County, Oklahoma. They had met in Drumright, Oklahoma in March, 1913. He had black hair and brown eyes and weighed about 130 pounds. Her sandy, almost golden long hair hung to her waist, she possessed blue-green eyes, freckles, and weighed just 100 pounds.

They were blessed with four children, two of whom died at birth, one in 1914, and one in 1916. James Louis was born June 18, 1915. Victor Alonzo was born March 29, 1922. Due to the lack of hospital facilities, all were born at home.

## **MARGARET TIBBETS**

According to her recollections, Maggie Tibbets was born in Melvin, McDonald County, Texas on October 29, 1895. She was told her parents died in an accident, she wasn't sure what kind.

According to the census of 1900, she resided in the Creek Nation, Indian Territory, in the household of Sarah J. Nolan with her two sons, Isaac H. and James. Also shown in the same census record are Arthur Cox and Flossy Cox with the latter shown as 4 years old with a birth date of January 1896, and her birthplace was given as Oklahoma.

On the 1910 Census Record, she appears as Flossie Cox, Foster Daughter, age 14, with no reported birthplace. She was enumerated in the family of James K. Polk and Matilda Tibbetts.

James K. Polk Tibbetts was born July 8, 1845 and Matilda Parrot Tibbetts was born in January 1868, both Audubon, Iowa natives.

Finally on the 10th of January, 1945, a county judge, W. M. Hall, made it official--Maggie was born in Melvin, McCulloch County, Texas on October 29, 1895.

When Maggie and Louie were first married they lived with the Charlie Winans family. The family owned one of the larger grocery stores in Drumright. Mrs. Winans took care of Maggie as if she were her own daughter. Both Mr. and Mrs. Winans worked in the store as did one of his brothers who was the butcher. They had a daughter, Betty, and a son Jimmie who was always into some minor mischief. Jimmie became a well known boxer at one time.

### **COOK, BAKER**

Louie and Maggie came to live in the town of Drumright on the east side of what was known as Tiger Hill, until 1920. During that time he held many jobs. At one time he was a cook in a short order cafe. He had a flair for cooking, and he used to run Maggie out of the kitchen while he whipped up a raisin pie that was out of this world. Louie also used to make chili and hot tamales that would clear your sinuses and stick to your ribs. Renown in his neighborhood as a cook of considerable talent, he would have to make up big batches so he could share them with friends and acquaintances.

Louie used to work in a bakery in Drumright. He always laughed when he told about that time in his life. There were big rats everywhere. Once, when the baker was rolling out a big hunk of dough, a big rat ran along the work bench. The baker calmly dispatched the rat with the roll of dough, finished rolling it, cut it into loaves and put them in the oven.

### **MASONIC LODGE, PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

Louie also joined the Drumright Chapter of the Masonic Lodge and became an active member. His marvelous memory enabled him to memorize the rituals, and he became team leader, conducting Masonic burial rites in Oklahoma. He maintained his membership in the Drumright Lodge until his death, saying the Masons proved a helpful influence throughout his lifetime. Louie died at the age of 72 on May 1, 1963 in Mexico City.

Maggie became an Eastern Star member and maintained her membership in the Drumright Chapter until she passed away at the age of 82 on May 23, 1976 in Pasadena, Texas.

Louie and Paul Jensen were two of the founding fathers of the El Sol Naciente Masonic Lodge which was later established in Aruba, Netherlands Antilles in the early 1930's. When he left Aruba they gave him a gold pocket watch and chain which his son still has. On the back of the watch is engraved "TO BROTHER L.G. LOPEZ IN APPRECIATION OF YOUR SERVICES TO THE LODGE 'EL SOL NACIENTE'. ARUBA, N.A. 1953."

Louie and Maggie joined the Presbyterian Church of Drumright, and his sons, James Louis and Victor Alonzo, were baptized in this church. At that time the church was on Penn Street south of Drumright High School. The men of the Masonic Lodge put on a play one night in the High School Auditorium as a fund raising effort. As a part of the entertainment for the evening they had a sing-along program complete with the song projected on a screen and a bouncing ball to encourage audience participation. The name of the play was "The Woman-less Wedding." It was a success, particularly to the family members of the players. Looking back, Louie expressed his astonishment that such an amusing play could be put on by a group of men. The "bride" was unusually tall, the "baby" hardly fit in the baby carriage, the "other woman" practically cried her eyes out, and Louie was an Indian dressed in a genuine Indian headdress and blanket which was borrowed from an Indian family.

His son, James, was with him when he went looking for that Indian headdress. They visited several houses and James recalls one house in particular; a nice home, practically a mansion. Through an open front door they saw a chicken standing on a grand piano. Louie knocked, called out, and when no one answered, they entered. He told his lodge brothers that he found the family in a large tepee out back of the house. The Indian family didn't live in the house; it was reserved for formal visits of their white brothers (friends).

He also recalled taking his nine year old son, James, and his wife, Maggie, and two year old Victor to Rose Hill one Saturday evening. The small settlement was between Drumright and Cushing, Oklahoma where an Indian stomp dance was in progress. There were few white spectators. Both Indian men and Indian women danced around the big bonfire.

#### **SCHOOL PROGRAMS**

Some time during 1924 the several country schools in the Drumright school district had a joint effort where each school offered a play featuring a different country. This program was staged in the Drumright High School Auditorium. One school featured Holland and a little Dutch girl and boy appeared in a dance scene complete with wooden shoes. As each country was presented, the set was changed accordingly. Louie designed a bullfighter costume with a cardboard hat covered with black cloth, Maggie, his wife, did the sewing. The gold lace trim on the beautiful cape, trousers, and hat was actually an indoor copper radio antenna. A piano playing school teacher had worked with Louie to teach his 9-year-old son, James, to sing the song, La Paloma, in

Spanish. The stage, decorated under Louie's direction, resembled a typical Spanish village.

At one time Louie decided to give up smoking. He gained so much weight that overalls were the only clothing that would fit him. Reluctantly, he began smoking again.

### **CAREER BEGINS**

On April 23, 1916 Louie went on the payroll of the Standard Oil Company of Indiana (later known as the Stanolind Oil and Gas Company). He was assigned to work with a millwright who was installing combustion engine driven Cooper Bessemer Compressors at the Drumright casing head gasoline compression plants. These Plants, the number one, near Oiltown, the number two, three miles north of Drumright, the number three, five miles south, the number four, 5 miles east of Drumright, and the number five, which was near Shamrock.

He learned a great deal from that Millwright and this was where he really got his start in the Gas Plant business. In July of 1951 he wrote an article for The "Instrument Society of America" Bulletin which was published by the Aruba Section in the Lago Colony at that time. The title of the article was, "Is the Quality of Workmanship Important Today?" In it, he said, "Not too long ago an 'Erection Engineer' was known as a Millwright. He was a skilled craftsman in carpentry, the use of a metal lathe, a drill press or a shaper, blacksmithing and mathematics. He was a supervisor and a trainer. He did his job without instruction books, factory representatives, or field engineers to get in his hair. He recruited his helpers from local people, usually employees of the company purchasing the equipment, trained them to follow his every move and ask questions. He had infinite patience, and the willingness to impart to others the fundamental knowledge necessary to aid him in his task." The article further stated, "The fact remains that in any highly competitive field quality workmanship is more important today than at any time in the past."

In 1917 Louie became a member of the work force at Plant Number Two and he moved with his family to the company housing. The plant was surrounded by a cyclone fence, and near the north fence line were the chimney-like exhausts of the eight compressors. The compressor house was a long, steel framed building covered with corrugated, zinc coated, sheet metal that had a cooling tower at its side. Outside its west end was a smaller building, similar in design to the main compressor house that housed the small boiler used to supply the plant with steam. For employees who butchered hogs, there was a steam connection over a

large wooden barrel outside the west fence. There was another long corrugated building on the plant's west side which served as the warehouse and garage for trucks. On hot days Louie and some of the men would take a swim in the cooling towers collection pond. This practice was discontinued when one of the younger men got a chill which brought on pneumonia and his death.

There was a small engineering group and a plant superintendent who lived outside near the east fence in more luxurious quarters. An engineering office building, the main office for all five of the Stanolind compressor plants in the area, was nearby. A paved street ran outside of the east fence. All houses and the office faced the street and the plant. On the west side of the plant, stood the housing for the plant engineers (Operators) and their helpers. An alley extended along the west side of the housing with communal employee garage area on the south end of the housing. Yards of the houses were comparable to 100 foot city lots nowadays, and they were covered with bermuda grass everywhere.

As a "wiper" Louie was one of the lowest men on the totem pole. One of his jobs was mowing the huge lawn around the plant. He worked shift and had a tough time sleeping during the hot summer. He spoke of wrapping himself in a wet sheet to get to sleep. Each shift had a plant engineer and a wiper. The term, wiper, was descriptive of that job. A wiper wiped the excess oil off everything in sight, did all janitorial work and **helped** the plant engineer.

The five compression plants received natural gas by pipeline from the surrounding oil fields, and compressed it to produce gasoline. When Henry Ford started producing his Model T Ford in 1908 the demand for gasoline began to increase. Other automobiles began to be produced.

One of the plant engineers, M.A. Ellison, was a next door neighbor. Meigs, and his wife, Ora, and their two children, Charles and Eva, became life-long friends with the Lopez family. The Ellison's were transferred from Plant Two to Plant Four in 1928. James stayed with the Ellison's during the 1929-30 school year while Louie, Maggie and Victor were in Aruba. That school year Aruba did not have enough students to make up a 10th grade class. Eva Ellison spent five months in Aruba as the Lopez's house guest--October 27, 1934 to March 30, 1935.

#### **TRUCK DRIVER**

Late in 1923 the Drumright Company began having trouble with the gas lines from the wells to the five Compression plants. Gas was condensing into liquid gasoline at low points in the pipe line. They installed traps to collect this liquid. A tank truck collected this liquid and

brought it in to the plant to store with the other gasoline. As an added benefit, all employees could fill up the tank of their car with this gasoline as they needed it.

During World War I, a heavy truck, the International (Later became the International Harvester), was developed. It had an air-cooled engine with a heavy box-shaped hood, no power steering or power brakes. Two men were required to change one of the huge tires.

Louie became driver of that truck for several years, developing his shoulders and arm muscles until he looked like a championship wrestler. In all of the time he drove the truck, he had only one serious accident. One day, an old man and lady in a horse drawn buggy met him on the road, and the couple's horse became excited upon hearing this loaded truck coming up behind it. It bolted and the horse dragged the wagon in front of the passing truck. The Truck hit the rear of the wagon, and it tipped over. Louie helped the old man and his wife to right their wagon, and saw that they were able to proceed. He said they were most angry, and that the incident scared him. He was forced to find a way back to the plant that did not involve that buggy.

In another incident, he related that a couple of drunks began playing a game of tag with his truck; coming up closely behind him and honking their horn; then passing him and slowing down at his front bumper, nearly causing a collision. Tiring of their dangerous pranks, Louie blocked the road with his truck, reached under the seat for his jack handle, and walked menacingly toward them. They hurriedly reversed their car, and made tracks in the other direction.

During the summers, his son, James, and a couple of his friends from the neighborhood took sack lunches and rode with him all day while he made his rounds. The silly kids would often ride on the tank, sniff the fumes from the tank inlet cover and become woozy. If they behaved themselves, at the end of the day Louie would stop in Shamrock and treat everyone to ice cream cones before heading back to Drumright.

Just before Christmas he began to carry an axe on his route and kept watch for a suitable Christmas tree. There were no pine trees in that area; they were all cedar. Naturally, some of the neighbors needed one also, and as a matter of course, he collected Christmas trees over a period of several days.

#### **DRAFTING COURSE**

During this period, the International Correspondence Schools sent a railroad car outfitted as a classroom around the country to offer various



courses. Louis took a course in engineering drawing and completed it successfully.

He was talented and had previous training in penmanship in his school. He developed this writing talent and as a result he was in demand for using a steel-nib pen and gold ink to produce fancy wedding and graduation announcements as requested by the neighbors. This talent seemed to also help him when it came to drafting work.

It came to the attention of plant superintendent Paul Goldman that he had completed this drafting course and the superintendent had him helping design gas compression plants that were later built in Texas. Working on this project added to his knowledge of gas plants, and was later to prove quite useful.

### **FIRST CAR AND RADIO**

One day Louie bought a new Chevrolet touring car which developed a cracked block, but the dealer replaced it and he enjoyed that car for several years. The people who lived at Plant Number 2 needed a car; it was more than three miles to town by the roadway, a route which was paved during the early 1920's.

He also bought one of the first radios in the neighborhood; an auto battery powered Atwater Kent. This was most likely one of the first production models from this manufacturer with a metal case and a metal amplifier horn similar to the one seen in the RCA's early advertisements--the one showing a dog with one ear cocked as if he were listening. Station KDKA, from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania came in loud and clear.

### **THE NEIGHBORHOOD**

The neighbors at Number Two Plant were a congenial group. During the summers Pinochle card parties were held for the adults, and games were organized for the kids. Once a month, during the summer, the group would go together for a Saturday night camp-out between Drumright and Cushing, on Euche Creek. Men set trot lines on the Cimmaron River and their families would swim. Once, the river was swollen by heavy rains, and no one was daring enough to brave the current. Louie, a strong swimmer whose side stroke was imposing, was the only one who dared to swim across the river and return. He made the trip only once, professing the river was too swift for him to try his luck again. A quilt spread on the ground as a pallet served as a bed. It was exciting for the kids to lay there on that quilt and hear the bull frogs croaking; see the lightening bugs; watch the sun rise in the morning, and smell bacon and eggs frying for breakfast.

Nearly everyone in the Number Two Plant Camp had a vegetable

garden. Eva Ellison said she could remember the beautiful tomatoes, sweet peppers, radishes, onions, beans, and peas that were produced in Louie's garden. There was a good sized peach tree just inside the fence, near the back gate. The neighbors enjoyed the fruit from this tree as much as Louie and his family.

### **HIS LIFE STYLE**

Louie had a difficult time finding the size six shoes he wore. He wore a size 7-1/4 in a hat, but he seldom wore one. A picture of the period shows him wearing a cloth cap which may have been the only one he ever owned. He was a straight razor user, cultivated a thin mustache all of his adult life, and wore his hair in a straight back pompadour style.

Louie enjoyed reading the Sunday funny papers to his two sons. As he read "Maggie and Jiggs", "Mutt and Jeff", and "The Katzenjammer Kids," he added embellishments of his own. In one of them, the Katzenjammer Kids found a cave and coming out the mouth of the cave were the words, "They heard my moans, as they scraped my bones, but they only whittled faster," a line that struck Louie's funny-bone. It became a family saying. His son, James, often said that learning to read the funny papers was his motive for learning to read.

Early in 1926 Louie was transferred from Plant Two in Drumright, Oklahoma to the Huasteca Petroleum Company, promoted to production plant operator, and assigned to Cerro Azul. Cerro Azul is about 100 miles south of Tampico in the adjoining Mexican state of Tamaulipas.

Rigs were erected in the uninhabited areas. Often, the drillers found themselves sharing the floor of a drilling rig with a wild cat, and drilling had to be suspended until the cat was coaxed from the rig. Bunkhouse walls were filled with spent lead bullets from bandits in the area.

A crew of Americans pranksters in the final days before the government terminated their contracts to work in Mexico signed their club bills with names like: George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Robert E. Lee, the result of which was confusion at the accounting department.

Attempting to reduce the number of foreigners in the country, the Mexican Government offered Louie a permanent job with the company if he would renounce his American Citizenship. No, he said, he had worked too hard to become an American; he wasn't about to give it up.

At this time his family had been in Tampico for 6 weeks. In fact they were in the process of getting settled in a rented home, in the outskirts of Tampico. So by the end of the year, 1926, he was transferred

back to Drumright and assigned to Plant Number 3, south of Drumright, Oklahoma. Here he reverted to the status of wiper, and worked with a plant engineer.

While working with Superintendent Paul Goldman at the Number Two Plant in Drumright, Oklahoma he became acquainted with Donald J. Smith who later became the manager of the Aruba Refinery Construction Project.

### **ARUBA**

Smith's recommendations resulted in Louie's transfer to Aruba in February of 1928 as a material checker in the estimating section of the Engineering Department, and a member of the original crew who built the refinery. In preparation for the job he bought a beautiful pair of cordovan brown, high top, lace boots, and some boot pants. Whereas they did offer protection from the cacti that overran the construction site, the hot sun in Aruba made them excessively uncomfortable.

Along with those who arrived before family housing was built, Louie lived in the long wooden buildings with two bunk rooms called "sheep sheds." Their windows had no screens or glass, but were covered with a solid wooden cover hinged at the top which was propped open with a stick. A communal shower and toilet building was constructed for the convenience of those living in each group of four *sheep sheds*.

Residents of the sheep sheds, like their counterparts in houses, had pets. One fellow had a monkey that got loose and ravaged the toilet articles of everyone in the shed, strewing powder, hair oil, shaving cream, after shave and toothpaste everywhere. Louie said there were some very angry people in that shed when they got home from work.

As family housing became available, Bungalow 47 was set aside for those on bachelor status with key jobs. This bungalow was located on the lower road and across the street from the bungalows that were assigned to the Lake Tanker Fleet families. Louie lived there while his family was away from Aruba. He and A.C. "Pop" Fuller cut hair on the front porch of Bungalow 47 every evening after work until dark. Pop Fuller was a clerk in the Marine Department while Louie worked in the Engineering Department. Each man in the bungalow had his own room; the lap of luxury compared to the sheep shed dwellers. At one time other residents in the bungalow were Elmer Wheeler, Harry F. Moore, Fred W. Switzer, "Pop" Fuller, and Louie Lopez. From time to time the occupants changed as their families either arrived or departed.

Knowledge of mechanical drawing resulted in Louie's reviewing

drawings for new housing in the colony. At one point, he took drawings home and asked his wife, Maggie, how kitchen cabinet doors should open and how other household features could be best designed with the woman of the house in mind. It was curious: The drawings, prepared in the New York Offices, depicted houses surrounded by coconut trees. For many years you hardly saw a flower bed, let alone trees in the colony, but during its last years, the Lago colony had coconut trees growing everywhere.

#### **ESTIMATING GROUP**

An estimating group where material orders were prepared and amounts of various materials, parts, and equipment were "guesstimated" was another of his assignments. After he left, a large shipment of sheet-rock used on the interior of housing and offices was received and there was some consternation. There didn't seem to be enough storage space for all of it. On examination, the invoice for the material received revealed that somehow after the order had left Aruba another zero was added to the amount originally ordered, and ten times the amount they had ordered was shipped. Frank Hawkins, the carpenter foreman, told Louie about what they were doing. He said they were using that sheet rock to make all kinds of temporary buildings and they were cutting needed lengths out of the center of full sheets to use it up.

#### **THE GAS PLANT**

Nineteen thirty, while the refinery was still the property of the Standard Oil Company of Indiana, found Louie promoted to Foreman of the Gas Plant. He was in charge of the Gas Plant. He was there from the construction of the foundations, and for the installation of each piece of equipment: the Stabilizing Plant; the Absorption Plant; the Lean Oil Tower, the Debutanizer Plant; the Splitting Plant, the Propane Plant, the Butane Plant. There were Tar Cooler boxes, a couple of small furnaces, and of course the heat exchangers and pumps used in the operations of the various plants.

Louie had his office in south east corner of the plant area. Subsequently he added a small laboratory next to his office. As the Gas Plant became a larger entity, during the war added were the Gas Compression Unit, the Depropanizer Plant, the High Octane Splitting Plant, the High Octane Stabilizing Plant, High Octane Debutanizer Plant, the High Octane Butane Plant, the Hot Acid Polymerization Plant, and the supporting heat exchangers and pumps. As a result the office was moved up on the hill to the East of the Polymerization Plant so it was more centrally located. It might be noted that the older plants became low octane plants.

### **THE PODBIELNIAC MACHINE**

The laboratory served him well. He was able to purchase a Podbielniac machine and was a pioneer in its use. This machine permitted him to test out his ideas for plant operations before he actually applied them in the plant itself. With that glass apparatus he could simulate the temperatures, flows, pressures and levels that would be found in the steel towers in the plant. If he had not had this machine he would have been limited to trial and error methods in operating the Gas Plants.

After he worked with the Podbielniac set up long enough to gain valuable experience, he spent one of his vacations in the United States, working with the designer of the equipment in his factory in Tulsa, Oklahoma. As a result of his development work, some design changes were made by Mr. Podbielniac in the newer models, and Louie got one-on-one training directly from the inventor himself.

In those early days the company was still learning about the manufacture and handling of gases and gasolines. Louie contributed to various developments used in Esso refineries worldwide. He received regular visits from Mr. Ruff, one of the Vice Presidents of the company. Mr. Ruff was responsible for gas plant operations for the company worldwide. They would exchange the latest information. Mr. Ruff would make suggestions for Louie to try out and Louie would go over the results of his experiences. Mr. Ruff was very complimentary of the work done by Louie and said he was contributing to better results worldwide in the company.

It was years before the Technical Service Department finally decided they should become involved in this phase of laboratory work. Doctor Lazlo Broz was sent over by the Technical Services Department to learn how to operate the machine and it was then moved over to the chemical laboratory. They later purchased several more for their use.

### **DEVELOPING HEAT EXCHANGER TUBE CLEANING PROCESS**

All of the refinery units had heat exchangers which were a source of problems well known to even the most inexperienced operator. Heat exchangers vary in size, and can be as large as twenty feet long and five feet in diameter. Contained inside the vessels is a "bundle" of tubes through which liquid circulates. Separate connections on the exchanger allow liquid to circulate around these tubes. In some cases both liquids would be hydrocarbons.

For example in one case an inlet liquid such as a fresh "feed stock" at ambient temperature was circulated around the outside of the tubes

and a heated product would flow through these tubes. This would be a safety feature that cooled the heated product before it was pumped into a storage tank. At the same time the heat in the product going to storage was used to raise the temperature of the incoming "feed stock." This would mean less furnace heat would be required to bring the "feed stock" up to the desired processing temperature, resulting in conservation of energy, and a savings in operating costs.

In other cases, the liquid inside the tubing was sea water which was used as a coolant for the hydrocarbon liquid or gas circulated around the outside of the tubes. The sea water tended to develop a scale, or deposit on the inside of the tubes similar to that which sometimes develops in the bottom of a teakettle. This meant that the liquid being cooled was not being cooled as much as it should be. This would very probably mean less efficient operations or more water would be needed to get the desired results. This usually meant that at the next shut-down, they would be opened; tube "bundles" removed and the tubes "rattled" (cleaned) out manually. Such maintenance work was time-consuming, often resulted in damaged tubes which required replacement tubing. Bottom line it meant lost time and money.

Experimenting in his little laboratory with short lengths of plugged or partially plugged tubing, and various solutions, Louie managed to come up with a solution that dissolved these deposits, and did not damage the tubes themselves. Hydrochloric acid seemed to do the trick. A solution of the acid with water was found to dissolve the deposits and caused little or no erosion of the metal of the tubes themselves.

Over a period of time he managed to rearrange the piping in the units under his charge so that there was a spare heat exchanger mounted alongside of each of the regular exchangers. By monitoring the temperatures of the liquids flowing through his in service heat exchangers, he could tell when an exchanger was no longer functioning efficiently. Then he would put the spare in service and take the in service exchanger out of service, and circulate his acid cleansing solution through its partially plugged tubes. Previously, he had all of the necessary piping and pump equipment installed to allow him to do this throughout his units. He could do this without having to shutdown the plant for this cleaning operation as had been necessary before his innovation.

Proving to himself that this cleaning operation was practical and did not damage the equipment in his units could not convince others to adopt this method of cleaning their exchangers. In 1949 it was noticed a

contractor had begun doing the same operation in the company refinery in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Finally Louie wound up writing an article for the Gulf Publishing Company's "Oil and Gas Journal", describing his system.

The Technical Services Department took almost 20 years to make up their mind that the exchanger tubes would not be "eroded to pieces," and to recommend that this procedure be done throughout the refinery.

His last assignment before retiring from Aruba was to develop a portable system consisting of a pump and a tank with hoses mounted on a trailer. This equipment was moved around the refinery and heat exchangers were acid-cleaned at the remaining refining units.

### **SECOND MARRIAGE**

In 1937 Louie and Maggie were divorced, and in February of 1938 he married Consuelo Jimenez in Tampico, Mexico, her hometown. Consuelo was previously married to Henri Devolder who was a company diver involved in the construction of Aruba's San Nicholas Harbor, and they had a 12 year old daughter. Louie legally adopted the child, who attended a Dutch school on the island of Curacao.

When Louie and Consuelo were first married, they lived in Bungalow number 140. August 13, 1939, they moved into Bungalow number 509 where they resided until October 5, 1953, the date of Louie's official retirement.

### **VACATION PAY INCREASES, AND PROMOTION!**

In 1939 Louie was appointed to Assistant Division Superintendent in charge of Gas Plants. On a vacation prior to that time Louie received two hefty raises to bring his salary up to the level it should have been in light of the importance of the job he was doing.

### **1950 PROMOTION**

In 1950, he was promoted to Assistant Division Superintendent of the Catalytic Cracking Plant and Light Ends Department, a post which included the Gas Plants. He was put on special assignment to develop portable equipment to be used in chemically cleaning all condensers and exchangers throughout the refinery.

There was a bit of irony about this final promotion. The local management found themselves with an engineer for whom they had no position open so they could promote him. Louie was approached by a fellow management member who in, oh, so polite terms let Louie know that the upper management would appreciate it very much if he would take an early retirement. They needed his position for this engineer

without an assignment.

However Louie had no intention of retiring before his age would require it. So the following weekend he took his son, James, down to his office to type a letter for him. He dictated what should go into that letter. His files contained all of the information he needed. The final result was a two page letter. The first page was a letter with his explanation of why he felt the management did not know his accomplishments during his years of service. The second page of this letter outlined these accomplishments, which were well documented.

Louie was a strong supporter of the Coin-Your-Ideas Program that had been developed. Robert Heinze at the time the Superintendent of the Acid and Edeleanu Plants was chairman of the Coin-Your-Ideas-Program. He was the one who developed the program. Although Louie could not benefit monetarily from his ideas because he was a member of management he nevertheless submitted ideas and Robert Heinze would acknowledge them in writing and credit him with his very worthwhile ideas. One idea in particular stands out. This was the one which ultimately resulted in the construction of the spheroid tank farm where the high octane gasoline was stored. The idea was calculated to have saved the company \$1,000,000.00 a year that would have otherwise been lost by the gas vaporizing to the atmosphere instead of being saved in the tanks. Other ideas he had concerned the proper use of automatic control systems in certain units in the refinery. Because he wasn't eligible to receive the money another person in another refinery who came up with the same idea subsequently did receive the award.

Louie's development work with the Podbielniac Machine and the application of the results in improvement of Gas Plant operations over the years was pointed out. His work on the Acid Cleaning system was also submitted for full recognition. Other details were also present for full recognition. The two page letter was delivered to the management office.

Louie received no written acknowledgement or reply to his letter. However the same management representative who had been sent the first time again paid a visit to his office.

The word he was given was: "Louie you don't have to worry. If you want, you can stay home and sit on your front porch in a rocking chair, and we will deliver your pay check to you every pay day as long as you like."



### **GAS PLANT SHUTDOWNS - PLANNING METHODS**

He truly enjoyed trouble shooting in the "Gas Plant" as his department was called. Before planning became a way of life in the refinery he got ready for the annual shutdown of each of his operating units by collecting the maintenance orders that had been written for certain jobs to be done when the units were out of service. He went to the company bakery, bought a batch of donuts, called the general foremen of each of the maintenance departments together in his office building's small conference room, and they would organize the coming shutdown over coffee and donuts. Among themselves they would decide who was to be first and then second and so on so that the workmen would not get into each other's way. Their meetings were informal and things got done in a congenial fashion.

### **INSPECTION OF TOWERS BEFORE START-UP**

He kept an army surplus folding cot in a closet in his office building. During the early days he spent several days and nights in his office during a shut down or a start up of his operating units. He also made it a standard practice to personally examine each of the towers after maintenance work had been done and before the vessel had been buttoned up, or closed. He put on a pair of coveralls and, with a flashlight, crawled through the vessel to make certain all bubble caps were in place, and no strange material such as ladders, pump covers, gloves, safety hats, or timbers were left behind.

When he was asked why it was that the start-ups always seemed to happen over a holiday period, he said it was so that the "big wigs" wouldn't be around asking questions and making suggestions while he was trying to keep his thoughts together.

### **FAVORITE SAYING**

"Anything worth doing is worth doing well." <sup>1</sup>

### **SAVING A NEWCOMER EMBARRASSMENT**

On one occasion he was making a personal inspection of one unit that was located next to the Hydrogenation Plant. In his dirty coveralls, looking like one of the native workmen, he went to a water cooler in the Hydro Plant operating building to get a drink of water. One of the new American operators at the Hydro Plant ordered him out of area in no uncertain terms. Louie smiled and turned around and walked off of the

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<sup>1</sup> *I always thought it was "Peel me a grape, Beulah." or maybe "I'm an old cowhand/ from the Rio Grand,/ My cheeks are bowed/ and my legs are tanned..." or maybe that one about grinding bones to make bread.*

unit. He remarked afterward that he didn't want to be around when someone explained to the new man who he was, they would both be embarrassed.

### **ISLAND FRIENDS**

In his early years in Aruba, since he spoke Spanish, he made many friends with native Arubans and visited their homes. Most of the men spoke Spanish because they had worked in other Spanish speaking countries before the Aruba refinery was built. One of his good friends, Louis Ponson, had a Dodge touring car and used to pick up Louie and his family in the Lago Colony and carry them over to Oranjestad for a Sunday visit. In those days (1929-30) not too many people owned cars on the island.

### **HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS**

Mexico is one of the few countries in the world today that celebrates two Independence Days. September 16, 1810 is the day they won their independence from Spain. May 5, 1862 is the day they won their independence from France, Louie, as an American Citizen, had always been proud to celebrate July 4th, the American Independence Day. He always entered into the spirit of the celebration and enjoyed setting off firecrackers, lighting sparklers, pin wheels, roman candles, and sky rockets.

In September of 1951 Louie decided he wanted to also celebrate a Mexican independence day. After all he would be retiring one day and he expected to live out his retirement in Mexico City. So he went down to San Nicholas and bought a selection of fireworks. You could always find fireworks somewhere in the village. In the late afternoon of September 16, which happened to be on a Sunday, he sat on Bungalow 509's front porch, and started his celebration with some small firecrackers, working his way to larger ones.

On a Sunday afternoons in the Lago Colony, people were usually relaxing in their patios or catching up on their sleep if they were not out visiting.

The assistant chief watchman, who lived on the street north of Louie's bungalow, ran up carrying a pistol in his right hand. Charlie Hogleund, wearing his uniform cap and a T-shirt, said, "Why, Mr. Lopez, what's wrong?" He later admitted he thought perhaps Mr. Lopez became despondent and was firing off a gun of some kind.

Gene Keesler, the laundry's supervisor was next at the scene, and he

was disturbed. He wanted to know what Louie was doing. His wife and children were trying to take a nap and the noise was too much for them. Louie apologized to both of them, and said he was sorry. When everyone celebrated the American Independence day on July Fourth he was happy to participate in its observation, but now he was celebrating one of the Independence Days of Mexico. And since this was his mother country he thought he had as much right to celebrate her Independence Day as the other Americans did on July Fourth. Both Gene and Charlie went away shaking their heads and not altogether convinced his argument was legitimate.

### **CHILI AND HOT TAMALES**

Once every year, while in Aruba, he got busy and made up a batch of hot tamales and/or chili, and shared them with his friends who had cast iron stomachs and appreciated this type of cooking. These were usually Texans, one of whom was Norman Shirley.

One year he got lye to remove the husks from the kernels of ear corn; ground up the corn; used a washtub to mix the "Masa" ("dough" in English); scrounged around in the farms to find corn shucks (these were hard to find), and mixed up the best batch of fat tamales he ever made. His wife, Consuelo, was involved in this masterpiece up to her eyebrows. They spent a whole weekend on this endeavor.

### **MUSIC**

Louie had a collection of classic Mexican folk music. His favorites were Augustin Lara, Trio Los Panchos, Pedro Infante, Jorge Negrete, Nestor Chares, and the Mariachi. He knew all of the words to the songs and usually sang along with them. In his early days in Oklahoma, he enjoyed the German bands which were often featured in touring circuses. He became acquainted with the music of John Phillip Sousa and his record collection contained selections of this famous band leader. Some Saturday evenings, he would build some scotch and sodas; put on a stack of these records, played them at such a volume the louvers in the windows rattled.

In Oklahoma, Louie learned to play the harmonica. He carried one to Aruba, and could render all kinds of songs for which he had no records. "Redwing," "Carolina Moon," "Silver Threads Among the Gold," "Over the Waves," "My Wild Irish Rose," "Roses of Picardy," "Moonlight and Roses" and many other pieces of World War I vintage were among his repertoire as well as his favorite Mexican folklore pieces.

He liked to dance, and performed waltzes, polkas and foxtrot

equally well. Of course he knew all of the Mexican traditional dances. He had a good tenor singing voice and could recite Mexican, American, and Spanish poetry.

#### **THE GARDEN AT BUNGALOW #509**

At his bungalow, he and Consuelo spent many hours working in their garden. As with all bungalows, everything had to be in raised flower beds or pots. Around the perimeter of his yard in raised beds, were Australian pine trees. Along the west side of the house was a lattice covered arbor covered with Bougainvilleas. A similar arbor covered a cement walkway from the front of the house to the front gate. A wooden lattice fence surrounded the yard and the house. There was an opening in the fence for a concrete surfaced driveway that led under the arbor on the west side of the house. Along the front of the house was a flower bed with Oleanders, and as you went in his front gate, a flamboyant tree stood, At least one night a week Louie watered the flower beds for hours.

There was a time in the colony when unscrupulous people went about nightly, digging up plants from other peoples' yards, putting them in their own. One evening when Louie was out watering his garden he heard someone in his yard. He thought at first that someone was coming to pay him and Consuelo a visit, but they were so quiet he decided to investigate. They had one of his plants almost dug up when he said, "Hey! What's going on here?" They dropped their shovel and bucket, and ran off down the road. Louie never did discover the identity of the midnight plant filchers, but he put their shovel and bucket to good use in his gardening activities.

#### **THE REFINERY GRAPEVINE SYSTEM**

During the war years there was a shortage of manpower so the management set up an active recruiting program. It was at this time that there was an influx of personnel from British Guiana. They spoke English and were well educated. They naturally became the clerks the various departments so badly needed. A few of them chose to work in the various crafts in the Mechanical Department. Louie had George as the clerk in charge of his office. George was from British Guiana. At the time most of clerks in the offices were his countrymen. These clerks kept in daily touch with each other through their work and friends. One day Louie picked up his phone and heard a clerk in the Main Office building talking to George, his clerk. He heard his name mentioned and as he listened he heard that he was receiving a certain amount as a raise. He also heard about other management personnel receiving raises and the amount.

Several days later when his Division Superintendent officially informed him of his raise he thanked him and said he was glad to see the news confirmed. He said he was pleased to see that his raise compared favorably with those of his peers. There was consternation at the upper management levels to find they no longer had confidentiality they had assumed they had.

#### **SPEECHES AT MASONIC BANQUETS**

As previously mentioned, Louie had a very good memory, and in his Masonic work this proved invaluable. Every year the El Sol Naciente Masonic Lodge had an annual banquet. Usually some local luminary was invited to deliver the main speech of the evening. Several times something happened to keep the principal speaker from appearing, and Louie would be asked on a short notice to take his place. Members reported that they always knew that Louie would have an interesting talk for them.

#### **MANAGEMENT MEETING ATTENDANCE LOUIE-STYLE**

It was also reported, that in the last year of his company service in Aruba, he sat in the weekly management morning meetings in the main office building with his eyes closed. It got so the chairperson of the meeting never called on Louie for any comments because his eyes were closed, and obviously he would have no comments. The chairperson was usually of the same rank, so Louie got away with his napping. Apparently this was a common ailment in this meeting as reported in the stories of others who attended the same weekly meeting. Also it was reported that he gave very pertinent remarks on those rare occasions when he was called upon.

#### **RETIREMENT PICNIC**

During his last year in Aruba he was ill for some time with a liver ailment which finally caused his retirement in August of 1953, one year before his compulsory retirement date, or so he thought.

As was the tradition, there was a farewell picnic organized for him by his department. This was held after five p.m. on a Saturday. The fare consisted of barbecue, beans, salad, rolls, and a wide selection of beer, wines, and liquors. A volunteer three man combo supplied the music. Sam Speziale played his violin, Walter Deece played the horizontal steel stringed guitar and "Doc" Hatfield played acoustical guitar. Sing-along music was played, but not much singing was heard as everyone was busy talking and telling stories about each other.

Odis Mingus, who at the time was the refinery's manager, was the ranking speaker of the evening. At the time there was a retirement picnic

going on nearly every Saturday because there were many people reaching retirement age at the same time. Mingus said that someone asked him how he decided which of these retirement picnics he should attend. He said if the person retiring had more service than he did he went to their retirement picnic! He said he always remembered the calendar on the wall above the drinking fountain just inside the front door of Louie's Gas Plant Office building. This calendar had a large picture on it showing a man sitting on a commode going about his business. Underneath there was a caption which read, "THIS IS THE ONLY MAN IN THIS PLACE WHO KNOWS WHAT HE IS DOING!"

Friends around the refinery presented Louie with a JaegerleCoultre Atmos clock which is wound by a variation of two degrees Fahrenheit change in temperature. The little brass plate on the front of the clock says: TO L. G. LOPEZ FROM HIS FRIENDS IN LAGO - ARUBA 1916-1953. This indicates that his accredited service with the company was 37 years.

#### **RETIREMENT TO MEXICO CITY**

Louie and Consuelo left Aruba in August 1953 and landed in Miami, Florida. From there they went to New Orleans where he purchased a black Buick sedan. And from there with his wife, Consuelo, her daughter Adrianna and her husband, Flavio Carlos, and their daughter, Ivonne, he drove to Mexico City by way of the coastal route.

In Mexico City he built the dream house he had been thinking about for many years. Fortuitously his son-in-law, Flavio, was an engineer, and he had someone to work with on the design of his two story creation. All floors are terrazzo with a floor plan as follows:

- A breakfast nook large enough to hold a table and chairs for eight people. As you sit at the table you looked out through ceiling to floor windows and a sliding door into the backyard. The doorway to this breakfast nook is wide.
- The door to the kitchen is on your right. It has a walk-in closet.
- The dining room is to the left. The outside west wall has floor to ceiling windows which were intended to take advantage of the sun since Mexico City is cool even in the summer.
- The dining room contained a dining table with seating for twelve people. The dining room area was set apart by means of a five foot long by 18" wide raised flower bed lined with ceramic tile. It formed traffic path from the breakfast nook, past the doorway to the kitchen to the foyer. An 8 ft., floor-to-ceiling decorative brick wall blocked

off half of the south side of the dining room area from the foyer. The other half of the area was open to allow entrance from front door. This also allowed the dining area to become a part of the formal living room area.

- The foyer area actually separated the living room and dining room areas. Louie had his General Electric long and short-wave radio and record player cabinet installed in this area.
- Also to the side of the foyer was a small television room with a large window.
- Under the circular staircase, adjoining the television room was a small half bathroom.
- Two large windows filled the east wall of the foyer area. These windows extend from ground level to the ceiling of the second story of the house.

The second floor of the house contains four bedrooms, including the master bedroom; all with built-in wall closets. These bedrooms open out on to a common hallway with a bathroom at each end. A railing allows you to look down to the floor below.

A small balcony on the corner of the second floor was originally meant as a place from which the family could overlook the avenue at the front of the house. It also could be an outdoor patio where visitors could enjoy a quiet interlude in a busy day. The side of the house overlooking the street is faced with slabs of colored granite and marble.

There was and a narrow one car driveway leading to a free- standing one car garage with a garage apartment overhead accessible by an inside stairway

Louie and Consuelo lived here with Adrianna and Flavio and their growing family of four daughters for some of the happiest years of their lives. A constant stream of Consuelo's relatives came to help them celebrate on the various festivals, birthdays, anniversaries, and visits to the big city, Mexico City.

- Ivonne born April 2, 1947 has a degree in Accounting.
- Patricia born April 27, 1954 has a PhD. in Philosophy and is a Professora at the University of Mexico.
- Lorena born August 19, 1955, has a degree in Interior Decorations.
- Angelica born July 25, 1956, has a degree in Communications and is a

Professora in the University in Queretaro.

All are married and have children.

### IN MEMORIUM

Louie died on May 1, 1963 at the age of 71 years and 4 months. He is buried in the Cemetery Frances de San Joaquin in Mexico City.



Hours of operation and pricing for a store in Oranjestad in 1980's.

Photo courtesy Sharon Klein.



## **The Frank C. Lynch Story**

I got down to Aruba on the 10th of February 1931. I came from Bayonne on the tanker *Harold Walker*.

I was working for the United Parcel Service as a comptometer operator when I saw an ad in the paper. I worked my regular shift, from 2:00 a.m. to noon, and in the afternoon, I went to the Standard Oil Company office on Broad Street. I tested for the comptometer. They had me signed up and my passport picture taken by 5:00 o'clock in the afternoon. The Company wanted me to leave for Aruba right away. I said that I lived in Massachusetts, and that I was going to have to go back home before I left for Aruba. That was okay with them; they said you go home and we will send you a telegram. They were in a rush to get me down there, because the comptometer operator in Aruba had stolen Jim Bluejacket's truck. He had smashed it up in the village, and they wanted to get rid of him. The same ship that brought me took him back to the States. I think it was Leon Rought who met me at the ship. He took me directly to the office and put me to work.

### **ANECDOTES**

I remember a story told by Jim Bluejacket. He played on an Indian baseball team. They never had any money to go anywhere, so they used to hop freight cars. A crap game was in progress as they came home in a freight car. One of his friends reared back to make a high pass with the dice, and he backed himself right out the door. It was two days before they saw him again.

T. C. Brown worked for the Standard Oil Company of Indiana in Whiting before coming to Aruba. He was a great man. I think I was a favorite of his because I got away with an awful lot of stuff in Aruba. I think sometimes I should have been fired. He was very kind and sedate, and he loved to gamble. Guys came to his house, and they shot craps until 3:00 o'clock in the morning. Brown was at work by 8:00 o'clock on the following mornings, and he always looked like he had had a full night's sleep.

There was a Claude Case who was there in the Labor Department early on. They called him "Doc" Case. He and another fellow, whom I can only recall as "Jim," had a flat bed truck that they kept parked out in front of Bachelor Quarters Number Two. In those days there weren't very many vehicles. Every night at about 6:30 or 7:00 p.m. anybody

who wanted to go to the village went over and climbed on the truck. Doc drove the truck and everyone on it to the village, and he parked in front of one of the canteens. When the canteen closed, you went over and climbed back on the truck. Everybody went looking for you at closing time if you weren't on the truck.

Isador Cosio came from Brooklyn and I think he went back there. He was probably in his 40's.

Coy Cross was in charge of the Light Oils Finishing Department. I am not sure where Gerald Cross, his brother, worked.

Charles Dahlberg was a carpenter.

Goody Goodson was in charge of the warehouse. I think he came from Whiting. Don Henderson was a great big carpenter. He had the first private car in the colony.

Oscar Henskie was there in charge of dynamiting. And later on his nephew, Chuck Henskie was there in the operating department I believe.

Leon Rought was in the Accounting Department and he came from Whiting. Bill Rae was a pipefitter. Cliff Semmens and John Semmens were brothers.

I can remember Johnny, Cliff, and Bates used to get together every Saturday night to get drunk. They always got into a fight. Cliff and Bates used to room together in an upper corner room. The fight always ended up downstairs in the courtyard. No one would ever get hurt, and they would wind up going back upstairs to have another drink. For a while, this happened every Saturday night.

In the early days they had a big "to do" about the quality of the sandwiches for the shift workers. Jimmy Armstrong was on the committee who argued with management about getting an improvement in the quality of the sandwiches. During one of his arguments, he told management, "I want to give you an example how the sandwiches are. The other night, one of the fellows at the power house took the meat out of a sandwich and threw it down on the floor for the power house cat. Now, I won't tell you the cat didn't eat the meat; I am going to be honest with you. The cat ate the meat, but he turned right around and licked his ass to get the taste out of his mouth."

When he saw me coming down the street, he would throw up his hands and say, "Glory be to God, Glory be to God, here's Frank Lynch. You're the man that gives me my money every payday." He would pat me on the back and say, "Thank God, you're here!"

Ed Tucker the Paymaster had something to say about Jimmy Armstrong during the days when there was a second shift. Jimmy comes along and he says to Ed, "Well look who's here. Ed Tucker, I'm glad to see you. You gave me my first paycheck 20 years ago. Somebody in the back piped up and said, "Yes, you SOB, and it should have been your last."

Army Armstrong was the ships' dispatcher. When ships were loaded, he wrote which ones and what the tonnage of the cargo was on a manifest. He took the papers to the captain on the ship. Lots of time when the ship was loaded they were so busy and needed the berth for another ship they would send the ship out of the harbor. The ship will be tied up outside of the harbor. I used to go out with Armstrong in a tug or a launch to deliver the papers. You could never believe a word he told you. He would tell about his wife and child. He wasn't married.



## **The Robert & Mildred MacMillan Story**

I was born in Scotland in 1911. At age 12, I came to New Jersey. My carefree school days, divided between Scotland and New Jersey, ended in my 16th year when I began to work days and attending night school. I obtained an associate engineer's degree from Newark College of Engineering in 1935.

### **MILDRED DOROTHY MACMILLAN**

My better half, Mildred Dorothy MacMillan, was born in Turtle Creek, Pennsylvania, but she's not saying when. Mildred graduated from Turtle Creek High School, attended Temple University for a year, after which she matriculated from Trenton State Teacher's College in Trenton. She did most of the art work on her high school yearbook.

### **FIRST WORK**

I started working for 60 cents an hour in Esso's Bayway refinery in Linden, New Jersey in 1930, as a helper in the Electrical Department. In 10 years I made it to the rating of mechanic, and was transferred from the refinery to the Construction Engineering Department of the Standard Oil Development Co. (S.O.D.), where the work was done on the Cat Plants for Aruba, Baton Rouge, and Baytown, and the Butyl Rubber projects at Baton Rouge and Baytown. At S.O.D. I was a Materials Lister in the electrical group, and that was where I met Colton Somers, an Aruba Refinery Power House employee with two year's service. Colton told about his life in Aruba and I was intrigued. He also worked in the Listing Division.

### **TRANSFER TO ARUBA**

I transferred to the Aruba Refinery from S.O.D. in August 1943. I started as a sub-foreman in the Electrical Department.

To get there, I traveled for 36 hours from New York to Miami by train, and flew KLM to Aruba by way of Cuba and Jamaica. I was traveling as a bachelor because war time restrictions kept Mildred from obtaining a passport. I stayed two nights at the Miami Colonial Hotel waiting for the KLM flight. While I was there I met Joe Rosetti, the lab glass blower known to his co-workers as Joe Blow. He was returning to his job in Aruba after a visit home. He updated me, a green horn, on some of Aruba's customs. On Arrival, I was billeted in single room in Bachelor Quarters Number Eight, but I shared a bathroom with two naval officers. I was there until Mildred obtained her passport, then I was

assigned a three-room bungalow on the main road. She arrived in Aruba in early December. We stayed at that location several months before moving to Bungalow 221, and we lived there for the next 13 years.

#### **MY JOB IN ARUBA**

I started as an Electrical Sub-foreman, eventually becoming Zone Foreman. My next assignment was as an Assistant Zone Supervisor in the Mechanical Department zone organization. My tenure in Aruba lasted from August 1943 until May 1957, at which time I arranged a transfer back to S.O.D. which by that time had changed the name to Esso Research and Engineering (ER & E.). I left Lago because Mildred was not well and the proper type of medical help for her was not available in Aruba.

#### **THE LAGO COLONY SCHOOL SYSTEM**

Not having any children, we didn't get too involved with the school program. When Dean Thompson was school principal he prevailed upon Mildred to fill in as a kindergarten teacher until he could get a permanent replacement. She did her best for a few weeks, but gave it up because she didn't feel she had the proper training for a kindergarten group. Her teaching experience had been with elementary children. I believe Dean got Mrs. Curley Minton to take the class after Mildred.

#### **COLONY HOUSING**

As I remember it, housing was assigned according to the size of the family, but your job level could be a factor. The house we lived in the longest, Number 221, was a one bedroom unit. I didn't know much about the procedures for bidding on another larger or better situated dwelling. When we left Aruba, 221 was one of the few bungalows left where the occupants were still paying basic rent. We had spent quite a bit of money on improvements, a patio, garage, fences, and so on, but we never turned over the improvements to colony service. I believe the maintenance schedule called for a complete renovation every four years, at which time colony service moved you to a "paint house" while yours was worked on. Bungalow 221 was one of the only completely air-conditioned houses in the colony. We had window unit in the bedroom, a large wall type console unit in the living room and in the kitchen, a homemade unit which Howard Stoddard and his refrigeration boys built for me.

#### **A THANK YOU TO THE MEDICAL DEPARTMENT**

For myself, I had no ax to grind with the Medical Department. I think the doctors and nurses did a good job. During the last couple of years they did what they could for Mildred.

### **HIRED HELP**

Our experience with maids was for all practical purposes quite satisfactory. We had part time girls two or three days a week. During our 13 years of residence, we had only three girls. In each case we were very pleased with what they did. Mildred always treated our maids well and they seemed to respond accordingly.

### **THE ESSO CLUB LIBRARY**

As you may recall, Mildred was the librarian at the old temporary club for five years and two years at the new club. She was first hired in mid-1944 by Andy Wetherbee, the club manager, to replace Mrs. Sid Tucker. Mildred thinks her salary was two and a half guilders an hour. Since she didn't work full time she was considered a local hired casual employee. Her normal hours were 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, and 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Monday evening. After the war Bob Vint was club manager, and for a while, Martin Czechowitz was Bob's assistant. Mildred says the library was a haven for all the bachelors and married men on single status, and she got to know all the new arrivals. As soon as their families came or they got married she didn't see them anymore. There was a large red comfortable sofa in the library. Military officers all seemed to enjoy lounging in it, and, I guess, dreaming of the comforts of home. The old club was overrun with field mice and Mildred was kept setting traps to keep the critters from eating the glue from the book bindings. One mouse family was born in her desk drawer.

Mildred was relieved from her duties as club librarian when the new club opened in 1949. Lago management decided that Margaret Wade's news stand at the colony post office would be closed. Joe Abadie proposed that Margaret could open her stand in the new club library, but for the privilege, she would have to run the library as well. Naturally Margaret placed the emphasis on her own business and the library and its patrons were the losers. This went on a couple of years until they separated the library from the news stand, and Bob Vint had Mildred come back to run the library for another two years. She gave up the job when she started having health problems.

### **THE COLONY ESSO CLUB**

I served on the club committee for two years, and during my second year on the committee I was the chairman. Serving on the Committee with me were Russell Brace, Wayne Richey, Neil Griffin, Tom Eagan, and a couple of others whose names I can't remember. This was the last committee to serve in the old temporary club. When the new club

opened, a whole new committee was elected to run the club as a dues paying private club. I was the committee chairman when the decision was made to start charging dues for the club, and believe me, I was called some unprintable names by some of my more radical constituents.

Concerning the dues at the club, here are the facts as I remember them. For a long time Lago management (Joe Horigan in particular) were upset about the high cost of running the club. The committee was always being asked to come up with activities for raising revenue--raising bar prices, movie ticket prices, etc., or even paying monthly dues. Naturally the committee represented all the non-management residents and resisted like a bulldog guards his bone. The movie concession at the club was run by de Veer who controlled all movie houses on the island. The censorship committee for the island government was fairly strict about which movies could be shown, and they decided age limits for movies. Censorship rules did not apply to the Esso Club, and de Veer was free to import any films, and all ages in the colony could attend with no restrictions. When the contracts for showing movies in the new club were being discussed someone in the government asked why government censorship didn't apply to the Esso Club, and they wanted to know if that wasn't discrimination. The answer by Lago management and the Esso Club Committee was that it wasn't discrimination because the Esso Club was a private club. The government didn't buy the private club story because anybody who lived in Lago Colony, young or old, could attend all club functions including the movies. There were also about 100 non-colony residents on the island who had special guest privileges at the club. To resolve this question, a meeting was arranged for in Oranjestad at the office of the government's legal representative. The government's legal man, J.J. Horigan, as the Lago Management Representative, and I, as the chairman of the Esso Club Committee, were in attendance. On the day of the meeting I was excused from my usual Electrical Department duties for the afternoon. At noon I went home, changed out of my normal working clothes, dressed up and went down to Mr. Horigan's office in the main office building. Before we left for the meeting we discussed strategy. Then the two of us got in his big chauffeured limousine and motored over to Oranjestad. For a long time afterwards I took razzing from most of my friends about that ride with the big boss. At the meeting both Horigan and I made our pleas to allow the Esso Club to retain its special status. The government man told us that the only way this could be allowed, without having the rest of the non-Lago people on the island yelling discrimination, was to make the Esso Club private in the eyes of the law. This meant requiring membership be entirely dues paying.

Subsequently I called a meeting of the Esso Club Committee to advise them of the outcome. After much soul searching the Committee decided to have flyer distributed which explained the pros and cons of having dues for the club. There was then a referendum vote where the majority of the members voted in favor of having dues after we moved into the new club. Many members, although they voted in favor, felt our committee had not fought hard enough to prevent dues, and that we had sold out to the management. We took a lot of flak and not one member, including me, would agree to run for the new committee. It was most likely that none of us would have been elected had we run. Our committee turned over the reins after the new club had been formally opened.

The grand opening of the new club was a gala affair. We asked Horigan to make a presentation speech at the opening ceremonies. As you probably remember public speaking was not one of Joe Horigan's long suits. He seemed to freeze when he got up in front of an audience; it was a shortcoming he never got over. He agreed to take part in the ceremony but refused to speak. Bob Vint, the club manager acting as master of ceremonies, first introduced Horigan as the management representative to the audience, and then he introduced me as chairman of the club committee. As such, I was a representative of the colony residents. Horigan without saying a word walked across the platform and handed me a large wooden key. This gesture was supposed to symbolize management turning over the club to the people. I said thank you to Horigan, and I made the new club inaugural speech. I don't remember a single thing I said and I doubt anyone else does either.

#### **ARUBA GOLF CLUB**

While we are on the subject of clubs, a word about the golf club. One year I ran for the gold club committee and was elected. At the newly elected committee organization meeting I was appointed to the secretary's job. Of all the jobs I have ever done in my years of public duty, serving as the secretary of the Lago golf club was the toughest, most thankless job I ever had. It is the secretary who sets up and runs the men's tournaments. Thank heavens the women's events were run by a separate ladies golf group. In addition to running tournaments, the secretary was responsible for posting men's' handicaps. In order to determine the handicaps, all golfers dropped their score cards in a locked box in the men's' locker room after each round. As secretary I had the only keys for the card box. I removed the cards regularly and took them to a locally hired employee who worked in the accounting office at the main office building. After his regular working hours this man would



tabulate all the scores listed on these cards under the member's name. The club paid the man for the extra hours he put in preparing the handicaps, and he was allowed to use Lago's calculating machines. Once a month he totaled the scores and using a formula recommended by the United States Golf Association to determine a handicap for each member based on their performance. He gave a copy of the results to me on the first of each month and I posted these handicaps on the locker room bulletin board at the golf club. Because of the uproar in the locker room when I first started posting handicaps, I started waiting until I knew the place was empty. I tacked the list to the bulletin board and beat it for home before anyone saw me. One evening after posting new handicaps my home phone rang. An anonymous voice said, "MacMillan, you are a son-of-a-bitch," and they hung up. You might say some of these golfers took the game seriously. Many of them were far more interested in other golfers' handicaps than their own. All I could tell them was that we calculated handicaps on the basis of records turned in. If they thought their fellow golfers were cheating, they should tell them and not me.

On the tournaments no matter what we did to make the pairings as we thought they should be, someone always had a different opinion. What we decided to do was write 'em like we saw 'em and let the chips fall where they may. As you might imagine, at the end of my year as secretary, I did not run for re-election.

#### **ARUBA PHILATELIC SOCIETY**

Regarding the stamp club, it was organized in 1945 or 1946, I'm not certain exactly when. Present at the first meeting were Reede Holly, Fred Bucholtz, John Hamelers, Marchant Davidson, Tom and Elenore Woodley, myself, several other men, and a couple of women. We met in the Colony Service Meeting Hall in the mechanic shops across from the colony commissary. At the first meeting we decided to call ourselves the Aruba Philatelic Society. I believe Reede was our first president. After we got going as a group, we began having our monthly meetings at the homes of various members. Several Oranjestad collectors joined our group, and the society became an island wide activity. Reede and I were invited to speak to a group of Lago Heights Club members about stamp collecting as a hobby. We prepared charts, slides, etc., and put on a comprehensive demonstration for a large and appreciative audience. The largest function hosted by the society while I was in it was the issuing of a special Christmas cover. Most of our mail was handled by the San Nicholas Post Office. St. Nicolas and Santa Claus were different ways to say San Nicholas, so we would post our covers (envelopes) on Christmas Eve from the San Nicholas Post Office with a cachet on the cover that

said, "Greetings from Santa Claus." We got the San Nicholas postmaster to agree to have all the covers postmarked December 24 if we brought them to him before closing time that day. First we ordered 1,000 envelopes with our red cachets from a Newark, New Jersey publishing house. Announcements printed in two of the leading US stamp magazines advertised our offer to send greetings from Santa Claus for 25 cents each, or five for a US dollar. I can't remember the exact figure, but I think we mailed about 700 covers. Two things helped to make the project a success. The Post Office issued a new commemorative stamp in early December and we were able to buy them for use as postage on the covers. The Aruba tourist commission had begun a promotion, and they gave us a supply of advertising post cards with a lovely picture of Palm Beach. These we slipped into the Santa Claus covers. For a few years after I left Aruba I continued to correspond with club members, and they sent me new stamps as they were issued. I have lost contact, but as far as I know, the club is still active.

Bob Baggeley senior was a stamp dealer. He was never a member of the club but most members bought albums, catalogs, and stamps from him. Bob handled his stamp business in his house as a side line, and he had philatelic contacts all over the States and in Europe. He planned to become a full time dealer in Texas after he retired. I understand that after he retired he got involved in something else and never did get into the stamp business.

## **The Arthur S. & Dorothy MacNutt Story**

Arthur Smith MacNutt, “Art”, was born on July 31, 1913, in Los Angeles. He graduated Redondo Union High School and Compton Junior College. He was in the high school band and orchestra, and participated in track. In those days he spent most of his time at the beach with his surf board. He was an ardent surfer.

### **ART'S FAMILY HISTORY**

My mother and father were from Canada. The ancestor who came over from Scotland, I guess he was on my dad's side, was an elder in the Kirk Church when he came to Canada in the late 1600's. My dad and mother were both born in Nova Scotia and they immigrated to the United States circa 1900. My dad, Gordon MacNutt, was a lead burner for thirty years. He and his brother worked for the Standard Oil of California's El Segundo refinery for 34 years. My mother's name was Georgetta Lewis, and my middle name is Smith, a family name on my mother's side. My great uncle, George Smith, was an old sea dog.

When I knew George Smith, he was quite elderly. He was the one responsible for my love of sailing. He went to sea as a cabin boy, worked his way through the ranks to become the skipper of three-masted schooners under the Canadian flag. My father didn't like the sea; it made him seasick to watch it, much less sail on it.

I have a sister, Marian, who was born in 1907 and lives in Oceanside, California, not far from Camp Pendleton. My older brother, Gordon Lewis, was born in 1909. He went to Aruba in 1928 as one of the pioneers who helped build the refinery.

We were in Scotland on a job there for about 18 months a few years ago. While there I spent some time looking for our family. We even traveled to Edinburgh, but were unsuccessful at locating anyone. Our people had been gone too long.

I stored my things in California with my sister when I went overseas. In one of the numerous floods, I lost all of my books. It was a great loss since one of them traced our family tree back to the time when they left Scotland. Also lost was the big cutaway model of a full rigged three-masted schooner that my great uncle George Smith had built.

### **ARRIVAL IN ARUBA**

I arrived in Aruba in 1934 aboard the old oil tanker the S/S *Esso*

*Aruba* while I was vacationing. I was traveling with G. Lewis MacNutt, Mary Corporan, and Mrs. Corporan, who were returning from a vacation in the States. In later years I sailed on the oil tanker the *S/S Paul Harwood*, the *S/S Santa Clara*, of the Grace Line, and a Reidermann tanker in 1936.

#### **DOROTHY'S STORY**

I was born in Corozal, Canal Zone, Panama. I attended the local high school, and was mostly involved in swimming. During my early years, my dad was the army's head of the telephone and telegraph in Panama.

Art and I have been married 47 years come July 16, 1985. We met in Panama when he was on vacation. He wanted to marry me right then and there after a hasty courtship, but my mother and dad said no. My Dad said to Art, "You go back home and for a while and let's see if this thing is serious."

He made me wait until I was sure, a period of three months. I finally heckled them until they let me go. As an eighteen year old, I thought I knew it all. Mother was unable to go because of her severe asthma, and I went alone on the *S.S. Colombia*, a passenger ship, to Curacao. I met Judy and Bill Cundiff on the *Colombia* during that trip.

When I arrived, Art wasn't at the dock to meet me; he had overslept. I was so angry; I considered going back to Panama. When we finally got together, Art told me we were to sail to Aruba on the *El Libertador*. Somehow he got his wires crossed; it wasn't scheduled to sail that day. Instead, we arranged to fly on a tri-motored Fokker Snipe, one of the first commercial flights between Curacao and Aruba. We arrived in Aruba June 30, 1938.

We married July 16, 1938, at the government courthouse in Oranjestad, with Freda and Art Krottenauer, Mary and Lewis MacNutt as witnesses. The reception was held at G.L. MacNutt's bungalow and there was a dance later at the old Esso Club. As part of the festivities, the groom was wheeled onto the dance floor tied to Frank Griffin's boy's toy red wagon. I sent a cable to my parents to inform them of our marriage.

Mother eventually came to visit, staying a month while I was expecting Arthur Jr. She had an asthma attack and the doctor told her she would recover more quickly if she got off the island. A week before Arthur Jr. was born she returned to Panama. My sister, Adah, came for a couple of months after our son was born. Art and I and the baby were

living in bungalow 537 when she came on the oil tanker the *S/S Pan Bolivar*.

#### **JOE AND MIN JOSEPHSON**

Joe Josephson should not be mentioned without mentioning Min, his wife. She was very protective of Joe. One night at the club they were having a Boxing Event. After the program one of the boxers was heckling Joe. Min hauled off and knocked the heckler down the front steps of the Club.

#### **VIANA AIRLINES**

Before the time of the Snipe, Viana Airlines operated a commercial flight between Aruba and Curacao two times a week. The aircraft he used was a twin engine plane fitted with wheels and floats, and it used to land on the flat piece of land just below the acid plant. Young Fred Corporan was the co-pilot on that plane. I can't remember the name of the American who was the pilot, but if I am not mistaken, he also flew for KLM for a few months before leaving Aruba for good. KLM, the Dutch national airline, took over the route when it became profitable.

#### **THE SUBMARINE ATTACK ON FEBRUARY 16, 1942**

When the submarine torpedoed the Lake Tankers on February 16, 1942, I slept through the first part of it. Our Aruban dog started making so much noise that when I finally got up to see what the problem was, I could see the fires of the ships burning. I went down the street to the cliffs where I had a clear view of the ocean. I could see the glow above the nearby house tops. I wanted to see what was burning. Since no alarm sounded, I figured they didn't need me at the refinery so I went back to bed. There was nothing I could do anyway.

#### **GOLFING IN ARUBA**

Art learned to play golf in Aruba: Of course I was a duffer and had a handicap of something like nine and a half. One time I was in a foursome with Louie Crippen, one of the top players at the time. My partner and his both had a five handicap while Louie's was one. He started giving me a stroke a hole. On the very first time I birdied, and that shook up his game. He gained a couple of strokes on a few holes, but that long five par number five hole had a dogleg to the right. Louie hit one that cruised way out into the coral and cactus, and I knocked one down the fairway. My second shot put me up even with the pin, right off the green. I chipped in, taking a par for the hole. Poor Lou came in with an eight. We beat them by one stroke. Normally he could spot me a stroke a hole and beat me every time; he was that good.

### **THE 1965 LAYOFF PROGRAM**

I left when they offered the 50/15 program in February 1965 and I had 192 days vacation coming which I had to take before I could start drawing my annuities. The program didn't give you any additional percentage for the number of years you had served, but they gave you a severance pay. Your annuity only amounted to 50% if you were 52 years old, and your severance pay depended on your length of service. I had 31 years of service, and my brother, Lewis, had 40 when he retired.

### **WORK EXPERIENCE AFTER RETIRING FROM ARUBA**

During most of 1967 Dorothy, Liz and I were in Rome. At the time I was working with the Overseas Services Company and we were designing a fertilizer complex for Indonesia. The group I was in consisted of only eight people and it was the prime contractor of the \$60 million dollar job. The company farmed out everything. All electrical work, including the distribution system, was farmed out to an electrical consortium, as was the mechanical work. Our company did all design engineering, procuring the materials out of Italy. On weekends, Dorothy, Liz and I took the chance to tour that part of Europe.

One fine day, Tom Malcolm, Joe Proterra, Howard McMillin, and I played together on a golf course just outside of Rome. From February 1970 to October 1973, Dorothy and I were in Libya working for Esso Standard Libya. Len and Pauline Wannop, Ed and Betty Lennep were among those at the airport in the city of Marsa El Brega when we arrived.

Later that day we met Dougald McCormick. He was John's flying instructor in Aruba. I saw Hal Richardson also, but he didn't stay in the area long.

We visited with Len and Pauline Wannop in Saudi Arabia in 1978. A week or so ago, we had a 1984 Christmas letter from them about the happenings for the last few years. They are now in Vancouver, B.C.

Nineteen seventy-eight was the year I was in Saudi Arabia for the Dean Wilkerson Engineering Company, whose headquarters is here in Houston. I met Ken Oliver and Alan Temple in Dhahran airport when I was in Saudi. They both work out of Aramco's Headquarters at 1000 Milam, Houston. They had a job installing some new compressors and running a pipeline for Aramco. I was sent over there to look at the site, and to check the availability of a couple of compressors. The compressors had been in an explosion and fire, and, as you can imagine, they weren't worth a hoot.

Another interesting job I was on was helping to assemble an oil

platform in the North Sea. The quarters for the men who were to be housed on this platform were preformed. They were assembled like building blocks. The compressors mounted on this platform were some of the largest made. Our biggest problem was the weather.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*Arthur Smith MacNutt died on October 7, 1987, in Clear Lake, Texas, as a result of complications, five days after a splenectomy. He is buried in the Forest Park Cemetery on Lawndale in Houston.*

## **The John Gordon MacNutt Story**

My name is John Gordon MacNutt and I was born September 7, 1944, in the Aruba hospital. My father's name was Arthur S., and my mother's name was Dorothy. I was the second oldest boy of four children in the family. Arthur was the oldest, Roger was the third child, and my sister, Elizabeth, was the youngest.

### **CHRISTMAS TABLEAU AT THE CHURCH**

I remember the tableaux at the church that we had at Christmas time with the manger scene when I was little; I was involved in that for two or three years. Others in the tableau were the Schwartz sisters, Anne and the older sister, Joan, and Scott Montfrans. For a while there after the war at Christmas time there was a manger scene on the lawn at the church. Children from the Sunday school classes would be in costume. There would be Joseph and Mary and the baby Jesus. The three kings were there. There would be shepherds and live sheep. One year they had a live donkey. Several of the children would be selected to care for each animal, at his or her home during the day time. The tableau would be performed in the late afternoons.

### **TRAINING BY JIM DOWNEY**

Jim Downey had us kids either participating in sports, or dancing. I can remember when we were in the first years of elementary school, learning to square dance under Jim Downey. In junior high and high school I was in track, field, baseball, swimming and basketball. Jim came up with some very good teams for Lago.

### **SCUBA AND SKIN DIVING**

I did a lot of water skiing and scuba diving when I got older. Some of the younger Monroe boys, David Brace, his younger brother, Robin, Spence McGrew, and David Norris used to go scuba diving with me. The van Ogtrop boys, Artie Spitzer, and their age group did a lot more skin diving. Our age group probably did more scuba diving; we learned this in the summer recreation program, and our diving equipment came as a part of the program.

### **SAILBOATING**

I can also remember participating in sailboat races, particularly the Sunfish class. On a very windy day David Brace and I sailed in a regatta in Oranjestad and won some medals, and although we were in third place, and weren't supposed to be in the race. The weather was so severe



and we made such a good showing that they felt we deserved recognition for our seamanship.

My older brother, Arthur, was also into Sunfish racing. A Sunfish is no more than a big surfboard with a rounded bottom, and has a thin, removable centerboard set into a slot in the deck. As soon as you get off the beach, you drop it. It has a big sail, but no cockpit. You sit on it rather than in it as you would a Snipe. The Sunfish has a low rail around the deck to keep you from falling off. This class of boat was easy to take in and out of the water, inexpensive, easily controlled, and was very popular in those days.

My uncle Lewis was a real sailor. I wonder if anyone remembers that racing boat he made after 1955.

### **SCOUTING**

Mr. Jack Opdyke was the scoutmaster when I was in Boy Scouts. I went from the Cub Scouts, through the Boy Scouts, and on to Explorer Scouts with Mr. Opdyke. Jack was with the scouting program for a long time.

When I was in the Sea Explorer Scouts we had a six-ton, 120 horsepower harbor launch named the *Pedernales*, after the Lake Tanker that was torpedoed right outside the harbor. We sailed around the island in it. Later, the scouts traded it for a six-ton banana boat, a fishing boat, and a sailboat. We learned much more about sailing with the latter. Its boom, six inches above the deck, knocked us off the boat a few times until we got organized and caught the hang of it. One of those times was when we were out outside the lagoon in the open sea. The sight of those big waves and deep blue water when you fell in was enough to make you remember the boom when you tacked.

On the average, the crew was boys in my age group. I remember Duncan Echelson, Gary Schlageter, David and Robin Brace. The longest trip the scouts ever made - we were in the motor launch when we went down to the southwest end of the island. I can remember one time we went all the way over to the Eagle pier. We met with sizable swells out there even on calm days, but the boat could handle them easily. I rammed the swimming dock in the lagoon near the swimming area several times.

Jim Downey had a boat, and he put Christmas tree lights on the mast during the Christmas season and. On Christmas Eve he anchored in the lagoon and turned those lights on.

## **VAMPIRE BATS**

If you went out the road past B.A. Beach, toward Fontein, you would come upon the bat caves that had vampire bats. A Dr. Bekker from one of the zoos in the States came down to catch some of these bats. He brought his own nets, and enlisted some of kids to help him. Those bats were vicious, and we wore heavy leather gloves to protect ourselves. These expeditions were in the daytime, but the deep caves were dark. We put the nets up over the main opening; I don't recall how they were attached the walls. When we made a commotion inside the cave, they flew into the nets. They had to be removed by hand from the nets. The bats had large claws and teeth.

## **BANDS**

Through a fluke, I organized the first American steel band in Aruba. We got a wild hair and decided it would be a neat idea. Gary Schlageter, Duncan Echelson and I were in junior high and we knew a man named Connors who was 30 years old at the time. Connors had had his own group, the Aruba Invaders, for many years. We approached him and asked if he would be interested in helping us. Enthusiastic about the idea, Connors made the drums for a price. We supplied the oil drums and he cut them and tuned them for us. Connors declined to show us how to make them; he wanted to keep that secret to himself.

It took us about six months to learn how to play them, and we did so for about a year. Sam Speziale, Gary Schlageter, Mark Dittle, and my younger brother, Roger, and I were in it, and my older brother, Arthur, was lead drummer.

We had soprano, alto, tenor, and bass drums. We had some bells, cow bells and things like that. The tunes were played from memory; there was no written music. Because lead soprano was so hard to play, Connors played with the band. Eventually he, Brad Linam and Arthur had to play the pieces together.

The short drum was the soprano; the three perfect five gallon drums I played were the bass. The shorter the drum, the more notes you could get out of it. The soprano drum had about 30 or 40 notes, whereas the bass drums had only three. They were played with a small stick, six inches long and half an inch in diameter. One end of it was wrapped heavy rubber bands to make a ball about one and a half inches in diameter.

We played calypso music that he taught us and just for the heck of it, we tried to play more modern tunes. Love Me Tender by Elvis

sounded quite passable. Marianne and Moses were a few of the calypso tunes we played at a couple of those junior proms, and some beach parties for different class parties. I don't think we had any particular costume. Once we learned how to play the drums we were invited to play at various functions.

Jan Koulman and his wife organized junior and senior bands in the school over the years. They had the instruments you would expect to find in any normal stateside band from bass tubas to piccolos, saxophones, flutes, clarinets, trombones, trumpets, etc. Jan Koulman could play all of them - there wasn't anything he couldn't play.

I can remember Mary Lou Farr as my band teacher and chorus teacher before Jan showed up. After the two of them got married, they taught together for a while. She quit and he took over everything.

#### **THE CHURCH CHOIR**

A tenor, I sang in the choir, and I remember Pete Storey because he had such a lovely tenor voice. Pete was in the choir for many years, and we sang together during our high school years. When we went back for the Aruba reunion in 1974, I sang in the choir with Pete once more. In the bass section was Doug Monroe, but I can't recall the others. There weren't that many men in the choir.

#### **THE ARUBA FLYING CLUB**

I always wished I had gotten in more flying time in the Aruba flying club. The young people in my age group who learned to fly in Aruba were Gary Schlageter, Arthur, and I think one of the Barnes boys. Arthur's age group was one of the first to start flying out there. I have been trying to remember who my instructor was, and I want to say it was Malcolm Murray - I'll have to look in my log book, it's been a long time.

I soloed after eight hours of instruction and had a total of 13 solo flying hours. I can remember the day I did my first solo. When we landed from the check out flight, my instructor told me to pull off to the side of the runway. I did. He got out and said, "Okay, take it on up." I could look over and see my proud parents watching. There was a little celebration afterwards at the flying club.

#### **SCHOOL HAYRIDES/DANCES**

My dad was one of the organizers of hayrides for high school kids. They got a big truck and loaded it with hay. Where they got the hay, I can't imagine, but they did.

I was once in charge of a sophomore dance in high school. Dad got 2000 pounds of sawdust for us, and I spread it six inches deep on the

canteen dance floor. It was really something, but I learned it was hell to clean up. Waxing and polishing that 30 foot by 40 foot youth canteen floor the next day was a chore.

I remember Jan Koulman used to position his very popular 12 piece Caribbean Ambassador Orchestra on the steps of the stage, and we still had plenty of room to dance. Jan and an Aruban fellow were the leaders. They played a wide variety of music, including a combo that they called The Powerhouse Three Plus One. He played the trombone, and they had a drummer, a piano and a saxophone.

Koulman also organized a community band that lasted six years. The band performed while either the flying club put on an acrobatic show, or the Dutch marines gave a close order drill demonstration. I regret I was so young I forgot many of the details.

## **RADIO**

Somewhere about that time, I helped my dad build one of his amateur radio stations. Jim Downey was one of the amateurs, as were Mr. Chapman and Mr. McBurney, who lived across the street. I can still remember the big antenna he had on his roof. Max Sand, a man from Switzerland, and George Hemstreet were two more of them. Ham radio didn't become important to me until I was in Texas A & M studying industrial technology. Our class got into building a superhetrodyne receiver and some other electronic devices. And we had a little ham radio station there at Texas A & M and that's where I got involved in ham radio. In the military we had to have a novice's license, but I never did get my general. Vietnam came along and I got sidetracked.

My dad and I were operating a station just recently. He has a novice's license, but not a general license. With a novice rating you can send code, but not phone or voice. The requirement for the latter is to be able to send and receive 5 words a minute. For a general license, the requirement is 13 words a minute.

My dad put out the first radio club news letter in Aruba.

## **NEWSPAPER DELIVERY DAYS**

At age ten I delivered the Pan Aruban, and I had paper routes for many years. The Pan Aruban was first, and then I graduated to the Herald Tribune, The Miami Herald, The Washington Post, The New York Times, and The Wall Street Journal. After the skinny little Pan Aruban, all of these papers seemed to weigh a ton. I carried anywhere from fifty to sixty papers, and we used some of the largest baskets ever made for a bicycle. There were always 10 or 12 boys who carried them all around the colony. Arthur and I were latecomers in the delivery

business so we never delivered to the bachelor quarters. We earned something like 16 guilders a week, plus tips. Some of those papers, like the Washington Post, were too heavy to throw. We used to meet at the Sunday school area to pick up our papers. I have forgotten the name of the man who delivered the papers to us in the back end of his car. Billy MacNutt was another of the paperboys.

### **BOYS' STATE**

During 1960 I was selected one year by the American Legion to go to Boys' State while Gary Schlageter was my alternate. Boys' State, a school held in the Panama Canal Zone, taught local, state and federal government. Representatives came from all over, including the States. We stayed in some barracks there. The American Legion expected and got a report of what happened when I returned.

### **CUB SCOUT DAYS**

Marchant Davidson was one of the Cub Scout leaders. Usually the fathers went on campouts with their boys. I remember helping load our equipment on a large flatbed truck when we went camping. My dad was a veteran of many of these campouts.

### **COLLEGE**

When I was ready for college I had a time deciding between Texas Tech and Texas A & M. A cousin on my mother's side graduated from A & M, so I decided to go there. In those years, you were drafted into the service after attending R.O.T.C. for four years, but my second year they made the last two years optional. While in R.O.T.C., I was in the marching band and I played the trumpet.

Originally in mechanical engineering, I switched to industrial technology my second year.

## **The Lotje McReynolds Story**

I wish Mac was here to help me remember "the long ago;" it was surely the most meaningful period of my life.

My name is Johanna Charlotte McReynolds and Mac's was Leonard Stevens McReynolds. His father was a Major in the U. S. Marines and he was killed in the 1920's in Nicaragua. He is buried in the Arlington Cemetery.

My sister and I were born on the Dutch island of Saint Martin (up near the Virgin Islands). My brother was born in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. My father was born and educated in Holland and was sent out to St. Martin to manage a Salt Development and Export Company, the island's chief source of income. There he met and married my lovely mother, descendent of a titled French family who escaped from France, and the guillotine, during the revolutions there in the 1700's. Some settled in England and others in the Caribbean islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe (where my mother was born).

### **SCHOOL**

My earliest memories of school started at the age of five years in Canada, continued in North Brookfield, Massachusetts, and later in New York. In my early teens we returned to the warm blue Caribbean and I attended Dutch and English schools in Saint Martin, St. Christopher and Barbados. My sister went to Miss Branch's School for Girls in Antigua. I earned my Oxford/Cambridge High School diploma and, after another year's study a Business School Certificate. In those days English girls did not flock to colleges unless they planned a business career. I joined the Barbados branch of the Royal Bank of Canada as a secretary.

### **EARLY YEARS**

Those were such glamorous and exciting years in the Islands! The social life was delightful with picnics and dancing and sailing and swimming, but it wasn't considered proper to have "dates," as we do today. A goodly supply of chaperons was always on hand.

### **ARUBA ENTERED OUR LIVES**

When we were in St. Martin, there was a Government doctor and his young French wife who were friends of my family, a Dr. Nunez and Lizette. They were transferred to Aruba at the time we lived in Barbados, and Mrs. Nunez wrote to Sylvia, my sister, inviting her to come for a visit. We knew nothing of Aruba or the Lago Company then.

However, just at that time Captain and Mrs. Rodger, Mr. Farquharson, Ralph Watson, Bert Oxley and three or four Englishmen whose names I have forgotten, were in Oranjestad starting up the Shipping Department of Lago. Except for a Miss Carrie Croes, there did not seem to be any available secretaries, and my sister was asked to help out in Captain Rodger's office, which she did, until she and Bert Oxley were married a couple of years later.

### **MY FIRST JOB IN ARUBA**

A Pan-American accounting office was started at the other end of the small building where Captain Rodger had the Shipping Office, and I received a letter from the company, offering me three times the monthly salary I was being paid by the bank of Barbados. Also, I was asked would I be able to persuade an equally qualified secretary to accompany me. So that is how my friend, Peggy Edwards, and I came to Aruba. The accountant from the New York Office was Mr. John Alden, who descended from the John Alden.

I became Mr. Alden's secretary. Peggy joined the Shipping Department and a few years later married Bert Martel, an accountant from the U. S. and a fine gentleman.

### **OUR HOUSING AND SOCIAL LIFE IN THE EARLY DAYS**

I went to Aruba in my 20's and am now in my 70's. We traveled by steamer, first to Trinidad as I recall, to Curacao and then to Oranjestad, Aruba. I do remember how warmly we were received; everyone seemed so grateful to us for coming. They had prepared temporary quarters for us until we and the others could move to the five new bungalows being finished out at Lago. We were taken to the upstairs floor of a private home. I seem to remember we only had breakfast there, and then drove over to Lago and back again after 5:00 p.m. I think our small office by the cliff became the Post Office later. We were across from the old "White House" where we had lunch and supper.

Mr. Farquharson, second in command in the Shipping Department, was very kind and helpful. In the Oranjestad house, he would help us whenever things got stuck, such as the stove, or a window, etc. He was from Scotland and became our dear friend (as they all did). Later, when the colony at Lago was pretty well along, his fiancée (Hilda) came out from England and they were married. Pretty soon, five bungalows and a sheep shed were completed and we all moved over to Lago. Captain and Mrs. Rodger and their daughters lived in the stone house which later became the main office. The five bungalows were in a row east of the Rodger's home and in them lived the Aldens, the Pennys, two other

British couples (I have forgotten their names), and us three girls. Soon after, a nurse came down and stayed with us, and the small hospital was built.

We were often entertained at the Rodger's home at Saturday evening parties. Mrs. Rodger very kindly wrote reassuring letters about us to our mother, who was never too clear in her mind about Aruba. My sister and Bert Oxley were married at the Rodger's home. There was a big reception and everyone was invited, all the captains and officers from the ships. The Lake Tankers in the harbor strung up their flags. Peggy and I were bridesmaids. I remember how helpful Mrs. Rodger was in having our dresses made. Her youngest daughter was the flower girl.

Later, one of the ships' officers was married to an American nurse and another big reception and party was held at the Rodger's home.

### **THE COLONY GROWS**

It was fantastic how fast the place was growing. Contractors arrived to build the refinery, and new bungalows and office buildings were going up all the time. "Bird Cage Row" was built, overlooking the sea. These were for families of the officers on the Lake Tankers. Harbor docks were being built, and an entrance had to be opened in the reef and dredged deep enough to permit ocean tankers to enter. There was usually a strong current flowing west just outside the harbor entrance and it was believed that was what kept the flaming oil outside, after the submarine attack in 1942. Finally in November of 1928 the San Nicholas harbor was opened for shipping. The big ocean oil tanker *Cerro Azul* was the first ocean tanker to come inside and we had quite a celebration.

There was a small dock on the beach above the camps, and afternoons and weekends we went swimming. The ball parks and tennis courts came later. We wondered how the reef looked close up, so one day my sister and I swam across to find out.

The *sheep sheds* were filling up with refinery workers, and new bachelor quarters and bungalows were being built. The Rodgers and other officials moved up to "The Hill" overlooking the upper lagoon where we sailed and swam. The Lloyd Smith family lived higher up (further east) in "Casa Grande" and had groups of us to parties occasionally. "Essie" Esselstijn and Winnie Smith became engaged. The "stone house," the Rodger's former home, became Mr. Bartel's office, with the Engineering building on one side and the Accounting on the other. The Aldens left and T. C. Brown arrived as an "efficiency expert" to run the Accounting Office. Later he became the Controller.



Bob Schlageter arrived, and started our weekly newspaper, "The Pan-Aruban." I still treasure some copies of it. It was a great gift to the community at that time and so it continued to be through the years.

### **I WENT ON VACATION IN 1931**

I wanted to visit my family in Holland and elsewhere, so I clutched my small purse of savings and quit in 1931; visited New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, then sailed from New York to Europe on the lovely Holland-American passenger Line, and visited in Holland, England, and Scotland. After seven or eight months I returned to New York and have often wondered why, instead of finding secretarial work in England, as I was not an American citizen. However, in our New York office they said I was still needed in Aruba.

### **THE COLONY GROWS!**

Such changes during my absence! Bungalow 32, on the sea front, was home to the school teachers; one hospital technician (Beulah Snide who later married Ralph Watson) and me. Jennie (Thorpe) Greene was there; Myrtle Parham, Louise Powers, Maude Thomas, Edith Greer, and another whose face I can see so plainly, but cannot remember her name. Later when the Girls Dormitory was built, we moved there, and Vina Walz, Marguerite Fassler, Peggy Engle, (before she was married to "Dutch") and others were there. Marguerite married the superintendent of the Eagle Refinery (Mr. Newton) in Oranjestad, and we all attended the wedding, including Governor Wagemaker. Those were all wonderful people and I was happy to live among them.

### **THE HURRICANE OF 1932**

One day we were told to expect a hurricane, coming straight at Aruba from the East. The Company started preparations for vacating the bungalows if it became necessary. It was suggested that we should go to the caves for shelter. We remembered the caves had bats in them, lizards too, and maybe even land crabs. We decided to stay in Bungalow 32. The eye of the storm passed several miles north of us. We had high winds and lots of rain. Since our windows were just louvers, the rain came in all over the house. We hung blankets over the closed louvers. When the sunshine returned, our carpets and rugs were put out to dry. It took a whole week for them to dry completely.

### **WE WERE FORTUNATE WITH OUR MUSICIANS**

Jan Koulman was our "Music Man." He led the community and school bands and our church choir on Sundays. His talented wife, Mary Lou was our school music teacher. They were often at our home with their musical instruments, and we felt privileged to have them there. Jan

was from Holland and became an American citizen later. He taught at Potsdam, N. Y. after they left Aruba. Mrs. Doris Thompson, the wife of our school superintendent, organized and led the community choral concerts, and they were wonderful.

If Jan Koulman was our "Music Man", Mrs. Nell Mingus was our "Music Lady." She was an accomplished pianist and taught piano to our young daughters at a time when we parents really needed such a teacher for our children. She trained the children to give recitals, and I seem to remember one was given over in Oranjestad, as well as in the Colony. We were all very grateful indeed.

### **MARRIAGE**

When I returned to Aruba after my vacation in 1931 I met Mac (Leonard Stevens McReynolds). He was a Mechanical Engineer in the Engineering Department. Four years later we were married.

Before my marriage to Mac, all the girls gave me a surprise shower, and it was really a surprise. Paul and Louise O'Brien were my dear friends and they gave an engagement dinner for us. Their guests were Margaret and "Chip" Chippendale, the Paulus's, Stuart Harrison (who came down to Aruba ahead of his family), Myrtle Parham, who was bridesmaid at the wedding, and Jack Souder, Mac's Best Man. Our church had not been built yet, so the minister (Reverend Rishell) performed the service on the O'Brien' lawn, overlooking the blue sea. Paul O'Brien gave me away, as my parents could not come. Mrs. Rodger attended the service also. That afternoon there was a wedding reception at O'Brien's home with all our friends present. I seem to remember there were sixty guests. For a week-end honeymoon we flew over to Curacao in the small, very noisy Dutch "Fokker" plane.

I valued the friendship and kindness of the O'Brien family, and when Louise died of pneumonia a few years later, I lost a dear friend. It seems incredible now, but there was no penicillin available in our hospital in those days; it might have saved her life.

### **BUNGALOWS BECAME COLORFUL**

At first the bungalows were drab, gray stucco on the outside. Later the company painted them in soft colors of blue, pink, green, yellow, white and our Colony blossomed like a bouquet. Everyone planted hibiscus, croton, star-of-Venezuela, frangipani, oleanders, yellow bells, etc., in the flower beds built alongside our houses. Mrs. Hewlett actually grew rose bushes! Good garden soil was non-existent in the colony and had to be brought in from other parts of the island. I think we paid seven guilders for a small truck load (or was it Fls. 14.00?). Patios were being

added to back yards and when we lived in Bungalow 305, Mac had a really beautiful one built for us. We also planted a small flamboyant in the yard. Over the years it grew as big as those in Florida.

During the War years the Company built a cover of sorts over the top of the outdoor movie screen, maybe at the sides too. That way, no light could be seen by the German submarines at sea.

A really nice patio was built alongside our church, overlooking the blue sea. We held our church suppers there, and Easter morning sunrise services. I wish I could remember the name of the minister who had it done. He went to Florida to live.

### **MY SERVICE WITH THE LAGO SCHOOL SYSTEM**

One day, when Mac and I returned from vacation I was asked to help out temporarily at the High School Office until a replacement could be employed. I was there as secretary to Mr. Smith and Mr. Dean Thompson for seven years, until we left Aruba to live in the States.

### **FEBRUARY 16, 1942 AND THE WAR YEARS**

After our daughter Aileen was born in 1937 in the small first hospital, we were moved down the road to a larger, two bedroom bungalow, No. 222, and were there when the German submarine attacked us. Across the coral lived Charlie and Kay Drew and Eileen and Bernie Shearon. The Perkins family lived just up the road. It seemed as if the whole ocean was on fire that night. We stood on our front porch and watched the sub's tracer bullets pass over the refinery between the towers (by the grace of Providence!) My knees were knocking together so hard I could almost hear them. Someone pulled the main plug at the Power House and every light went out. Someone with a flashlight came by and told all the families around there to drive up to the church hill or higher. There was a chance of the tank farm being ignited.

The Scottish troops had left the island just the day before. We caught up Aileen from her crib, the kitty, a bottle of Poland water, and my pictures of Aileen, and drove up the road just behind a big American truck. I marveled at how they kept so closely to a strange road without lights, as they had arrived on the island just the day before or two days before, and were stationed outside the colony (at Savaneta, I think). They would blow a siren at night when a submarine was near, and we had to vacate our homes and drive higher up the road. Some nights we stayed with friends. We had the submarines around us all the time. The airplanes would go out and drop depth charges. For the remainder of the war we lived in blackout. The men volunteered to help, and if a speck of light showed at any bungalow, they would knock and ask the family

indoors to straighten the blinds. Mac helped out in many ways during those years as did many other employees. Our refinery was making the high octane gasoline for England during the Battle of Britain. My sister and her family were in Kent, not far from London.

There were six or eight American G. I. boys who came up for a meal or a visit at least once a week. There was a certain day in the week when rations were particularly distasteful at the army mess hall. On that day Mac would receive a visitor, or two or three, at the office and soon after he would phone me to add a few vegetables to the stew, or bake some extra biscuits or cookies that evening. We had them on holidays too. One sergeant still writes every Christmas from Pennsylvania.

There was also a U. S. Navy boat patrolling the harbor and outside the reef. I don't think it was a regular P. T. boat, but it might have been. The Commander (I mean Captain) often came up to dinner with us, and we enjoyed his company. Once, the Navy and Army were there together, unfortunately. It was a quiet evening. Luckily, it was not a dinner night, just chatting, mostly by Mac and me! I think the Cameron Highlanders were with us two years, shortly after Dunkirk, but I am not sure. They had a small canteen outside the gate, and we baked pies and cakes for them and served tea and coffee. We met them at dances in the small Marine Club near the docks.

Word of the German invasion of Holland arrived at Oranjestad Governor's Office at midnight on May 10, 1940, and by 2:00 a.m. the few Nazi Germans in Oranjestad and San Nicholas were rounded up and given a very short time to pack a suitcase before they were shipped over to Bonaire, where they remained for the duration of the war. Not far from our bungalow No. 222 there lived a German couple, and the wife attended first-aid classes which our hospital held for us wives in the colony. She was a very pleasant and quiet woman and I had heard they owned some lovely things in their home. I felt sorry for her. However, Bonaire was not an unpleasant place to wait out the war. One of my cousins in Holland had a spell in a Nazi concentration camp in Germany. After the war it took six months of hospital care in Holland for him to recover.

After the submarine attack, many families returned to the States. Some enlisted, Bernard Shearon among them. They sent up their household goods, wedding gifts, etc., by tanker, which was torpedoed on the way up. This exodus left some empty bungalows in the colony, and we moved from No. 222 up to 305. Our neighbors there were the Pomeroy's, McBurneys and Frybacks. There Gregersons, with all their

beautiful Danish treasures, lived just a short way down the cliff.

### **HOUSING MAINTENANCE IN LAGO COLONY**

Periodically, we had "paint jobs" on our houses, by the colony Maintenance Department. We were moved out to a "paint house" kept for that purpose, and moved back in a week or two to a freshly painted and renovated house. We could choose the new colors for the rooms, and have minor alterations done at that time also.

### **THE COMPANY CALENDARS**

The Company published a calendar each year. Employees were asked to submit colored slides or negatives. Hundreds of beautiful negatives were submitted and the judges had a hard time each year choosing twelve from among the lot. One of them was surely the most beautiful sunset ever, at Aruba. Some really fine cameras could be purchased over in the Oranjestad stores. I now treasure those calendars with their beautiful pictures of our island.

### **OUR HOSPITAL**

A large, new, modern hospital was built on the cliffs up by Lighthouse Point (known as Colorado Point). The view over the blue sea was wonderful, and on clear days we could see the island of Curacao on the horizon. Two or three new doctors came from Holland. Dr. Russell Carrol was in charge and later Dr. Glenn Hendrickson. The nurses lived in the new girls' dormitory. Sometimes we had visiting doctors from the States for a few weeks. One evening, after a very strenuous basketball game, Mac had a pain in his chest and was examined at the hospital by a visiting heart specialist. They gave Mac a thorough examination and kept him in the hospital for four days in case the pain returned. It did not, but we were told it might have been a "nicotine spasm." For the rest of his life, Mac never smoked another cigarette.<sup>1</sup>

### **OUR CAMERON HIGHLANDER FRIEND**

When we had the Scots Highlanders with us soon after Dunkirk, we had the privilege of knowing their pastor, Reverend Murdo MacDonald. He was with his troops in North Africa, was captured, and spent four years in Nazi prison camps, mostly with British and American soldiers. After the war, he returned to Aruba and visited in our home. He married Betty Russell, the daughter of one of our Lake Tanker Captains, and they returned to his church in Scotland. Many years after we were settled in the lovely town of Worthington, U.S.A. Reverend McDonald visited our Presbyterian church here and preached the Sunday sermon. He came to

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<sup>1</sup> *Aileen passed away in 1976 of cancer; Mac in 1978 due to a stroke and Lotje in January 7, 1987.*

our home for a short visit, and I felt that we had received a blessing.

### **MEMORIES**

In our colony at Aruba, we now had four tennis courts, and we exchanged matches with Curacao teams when a long weekend turned up. We had a new hospital, a ball park, a golf club, and a beautiful new clubhouse down by the sand dunes, with movies, a book shop, and soda fountain, and an open-air dance floor, right near the sea front. We had square dances there and regular Saturday night dances and New Year's Eve parties.

We had four or five snipes in the lagoon and a boat dock, and Aileen had her sailfish. A small pavilion was built on the cliff above the boat dock--it resembled a well roofed-over porch, and it was named the "Indoor-Outdoor Yacht Club." After each race on week-ends, the "Yachtsmen" and wives and others gathered there for a coke and to discuss the race. There was also space to store the sails and starting cannon.

When Mac first came to Aruba, he was instrumental in getting the ball clubs and tennis games started. These filled a great need at the time. When he left Aruba, the tennis club presented Mac with a beautiful gift and a printed, framed token of appreciation for his efforts.

In my minds eye, I often see the high waves crashing on the rocks at lighthouse beach and over on the north side of the island, where we had picnics. Weekends, we would go driving over to Andicouri, Bushiribana, Boca Prins, Fontein, and the Spanish Lagoon; to a picnic at Sea Grape Grove. I would not enjoy seeing all the hotels now on our lovely Palm Beach--I remember it as it used to be.

### **MAC'S STORY**

Mac worked his way through college and learned to catch a nap anywhere, anytime. While he was in Aruba this habit caught up with him and he would often nod off during an Engineers Club meeting.

When the Community Band was formed Mac was away from Aruba on vacation. In high school he used to play the clarinet. When he returned from his trip the only instrument that had not been selected by others was the Tuba. In his efforts to master the playing of the Tuba he first had a record of "Tubby the Tuba" which happened to be a popular piece at the time. Then he was on a business trip in the States and he found the "Fire House Five Plus Two" records. These were records made by a group of Disney Cartoonists who formed a little band to play for parties and small gatherings. In this series the Tuba carried the

melody. The songs they played were ones similar to "Minnie the Moocher," "Good Time Jazz," "I Love You Truly," "Love Songs of The Nile," "California Here I Come," "Lady of Spain," "China Boy." Mac did learn to play the Tuba well enough that he gave a rendition of "Tubby the Tuba" at one of the concerts given by the Community Band. Jim Lopez liked these records and bought several of them the next opportunity he had. The idea of the Tuba playing the melody convulsed everyone who heard the Disney group play.

Mac learned to play golf in Aruba. He took the admonition seriously to keep his head down and keep his eye on the ball when he made his golf swing. As he was learning he wore a baseball cap with a weighted string fastened to the brim of the cap. This weighted string was adjusted so if he did as he was instructed the weighted string was vertical through the swing of his golf club.



Steps up the side of Mt. Hooiberg - - circa 1976

Photo courtesy V. D. Lopez

## **The Willie M. Miller & Family Story**

Willie M. (Bill) Miller was born in Anniston, Alabama, September 16, 1900. He was the last of five children, although only two of his sisters were still alive. His mother died soon afterward, so he was sent to live with a maiden aunt who lived in Los Angeles, California. Unfortunately she died when he was five, so her neighbors put a tag on him and sent him back to Alabama on a train. Bill often told stories of the great time he had crossing the country, and of all the wonderful people who took care of him along the way. Back in Anniston with an aunt and uncle, he went to school through the fourth grade.

The year of 1914 saw his father remarried and living in Anahuac, Texas with his wife and two daughters. Bill rejoined his family there later. As a teenager he drove a horse and wagon to the bayou where he unloaded groceries from the boats.

In 1917 he moved with his sister and her husband, a grocer, to the booming Texas oil field of Goose Creek now known as Baytown, Texas. His brother-in-law established one of the first grocery stores in the area, and Bill worked for him. In those days the local streets were mud, and there was no real road connecting the vicinity to Houston. Virtually everything needed by the community was brought in by boat and hauled to its destination by horse and wagon. During WWI his brother-in-law added a movie theater, and Bill worked as the projectionist. The day Bill was to be inducted into the Army, November 11, 1918, the Armistice was signed. All recruits were released.

In 1920 he went to work as a driller's helper in Humble Oil's Goose Creek oil field. On February 25, 1926, he transferred to the Humble Oil Refinery in Baytown. Here he was a pipefitter's helper until September 16, 1929, when he was transferred to the Lube Oil Treaters.

Bill lived in a boarding house with several Humble men. None of them had cars, so they pooled their money to hire a taxi to commute five miles to the refinery. Everyone stood at the refinery gate until the foreman read the list of workers needed for the day. Each man usually got work at least two or three days a week. On the days when Bill didn't get to work, he picked up odd jobs like delivering ice for the ice house or helping in the store. Delivering ice was how Bill met fifteen-year-old Gladys in 1925. She said that it seemed like the only time he delivered



ice to her house was when she was down on her hands and knees scrubbing the kitchen floor.

Nineteen twenty-nine brought uncertain times to America. Many men worked on a day-to-day basis. In October of that year, a notice listing overseas jobs available was posted. The Pan American Refinery in Aruba, Dutch West Indies had openings. Bill applied on October 17, 1929.

On October 28, in a letter, O.H. Shelton, of the Personnel Department of the Pan American Petroleum Corporation offered him an eighteen month term of employment as an operator. The salary was \$185.00 per month. He was asked to wire his decision of acceptance, at the company's expense, and to advise them of the earliest possible date he could leave. If hired, he was allowed \$0.06 per mile from Baytown to the port of embarkation. This sum was to cover railroad fare and meals. (1,750 miles x \$.06 equals \$105.00) At the port of embarkation he would be given \$50 cash to cover the cost of his passport and living expenses while awaiting his sailing orders. The job was shift work, eight hours per day, seven days per week.

No housing accommodations were available for families, but when the construction period was over, there would be a certain number of houses available. In closing the letter stated: "In comparing the salary stated above with your present income, you should take in consideration the free room, board, laundry, medical attention, a fully paid thirty day vacation, and the ten days traveling time at the end of your term of employment."

Vacations, much less vacations with full pay, were unheard of for the common working man. This standard saw its first change the year before when, on October 1, 1928, the Humble Oil Refinery granted its employees one day's rest each week without reduction of present earnings. Any man working on a day-to-day basis with no guarantee of how many days a week he might get to work, would have been a fool to turn down Pan American's offer. For a single young man with no family obligations, it was an opportunity of a lifetime. On November 25, 1929, Bill received a letter that stated: "We confirm the offer made to you for position as first-class operator at a salary of \$185.00 per month and sustenance." He was told to report in New York on December 10, 1929, at their office room 1913A, 122 East 42nd Street, New York City.

After reporting in New York on December 10, Bill and a couple of new fellow-employees went by train to Washington, D.C. to see the sights. They sailed out of Baltimore, Maryland on Chesapeake Bay

aboard the S.S. *George G. Henry* on December 12, and arrived in Aruba at 10:00 a.m. December 20, 1929.

Bill worked as a first-class helper in the Process-Cracking Plant from 1929 until February 5, 1940. He lived in Bachelor Quarters Five until 1935.

A roommate during much of that time was Louis G. Harris. Louis, a naturalized American citizen, had been well on his way to becoming a lawyer before he went to Aruba. Harris encouraged Bill to improve his education by taking extension courses from a university. One of his hobbies was photography, and after he came back from fighting in Europe in World War II, he had his own darkroom.

In letters that he wrote home between 1929 and 1934, Bill stated that there were a number of Baytown men working there. Several of them became unhappy and subsequently returned home. Bill apparently enjoyed the adventure. He wrote of spending off days seeing the island and its local color, playing golf with friends, and working with the punching bag at the club. The club was a good place to be for socializing, reading, or just seeing a show. Boating and swimming were indeed luxuries to a man from his background.

Letter home October 31, 1933 - "Have you been watching the rate of exchange on money since the States went off the gold standard? The dollar was worth Fls. 2.25. A few days ago it was worth Fls. 1.50."

Letter home April 2, 1934 - "You say that Humble isn't running but six of their pressure stills. That's almost shut down. We have continued for a long time at about full capacity here. That is always maintaining better than 95,000 barrels of crude a day. That is the set schedule of production, but we can go as high as 150,000 barrels per day in rush periods although they don't usually last more than ten to twenty days."

While on vacation in Baytown on October 30, 1934, Bill married his long-time love, Gladys Lucille Neal. The fourth of six children, she was born in the little oil town of Saratoga, Texas on July 19, 1910. Her father worked in the field. They moved so often that only two of the six children were born in the same town. Their last move was in 1924 to Pelly, Texas (Now known as Baytown). Her parents also cared for fourteen more children who had been orphaned in oil field accidents. With so many people in the household, everyone had to do their share. Fourteen-year-old Gladys worked as a carhop in a root beer stand after school. Later she worked in an ice cream parlor.

Bill left Baytown aboard a tanker bound for Aruba on Tuesday,

November 20, 1934. It was a very pleasant trip and the people were good to him. The hardest part was leaving his new bride waving to him from the ferry. He said that he got paid for the 19th and 20th, and he got regular pay when he got on the boat. The ship was off the coast of Aruba at 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, November 28. Since the docks were full, they spent two days, including Thanksgiving, off the Venezuelan coast. They finally arrived in Aruba at 4:00 p.m. Friday, November 30, 1934.

Letter to Gladys: "I started on days Sunday morning December 16, 1934, and will work until 4:00 p.m. Saturday evening. Will be off eight hours and back on at 12:00 p.m. Saturday night, December 23. Don't forget that we shift backwards down here - from days to graveyards to 4 - 12, then on days again."

When Gladys arrived in Aruba on March 29, 1935, she roomed with Mr. and Mrs. Ray Imler. Since houses were scarce, Gladys and Bill finally got a chance to share a house, Bungalow 483, on Tenth Ave., between Fourth St. and the new high school. They stayed with William D. (Bill) and Agnes Orr from Florida. A short time before their son, Arthur Clyde was born, they moved into Bungalow 436, on Ninth Ave., between Second and Fourth Streets. Clyde's birthday was February 1, 1936. Some of their neighbors were Vernon and Merle Turner. The Turners lived in Bungalow 434. Vernon had a fantastic telescope in his backyard that he built himself, and he made Bill a wood lathe that is still in use today. One of his other hobbies was flying. Vernon taught both his sons to fly. Stanley and Peggy Chapman in Bungalow 435 were also neighbors. Stanley was always working with his radios. Later on he built a great P.A. system for Bill's radio and record player. It had speakers in the bedroom, kitchen, patio, and shop. Clyde and his friends used it to create their own radio station, complete with disc jockey. Cary and Beulah Daly in Bungalow 437, Evelyn and Margaret Wade in Bungalow 438 were other friends of his. Margaret ran the magazine stand in a little building next to the post office. Later she moved it to the new Esso Club room that eventually became the library. Vincent (Binky) and Emily Fuller, who lived in Bungalow 442 were two more neighbors. Turner lived in Bungalow 471.

Bungalow 43 was one those wonderful houses on a grade that stood eleven steps off the ground. Bill had sand put under the house to make one gigantic sandbox for Clyde and his friends. Eventually he even put lights under the house so they could play at night. The first year they were there, they planted a tiny palm tree that by 1961 had grown taller than the house.

Since clothing stores for children were somewhat lacking, Gladys went into the business of selling "Klad E Z Clothes." (I'm sure that almost anyone from this era of Aruba's history can go through their mother's old button box and find Klad E Z fasteners.)

On March 24, 1937, Bill, Gladys, and Clyde left on vacation aboard the S.S. *H. M. Flagler* bound for Baytown. Their return trip scheduled for May 22, 1937. Once she was back in Aruba, Gladys began growing and selling pine tree seedlings. There were seedlings in coffee cans everywhere. (It could be truthfully said that half the pine trees grown in the colony started out on their back porch.)

Bill was good with animals. He had a trained monkey that liked to sit on his shoulder and fish things out of Bill's shirt pocket. He also made friends with an iguana that liked to sit on the trellis over the gate and wait to be fed.

In 1938 Gladys's sister, Alta Neal, spent six months in Aruba visiting the Millers. Everyone was celebrating Queen Wilhelmina's 40th Jubilee while she was there. During the time of the celebration, most of the buildings were decorated with orange banners in honor of the House of Orange.<sup>1</sup>

In February 1940, Bill was made an assistant operator and worked at that level until July 1940, when he was promoted to operator.

At the start of World War II, all people of German descent were forced to leave the Island. They were transported in the dead of night to Bonaire where they were interred until after the war. Gladys told the story of being awakened in the night to crying, and shouts of "Please don't take me away" as they loaded some of her neighbors into trucks.

With Gladys expecting her second child, she and Clyde left Aruba on June 18, 1941, aboard the S.S. *F. M. Bedford* bound for New York. On August 25, 1941, the Miller's daughter, Billie Sue, was born in Baytown. Mother and children were not able to return to Aruba until November 1943. (I remember going to the house about dusk and being told we couldn't turn on the lights because of the blackout. I also remember seeing car lights painted black with just a slit of light, one centimeter wide by three centimeters long. The vehicles were also

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<sup>1</sup> *Queen Wilhelmina's father, William III, died in 1890 when she was ten years old. Her mother, Emma, ruled in her place until 1898. Wilhelmina was crowned Queen of the Netherlands at 18, and she served until 1948 when she abdicated the throne in favor of her daughter, Juliana.*

marked by two red-lenses on the back and one on the front.)

On February 16, 1942, Bill was working the graveyard shift on Units Five and Six. In his nightly report he made the following entry: "Down for cleaning and tar line changes. The entire refinery down in about one hour. Submarine attacked at 1:30 a.m. Lasted until 2:11 a.m. Started circulating down at 3:15 a.m. Two ships sunk about 2:00 a.m. One at 6:00 a.m. Shelled power house for about 20 minutes with machine gun and 1-1/2 inch shells. Fire from ships too bad, unable to continue..."

On October 22, 1942, Bill again registered with the Selective Service. He was classified III-B until further notice, which meant he had already served, but could be called up in the event of a national emergency.

In 1945 the Millers moved one street over to Bungalow 413, on Eight Avenue between Second and Fourth Streets. Some of their neighbors were Lloyd and Esther Monroe in Bungalow 411. Broed and Emma Dell Cross in Bungalow 412, Fred and Vera Eaton in Bungalow 416, and Mr. and Mrs. (Chick) Casteel in Bungalow 197. One of Bill's first projects was building a concrete block fence and patio. He and Clyde were always mixing cement and making lattice blocks one-at-a-time. Bill also worked often in his woodwork shop, making gates and patio furniture.

Gladys took Spanish lessons and played "42" with Wilbur and Georgia Self of Bungalow 194. (Wilbur retired in 1949 and returned to Baytown.) In those days Gladys and Georgia would get together to pick almonds, and they often picked sea grapes for sea grape jelly. Agnes Orr made Guava jelly from the tree in her yard.

On June 13, 1945, Bill, Gladys, and children made their first trip by airplane. They flew KLM, to Miami, and they were scheduled to return August 20, 1945. Included in their travel documents was a shoe ration letter. In Texas Bill bought a 1942 Studebaker to take back to Aruba. To enable them to drive it to Miami, their friends and relatives donated gas ration coupons. At noon on August 15, 1945, they were passing through Biloxi, Mississippi when people just suddenly started pouring out of stores, buildings, and houses. They yelled and threw scraps of paper into the air like confetti. Traffic came to a standstill, and Bill leaned out the window and asked what was happening. "The Japanese have surrendered!" They were told. The Millers finally reached their destination, Miami's Columbus Hotel on Biscayne Boulevard.

Bill and Clyde spent most of their 1946 local leave camping out at Boca Mahos. They improved their campsite until they had all the comforts of home; a rock barbecue pit, and a swing tethered to a treetop. That was also the year that Bill helped Clyde build his first boat. Built from scrap lumber and just big enough for one person they paddled it around the Little Lagoon.

A fond memory of this time is walking to the club (this club was across the street from the commissary, and it was in the middle of the colony.) to go to the movie. He remembers sitting in the rows of canvas-backed directors' chairs and looking up a star-filled sky. Unless, of course, it began to rain. A mad dash to get under the eaves of the building was often followed by the realization that you forgot to bring your chair to keep it from getting wet.

The Esso Club Fair in December of 1948 was a big event for the colony. The merry-go-round put together in the open area near the Girl Scout House. Clyde won a prize of fls. \$25 for a poster he had entered in the fair's contest. Horses were bolted onto the merry-go-round, and the flying swings were assembled near the Boy Scout House. (The flying swings were my favorite until one of them came apart one night. David Massey went flying off, hit the Boy Scout House, and broke his arm.) Inside the open area where films were shown, several booths were set up. Bill Koopman had a booth where he made spoons from two Dutch silver ten-cent pieces. One coin was used to form the bowl of the spoon and the other decorated its silver wire handle. Clocks were sold in one, and I think everybody bought one. A glassblower had a booth, and the electric company's Redi Killowatt occupied yet another. Teenage girls operated a wheel of fortune game outside to raise money for a good cause. Their prize was a free six-ounce bottle of Coke. It usually ended up costing you more to win the Coke than if you bought one outright at the inside soda bar.

Gladys and children went to New York aboard the S/S *Esso Aruba* on June 10, 1949. The other passengers included Mrs. Wease and her children; and a couple who were retiring from Aruba. Bill left on August 26 of that same year and joined them in Texas. The Millers and the Weases ran into each other again in New York at the Abbey Hotel, and they returned to Aruba together on October 16. (Billie Sue always wondered why vacations seemed to last so long. Her most frequently asked question of the summer was, "When are we going home?" Adults who grew up elsewhere really didn't seem to understand the bond their children had with Aruba.)

Gladys was in the village Christmas shopping in November, and as she exited the Aruba Trading Company, she was hit by two Dutch policemen in a jeep. When it began to rain, they drove under the awning to get out of the shower, crushing her leg in the process. She didn't lose it, but she did spend considerable time on crutches.

Just before Christmas, Bill became eligible for Bungalow 412. Clyde moving their fully decorated Christmas tree was sight to see.

The Crosses were gone by then, and the Casteel's had retired. There were some new neighbors - The Gongriebs of Bungalow 413, G.G. and Peggy Corrington of Bungalow 197, and Jim and Margaret Farris of Bungalow 195 were new neighbors.

Since she was a young girl, Gladys had a natural talent for cutting and styling hair. When the "Toni Home Permanent" came into use after the war, she was able to show her skill. (You can't imagine what it's like to wake up in the morning in a bedroom full of ladies and the pungent odor of permanent wave solution. A body will get out of bed and leave the house as quick as a bunny.)

Clyde was fourteen and was itching for his own motorboat in 1950. It all sounded simple enough. For \$100 you could buy a boat kit that you could put together yourself. Bill and Clyde began to assemble the thing in Bill's shop. Two days of hard work passed before they became aware there was no way to get the completely assembled kit out of the shop. Much to Gladys' dismay they moved the whole mess into the patio. It finally got launched the first part of 1951. As if to prove that fathers really do enjoy their children's toys as much as their kids do, Bill bought Clyde a five horsepower motor for the boat because he thought it was all he could handle at his age. One spin around the Big Lagoon convinced Bill to trade it off for a more powerful seven-and-a-half horse motor. Bill still got sea sick, so he bought a 10 horse motor for Clyde's birthday. He claimed it rode the waves better.

Halloween and Christmas also bring back memories. On the evening of October 31, 1950, a kids' Halloween party was held at the Jr. Esso Club. Billie Sue won second prize for her "Tottering Grandmother" costume. There was also a Halloween dance at the Esso Club for the High School students that night. Santa Claus arrived at the Jr. Esso Club and gave each child a box of card games. (Who was Santa Claus?) Billie Sue's Donald Duck bicycle invaded the colony that year. Bill found it at that unique store in the village known as "Pete the Greek's." We mustn't forget the Valentine's Day parties at school and the annual Poppy Day Poster Contest held in April or May to advertise the

American Legion's poppy sale.

The next year there was an afternoon Halloween costume contest at the elementary school. Mrs. Mingus and one of the Catholic priests were among the judges. The parade was held on the playground and many mothers were there to watch. Billie Sue won first prize for her "Sunflower" costume. The school Halloween costume contest first prize was won by Dick Burson (Class of 1959). His pirate costume was complete with live, talking green parrot.

Bill worked as the temporary fire chief in the summer of 1953. On the Fourth of July he drove one of the parade's fire engines. You could hardly see the fire engine for all the teenagers riding it. That summer Billie belonged to the "Wheel and Saddle Club," a bicycle safety program sponsored by the Lago Police Department.

On July 19, 1953, Gladys and children went to New York aboard the *S/S Esso Aruba*. Other shipmates during their vacation trip included Dorothy Ammann, Babs, Lonnie, and a family of visitors leaving the island.

The visitors were quite upset. They failed to get the cabin they requested, and they were not seated at the captain's table. For the first time, Billie Sue realized that the Lago system of allocation by seniority and position was not necessarily universal.

The steward was the same one that Gladys had sailed with in 1935. He and Gladys had some amusing stories to tell about the rough trip they had shared. They were the only two that never missed a meal that trip.

While they were on the way to New York, the longshoremen went on strike. The crew honored their picket lines and shut down the galley among other things. The steward, who was making his last trip before retirement, served cold cuts and simple dishes he could prepare himself. Some of us kids pitched in, helping to prepare vegetables and set the tables.

Things were a little tense before the ship docked at an out of the way pier on the East River. A couple of taxis were the only signs of life. In New York, we stayed at the Abbey Hotel, 151 W. 51st Street.

The teenage boys who innocently hitched a ride with Mr. Brook on Halloween Day were a source of aggravation to him. After they jumped off the back of his police truck, he found they had damaged his radio antenna and he was unable to summon help to catch them. He saw how they raced down the sidewalk to the canteen, making sure to jump noisily



on each steel plate that covered the pipelines. At the back door of the canteen, Mr. Brook's first question was, "Okay, which way did Russell go?"

I don't think he was too happy when all we could say was, "Russell? Russell who?"

The seventh and eight grade Mother's Committee held a square-dance/couple dance for the kids at the picnic grounds November 14. Spin the bottle and kissing behind the barbecue pit were two prevalent games during the dance.

There was a New Year's Eve dance at the American Legion Hall for all high school students, and an adult dance at the Esso Club. This was the first time in many years Bill didn't work on New Year's. It was his habit to help blow the plant's whistles at midnight.

Swimming at the beach was a short-lived although widely observed fad for those who celebrated Christmas and New Year's Day of 1954.

If Clyde wasn't at the lagoon working on his boat, he could usually be found messing around with his car. When Bill started working straight days and got a scooter to ride, he had given Clyde his 1937 Ford work car. Clyde cut the back of it cut off to make it into a hot-rod. A job delivering the Pan Aruban on Saturday mornings was necessary to support his two hobbies. By the time Clyde finally got his driver's license on February 1, he had a magazine delivery job with Margaret Wade. Saturday mornings were also times to earn money washing cars. Dean Thompson, the school superintendent, was one of his regular customers.

During March and April Clyde, David Massey, Danny Brewer, and some of his other friends headed for the tank farm behind the high school to try out their latest creation in kites.

The Youth Canteen house opened on Saturday, April 27, with a dedication ceremony at 7:00 p.m. A dance after the movie followed.

Mrs. Mingus donated a big, white ottoman for the Canteen; someone made curtains of rainbow striped material. Bill, Clyde, and other fathers and sons made furniture for the patio. Some of the girls with artistic abilities painted boys and girls on the rest room doors to indicate which was for whom. The patio floor was green cement and the house and fence around the patio was painted green to match. Inside there was a snack bar, shuffle board, Ping-Pong table, and tables and chairs for cards, checkers, chess, backgammon, and just plain "hanging

out."

In the spring of 1954 Bill was on vacation in Europe. By the time he got back, the summer activities program was in full swing. It consisted of swimming lessons at Rodger's Beach, arts and crafts classes at the elementary school. Arts and Crafts classes were facilitated by a man who had lived in Aruba as a boy. He said his house had been in the spot where the children's Sunday school patio now stands. There were tennis lessons at the new courts, archery at Lone Palm Stadium, miniature golf and games at the Jr. Esso Club. Peggy Corrington and Gladys gave teenage girls sewing lessons at the high school.

The summer of 1954 often found Clyde and his friends at the Millers with Denny Jones cooking split-pea soup. That boy did like to cook! Frequently the whole bunch went camping near the picnic grounds. For a conclusion to the summer, the tennis instructor took her charges camping at Sea Grape Grove. Mr. Downey and some of the older Boy Scouts went along as chaperones. Bill and Clyde helped Mr. Downey and the Scouts haul driftwood from the beach to make a campfire. After supper we sang songs and told stories.

A typical school day in the Miller household was started at 7:00 a.m. by the blare of their clock radio. The station began their morning broadcast with the sound of a rooster crowing followed by the recording of "Good Morning" from the movie "Singing in the Rain."

Since the colony was such a multi-cultural community, Gladys had long ago adopted the custom of 4:00 p.m. coffee. Their patio seemed to be a gathering place for teachers after school. Some of the more frequent visitors were fourth grade teacher Helen Busboom. Helen later married Jack Eder, a photography buff with his own darkroom. Others were Mildred Wightwood of the fifth grade, Lorraine Lupold of the fourth grade, and Laura Henniger, a high school teacher.

On Bill's birthday, September 16, 1954, they offered him a two-year position in Santos, Brazil. Since he only had one year before retirement, the job sounded good. To make it more enticing they gave him a year's leave of absence with pay.

Two hundred and five employees with 25 or more years of service were presented gold watches as a company expression of gratitude in November, and Bill was among them. Men from his unit gave him a gold band to go with his watch.

After several delays, the Millers finally departed on December 6, 1954. Bill had been on the Island a few days short of twenty-five years,

and he had been working for the company thirty-four years.

Bill went to work for Hydrocarbon Research in Brazil, and worked there until the job's completion at the end of December 1956. Many Aruba friends ended up in Brazil. Horace and Phyllis Semmens with their three children, Tracy, Barry, and Candy, were a tremendous help to us getting settled. After the first of the year Eugene "Brownie" and Harriett Kimler retired from Aruba and came down to Santos. (Brownie and Harriett Kimler had worked in Tampico, Mexico in 1936 before the government there began to require that more nationals work in operator positions.) Mr. Jamison also came down after the first of the year. Mr. Malcolm and Harold Locker were there on loan. Eugene and Gladys Work were on another job for Hydrocarbon Research in Rio de Janeiro. Louis G. Harris retired from Aruba and went to work in Manaus, Brazil. During the two years there were also visits from Elizabeth Johnson, Barbara Malcolm, Lorraine Lupold, Eula Locker and their three children.

Gladys and children returned to Baytown on September 1, 1956, so that Billie Sue could start school. Bill got there on January 2, 1957. On Bill's plane from Miami, on his way back to college, was Butch Hudson. Bill and Clyde spent most of their time in Texas repairing rent houses. Eventually the whole family began building a home of their own.

To comply with doctor's orders to walk more, Bill went to work part-time for one of the few remaining independent drillers. On February 28, 1970, while walking in the oil field, Bill died of a heart attack. Gladys died June 5, 1982, of natural causes.

**Story as told by his daughter, Billie Sue Lewis.**

## **The Lloyd & Esther Monroe Story**

I was born August 15, 1917 in Pleasantville, Pennsylvania. My wife's name is Esther G. Monroe, born March 15, 1919 in Louisville, Kentucky.

We're western Pennsylvanians, although Esther was born in Kentucky and grew up in West Virginia. Her dad was a minister. My Dad was a driller/producer in the much worked-over Pennsylvania oil field, just a few miles from where Col. Drake started it all. I worked summers as dad's tool dresser during high school and college. Esther and I were high school sweethearts, and both attended Grove City College in Western Pennsylvania. I was on the track and soccer teams and was vice president of the senior class. We were both in one drama club production, playing opposite each other. We were married in June 1940 after my graduation. I went to work, as a student-engineer, for Standard Oil of New Jersey at the Bayway Refinery in New Jersey on July 1, 1940 - 5 days after the wedding. I knew Ira Kirkman and George Cunningham at Bayway; they gave me the low-down on Aruba when I was debating going.

We sold the furniture, packed up and transferred to Aruba November 24, 1945. We got on our very first airplane ride, a DC-3 to Miami. We went from Miami to Aruba via a KLM DC-3. We arrived there on Sunday November 25, 1945. We had three children, Larry 4, Rich 3, and Doug 4 months and we had our hands full. In Miami some helpful soul put our "KLM" hand bags on a hand truck that proved to be carrying the luggage being transferred to flight going to Caracas. Among the essentials winging their way to Venezuela was the baby's formula, with Doug hollering for his 4 o'clock feeding. It being Sunday, there were no stores open in Aruba. No one was at the Aruba Airport to meet us. Information received by the Lago Personnel Department indicated we were due to arrive on Monday. Deo DePalm, bless him, just happened to stop by the Airport. He thought someone might be on the plane. He brought us to Lago Colony, tried to locate some "Klim" for the baby formula. He managed to get us into one of the Bachelor Quarters. (Bungalow 411 wasn't ready for us until two weeks later.) He also found Tink and John Cahill who came to our rescue with formula fixings and a warm welcome. We began to discover how people there really went out of their way to make newcomers feel welcomed. By the way did it ever occur to you how dead and deserted the streets of the Colony could be on

a Sunday afternoon?

We had celebrated Franklin D. Roosevelt's early Thanksgiving in a restaurant in Cranford, New Jersey before going to Aruba. We celebrated the traditional one after arriving in Aruba in the Lago Mess Hall, and the outlook for Christmas was bleak. The only other recollection of that first night in Aruba was our first encounter with those HUGE cockroaches in the Bachelor Quarters kitchen. By the end of the first week in the Bachelor Quarters the kids were all sunburned from daily treks to the Mess Hall. They had also developed heat rash.

We were just ahead of the post-war influx so we got a house, whereas many got stuck in the "barracks" out at Colorado Point. We only experienced that briefly later on as a "paint house" location.

Then we got moved into Bungalow 411 where we lived for the next 15 years. Esther began learning to cope with the kerosene stove, and we had gotten a "maid." The week before Christmas our household goods arrived and the "maid" promptly quit. Fortunately the Christmas trees arrived on time and with the novelty of swimming at the Baby Lagoon on Christmas day we did celebrate--and decided to stay. However I said to myself: "But, so help me, for no more than 2 years."

Recollections of the inevitable adjustment problems have dimmed in the intervening years. Eventually we brought Josephine over from Nevis; she was our maid for over 20 years. The heat rash problem persisted until, many bottles of Calamine lotion later. Also a little creative plumbing under the house to get fresh water in one of the showers helped solve that problem. We finally concluded that the brackish water previously flowing from the shower aggravated the rash problem.

Initially our neighbors were the Ralph Denton family (John and Nancy Denton lived there later after Larry and Patsy Engleking and on the other side Broed and Emma Cross followed by Bill and Gladys Miller and the Touchstones--lots of turnover. Behind us was Jim Osborn, down on the corner was Oliver Forbes, up across the street were Jim and Margaret Farris, and on up the street were the Eatons, Schoonmakers, and Rosboroughs. Chief Brook was nearby at "five-corners."

I transferred from Bayway to Lago in 1945 as Process Engineer in the Technical Services Department. In 1951 I transferred to the Process Department as technical assistant in Catalytic & Light Ends Department. Later I became the Process Foreman and Assistant Division

Superintendent in the C. & L. E., then the Acid & Edeleanu Plants, then the Receiving & Shipping Department and then the Utilities Department. The last position I held was that of Division Superintendent (replacing Bill Ewart) in the Utilities Department. Then I spent a year in the Mechanical Department during reorganization. I had by then turned down two transfer "opportunities" and the skids were greased, so I opted for an early retirement, at age 50, in 1967 and came back to the States.

The fun went out of it in the later years as Lago had to cut costs to stay competitive. Those later years were less pleasant, as we pared the payroll from something over 8000 to less than 2000. There were fewer than 100 foreign staff there when we left. Competitive pressures in the oil industry had forced a hard-nosed approach. New management people circulated through the ranks and old faces disappeared. New friends replaced old ones, but the halcyon days were gone forever. As we reduced forces and cut services I think we were all a bit surprised at how much leaner we could operate. It was difficult to see people go, but I think that in the process of reducing the number of men in the organization the minimum of hardship was created for those involved.

Our John had to go to the States for his last two years of high school. We left shortly afterwards, when Bill was ready for junior high school.

I went to work for Bechtel in San Francisco, did a little consulting work after getting my California engineering license, then "hung it up" for good in 1976. My life story--somehow, in retrospect, less impressive than once dreaded of, but with no regrets and with overall good feelings about Lago and Exxon in general.

## **CAVES**

Those caves in the colony were known to our kids as the Burson Caves but I'm not sure why. The younger generation can probably supply you with more tales about those and the phosphate mines. However, I believe Jack Opdyke was the resident spelunker of our time. The only thing I remember about the "bat caves" was the smell. It was there I identified the strange taste found in vegetables from the Chinese gardens at Fontein.

## **RAINFALL**

From a government report (October 1929 - December 1962)  
(figures are in inches)

Minimum monthly - NIL on several occasions  
Maximum monthly 14.66 - in November of 1955

Overall annual average - 18.82  
Minimum annual 7.73 - in 1930  
Maximum annual 44.16 - in 1950

### **WEDDINGS**

We remember a Moslem wedding at Lago Heights of one of my employees in the Technical Services Department to which Esther and I were invited. The bride, a Venezuelan girl, had to first renounce her Christian faith and embrace the Moslem faith as part of the ceremony. It was performed by the Moslem leader at his home. He was one of the power house operators, named Saed I think.

### **CRAWLING THINGS**

Lizards, Iguanas, Land Crabs of course were mostly fun things, especially for the kids. Not so the scorpions and centipedes. I didn't believe the centipede stories until I saw a huge one preserved in a bottle. Esther can attest to what they can do. A small one, about 3 inches long, landed on her arm one night at a wiener roast under the sea grape trees and left marks like a surgeons stitches. I encountered a scorpion one day when I pulled on an old pair of pants I had left hanging in the garage. That was not the only time I got stung but the most memorable.

### **THE PITCH PILE**

This was the sandy beach area that was laid out along the north side of the island opposite the cliffs and the Golf Course Club House. Bull dozers scraped up the sand into dikes around the area. Low and high melt pitch was pumped out from the Pitch Stills during the war when the fuel products had to be produced but there was no market for the heavy ends. The high melt, was injected into a 6" pipe line through which a stream of water was pumped. In the water the pitch formed chunks that wound up in the pitch pile. The low melt went out hot to form the pitch lake inside the dikes.

I don't know how deep that lake is, but I remember getting stuck there one night in Bill Beatty's car. The church's Young Couples Club had a treasure hunt and one note was in the old shack down there. We drove onto the lake but tarried too long. The car settled just enough so that it wouldn't budge. As the wheels spun, it settled deeper. Fortunately we found some boards, jacked up each back wheel, put a board under it and got away.

### **WHITE RATTLESNAKES**

We saw one while on a picnic with Dr. Woodard and his family. The next one we saw was in the San Diego Zoo labeled "Rare White Rattlesnake from Aruba, N. A." A guy in the Technical Services

Department, whose name I can't remember, used to trap them to send to zoos.

### **LAGO COMMUNITY CHURCH**

Esther's scrap book turns up a clipping from either an anniversary service or from information sent out when we were looking for a new minister:

"The Lago Community Church, located on Aruba (123 degrees north latitude, bisected by the 70th meridian), with the Reverend Donald R. Evans as minister since 1948, has 312 church members and 300 church school members. The first permanent church organization, formed in 1929 was basically a Sunday school. The school met in George Wilkins home at one time. Later it was supplemented with church services in the old Dining Hall and was led by Jack Emery who was a carpenter foreman.

In 1934 the Reverend Paul W. Rischell, of Norwood, Massachusetts was called as the first minister. The first and present church building was donated by Lago and dedicated in 1939. Many of the furnishings supplied by members at that time are the same as exist today. The Reverend W. D. Bigart (1940 to 1943) guided the church during the worst of the war years. The Reverend Percy V. Dawe (1944 to 1948) promoted the construction of patios for the primary church Sunday school. The Women's Guild request for a church kitchen and an outdoor terrace overlooking the Caribbean toward Venezuela was realized in 1948. With the construction of the large patio east of the church in 1955, the entire Church School was reorganized at their Church." After Don Evans left, he was followed by Joseph Q. Wayne and then Anthony Van Den Doel, but I don't remember the years of their ministries or who replaced Tony after we left. Two notable interim ministers or vacation replacements were Murdo MacDonald and Ed Hunt. Murdo married Betty Russell who was the daughter of Captain Russell of the Lake Tanker Fleet. Murdo had been here with the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders during the war. He came back after the war for a visit and to fill our pulpit for one summer. We visited Murdo and Betty in Scotland in April of 1981. Murdo was the head of the Department of Theology at the University of Glasgow.

### **TUG AGROUND**

I don't know what tanker was involved, but the tug was the Captain Rodger. Our maid insisted that the people from Saba never tolerate losing a ship that way and that, if they got all the Sabanes together, and provided enough rum, they'd get it off the rocks and back at sea.



## **CHIVAREES**

I only recall the one for Al and Comir Kossuth. They spent their wedding night in Jim and Kinta Osborn's house behind us. After they thought festivities were over they discovered that alarm clocks had been hidden all over the house to go off at intervals all night.

## **GOLF & WATER SPORTS**

I wonder if anyone ever took Roy up on his bet that he could beat anybody in the club in a round of golf using only his putter?

Some of the favorite memories shared by our family of Aruba concerns water sports. This includes swimming, snorkeling, water skiing, etc.

## **LAGO COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

I remember very little about it except for an incident when I was presiding at one of its meetings in the Esso Club. A motion was introduced that a strong letter of protest be sent to the island government against their proposal to legalize prostitution. Most people kept their views to themselves, but there were enough bachelors and other well-meaning folk who thought the government action justified from a health protection standpoint. As chairman I didn't cast a vote. Wouldn't you know-- it was a tie and I had to break it.

## **MAIDS**

We went through several until we sent airfare to the sister of Reverend Dawes' maid to come from Nevis to work for us. Josephine was with us for almost 20 years and worked for Gene and Laura Goley after we left. We still keep in touch with her although she is no longer able to work.

One of the early candidates we will well remember: Esther found her one day taking a spoonful of kerosene with Tabasco sauce in it because her stomach was upset.

## **BASEBALL**

Lago Colony had a team in an island league one year. With Joe Proterra pitching and a couple of buys with Class A experience the scores tended to be one-sided. Bill Eagan was playing 1st base, George Janson on 3rd I believe, Wes Walker at short, Walt Spitzer in center field and I was in right field. A guy on the local team got trapped in a rundown between 2nd and 3rd. He tried to get out of it by ramming Wes Walker headfirst in the stomach. In the ensuing melee the fans emptied the stands, picking up baseball bats if they could (we had no fans).

Calmer heads prevailed but we retired from the field--and the league.

In later years we had a colony team sponsored by Woolsey Paint, but by then the caliber of baseball on the island was far different and we were on the losing end.

### **SOFTBALL**

The departmental teams were a source of much entertainment and good exercise for many years. The time came however when some departments had difficulty fielding a team and for a year or two we had pickup teams and welcomed anyone who wanted to play and the coaches tried to give everybody a chance. One night Eddie McCoart told one of his subs to take so-and-so's place in right field. When the sub said "Where's right field?" I thought Eddie was going to swallow his cigar. Maybe that's why the format changed back again, with departments combining as necessary. The High School also fielded a team.

The softball league shares a big part of our memories. This became especially true after our sons got in High School and played along with us. Esther always was (and still is) an avid baseball fan.

### **BRACKISH WATER**

The main well was the Mangel Cora well, a tunnel running between the Baby Lagoon and the Seroe Colorado Light House. I don't remember the other well. Fresh water was injected to control salt content to under 35 grains per gallon, which someone had determined was the limit for plant life. However, it did not prevent heat rash, so many covertly converted their showers to fresh water. On the other hand, one guy insisted a Scotch and water was much better with brackish than fresh water. With the proportions he used I don't think it made much difference.

### **JIMMY ARMSTRONG**

A lovable guy; the only one I ever knew who could swear like a pirate in almost any company and never seem to offend anyone.

It is difficult to talk about all the colorful characters that added spice to life in Aruba. Naming names or even repeating stories without names might cause hurt or embarrassment--except for real short-timers like the guy that buzzed the tankers in the harbor with a flying club plane, damaged his propeller on landing, sawed off both ends of the prop and took off again. I believe he left on the next flight out. Then there were those whose quiet influence made Aruba a pleasant place to live--I think of Glenn Hendrickson, Fred Eaton, and Earl Carroll to name a few.

## **SHOWS**

Esther's scrap book turns up more stuff. "The Cotton Blossom Minstrels" in March of 1955. Put on by the Esso Club Board of Governors; Gene Keesler, Director of Activities; show written and produced by Ev Biddle; with Dr. Russell Carrell as Interlocutor, Vic Schultz as Master of Ceremonies, Jan Koulman's orchestra, and dozens of other talented people.

And then there was the show, March 5th and 6th, 1958. The title was "Hoop Skirts and Bustles." Ev Biddle assembled cast, costumes and comics. The Nineties was with us in song, instrumentation, antics and dance. The Gay Nineties chorus alone contained 41 voices directed by Jan Koulman. We even had the high kicks of leggy Can-Can girls. (They were Ann Orr, Jessie Wimmers, Eileen Hochstuhl, Barbara Malcolm, Beatrice Hayes, and Dean Thompson, Eileen Turner, Angelina Smit, Leo Ehteld, Emalie Janson, John Stritch, Dottie Lisot, Jim and Joyce Quitter, Bill Hochstuhl and Jake Freundel, Val Learned, Dot Joseph and Pat Bergfield, with Carolyn Vint at the piano.

Among our fondest memories are Doris Thompson's incomparable annual Community Christmas Choir programs. We have tapes of all of those recorded. Doris deserves special mention for her contribution to the life of the community.

## **COMMUNITY BAND**

This was another major accomplishment of talented people in our community. Jan Koulman was the director and it was surprising to see those of our fellow workers who participated in this community activity.

## **CAR REPAIR**

A pastime for many of us, though not a favorite one, was keeping our car running and often an old dilapidated work car as well, because it was easier than finding a garage you could count on.

## **BARBECUES**

The Golf Club Barbecues were big events. The kids had more fun chasing donkeys on the golf course than eating. Which reminds me you can probably get some interesting stories of escapades from the younger generation that we know little of--such as chasing rabbits with cars on the golf course late at night, diving off Colorado Point, catching sharks at Boca Mahos (it took weeks to get the smell out of my car after Larry brought that shark's head home in the trunk), close calls swimming in the surf on north coast beaches, etc. <sup>2</sup>

## **ESSO CLUB ACTIVITIES**

Club activities were too numerous to mention--bridge, golf, tennis, etc. Our extended "Aruba family" helped us through the Holidays. We helped each other bear up under the absence of relatives.

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<sup>2</sup> *Actually we didn't find any in pop's files that were readily available for shoe-horning into this book. Maybe in a sequel. I was hoping to find just that in here. It would make a nice memory book all in one place.*

## **The Malcolm G. Murray, Jr. Story**

My name is Malcolm G. Murray. Before entering the Army in 1955 I answered to "Mac". Everyone was called Mac in the Army so since that time I have answered to "Malcolm." I was born in 1930 in Hinsdale, Illinois. I attended grade school in Ellwood City, Pennsylvania and in Stuart, Florida. I attended High School in Tucson, Arizona and Ellwood City, Pennsylvania. I was the Assistant Editor of the High School Yearbook and graduated in 1948.

I attended Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. I graduated with a B. S. degree in Mechanical Engineering in 1952. While there I was a Feature Editor of Duke Engineering Magazine. I later attended Stanford University, Stanford, California. In 1961 I graduated with a M.S. degree in Mechanical Engineering.

### **GOING TO ARUBA**

I first traveled to Aruba via a KLM Airline DC-4 airplane from Miami, Florida. It was a 6 hour flight and was bumpy over Jamaica. At the airport there I saw a 1930 LaSalle touring car being used as a Taxi. Had no time to take a ride in it. It was hot while we were at Camaguey, Cuba. I arrived in Aruba June 14, 1952 where I was met by Rudy Janecek. All of my travels to and from Aruba were by air. Never traveled on a ship.

### **ARMY SERVICE**

I was 22 years old and a bachelor, just fresh out of college when I arrived. I was assigned to Bachelor's Quarter Number 2 where I lived for two years. From there I moved in with Bob Townsend in Bungalow # 249 (I think). Bob married Frank Berto's sister, Edna, several months later and moved out. A few months after that I moved out to the Army where I spent the next two years.

### **BACK TO ARUBA**

After I got out of the Army I lived in a succession of three room bungalows. I had to keep moving so they could dismantle them. In January of 1967 Consuelo and I were married and we moved into bungalow 267. We lived there until our final departure in 1972.

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

My first assignment in Aruba was to the Equipment Inspection Department. I rotated through various training assignments for a year and a half. I ended up as a project and design engineer. I worked on

various building and refinery construction and plant modification projects. I also did many air conditioning and refrigeration projects and powerhouse work. I became a machinery maintenance engineer in a new section headed by Charles Miannay. In 1971 I returned to project engineering specializing in machinery aspects of projects. I also did a lot of work improving machinery grouting and alignment equipment and procedures.

### **EXPERIENCES IN THE COLONY**

The traditional 4th of July Parades were discontinued in the late 60's. Our regular 4th of July picnics and fireworks continued longer. British subjects attended our picnics. Some told me they were celebrating "getting rid of those troublesome colonies in North America."

We didn't have much variety in our weather. It was mostly hot and dry, with a bit of rain in December and June. 88 degrees Fahrenheit, dry bulb, 81 degrees Fahrenheit wet bulb, 74% relative humidity were our "official" outdoor design conditions for air conditioning calculations.

The allocation of housing in the Colony was based on salary, length of service, family status and size. Bachelors lived in the Bachelor Quarters or shuttled around in vacation houses every few months. Colorado Point apartments were usually the first step for newly married couples. Some stayed there by preference. The Sea View apartments were the next housing offered. Then small bungalows and then larger. Teachers and secretaries lived in the girls dormitory, Nurses lived in the nurses homes near the hospital.

The 30-year history of the Lake Tanker Fleet was brought to a close when the *S/S Trujillo* tied up in Jacksonville, Florida that November, 1954. The Lake Tanker fleet was replaced with four large shuttle tankers. Lake fleet officers and families left. This made housing more readily available. Colorado Point and Seaview apartments were dismantled. Most bachelors moved into bungalows. Housing renovations were supposed to be done every five years but didn't always get done. Many houses were dismantled in the '60's. In the '70's new houses were built and some Aruban employees were allowed to move into Seroe Colorado (Lago Colony).

There was an old steam locomotive for the phosphate mines on the tracks up near the old phosphate pits in the early days. It was put in the phosphate pits near the hospital. The railroad used by the refinery used Brookville locomotives. It was used to haul catalyst to the Catalytic Cracking Plant. This catalyst was shipped in large heavy cardboard barrels. They were about the size of a 55 gallon oil drum. The use of

this railroad was discontinued about 1956.

## **BOY SCOUTS**

I was never a Boy Scout myself. In 1953 I was working briefly with the field engineers in Aruba doing surveying work under Frank Parisi and C. D. Sexton. C. D. was Scoutmaster, and asked me to assist. I did so for the remainder of the year. Then I continued with Joe Anello the following year, and finally with Jim Lopez.

Other assistants during the period were Jim Maxey and Bob Townsend. Occasionally Frank Berto was an assistant.

Some of our scouts that come to mind were Norman Owen, Billy White, Donald Rosborough, Michael Proterra, Billy and Arthur MacNutt, Carl Beyer, John Thompson, David and Michael Lopez, Tim Hagerty, Phil Hemstreet, Michael Rogers, Bob Legenhausen, Jon Keller, Gary Osborn. Jon Keller caused a lot of disturbance until we found the solution. We made him the troop bugler, and had him blow the bugle to announce every event in our meeting program. He took this responsibility seriously and became a model scout. We camped out at both sea grape groves, Beaujon's Palm Grove at the other end of the island, Andicouri, Boca Prins white sand dunes, Dos Playa, and probably some other places I have forgotten. We dived for lobsters at the Malmok cliffs and cooked their tails over our fires. We hauled supplies in a company truck, hauled boys in a truck or bus, and let them walk the last five miles. We used to have trouble with boys making noise all night and keeping others awake. I solved this problem by requiring parents to sign a lengthy permission slip, in which I threatened to bring home any noisemaking boys, at any hour of the night or morning, and return them to their parents. The parents spoke to the boys. The boys were quiet after taps henceforth. I have waked up in three blankets, and been shivering with cold from penetrating sea breeze. Inside a pup tent one blanket was sufficient. I woke up once with a light shining in my eyes. Surprisingly, it came from a ship miles out at sea.

I left Aruba in March 1955, to enter the U. S. Army. I returned 2-1/2 years later, and again became an assistant scoutmaster, this time under Jack Opdyke, for about a year. During this period, Edward Gruenberg became an Eagle Scout. I then dropped out of Scouting activities, since I had joined the Flying Club, and wanted the time to engage in flying activities.

Now in 1981, I am again helping with a local troop, since our 11 year old boy, Ted, is a member.

## **ARUBA FISHERMEN AND SIGNAL REFLECTORS**

The old time Aruba fisherman used sailing boats, and it was a treat to see them handle the sails to make these boats go where they want them to go. In the late '50's and early '60's, however fishermen stopped using sails, and began using outboard motors. Some took two motors, but many took only one. If the motor failed, the water was usually too deep to anchor. They would then drift to Panama in 17 days. By this time, all on board were usually dead. A lot of fishermen were lost this way, despite extensive searches carried on by the Dutch Navy planes, Aruba Flying Club planes, and sometimes the U. S. Coast Guard from Puerto Rico. Most boats were painted white, and were hard to see in an ocean full of whitecaps. Mauricio Croes' father was lost this way in the late '50's. I searched for him without success in a Flying Club plane.

About this time, I had become active in the Flying Club to the point of getting my pilot and instructor licenses, and was making lots of off-island flights to Curacao, Bonaire, Venezuela, the Caribbean islands, and even to Florida. All this stimulated me to study ocean survival techniques and equipment. One of the most effective devices I found, was the military signal mirror - generally a 3" x 5" glass with an aiming device permitting its effective use over approximately 20 miles range.

Jim Lopez bought four of these one time at an Army-Navy surplus military equipment store. These were purchased along with canteens, belts, folding shovels, etc. for the use of the Boy Scouts. I bought a number of these from military surplus sources, and sold them at cost to Aruba fishermen. Several subsequently had trouble, signaled for help, and were towed in. This seemed to be a good solution to the problem, but it turned out not to be, for two reasons: The surplus sources became exhausted, and new signal mirrors were too costly. The glass mirrors were fragile, corroded easily, and would sink if dropped overboard.

I started experimenting with designs, working in Howard Garig's garage, later at Aruba Engineering & Drafting in Lago Heights, eventually in an airplane hanger I bought at De Vuijst Field. I came up with a plastic "aim-able" reflector which was highly breakage and corrosion resistant, and which would float. I obtained U. S. and foreign patents on the design, and set up a "factory" in a rented building in San Nicholas, to make them in quantity. The Harbormaster, Mr. Jan Berkhout, became interested in the project and arranged for free TV time to publicize them. He, I, and Mauricio Croes put on a TV program in Dutch, English, and Papiamento, in which we explained and demonstrated the mirrors, temporarily blanking out TV transmission when I reflected too much light into the TV camera. The next day we



sold hundreds of them to fishermen. We sold them below cost, which we were able to do by a fortuitous circumstance as follows: Lago, and the Charles Martin and Saybolt Oil Inspection Companies, and U. S. Navy Oil Inspectors decided they needed a non-aim-able version of this reflector for tank gaging. I sold hundreds at a profit to the foregoing purchasers plus the Esso Fleet in New York and Creole Petroleum in Venezuela. This profit subsidized the low cost of the signal reflector sales to the fishermen.

At the same time I was writing a weekly aviation column for the Pan Aruban, Local, and Sun newspapers, and further publicized the reflector program via these media. Customers even showed up from Curacao, and itinerant yachtsmen occasionally looked me up to get them.

I used to climb to the top of Hooiberg or Yamanota and signal to Colorado and California Points to friends established there, to test various reflector designs. Sometimes I would take a plane up, tilt it on its side and signal out the window to a friend on the ground miles away. I needed about 3 or 4 hands all at once, and the plane usually made some odd looking maneuvers.

I also designed and built at this San Nicholas site several unique machinery alignment tools to solve problems encountered on my job at Lago. For the design work, I set up a surplus drafting table in a vacant room at the hospital, and went up there to work on weekends. These alignment tools proved quite successful, and I got U. S. patents on several of them. I began manufacturing them commercially in 1973, with the help of Howard Garig, in a shop in the old terminal building at Brownsville International Airport, Brownsville, Texas. In 1974, I came to work at the Exxon Chemical Company in Baytown and moved the alignment tool shop to Baytown, where I still have it. The Murray and Garig Tool Works, which has been our name since 1973, has shipped tools to 24 countries thus far. As a part-time business, it isn't very profitable, but I hope to get more active with it when I retire, and in the meantime I enjoy it a lot.<sup>1</sup>

Another product, which I never did much with for fear of product liability lawsuits, was a "Painless Paddle." This was made of polyethylene foam. It makes a loud bang, but doesn't hurt the victim. In Aruba, I would give it to people who wanted it then later ask them, in a loud voice, in a public place, whether they had beaten their wives lately, and if so, had the activity been successful? This limited subsequent requests for free paddles.

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<sup>1</sup> You can go to [www.malcolmmurray.com](http://www.malcolmmurray.com) for more about these products.

## **THE ARUBA FLYING CLUB**

I joined the Flying Club in 1957, shortly after returning from my Army service. I had gone on some flights with Frank Berto in the early '50's, but delayed joining since I anticipated interruption of training by army service, and wished to avoid this.

My instructor was Dougald McCormick, an ex-U. S. Navy Grumman Avenger pilot. Among my fellow students were my former boy scouts Bruce Clark and Frank Barnes. Frank later became a U. S. Navy pilot. I got my license, and proceeded with more advance training, eventually getting a Dutch instructor license and an American private pilot license with instrument rating. In 1963 I bought a Stinson 108-3, with an oversize Lycoming 190 HP military surplus engine and variable pitch propeller. I bought this plane in Arizona and flew it to Aruba.

I kept U. S. registry on it, and flew it around the island chain once a year to Puerto Rico for the F.A.A. inspection. When I got married in 1967, Consuelo and I left Aruba in this plane and flew to Puerto Rico via Curacao; Barcelona, Venezuela; Trinidad; St. Lucia; St. Kitts; and Puerto Rico. In Puerto Rico I sold the plane and we continued on to the U. S. by airline. On the way back I found it necessary to spend several more days in Puerto Rico, teaching the new owners to fly the Stinson. Consuelo's vacation was running out, so she returned to Aruba without me, and took some kidding from her friends about my not surviving the honeymoon. I followed several days later. At that time we could ride the TransCaribbean Airline between Aruba and Puerto Rico for \$25 one way and \$35 for a round trip.

After that, I flew for a couple more years in Club planes, then stopped, mainly due to pressure of other interests and impatience at the increasing restrictions and red tape required for flying.

Prominent members and officers during my 15 years in the Club included Ted Cole, Al Casali, Fred Redden, Dougald McCormick, Ferrow and Betty Himes, Clarence and Edna Waddell, Paul van de Voort, Bill Porritt, Howard Garig, Jeff Johnson, Bob De Goede, Bill Ewart, Barney Ellis, Max Croes, Jessie Wimmers, Margaret Touchstone, Juan Diaz (IBM), Rob Kuipers, Mary Brindle (now Mary Grove), Dave Barnes, Dr. O. A. Bijl, Eddie Luckhoo, Eddie Bernabela, Harold Oduber, Charles Miannay, Pat Heigho (U.S. Vice Consul), Clarence Rutt (Dowell-Schlumberger), Jim Harlow (ex-U.S. Navy pilot).

Albert Nichols was our resident mechanic until he died in the late '60's. Then Jan Staat had the job for a couple of years, and after that the

work was done by ALM Airline mechanics. As I understand it, the Club became inactive in the '70's, partly due to high gasoline prices and partly due to other factors such as unsubstantiated accusations of narcotic smuggling which the government used as an excuse to close DeVuijst Field.

During its most active period, the Club had 45-51 members at any given time, and four planes (not counting several privately owned planes based at the field). We had an active Flight and Ground School program trained many pilots, some of whom went on to become professionals: Jan Staat, Rob Kuipers, Jessie Wimmers, Henk Holewein, Eddie Bernabela, Roy Bergen. Flights were made as far south as French Guiana, and north as far as Canada. The safety record was generally quite good, although a few accidents occurred. The worst being the crash and fire after takeoff of the 4 place Mooney, in which two passengers were killed and the pilot, W. E. Ruiz, badly burned. The most frequently made flights were to Curacao and Bonaire, as might be expected. Many ventured into various parts of Venezuela. My favorite was to enter at Barcelona and fly south via Anaco, San Tome, and Ciudad Bolivar, past the Orinoco River and the iron mines, into the jungle strip at Canaima. This was beautiful country with spectacular mountains and waterfalls, including Angel Falls, the highest in the world. It reminded me of Yosemite without the crowds of people.

Trinidad, the island chain, and Puerto Rico were popular for those taking "local vacations." And, of course, a few venturesome pilots went on to the U.S. and Canada. These included Fred Redden, Howard Garig, Ferrow Himes, John Wiederhold, Clarence Reutt, Ron Strong, and myself -- plus others I have forgotten.

I have fond memories of the Flying Club. My first date with Consuelo was a flying tour of the island. I served on several managing board positions over the years, and did a lot of working and arguing. Flying Club membership led to some lasting friendships (Howard Garig, in particular) and some interesting experiences.

### **BLURBS**

- I became a registered Professional Engineer in the District of Columbia in 1957. I became a registered P. E. in Texas in 1973.
- I was a member of the Engineers Club, the Camera Club and the Flying Club.
- Jimmy Armstrong had an unusual voice. Face to face it sounded normal, but on the phone it would carry across the big drafting room

from one end to the other. He had a poison apple tree in his back yard. When the Colony Service wanted to cut it down he wouldn't let them. So they put a fence around it. The day after he retired they cut it down.

- In 1958 Ferrow Himes ran out of gas at night while ferrying a Piper Tri-Pacer to Aruba from the U. S. A. He landed in the San Juan, Puerto Rico city dump. The plane only suffered minor damage
- Some of the professors who came down to Aruba during the summer vacations at their college were: Florence Schale - - Rapid Reading, Eugene L. Grant - - Engineering Economics, Bruno Furst - - Memory Improvement.
- When I think about some of the movers and shakers in the Colony I think of Ted Cole. He was a quiet man, an architect for the Colony Service. He was President of the Flying Club and a flying instructor. He accomplished a lot without pushing too hard. We still correspond with his widow who lives in Flagstaff, Arizona. Howard Garig was another of our movers and shakers.
- In the late '60's or early '70's a hurricane blew rain from the south side through open windows. It shorted out some of our powerhouse switchgear.

## **The William Hughs & Marjorie Hiron Norris Story**

I was born on a farm near a small town of Waltonville, Illinois, March 22, 1909. The town celebrated its centennial on June 10, 11, 12, 1992. Marjorie Hiron, a farmer's daughter, was born near Dixon, South Dakota on March 27, 1910. My father had studied law for a short while, worked as a station telegraph operator with a small railroad, and he began farming in 1899.

### **SCHOOLING**

At age four I started school in a one room school house in the little town of Science. I attended Community High School in Waltonville. Waltonville was four miles by road and just over a mile by railroad from my house. My main mode of travel to school was on horseback, and that was because farm chores and school kept me so busy I didn't have the time to walk. Required work on the farm kept me from taking part in sports and extra curricular activities. The saddle my father gave me when I started high school was more of a necessity than a gift. He died in August 1925.

### **MARJORIE**

Marjorie was born on a Trip County, South Dakota farm. A farm near Dixon, South Dakota was her home by the time she started school. In 1927 Marjorie graduated high school in Gregory, a town 13 miles from Dixon. After graduating from nurses training at Christian Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri, she worked in home care and took special cases in St. Louis. The terrible South Dakota drought of 1930 was instrumental in bringing her family back to live in Waltonville, Illinois. Both our families lived in Waltonville before her parents went to "help settle South Dakota."

I met Marjorie while on a vacation from Aruba. We corresponded and she described her duties in Mt. Vernon, Illinois as special nurse, her work in emergency relief, and her experiences in county visiting.

### **FIRST JOB EXPERIENCE**

The Roxana Petroleum Corporation at Woodriver, Illinois gave me my first big job in September 1928. Tests showed I was best suited for a position with their Technical Service Division. The wage was 50 cents per hour, five cents less than a laborer earned.

For the extra five cents an hour, I worked as a laborer for six months. I was with the clean out gang, the pipe craft men, the machinists, and the brick masons.

### **MY NEXT JOB ASSIGNMENTS**

During 1929 I was assigned to the Receiving and Shipping Department. My first job in this department was tank car valve inspection and repair. My next position was yard clerk. Yard clerks prepared manifests, drew samples for laboratory checks, and kept records of laboratory inspections, car sealing tank car valves and dome latches. They cleaned and loaded rack tracks, operated track switches, and called for switch engines. Laboratory samples I delivered by bicycle.

We loaded the tank cars on the 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. to 12:00 midnight shifts. The 4:00 p.m. to midnight shift clerk saw to it that a string of empty cars was waiting on the racks for the 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. shift.

### **TANK GAGING**

My boss, Dave Segal, gave me blueprints to study for a tank farm and gauger position that was opening. After a three day trial period the job was mine. I was responsible for 30 tanks, 12 steam driven transfer pumps, and I had oil and sewer water separators to operate. The separators kept refinery sewer oil from entering the Mississippi River. Oil transfers averaged 20 per shift. I worked this job from June 1929 to March 1930. On March 22, I was 21 years old.

### **INTERVIEW FOR JOB IN ARUBA**

There was an advertisement in the Woodriver News asking for experienced refinery workers to work overseas for the Pan American Petroleum Corporation. Mr. O.H. Shelton offered me a job in Aruba.

The minus 22 degree temperature we experienced during three weeks in January 1930 made his job offer look good, and I accepted. Mr. Henry Wolfe and I worked 12 hour shifts during that period.

The Shell Oil Company got 30 days notice while I went home to put in the family farm's spring crops. New York, my final stop before going to Aruba, was where I had yet another medical exam, received my passport, and signed an 18 month contract.

### **MY TRIP TO & ARRIVAL IN ARUBA**

I arrived in New York simultaneously with the Atlantic Fleet. Bluejackets on shore leave were everywhere in New York City. Battleships loomed in the Hudson River. A group of us destined for Aruba waited 10 days for an ocean tanker.

W.L. "Bill" Legate, E.O. Fickle, John Sonnenberg, two others, and I sailed from Perth Amboy, New Jersey on the *S/S Paul H. Harwood*.

The trip seemed smooth to me, but seasickness and homesickness were prevalent. Some were cheered by the foolish promise we would pass a mail buoy where letters could be posted. Mailing letters at a mail buoy sounded foolish to me, but writing letters seemed to calm those who missed their homes.

To a landlubber like me, all that water, passing ships, flying fish, and dolphins were exciting to watch. I think a few of the others were afraid of the sea and the unknown. We arrived in Aruba May 15, 1930, seven days after departing from New Jersey.

Someone from the personnel office, Joe Getts I believe, met us at the ship and took us to the personnel office where we received our job assignments. We were taken to our living quarters. The *sheep sheds* and Bachelor Quarters One, Two, Three, and Four were filled; we were consigned to the comparative luxury of bungalows. Sixteen other men and I were placed in Bungalow 28. Our beds were narrow, hard-as-stone army cots, and the only place we had to store our belongings was under them.

It seemed some men came to Aruba, took one look the conditions, and went back on the same ship. Some became so despondent they spent most of their off work time in the bar consulting with John Barleycorn.

A month later Bachelor Quarters Five was completed; and Don Haase, John Sonnenberg and I shared a room on the second floor. I don't know anyone who stayed in the *sheep sheds*, but it was rumored that some did not want to leave them. I never was quartered in the *sheep sheds*, but Ed McCoart and others used to have big poker games there.

### **MY FIRST DAY IN ARUBA**

I remember my first meal in the dining hall was very good, but then I thought the meals we had on the ship were okay too. A group went to a Bachelor Quarters One crap game after supper, and I got lucky. My pockets were full of those big guilden bills by 10:00 p.m. Our bungalow had a big party going full blast by the time I got there, and there was beer everywhere. The local beer was not the same as the home brew as I was accustomed to. People were sitting on my cot all evening and I couldn't sack out. About 1:00 a.m. things quieted, but someone had gotten sick and passed out on my cot, and I slept on the porch.

The next day I was assigned to work as a Fireman on Pressure Still Four. Gas Plant work for L.G. Lopez was how I finished most of my

first contract. I learned a great deal about distillation and operations in general. Along with his beautiful handwriting, his knowledge of distillation was outstanding. The construction and operation of the Podbielniac Apparatus in his small laboratory was a wonder of knowledge and patience.

One fellow told me that I would never get anywhere on the stills if I did not come to the cantinas and buy drinks for a certain person who had "influence." I didn't agree with that advice.

### **A SWING MAN**

In Aruba, becoming a "swing man" was an ideal training period for me. I replaced men on vacation in the Gas Plant and the Cracking Plant. This exposed me to the processing of crude oil, Cracking Plants, and the manufacture of lighter hydrocarbons in the Gas Plant. My supervisors and many Lago families made my job and our lives in Aruba enjoyable, and that experience gave us the greatest and most lasting memories. We had the good fortune to experience many great and lasting friendships. The Reunions, The Aruba Chronicle, and the many Christmas Cards and letters keep these memories alive.

### **THE LANDING OF THE PAN AM SEAPLANE IN 1932**

There was a seaplane that landed in the lagoon. The plane delivered rewound motors to replace the ones in Power House One that were ruined when the Pump Pit was flooded due to an operations error.

### **LAKE TANKER FIRE - 1932**

One night when I was working the 4:p.m. to 12: Midnight shift there was a fire at the Lake Tanker docks. Since I was a member of the fire fighting team for that shift I hiked down there. Luckily it was just before sundown. I was on the nozzle with five others helping me with the hose. There was full line pressure on the hose when there was an explosion on the ship. My team immediately took off for safer environment. I couldn't handle the hose by myself so all I could do was "spread eagle" on top of it at ground level. If I had left the nozzle the hose would have taken on a life of its own and someone might have gotten hurt. Finally someone turned off the water pressure on the hose. In the meantime I thought I was a "goner" for sure. I reported back to the Pressure Still Unit where I was working and changed clothes. Luckily I had a change of clothes in my locker there.

### **THE GUN CLUB**

The Gun Clubs (Skeet) were near De Vuijst Field. Shotguns were used by guards of the tank farm after World War II had started in



Europe. A number of the temporary guards later became regular employees in the refinery.

There was a rifle club in the early days when attack by a Venezuelan bandit Urbina was feared. This was in 1930. I was a member and our range was where Lone Palm Baseball field later stood. We used German Mauser rifles and fired moldy reject ammunition from the Dutch military. We had orders to hold the target for five seconds after a misfire to prevent bruised shoulders from those hangfires. At one time the bandit group did land at Curacao. They took guns and ammunition from the armory, commandeered a Red-D freighter/passenger ship to get back to Venezuela with their loot.

### **THE CAVES**

Most young men in the early days explored the caves below Hospital Hill and near Baby Lagoon. Creaking windmills in that area driven by the constant trade wind pumped brackish water from wells that extended down in certain areas of these caves. The windmills pumped the water for the colony in the early days.

### **OUR BEACHES**

Almost everyone enjoyed the island's beaches. Rodger's Beach was a popular one for the children and adults alike. The "Baby Lagoon," with its shallow water and soft sand, was a favorite with the young mothers and their babies. During the early days shift workers favored the B.A. Beach after workouts in the Bachelor Quarters' boxing ring, handball, or tennis court.

### **DEVELOPING A UNIT SHUTDOWN PROCEDURE**

Mr. G.H. Wilkin, my shift foreman, came to me with a request from Mr. J. S. Harrison, the Cracking Plant Superintendent. I was asked to make a time frame schedule for a normal Cracking Unit turnaround. The time between off and on stream was to be limited to 20 hours.

At first I wondered why I was asked to do that job. It came to me that before I left for Hydro Plant training I had taught the routine to Mr. F.W. Switzer and other young engineers on my 4:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m. shifts.

Mr. Switzer was particularly interested in the fact that the tower temperatures are critical to avoid tray upsets and other equipment damage.

When he wasn't around, Mr. Harrison was referred to as "The Major" because that was his WWII army rank. More than a few people thought he put his military organizational experience to good use in the

refinery. He took charge of the scene at all refinery fires and commanded respect when he did so.

At the time of the next normal turnaround Mr. Harrison took my outline and supervised the shutdown. The work was completed in 15 hours. I was asked about the extra five hours I had projected, and I said, "Some people drive, others lead, some are pulled along with the flow, and some do most of their own work alone."

### **MARJORIE ARRIVES**

Twenty-six-year-old Marjorie arrived in Aruba on February 15, 1936, and we were married on March 28, 1936. I was promised a house before leaving on vacation that year. By some mysterious turn of events there was none available for us, and she stayed in the home of Irby and Evelyn Couch. This was the year when Lago Aruba became the home for many who were transferred from the Huasteca Petroleum Company in Mexico due to nationalization there. Good friends can be wonderful in your time of need. I was in Bachelor Quarters Five, and I worked the 12:00 Midnight to 8:00 a. m. shift as a Stillman on Number Five and Six Units. Stillman was the title of the Operator of a high pressure crude unit at that time.

### **CHIVAREES**

Many tricks were pulled on newlyweds--alarm clocks under beds, bedrooms filled with shredded paper, and you name it. Chivarees were popular in the early days when wives first began to arrive in Aruba. It was almost a nightly affair for a while.

I remember ours lasted almost until daylight. We were living in Jess Norris' house while he was on vacation. We were off for 32 hours and so were the participants.

### **THE MEN'S FASHION SHOW APRIL 1936**

The Men's Fashion Show models I remember most were Joe and Tom Malcolm, and Ev Biddle. Bob Vint also took part. It took place in April of 1947. (This was about six weeks after the Women's Club Fashion Show. It was meant to be a men's answer to the women's show). The clothing worn by the men was described in terms that women use in describing their clothing. It was cleverly done and Wayne Richey and Jack Friel, as Co-Master's of Ceremony, alternately described what we were seeing as the men appeared on stage. This event took place at our temporary Club, near the Commissary, before the New Esso Club was built below Lone Palm Stadium.

## **TRAINING ON THE HYDROGENATION PROCESS**

The year of 1938 saw our lives take a major turn. Our vacation started with instructions that we would receive notification when to travel to the Baton Rouge refinery in Louisiana for a training assignment. World War II was looming on the horizon and military strategists urged the US government to gear up for the higher octane aircraft fuels that would be needed for the expected combat in the European theater. Spitfires and the Battle of Britain confirmed their projections.

Marjorie and I spent most my off duty at the Baton Rouge refinery putting together a booklet that outlined the critical points of the Hydrogenation process. I learned by observing the operators' procedures, listening to the supervisors, and meeting with the department head. Marjorie typed the booklet when our baby, Kay, was asleep. The original was turned over to Mr. J.C. Souder, the new department head for the Alkylation, Hydrogenation, and Polymerization Plants when they were completed. Prudently, I kept a carbon copy of it.

Our first trip by passenger ship was our return to Aruba on the Grace Lines' S/S *Santa Rosa*. While the new plants were being built I continued with my Stillman's job.

## **THE TRAINING DEPARTMENT PROCEDURES**

The Training Department began to change the breaking-in method of preparing recruits or instructing old employees in more efficient techniques. Mr. G.N. Owen, Ray Brown, Ed O'Brien and others were very active in safety issues. I personally enjoyed teaching elements of the safety program like safe handling of volatile materials, home safety, etc. Today Marjorie and I try to attend the "55 Alive Safe Driving" courses each year.

During Hydrogenation Plant ("Hydro Plant") training, the men in my group held little jam sessions about our points of interest and safe operations. We were aware of the Hydro Plant explosion in New Jersey's Bayonne refinery the year before. Our trainers had assured us that there was little danger as long as sufficient cooling gas to control oven temperatures was present. Cooling gas was made available by a booster system from the main hydrogen feed system. Jim French and I explained this to our students, and the point was covered in the booklet I had prepared for Mr. Souder. A Delta pressure of 250 pounds per square inch was the standard. Regular monitoring of the Delta pressure recorder was crucial. On my shift checking the pressure being recorded was the first order of business.

Coming into the shift foreman's office one day in 1946 I noticed Mr.

Souder and the others gathered around drinking coffee and appearing very upset. I made a silly observation that they must have seen a ghost, and I laughed. I was told in no uncertain words that it wasn't funny, and I was to find the cause of the rapid rise in pressure and temperature that caused an emergency shut down. I thought I knew what caused the problem, and I said so. My popularity rating dropped that day.

The Pipe Craft Foreman, Duane Walker, approached me on the unit. He asked how many men would be required to open the cooling gas system to find the blockage. Very little of the piping had been opened. Entering the control house I noticed the Delta pressure recorder read 250 lbs per square inch and drew a straight line. This indicated a cooling gas failure. I called the golf course to inform Mr. Souder that the problem had been found and with his permission I would return the unit to service. Product was going to storage by 10:00 p.m. and the unit came back on stream as I had predicted.

The above incident sharpened all of our thoughts. To avoid a similar incident in the future, specific orders were entered into the Emergency Procedure Book.

#### **THE CATALYTIC CRACKING PLANT - 1945**

The Catalytic Cracking Plant ("Cat Plant" or "Cat Cracker") was very intriguing to me. Difficulties with it seemed to respond to my instructions every time. I was often called on to pinpoint the cause of problems, sometimes in the wee hours.

The Inspection Department found that the wall of the reactor was thinner than the minimum thickness required for safe operations, and the vessel needed replacement. The reactor was located immediately below the structure's regenerator. I suggested that the new reactor be built outboard of the main structure. The old reactor was to be left in place, giving the unit a hot catalyst storage vessel. The new reactor was constructed while the unit was in operation, and this procedure saved downtime. Another positive feature to my plan was the elimination on the cost of dismantling the old vessel. Keeping the old one for hot catalyst storage saved five to ten hours on shutdowns and startups by holding the temperature at 1100 degrees Fahrenheit during the shutdown period.

Speedy turnarounds were a specialty and many craft and operating department supervisors made this a regular practice. Some names come to my mind: Earl R. Carroll, Chester Rogers, "Plow" Huffman, G. Smit, and J. Briezin. Aruban supervisors and workmen, and a host of others made this possible. Besides getting the job done, safety was always

foremost on our list of priorities.

### **SOOT BLOWERS**

It was a pleasure to have members of the engineering staff visit my office. Some were sent by the Operations Superintendent, G.L. MacNutt. Items of concern were the soot blowers and studded tubes of the convection sections for Units One through Eight's PetroChem Furnaces. During my last vacation, in 1963, I visited a refinery in Detroit and one in Philadelphia. In Aruba we built our furnaces and convection sections at ground level and used induction fans to pass the flue gas through the sections and back to the stack.

### **WARTIME**

The poorly clothed and underfed French troops in Aruba early in 1940 are remembered by those of us there. When these troops were ordered to leave by the Dutch Government they were replaced by the Cameron Highlanders. The Highlanders were a decimated Scottish Regiment fresh from their evacuation from Dunkirk, France in May 1940. February 13, 1942, saw the arrival of an American Coastal Artillery Battalion. The Highlanders were ordered elsewhere on the 15th,

The German submarine, U-156, attacked at 1:30 a.m. on February 16, 1942. I worked the 4:00 p.m. to 12:00 midnight shift, came home, showered, and Marjorie and I were celebrating our sixth wedding anniversary with a late night meal when the first Lake Tanker was torpedoed. I ran out of our house, bungalow #883 and climbed to the roof to see if the explosion was in the refinery. I could see ships burning and the machine gun tracers coming our way, ricocheting from coral and tanks alike. Bullets seemed everywhere. The newly arrived American troops camped just below Hospital Hill began shooting at an unseen enemy, but they were ineffective. I saw a flash, and heard a loud blast. It later proved to be the submarine on the seaward side of the reef, beyond what we now call Skippy Island.<sup>1</sup>

All outside lights in the refinery went out after the first torpedo, and they stayed off for the duration of our 18 month blackout period. Our children never awakened nor did those of our neighbors, Jim and Mildred Brennan. The four of us sat and talked, shivered and fortified ourselves with wine or whatever spirits we could find until daylight came.

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<sup>1</sup> *This must have been when the Deck Gun of the submarine exploded when they forgot to remove the gun plug.*

## MEMORIES

- Rodger's Beach got its name from Captain Robert Rodger who was the first Manager of the company Terminal operations. The tug boat that wound up on the reef near B. A. Beach was also named after Captain Rodger. The tanker, *Fisher's Hill*, went on the rocks just north of B.A. Beach April 13, 1947, and the *Captain Rodger*, the tug mastered by Captain J.B. Fernando, went to the rescue. It took a hawser from the ship and attempted to pull it free. As maximum power was exerted, the faulty hawser parted. Its loose end fouled the Captain Roger's screw and the tug went on the rocks. The tug's anchor now stands near the colony gate near B.A. Beach.
- I played some golf and wasn't too bad. At one time my handicap was down to five. Wayne Anderson and I paired up in a tournament one weekend and we both shot par. I had no bogeys or birdies at the 72nd hole.
- Rus Ewing's orchid house was quite a showplace. The little Quonset hut style marvel was built from scraps, and located between Bachelor Quarters Three and Four. He had some good helpers who scoured the island for most of his plants. Others who followed his lead were Mattie Hewlett, Vida Scott, and Jesse Reynolds. At one time orchids were fairly plentiful in the wild.
- Swimming was a year-round activity in Aruba, and until 1936, it consumed much of my time. Jim French and I used to swim for hours on end, and he was always talking about a marathon swim to Oranjestad. It did put a person in good shape; something I later had reason to be thankful for. One afternoon Marjorie and I went to B.A. Beach to sun bathe and swim. She could swim but her favorite past time was floating on an inner tube. Somehow she drifted beyond the beach's safety cable.

I was sunning on the sand when she called for help. Immediately I dove into the undertow beyond the safety cable and swam to her. We drifted westward as I struggled to propel the inner tube toward the beach. Swimming ability learned in my boyhood days, my conditioning, and my knowledge of how to work with the undertow was a big factor in her rescue.

The first time I had rescued a swimmer was in high school. A group of us were swimming in a small lake. It was early spring, the water was cold, and a friend developed a severe cramp. With the aid of my Boy Scout training I pulled him to shore.

- The first school building I remember was on the East end of "Bird Cage Row." This was near Dr. Reeve's dental office. Later another was built near the new hospital, east of the concrete block bowling alley. Our four children all finished grade and high school in Aruba's school system.
- Fourth of July Parades and other holiday observances were held at the Company picnic ground for a few years. There were lotteries, and I remember having two of the three numbers required in one automobile drawing.

During one celebration at the picnic grounds we were buzzed by a plane from De Vuijst Field. This was the Aruba Flying Club Field, north and east of the Colony. The same plane, flown by Mr. Boyd Bastian, buzzed a few other gatherings that day. Boyd had made a bad landing earlier in the day and busted one end off his propeller. Undaunted by this turn of events, he sawed off the other end to match the damaged one. He was spirited out of Aruba on the first loaded tanker after he landed to refuel.

- **CHILDREN:**

- Our first daughter, Kay, born January 6, 1937, married in Aruba by Don Evans. She and husband, Larry Carlin, school teachers in San Diego, California, and we now have five grandchildren.
- Janet, born May 8, 1940, married Smith.
- David S., born June 15, 1943.
- Barry C., born January 31, 1946.

All of our children were born in the Lago Hospital. They received their schooling through high School in the Lago Community Schools.

- In 1930, and perhaps long before, huge land crabs scuttled about the colony at night. These big fellows frightened night hikers and others.
- **FISHING:** I did very little fishing, but I remember crossing the reef with Mr. Kropke, Darlene Schlageter's father, in my small boat. We used a gap most boaters were familiar with that was traversed on outgoing waves and incoming waves. It was tricky, but challenging.

We were fishing one day near the Lake Tankers anchored off the reef, waiting for dock space. The ships' cooks threw their table and kitchen scraps to the fish. Mr. Kropke, the one of us who was a fisherman, hooked a good size Yellow Tail and was reeling it in when a shark struck. Seeing this monster take a third of the Yellow Tail was enough to make us retreat across the reef, never to return.

There was shark fishing at Boca Mahos where the butcher shops dumped their refuse. High school boys enjoyed this, and some of their shark bones are displayed around our house to this day.

- **PHOSPHATE MINES:** The phosphate mines were shutdown before my arrival, but an empty engine shed below the location of the new hospital stood, smelling of steam lubricant, was removed in 1931.
- **POPULAR MUSIC:** Lago bands at the new Esso Club were enjoyed by all. Jan Koulman was the leader of Lago Community Band, and Don Evans, Buck Johnson and many others were among the many players.

During the war we enjoyed the Scottish Highlanders' "taps."

Later we enjoyed Padu Lampe, Aruba's own musical celebrity, on the radio and on the local television station.

- **OUR CHURCH:** George Wilkens of the High Pressure Stills was one of the strongest advocates for the construction of the Lago Community Church. I believe Jack Emery, a Carpenter, did most of his preaching in the first Lago dining hall. Ministers for the church were changed from time to time. Don Evans stayed the longest. Juris Calitis was there just before we left in 1965. Those two ministers seemed to be very influential with the Colony and local people.
- **COMPANY HOUSING:** The Company housing allocation system was influenced by everything and anything--your job status basis, your job rating, your relative ability, favoritism, if you gave a party with big steaks, or you name it. Of course, department head changes, vacation relief, and such things had their effect. A house was promised upon my leaving for vacation in 1936 when Marjorie and I were married. Upon my return I found I had slipped from number one on the housing list to number 20. This was an experience known to many house seekers.
- **THE COMMISSARY:** The first commissary was near the San Nicholas main gate. The new one was near the new high school building. Most anything could be bought there, although Viana objected to its selling cars.

The great cranberry foul-up, the result of an erroneous triple or quadruple order by the store house, happened during 1937 I think. The dining hall served them every way imaginable and in desperation put them in ice cream. That old kid's verse about ice cream became, "You screamed, I screamed, and we all screamed about the ice



cream." The pigs and chickens had a new entree for a while.

- **THE BUS SERVICE:** The bus system operating from colony to commissary was a must when I arrived in Aruba. Very few cars were available then. Mario Croes was wonderful and many wives asked him to bring their orders. Marjorie asked for his services when we were staying with Mrs. Costello. This was before our car arrived. Later a delivery system was put into effect by the Commissary. We did not use that delivery system since we had a car, but I do not think it lasted too long. Not many had phones in their homes then.

The commissary ran out of Copenhagen Snuff one time, and the men on the stills made a fuss to J.S. Harrison. At the time he was Superintendent of the High Pressure Stills Area. He was responsible for airlifting a shipment of it to the island. J.S. was a great friend of the shift workers. He sat around and watched the stills from his vantage point above Rodger's Beach.

- **FIRE ON UNIT #5:** A bad fire started at 11:30 p.m. one night while I was the Stillman for Units Five and Six. Hot oil began shooting from the roof section of Unit Five Cross Furnace into the Reducer Furnace and I told my assistant to contact the shift foreman, George Wilkins, and I said I would see what was happening. Fire was all about, but I guessed right and we shut down the Cross system and blocked off the furnace. The blowdown was opened and followed with a steam purge, and the 100 foot flames went out immediately. The Cross Furnace operated at 1000 pounds per square inch. Ikky Mertens and I never did call the fire department, but Harrison showed up at 11:45 p.m. and asked how we had put out the fire so quickly. I told him Mertens and I were studying emergency procedures and this happened to be one of them. He asked to see the plan and I showed him the only draft of it in my notebook.

No books covered the subject then, but he said he would see one was started immediately. It was filled with contributions from Mertens and me, and when I retired it was about two inches thick. The General Order Book for Refinery Process may still be in use as far as I know.

- **THE LAUNDRY:** A few good men, including Preston Hunt, had a hand in the management of the laundry. It was popular with the wives as the men's clothing stained with tar would come back clean and pressed.
- **THE SQUARE DANCE CLUB:** There were many clubs in the

Colony--Bridge, cooking, sewing, language, art, and many more. We belonged to the Square Dance Club. Its callers were, Cary Daly, Georgio Gordon, Harry Gordon, Al Hellwig, Charles Smith, and on occasion, several professional callers. Herb Gregerson was the one who started us on the "New" western-style dancing.

- **OUR POKER CLUB:** I was a member of a Poker Club that played for small stakes, even matches. I remember the names of the members by the initials. P.P.B.M.S.N.V.F. The initials stood for Joe Proterra, Tony Proterra, Russell Brace, Joe Malcolm, Bob Schlageter, Bill Norris, Bob Vint, and Jack Friel. To me those initials stood for Poker Played by Me Seems Not Very Fruitful! Our chaplain was Edgar Jackson.
- **OUR DANCES:** Early dances at the old clubhouse were formal. Dinner jackets and long dresses. During World War 2 the Scottish Highlanders were colorful in their regalia.
- **OUR HOSPITAL:** The first hospital was built in the colony area between the dining hall and the main Colony gate. This was east of the fence that separated the refinery from the Colony. The site of Bungalow One was across the main road in the area later occupied by the Main Office Building.

Later the new hospital was being constructed on the raised ground area to the North and East of the dining hall when it was decided that spheroid aviation gasoline tanks should be built there. At the time there was a small gauge railroad for handling heavy equipment for a refinery expansion program. New track was laid for moving the incomplete hospital structure to its ultimate location below Colorado Lighthouse hill. Nurses' quarters was constructed to the East of the hospital.

- **OUR BARBERS:** Barbers were often refinery workers who did barbering in their spare time. Later an Aruban barber ran a shop in the new Esso Club.
- **YARDS IN THE COLONY:** Peter Storey's yard was among the best. Vida Scott grew the most vegetables in her yard, and J.S. Harrison's putting green was most unusual. I had one at Bungalow 826 that I had made from beach sand sprinkled with used motor oil. The oil came from Croes' filling station in the village. I remember the company used to give free gasoline to those who used their cars on the job.

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- **OUR WATER SYSTEM:** It was a great relief to us when the brackish water supplied to all bungalows was discontinued. Taking a shower in fresh water was a welcomed change. Toilet water was originally salt water, later brackish water, and finally fresh water.
- **THE DC-3 LANDING AT DE VUIJST FIELD - MAY '46:** The DC-3 landing at De Vuijst Field was caused by pilot error. The pilot sighted the field at dusk, and flew around it several times. People saw and heard it, and some 50 cars drove to the field. They lined up on each side with their headlights pointing to the end where he should touch down and he thrilled all the bystanders by making a perfect landing. His cargo was too heavy for the pilot to take off the next day, so his plane was unloaded and its cargo was trucked, by the company, to the commercial airfield near Oranjestad. The next day he made a perfect take off from the small field, and flew to the commercial airfield near Oranjestad. The Company helped him load his cargo and continued his journey.

### **RADICAL EQUIPMENT CHANGES WERE MADE**

This information is to show the activity we experienced during operation changes during 1964 – 1985. I was Refinery Division Superintendent in 1964 when they decided to consolidate the Refining Division Control Houses. This was the year before I retired in the 50/15 program. The consolidated control house was to be in the area south of the Hydro Plant and where No. 11 Viscosity Unit was formerly located.

Another interesting experience was the construction and startup of the N.F.A.R. This unit had eight towers. The feed stock for this unit was normal naphtha. It produced C3 and C4, C5, C6, C7, C8. These streams were used in gasoline blends and Propane for household fuel.

Mr. Don Darner and Ron Smith did an outstanding job putting the units in operation. Mr. Fred Eaton was also commended for his efforts in putting the On Stream Analyzer into operation.

During the first run, we had an operating upset. The heating tubes were discovered to be badly coked. It was necessary to replace the furnace tubes affected. There was an insufficient supply of new tubes in the warehouse to do the job, and Ron Smith and I proposed to "bypass" enough of the twelve sections to make it work. Ten four inch schedule 500 valves were needed, and their cost would be between \$50,000 and \$100,000. Mr. W.A. Murray, the refinery manager at that time, approved the project when it was explained to him that the valves could be salvaged at the next normal turnaround. The unit came on line with two tube sections bypassed. Ron Smith and I saw that these sections were

steam and air decoked and returned to normal service without a ripple in the unit's operations.

### **OUR RETIREMENT PARTY - 1965**

Retirement parties were abundantly popular during the 15-50 retirements Program. We missed our own as we were on a freighter bound for the Panama Canal. I asked the radio operator to call the Marine Department as we were leaving the harbor. They called the Legion Hall for me and give those assembled at the party our thanks. Almost immediately the whistles blew and flares lighted up in a never forgotten salute to us.

The freighter we were on took us through the Panama Canal and we wound up in San Diego, California. We stayed there for a year and a half and then moved to Hot Springs, Arkansas. There we built our home on the shores of Lake Hamilton some 2 miles off State Route #7 south. It was barely finished when we were off to Aruba.

### **AFTER RETIREMENT ASSIGNMENTS**

In 1969 I returned to Aruba for Chicago Bridge to assist in the Cat Plant turnaround.

In 1970 Mr. T.R. Burton asked us to come to the Creole Petroleum Company's Amuay, Venezuela refinery for its HDS start up.<sup>1</sup>

In 1971 we were back in Aruba again for the start-up of the #1 HDS Unit in the Lago Refinery.

In 1972 we were back in Amuay Bay Refinery in Venezuela for the HDS start-up and their #5 Crude Still Start-up.

In 1973 to 1974 we were back in Aruba again for the HDS #2 Unit startup and as relief for supervisor vacations.

### **FRIENDS**

During one's lifetime there are many people who have an influence on your career, your devotion to family, your friends and community.

After the death of my father it was my wish to help my mother, brothers, and sisters with the farm. At Woodriver, Illinois, Dave Seigel taught me about job responsibility.

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<sup>1</sup>*The drinking water for the refinery came from a lake in the mountains. The Amuay refinery Instrument Department was responsible for maintaining the chlorination equipment. In the early days they traveled by horseback to make routine checks of this installation.*

## **The Lise Nunes Story**

### **LUDWIG CORNELIUS NUNES**

Ludwig Cornelius Nunes was born on November 17, 1883 in Surinam. Surinam, formerly Dutch Guiana, located on South America's northern coast, shares its southern border with French Guiana, and its northern border with British Guiana. British Guiana adjoins Venezuela to the north, and Aruba is a mere 20 miles from that country's shores.

Though he was of Portuguese descent, Ludwig was a Dutch national. He went to a medical school in Surinam and graduated as a physician licensed to serve in Surinam and the Dutch West Indies. He completed his internship in Holland, and was qualified to practice in Holland as well as the colonies. Dr Nunes received his diploma, which had the word "Arts" after his title. As a full fledged, certified doctor, Nunes applied for service in the Curacao government, was accepted and assigned to St. Martin. He married, and had two daughters at the time of his first wife's death.

### **LISE NUNES**

I, Lise Nunes, was born on May 21, 1904 in the French West Indies on the island of St. Martin. My first name is Lise. Not Liza and not Liz, but Lise. In French the "e" is silent.

St. Martin is a small island, the northern half of which is French. Its southern half is Dutch. My husband was serving as the government doctor on the Dutch side, assigned there by the Netherlands West Indies Government in Curacao. At that time the French part of the island had no doctor, and the Dutch doctor took care of patients both sides of the island. I had returned from Guadeloupe where I had been attending boarding school for eight years when we met.

St. Martin is a curious island; both sides speak English as well as their own language. I suppose they had to learn a common language so they could communicate. Kids at school speak their own language, but when schools are out at four o'clock they all speak English.

My grandfather came to St. Martin from France. I believe in the old days my people were fishermen. In my immediate family there was an older brother, and two sisters. A younger brother died with my father in a hurricane. My father, Emanuel Fleming, was French. His wife, Mathilde, died in 1914 in child birth, leaving him with a new baby girl,

Dina. There were also two older daughters, Lise born May 21, 1904 and Douce born in 1906. Douce now teaches mathematics in a French Lyceum in New York. There was also an older son, Constant, born in 1899 and the youngest son, Claude, born in 1902. The boys were already in a boarding school for boys on the island of Guadeloupe.

My father, a business man, was the mayor of St. Martin. He had two growing girls, a 10 year old, and an 11 year old. He didn't know how to handle us older girls. He got relatives to help with the new born baby girl, but he decided the best thing for us older girls was a boarding school. In Guadeloupe there was a large girl's boarding school - a finishing school run by Catholic nuns.

They imparted their charges with an exceptional if somewhat limited education. In order to matriculate, you didn't need to know how to type or write a letter. You were required to know the proper way to place a vase on the table, walk, make polite conversation, and send thank-you notes and other rules of etiquette.

Guadeloupe is the main island of a French overseas department that includes five smaller islands and the northern half of St. Martin. Together, with the island of Martinique a second French overseas department, they are called the French West Indies.

The other half of the island of St. Martin is a dependency of the Netherlands and forms a portion of the Netherlands Antilles.

I was a Fleming in St. Martin. When you go to St. Martin and you say Fleming, you don't need to say anything else - it was a big family. They were like the Arends in Aruba. I thought everyone in St. Martin was named Fleming. As did most others, our household spoke French.

When my oldest brother finished high school in Guadeloupe, he went to Cherbourg, France, to study medicine. World War One came along and he was drafted. His dreams of becoming a doctor went out the window after the war; he decided to be a businessman.

When I was 18 years old I returned from the finishing school, and that was when I met my husband. Not long after my nineteenth birthday, we were married. Ludwig and I went to live on the Dutch side of St. Martin. Our first son, Lewis, was born on there June 1, 1924.

We traveled by sailboat from St. Martin to Aruba. In those days there were no steamers or airplanes. We moved all of our possessions to Aruba with us - we didn't expect to come back. I remember spending eight days sailing from St. Martin to Aruba. My people gave me a cow

so we would have milk for baby Lewis on the trip.

Our son, Lewis, lives in Costa Rica now, and he is with the Green Party.

When I lived in the Oranjestad, I bought water that came in a demijohn. A demijohn is a five gallon can similar to what was used to store kerosene at the time. A water vendor came daily to town leading a donkey with a tin of brackish well water strapped to each side. Brackish water was used to scrub the floors. In the rainy season, the gutters on the roof of the house collected rainwater and it was funneled to the underground cistern. This was used for drinking and cooking. Since the rainfall on Aruba was scarce, you had to be conservative with your potable water. All the years I lived in Aruba, we boiled our water. Every night before we went to bed, a big pot of water was put on the stove to boil. When we lived in Oranjestad we didn't have ice, but when we lived in the colony we had plenty; the company had the ice plant. You put your boiled water in your ice box, and the ice man put two blocks of ice in the top of it every day. Underneath the refrigerator, a tin collected the runoff from the melted ice, and it had to be emptied daily.

We had four children, and Charles, the last, was born 11 years after the others. Yvonne was born the 19th of November, 1927 while we were living in Oranjestad, and Liette was born in 1929 while we were living in the Lago colony.

At the time Lago was getting started, young Doctor Arends was the Dutch physician assigned to the island.

His family was well known on the island and they had a lot of business and family on the island. This boy went to Holland for his degree, and returned to his home town to serve as a doctor. I think he must have already been there a year or two before my husband came. The Arends had a lot to say in Aruba. When the government asked my husband if he wanted to go to Aruba, they mentioned that there was another doctor there, but they didn't say the other doctor had intentions of becoming the Lago doctor. Dr. Arends was a government doctor with a private practice; he came a few months after Captain Rodger's decision to locate the refinery on Aruba. Lago had no hospital. People in need of medical attention went to San Pedro, the Catholic hospital in Oranjestad.

We first arrived in Aruba as a result of the company's request to the government for a doctor. The consensus of Lago's employees seemed to be that it was acceptable for the doctor to be colored for caring for the contractor men, but when their American families began to arrive, they

wanted a white doctor to attend their wives and children. Standard Oil employees, the Americans were very racially conscious people.

Captain Rodger applied to the governor in Curacao for another doctor but he did not tell the doctor they had already hired. When my husband arrived with the proper credentials as a replacement, the Arends family was angry. Their son was the first doctor on the island. It was their country. He should have been offered the post of company doctor.

Aruba is strongly Catholic; the hospital in Oranjestad was run by a Catholic priests. If the priest said, "This has to be done," his orders are carried out. Even the doctors were under the direction of the priest in those days. The priest wished for the Catholic people to have a Catholic doctor. Although I am Catholic, my husband was Protestant. When faced with this, Captain Rodger said, "Oh! La! It can't happen this way. I'm going to build my own hospital." In the beginning employees went to the Catholic hospital. It didn't have the proper equipment to perform operations, so if you lived in Aruba and you had appendicitis, or a hernia, you died. Those who had money or relatives who could help took one of the daily boats to Curacao for treatment. If the patient was not in serious condition, there was no trouble. With accidents happening at the Chicago Bridge construction site, and with the people working at the harbor there were accidents.

The company decided to build a hospital, and nurses were sent out. There were four nurses, the head nurse being the operating room nurse. As soon as proper medical care was available, the wives came down.

The living conditions in Aruba were pretty bad in those days. The drinking water was transported to Aruba in the same tanks that were used to carry oil, and the water had oil floating on it. My poor husband often had diarrhea. As time went by, special tanks were assigned to carry drinking water, and this helped. Another thing that helped was the shipment of vegetables from the U.S. by tankers. I remember when they first brought me to see the colony and they told me that is where the company is going to be and this is where I would have to live. Imagine what they were talking about. It was cactus and coral. No houses, no streets, just cactus and coral. Marvelously, the houses began to sprout amid the cactus and coral; the company brought everything it took to make a small town. Workmen began to construct houses. One day you would see the site, and in a week or two, you could see a whole new street full of houses.

The wife of the boss of the Chicago Bridge Company planted flowers in front of her bungalow, and all of the men came to see them. It



looked so odd after all that cactus and rock. I think that woman was the first woman from the company to be in the colony.

The women would not come out until they had a bungalow. At first there was only a mess hall and bunk houses. By the end of the first year they had running water, but they didn't have toilets.

There was nothing the men could spend their paycheck on in the colony except the movie house. The men had to go to Oranjestad to see a movie. Outside the colony were a few beer bars, beer was the only form of alcohol the company allowed. They were bad news from the beginning; I'm telling you, they were trouble from the start.

Tankers came in at night, pumped the crude into the tanks, and the next night they left for Maracaibo. Sailors had their night in town, and after a long time without liquor, they went to the bars and loaded up on beer. Since it was dark, they were drunk, and most of them didn't know the paths back to their ships, they wound up falling down in the cactus. These poor people came to my husband covered all over with cactus prickles. He had to remove thousands of them from some sailors.

My husband was in the company's employ, but he also represented the Dutch government, and was required to attend to Arubans. The company had a fence around the concession, and no one was allowed to enter without permission. The first house inside the main gate was the doctor's. Our house was the first house built because it was requested by the government.

The walls of poorest native houses were made of small woven limbs of trees and coconut palm branches covered with mud. I have seen houses where they used the fresh manure of cows and horses to plaster the sides of their houses. It sealed the houses, and when it dried, you could never tell. Their dirt floors became hard after they were walked on.

Captain Rodger's wife and two daughters must have arrived in 1926 or 1927.

Many people were hard at work. The dredge worked on the harbor, men worked on the refinery, and carpenters worked on the houses. The Chicago Bridge people were busy building tanks. Office workers handled the paperwork.

Besides the *sheep sheds*, there was the mess hall and the Chinese laundry.

The small tankers arrived from Venezuela every morning. In the

beginning my husband was required by government regulation to meet the boats outside the reef. No one else was qualified to examine the men. Every morning about seven o'clock, he went to each tanker by launch to see if any of the crew were carrying anything. Any one having signs of a contagious disease wasn't allowed to come ashore. After the harbor was dredged, he met them at the docks and went aboard.

Arends, the other government doctor, never came on the company concession. But everything from the company was under my husband's control. If he needed anything, he put in a request and they got it. Americans gave the employees anything they needed.

My husband had a good life in Aruba. He got along well with Captain Rodger and the company bosses; they treated him well.

When asked about my years in Aruba, I will tell you that during my first two years, my best friend was my can opener. All we ate was canned food. I don't understand how we survived. We never used to take vitamins because we ate potatoes and rice, and he always made sure the children drank KLIM powdered milk. Some of the boats from the States did bring marvelously fresh carrots and cabbage from Texas, and frozen chickens. Because my husband was the doctor we got our supplies without any trouble.

By 1929 we had lived in Aruba for nearly six years. And it was difficult to decide to leave Aruba. My husband was making good money; we had a good life. Our children had grown up and we wanted them to have a better education than was offered in Aruba at the time. My husband dreamed of opening a practice in Holland and continuing his work there. We were in Holland during the war years and in 1942 we lost everything we owned.

Our fourth child, Charles, was born in Rotterdam on April 25, 1940. He was named after my brother, Claude. Unfortunately, the Dutch cannot pronounce Claude, and he was called everything except Claude. After six days of this, my husband said he had an uncle that was named Charles who had been very kind to him, and that we ought to change Claude's name to Charles. Max, a good friend of ours said he was going to call him Max. Poor Charles finally wound up being called Charles, Claude, Max, or Alexander.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*David Louis Lopez was born December 12, 1940. In 1955 the author, was transferred from Lago refinery in Aruba to the International Petroleum Company's refinery in Barrancabermeja, Colombia. The company school there taught students through the 8th grade. David was*

Nineteen days after he was born, the entire center of Rotterdam was destroyed in a half hour by the incendiary bombs. The Germans dropped them when the country refused to surrender. I can remember that the date the bombs fell was May 14, 1940. I wrapped Charles in a blanket and we ran away from the center of the city where the bombs fell. We had a country house in Schisterberg, near the queen's residence, and we went to live there.

It was a shock to my husband. All that he worked for all those years was gone. Ludwig developed a heart condition, and his patients were scattered. After about six months of doing nothing, he began again. He went to a little house back in the neighborhood where he had been to build his practice again. He lasted a year before his heart condition claimed him.

When I returned to Aruba in 1946, I didn't know it anymore. There were many Dutchmen who had families in Curacao that they hadn't seen during the war. The Dutch government filled one of their military boats with these people and I was on it.

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*(contd.) sent to stay with his grandmother, Maggie Tibbets, in Miami, Florida, to attend ninth grade at Miami High School through the 1955-1956 school year. He became acquainted with Charles Nunes and his mother who lived in the house just behind the house of David's grandmother. He and Charles became good friends and went to the same school together. One of the things that David remembered over the years was his friend's lengthy name; Charles Claude Max Alexander Nunes. It seems his parents were eager to honor his antecedents, naming him after Dutch and French uncles. Charlie's mother was the widow of L. C. Nunes, the first regular doctor of Lago Oil and Transport Co. Ltd.*

*On May 1, 1985, David was working on a project that required that he obtain some quotes on computer equipment. The purchasing agent of his company gave him a telephone number of a computer equipment supplier. The man who answered his call said, "Charles Nunes speaking". David asked, "Do you mean Charles Claude Max Alexander Nunes?" There was a dead silence for several moments while the man on the other end recovered from hearing his full name and realized who he was talking to.*

*Victor Lopez made friends at this same house when he came in 1961 to attend school at Miami High. It is interesting to note that both this school and Oklahoma Military Academy (author and all three boys attended there) are now museums!*

From Curacao I went to Aruba to see our dear friends and to check on property we owned there. They opened their house to us and we stayed for a few days before we moved on. My brother, the mayor of St. Martin, had a small hotel that he turned over to us when we arrived. Due to privation, shortages and rationing, my son, Charles, had never seen an egg. When his uncle discovered this, he made sure there were always eggs and fresh milk available. My brother has since passed away.

After three months, Ludwig's children, who were ages 17 and 18, became restless since there was nothing for them to do. I went to Curacao with them, and they got jobs. Their Dutch education made it easy for them to find work. They called the Dutch airline and got jobs. Soon, they became engaged, got married, and I was alone with Charles.

I decided to sell my house in Curacao, and return to Holland where I had five homes and a steady income. I had a sister living in Miami I wanted to visit. I really intended to tell her goodbye before I returned to Holland, but I liked Miami's climate. I agreed to stay there for a while, and if it doesn't work out I'd go back to Holland. The two children working for KLM airlines could travel to Miami easily since they had opened a route between Miami and Curacao. If I had gone to Holland, there would have been only Charles and myself.

I haven't been to Aruba lately, but I have been to Curacao because my daughter has a business I help her with sometimes. So I don't know too much about Aruba. I had two houses in Aruba, but I sold them after my husband died.

I remember Dr. Johannes Hartog. He was in Miami when I was there. He lived on a boat up the coast from Miami, somewhere near Fort Lauderdale. His family in Holland was looking for him, and couldn't find him. My son-in-law, who is a manager for KLM and lives with me in Miami, found Dr. Hartog through the Dutch consul. When they told him about his family looking for him, he went to see them.

I speak Dutch, French, English but no Spanish. When you call a bank, business is conducted in Spanish. I have found that one must be bilingual to live happily in the Spanish-speaking center of Miami.

My husband did a lot of business with Aruban people and we had to learn to speak Papiamento. I had to learn it to communicate with the Aruban maids I had. While in the Guadeloupe school, I learned to speak the Creole dialect. In the past, I have gone to the court in Miami to translate for the Haitian people there, and I enjoyed that. Now I am too old.

## **The Jack Opdyke Story**

Jack was born in Weehawken, NJ on September 22, 1909 except he says maybe he wasn't because he had no birth certificate. His family came to the United States from the Netherlands circa 1655. He graduated with a B.S in Civil Engineering in 1930 and in 1932 he picked up a C.E. Both of these degrees were awarded at Newark College of Engineering, Newark, NJ (now New Jersey Institute of Technology).

Before going to Aruba he worked with a consulting engineer and surveyor. He taught engineering drawing. Between jobs he worked with the CWA.

He went to Aruba in July of 1937 on a Norwegian tanker that picked up a cargo of oil at Cartagena, Colombia.

Marian went to Aruba in December 1938 on a tanker that picked up a cargo of oil at Caripito, Venezuela.

Marian was arriving in Aruba to be married. She hadn't seen John in 1-1/2 years, but left a teaching job and headed into she wasn't sure what. John says she probably thinks such things after 44 years. The ship docked at 2:00 a.m., and she had a bet of 5 cents with another passenger that John would meet her and she won. However John had to leave her on board because there was no immigration representative there at that time. They were married later the same day.

In 1938 Jack became the Cubmaster of Cub Scout Pack #1. This Pack was formed in 1933 by Gilbert Brook. Paul M. Walker was the second Cubmaster. Jack replaced Paul and continued as the Cubmaster for the following 17 years. The Cub Pack and the Scout Troop were sponsored by the American Legion Post #1 of Aruba.

## **The Alvah Rarick Story**

I was born December 27, 1914, in Four Bridges, New Jersey; I was named after my father. At the age of five, I went to a little country school of six or eight pupils. The building still exists today, but it is now occupied as a home. Between the time I was born and went to school, my mother left our home. My father went to live with his parents, who were farmers. We lived there for three years until my father remarried. My mother was named Viola Smith, and she was from the same area in New Jersey. They met around 1910. My dad was a mechanical apprentice. He worked as a mechanic as long as I can remember.

I went to Roxbury High School in Kenburry, New Jersey. We never had any of the problems people encounter these days. I went to Rutgers University for four years. I had developed some interest for chemistry during high school, and I thought chemical engineering was the thing for me. I had a short period of trying to get myself settled in the industrial world. I worked for General Chemical Company, Hercules Powder Company, and Bakelite in a two year period. Exxon said come on and work for us. My parents had a friend who was well known throughout the company and he became interested in me and he spoke to Harold Atwood about me. Harold called me to go to Aruba. In 1937 I went down on the Grace Line S/S *Santa Elena* . . . first class. June 9, I started out in New York. The ship made a stop in Curacao, and one in Porto Cabello, Venezuela before arriving in Aruba on June 14. I was single then. This was in the days when the Grace Line docked at the number four finger pier, and personnel had an office at the head of the dock. They just came right down and scooped me up and took me back to their office and found out who and what I was. They assigned me to work for McDermott as a student operator (the only one at that time) in No. 9 Viscosity Unit. I was on shift work, and boy, I didn't care very much for that. I had the short part of a month before they moved me to the Central Pump House. And then they needed somebody in the Hydrogenation Plant.

### **THE HYDRO PLANT**

I was given training in the low pressure side of the Hydro Plant. Hydro had a low pressure side and a high pressure side. This was all nice clean work and was in an area where there was a breeze. These were much better working conditions. I worked with Charles Adams Blakly, the operator on the initial start up of the unit, Dewey Hallay, Jim

French, Bill MacKnight, an assistant operator, and Sprider Heinze.

The High Pressure control room was the center of things as far as unit operations went. The controls to the unit were in there. It had a cement wall that would have protect the men in the control room against almost any explosion. This part of the unit operated at 3,200 pounds pressure. The size of the vessels was limited by their weight, and they had very thick walls. Once assembled, they were difficult to move.

I can still remember Jack Souder who had been put in charge of the Poly-Hydro Plants area. I was out working with some equipment when Neil Griffin came through, and I was on the second floor of this thing and I was trying to do something up there. I had vented a steam trap, which might have presented something of a safety hazard and they said something to me and I said, well, I guess I could vent it down to the next floor. It was very easy to get out of line with this assembly; it was very dangerous.

We received our feed stock (olefins) from the Poly Plant and pumped it up to 40 pounds, and there were a very large reciprocating pump that went slowly back and forth, and it had two pieces to it. One would come up as the other was going down. The operators had to keep an eye on those constantly as they weren't automatic. The two parts of this pump had to be moving in sequence. If they got out of sequence the pressure messed up. I wasn't on shift when we had some trouble. The pump was hooked up (oil and gas being pumped at the same time). They were pressurizing high percent hydrogen gas that was made at the Hydro Plant with five compressors to 3,200 lbs. The Hydrogen gas met with the oil and a bunch of catalyst. If you kept an eye on these 24 hours a day, you were all right. The big pump was steam driven. One of the boosters was steam, and the other was gas-driven. Once it got out of whack it was hard to get back in synchronization. After it left the compressor, the oil and gas stream were joined together, the mixture went into an oven with a catalyst, and that converted it to high quality av-gas (short for aviation-gas) component. It was not actually a blending operation as you talk about blending in the refinery, it was actually a reaction. Then you went through the business of depressurizing the product in a great big drum, down to 30 or 40 pounds. Part of the plant operated at this pressure. There were a few scheduled shut downs for maintenance and adjustments, but in the time I was there we only had two or three shut downs. This equipment was of the highest quality available and you could do anything with this equipment if you took care of it. They ran those units two and a half years after the WW2 ended because they didn't know if they would have to go back over there and do

some more fighting.

As I've said the Hydro Plant had to be watched carefully. One of the important valves had an extension that put the valve wheel inside the protected control room. There was an operator positioned in a chair near this valve wheel. He was supposed to keep his eye on the delta pressure recording instrument. If the pressure deviated from the 250# he was supposed to maintain, he adjusted the valve wheel as necessary. One fellow who had been on the job for a short time came to work one night, sat there for a while and all of a sudden he took his flashlight and bashed the front of the instrument. He wrecked it. The pressure of the responsibility was too much for him. He was quickly given a one way trip back home.

The unit could make about 6,000 barrels a day of a very high level of blending material. That doesn't sound like too much, but you've got such a large amount of 100 octane aviation gasoline you can make with that amount. When it got to the tanks it was under only five pounds of vapor pressure, not dangerous at all unless you had a careless person fooling around.

#### **VACATION - MARRIAGE**

I worked for 2 years in Aruba, went back home on furlough. Lois and I were married in 1941. Lois and I had sailed to Curacao on the Grace Line S/S *Santa Paula* at the end of October in 1941. In Curacao the Company told me to come back to the refinery straight away, and we took our first plane ride back to Aruba.

Bungalow 119 was waiting for us when we got back. I don't know to this day who did this fine thing for me. The Dorwarts, "Doc" Reed, Reede Holly, and all those folks were our neighbors.

When Lois and I first married, I didn't have a very good car, and I had an old jalopy I bought from Dave Meyers. That thing was a lemon. I vowed right then I would never have another Ford, and I never did. The next one I bought was Hankamer's Chevrolet. Clarence Hankamer worked up in the Poly-Hydro area. He drowned one day when he was fishing.

#### **WW2 CAME TO US ON FEBRUARY 16, 1942**

I was in the unit on the late shift when the Germans came along. I saw the tracers zipping. I was taking a reading on the pyrometer on the second floor side of the converter furnace, and as I looked out toward the water, I saw six or eight tracer bullets zip by. This was after the torpedoes. I out later that they surfaced, blew up their deck gun in an



accident, and were trying to do damage with their machine guns. No one was scared. Where I was by the compressor, you couldn't hear anything, and it was just like the whole thing happened at once. Only four places were found where the dud 37 millimeter rounds hit.

Many years later Bill MacKnight was in the Abbey Hotel in New York. He found himself talking to the former German Executive Officer of that German submarine who was injured during that action. As it turned out he was the only survivor of this submarine. This U boat was sunk by an aircraft off the coast of Venezuela while recharging its batteries. He was in the hospital in Martinique recovering from his foot wound when it went down.

Marchant Davidson came over to the unit and helped shut it down, but I had my own little bailiwick and I didn't see him.

Paul "Porky" Hermanson was the operator and I was his assistant on the low pressure side. Brinser was the operator on the high pressure side. All men did their jobs just as cool as cucumbers. They had a manual about that said three days would be required to shut the thing down. We started about 2:30 a.m. and we were almost completely shut down by the time we left there at 8:00 a.m. They were still pumping with the compressors to keep up the pressure when we were going off shift. Hydrogen gas goes right up in the air so venting it wasn't a problem. The Hydro Plant was shutdown for a week or two if my memory serves.

Bill MacKnight and his wife, Betty, were on the first plane that left Aruba after the submarine attack on February 16, 1942. They landed in Brownsville Texas along with a bunch of others from Aruba. We went half way to Oranjestad one time and that was the longest trip we made on the island during the War.

About five nights later, an American cruiser fired flare shells because they thought they saw a submarine between them and the eastern tip of the island. The shell casings from these two shells damaged the bachelor's quarters and our Club House Library. The American Coast Guard maintained a small area near number two power house and had some equipment there, and part of that was depth charges. Some batteries were in for recharging late one June afternoon in 1942, and the charger went amiss. Things got pretty hot and one depth charge went off. Nobody was hurt, but it tore up two houses on the lower level of housing near the water. Tore off some of their shingles. I was working days and Lois and I had gone to the village after 4:p.m. We were returning from the village and were just stepping on the front porch of the house when we heard the "whumph."

The American Army finally got their 155 cannon installed on Light House Hill above the colony on the eastern tip of the island. They had firing exercises during the day time. The explosions of these guns knocked pictures from walls and rattled window shutters in our nearby bungalows.

The French troops, who were there in 1940, wore white uniforms with red pompoms on their berets. They were not very well supplied from France and lived from hand to mouth.

After the shutdown of the Hydro Plant I was transferred to the Poly Plant for the start up over there, and I was working with Ed O'Brien.

### **THE POLY PLANT**

The material being handled by the Poly Plant was 70% sulfuric acid and 30% liquid butane. Actually the full name of this unit was the Hot Acid Polymerization Plant. The operators complained because when a certain small pump had a packing gland leak they wound up with shredded lower pants legs because of the acid spray. The acid ate holes in the pants legs and didn't do their shoes much good either. You can be sure the operators learned to tighten up that leaking packing gland as soon as it was spotted. The operators habitually wore protective goggles when making their rounds in this plant.

This process polymerized, that is, glued together, two hydrocarbons. This was a very corrosive system. It operated at 160 lbs pressure and was a continuous process. At the end of flow through this unit there were distillation columns to allow us to remove the material that didn't react. On some of the metal inspections, I had seen great big claw marks right down through one of the distillation towers. I warned people how this was tricky business. This was a brand new process and we were working under wartime conditions. Things were pretty hectic and we worked under blackout conditions. Apparently they had trouble coming up with a solution. In particular they were interested in this great big vessel that was one and a half stories high. All of this stuff was turning around in it.

The Hydro Plant personnel were transferred elsewhere after the Alkylation Plants were built. The Poly Plant became a part of the Gas Plant Department which was under L.G. Lopez.

I left the Poly-Hydro area in 1946. I was still up there when Laurie was born. I went from there to the Technical Services Department.

### **THE EXPLOSION AND FIRE AT THE POLY PLANT**

One day there was an equipment failure on the day shift sometime

after 8:a.m shift change. Apparently there was a 1/4" sample line that had corroded through and broken off. This was something as big as your finger. The 160# of pressure behind this kept blowing out a fog of acid and butane. This made it very difficult for anyone to go in and take corrective action. Of course the operators activated emergency shutdown procedures and left the unit. In a very short time this whole area was filled up with the mixture and the butane vapors were ignited. The failure happened on the north side of the control house and there was a small boiler with a furnace about 100 yards to the south west of the control house. The boiler produced high pressure steam for use on the unit. The boiler furnace was sitting right out on the corner of the unit. More vapors were filling the area at the time. Jimmy Seymour was one of the American operators that day. There was a horizontal condenser to the east and north of the control house. Jimmy ran around on the north side of the condenser, away from the resulting explosion. Another young American operator made the mistake of running around the south side of the same condenser where he was exposed to the resulting explosion. He was badly burned. The new employee <sup>1</sup> was killed. The only clothing left on the new employee in the control room was his belt. The rest of his clothes were burned off.) That plant was one of the most dangerous in the refinery. It was shut down after the explosion. The war came to an end. This process was very expensive. More manpower was required to operate this plant as compared to an Alkylation plant. They had to maintain a stock of land joints (a type of flange for connecting two pieces of pipe together) for the Poly Plant. A land joint has a little dip in it and they put two of those together, one against the other. They put very fine grinding compound on those, and grind them until those two pieces will fit together perfectly. When the pipe is assembled with these joints it is tested for leaks. In this case they used air pressure at twice the

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<sup>1</sup> *There was an employee on the local payroll that was in the control room at the time. He was a newly hired man and he didn't know what was going on. The office of Louie Lopez and Bob Baum was a short distance away and they heard the initial gas escaping and they ran to the scene. They could see the vapor cloud slowly rolling towards the furnace and they knew it would be ignited by the hot furnace even with the burners extinguished. They took up a position out of the danger zone because they immediately realized the danger. They were waving and yelling at the new man who was standing in the control room doorway. They were telling him to run toward them, out of the danger zone. He apparently didn't understand or hear them. He continued to stand in the control room door.*

operating pressure and there must be no leakage. All that material is highly specialized alloys and as expensive as gold.

During the war they set up the Alkylation Plant Number One, a process that did the same thing without all the fancy equipment. Number Two Alky plant was added later. Both of these units were able to do the same thing at low pressure.

### **TECHNICAL SERVICE DEPARTMENT**

When I was with Technical Service Department in 1946, I worked on shift again in the Oil Inspection Laboratory. Here we checked the quality of the cargo loaded on the tankers. This is a job where you can meet up with all kinds of strange things.

The Receiving and Shipping Department may have a ship that is ready to load gasoline. The Oil Inspection Laboratory might find that a sample of the gasoline turns out to be all black. Then the Oil Inspection Laboratory had to shut things down to find out what the problem was. A clean up crew might have to be brought in to take care of it. Sometimes whole ship had to be off loaded.

Right after I got there, I came to work at midnight and checked the final samples in the lab and found the octane level came out low. Here is this ship loaded with 100,000 barrels of gasoline which didn't meet the specifications of the order. The octane number was too low. I couldn't hold him, so I called Frank Griffin, our Refinery Manager. Frank was all over the captain who apparently was lax in supervision of loading the ship. After I gave my little spiel to him explaining the problem, he said, "Hold the ship."

The next morning, we got some more samples, and sure enough the load was contaminated. Some one had opened the wrong valve in the tank farm and the wrong product had gone into the ships tanks. A good part of the cargo was below specifications. The problem was solved by loading a higher octane product and the mix was blended in the ships tanks.

In another case it was found the mix was slightly off color. They finally adopted a scheme where they took the rust and scale from the ship to see whether it was passable or not. If it wasn't, perhaps her skipper would have to clean it up. Most of the problem was in the loading.

We had one tanker, the *S/S Trail Blazer*, from Charles Martin in there one time that came in to load gas-oil and gasoline. The first samples showed that the tanks on the darned ship were literally filled with holes in between the tanks. I don't remember whether they took a

waiver on that or what, but it was finally loaded. The quality was uncompromised as far as Lago was concerned. They may have had to change the specifications, and this meant they had to have concurrence between Lago and Charles Martin. Of course someone lost money on that one.

Sometimes valves don't hold between tanks. We took three samples during the course of the loading. The first was to see if there were any obvious trouble, the next was when the tanks were half full, and the final one was taken for overall quality. You took a quart or a gallon from each tank, in some cases, such as av-gas, you took five gallon samples. If you were watching, you would have a pretty good idea whether the cargo on the ship was all right or not. A lot depended on the guy taking the sample. They were usually young boys. It was a dirty rotten job. We kept an eye on them. Often we would go out with them and watch. Occasionally we sent the shift leader down to check their techniques, whether the proper tanks had been sampled. Sometimes the problem would involve three or four tanks, with everything else being all right. Maybe the fellow who had been sent down to sample didn't get the numbers right. They wrote up a batch of labels at a time. Then as they took the samples they put on the tags.

One time av-gas was the problem. Samples showed there was severe corrosion present. Copper strips were used to make this test. A strip was immersed in the sample for a certain period of time. If copper strip turned color, the quality of the av-gas wasn't acceptable.

One time a pipe fitter used a second hand piece of pipe to replace a piece that had been condemned. Apparently the pipe had been used in some plant that had a lot of sulfides in their process. They finally tracked it down. They knew which lines had been moved. They sampled each section of the pipe between the refinery and the ship until they came to the point where they found the section containing the corrosive material. They then replaced it with a clean section of pipe. The load had to be taken back on shore and put through the process again.

Some of the line-ups down there involved awfully complicated handling.

I was in the Chemical Analytical Laboratory One for five years. I worked with Henry Goodwin in Heavy Fuels. Then I went to Laboratory Number Two. One part of Laboratory Number Two took care of routine testing and another part handled non routine testing. Specialty work samples came from Laboratory Number One to Laboratory Number

Two. I was also in Laboratory Number Three. I was head of Laboratory Number One. My job assignments took me back and forth between these three Laboratories.

Doctor James Read moved from Laboratory Number Two a short time before I got there. Ben Whitney took his place. He did trouble shooting and odd jobs. He is extremely competent and knows his business.

Laboratory Number Three did a lot of Catalytic Cracking Plant work. Part of it was testing the product, but most of it was keeping track of the catalyst quality. The powdered catalyst, aluminum silicate, became contaminated in normal operations and twelve tons a day was lost as fines going out the stack to the atmosphere. Much was done to keep the loss rate down as low as possible. Carbon was burned from the catalyst automatically in a continuous operation.

### **BUNGALOW 513**

Bungalow 513 was our next home, and we stayed there for ever and ever, excepting renovations of course. That was where Laurie was born in 1945, and we adopted Ellen in 1952. She was seven, and we adopted her from around our home town. She is a third daughter of a first cousin of mine. If it was done, Lois handled it. I'm pretty sure we belonged to the Girl Scouts. Lois was an adult leader for as long as the girls were involved.

Often we went to the place right outside the Sea Grape Grove to go swimming. It was always amazing to me that that quieted you down when you got in there.

The local person that I am talking about is named DeCourt and he was a local supervisor, and we went on a picnic with him and his wife. There was another Aruban family, the Fabiano Kelly's, that worked for a while in the Laboratories. He went to work for the government. He was sent to Holland on a number of occasions. He was to learn about sanitation so he could inspect containers and vessels that come into contact with food. I guess he did quite well with this, but I don't know that the government paid all that well. A few years back I had a letter from him telling me had binged up his back. This last Christmas, I got another that invited me to stay with him for only \$30 a night. He has some cottages above Oranjestad. There are houses beyond the hotels along the beach clear up to the California Light House on the northwestern tip of the island. The farthest north road that is any good is the one where he lives. He had a sixteen cylinder Cadillac at one time. It was a very long thing with air conditioning, and the story goes that he

had got the thing trading with the Oklahoma Indians. We stopped off to visit him the last time we were on the island.

Men who worked in Aruba were highly trained and motivated. Any who left Lago applying for a job were hired immediately. Some went into the consulting business.

### **CLUBS**

I didn't belong to any club in Aruba. I went swimming and did some work on a couple of sailboats. One of them, built in Ponce, Puerto Rico, belonged to E. L. Wilkins. Its owners sailed to Aruba with a cargo of oranges. The people operating the boat got into trouble with the Dutch authorities, and they had to scamper for it. This made the boat come up for sale, and the people in Aruba were interested in it. Around the time of the German attack, MacKnight and I bought it from Art Krottner or whoever bought it in Curacao from the government agency that had impounded it.

Bill MacKnight worked for Kellogg all over the world. He died in 1986. They came to visit us in Fort Lauderdale in 1985. He was getting lined up for some job over in China and he never made it. Died of a heart attack. Bill had one little girl at that time.

### **RETIREMENT**

When I left Aruba in 1965, I came to Fort Lauderdale, Florida and have been retired for 22 years. I have done all of my house maintenance except roofing.

## **The Loren Elmer Robbin Story**

He was a tall black haired man. He had two grown daughters when I first met him in 1937. His two daughters were married in Aruba. Margaret, his eldest, was married to Gilbert Corrington. Evelyn was married to Ira Couch. Elmer was an operator in the Gas Plant, as it was known in the early days. He was from Casper, Wyoming.

The way he told about his first trip to Aruba always made us laugh. It seems that he and another fellow owned an old Model T Ford touring car, and they had the idea that they would drive it from Casper to a point near New York, sell or otherwise get rid of it there, and then they would take a train to their hotel in New York. When they reached the hotel they would find out how to catch the tanker bound for Aruba.

Well, they had an exciting time making plans for their first trip across the country to the fabulous city of New York. When the time for departure finally came, they were almost unable to sleep. The day of the trip, they got up in the early hours of the morning, fired up the old car and began their great adventure. They followed a route that took them through the northern states. Nearing New York, they began to look for a place to sell the car as they had originally planned, but all the sights and happenings kept them distracted. The next thing they knew they were entering the Holland Tunnel. When they got on the other side of the Holland Tunnel there would be a place to get rid of the car, they decided. From there they would take a train the rest of the way into New York. In the tunnel, policemen stationed along on the elevated walkways kept motioning them to keep moving. Their old car sputtered and strained, but it never could make the speed the traffic cops wanted. Behind them there was a long, bumper-to-bumper line of rush hour traffic behind them, impatiently waiting for them to get out of their way so that they might pass through. In the sunlight at the other end, they found themselves in what seemed to be a chaotic bedlam of confusion. The small town boys realized they had arrived at their destination. They also realized it would be a chore to find the Lincoln Hotel. They asked a policeman for directions. He spoke a different kind of English, but they finally understood his directions. On their arrival at the hotel, they presented an outlandish sight. Luggage was strapped to the fenders like the "Okies" from *The Grapes of Wrath*, road dust was an inch deep on everything, and they hadn't shaved in two days. To top it off, their old



car wheezed asthmatically, bucked like a maverick, refusing to die after the ignition was turned off. The bell boy who came out to unload their luggage was flabbergasted when they gave him \$25 and told him the old car was his.

People in the lobby peered curiously from the windows at this motley crew and their trusty steed. Elmer said he didn't blame them because the old car's fenders continued to flap up and down for ten minutes after the engine had been turned off. He said they were attention getters as they walked through the lobby to the desk, trailed by a cloud of dust while they tried to make themselves presentable. Two bell boys following them struggled with their antiquated bulging bags whose straps seemed to be ready to burst at any second. The newcomers' Western attire was distinctly out of place, and their quaint, Midwestern accent made them foreigners to the average sophisticated city dweller.

As they were being guided to the elevators and their rooms, they could still see the first bell boy trying to figure out how to get their trusty steed off the crowded street.

Another story told about Elmer was typical of things that happened to him as recounted by his fellow workers. On Elmer's shift there was a man by the name of Claude Dixon who was always thinking up new ways to play practical jokes on his fellow workers. One day he doctored Elmer's lunch while Elmer was out in the plant. Claude cut up a Serrano pepper in long thin slices. He put a couple of them in the bottom side of one of Elmer's sandwiches, rewrapped it and returned it to his lunch box. Well now, those familiar with exotic condiments know the Serrano pepper is considerably hotter than the fiery jalapeño, which is quite hot enough when you get right down to it.

It was the practice of workers to heat their suppers on a bare spot in the steam line where they removed a slab of insulation. I happened to have had business in the area as Elmer took his sandwiches from the hot steam line. As was his custom, Elmer had heated his sandwiches on this handy hot pad, replaced the insulation, seated himself, and methodically laid out his lunch on a small shop table. He poured a cup of coffee from his thermos bottle and carefully removed the wax paper from the first sandwich. Shortly after Elmer took a big bite of that sumptuous looking warm beef sandwich, tears began to come to his eyes. He gasped and lifted the top slice of bread to inspect his sandwich for the cause of his discomfort. When he turned it over and lifted the bottom slice, he saw the remains of the two pieces of a Serrano pepper. He virtually drained the thermos bottle, trying to put out the fire in his mouth. He said

breathlessly, "Boy, when I get home that Josephine is going to get it this time!" Elmer went home after that shift thinking that his wife had played a trick on him. I've often wondered how Josephine came out when he got home.

At the Aruba reunion in Clear Lake in the fall of 1985, I ran into Jack Couch, Elmer's grandson. I told him I needed additional material on Elmer to round out this story, and he promised he would look for more.

In the spring of 1987 I received a call from Jack, who lives in Victoria, Texas. He told me he had found some poems composed by his grandfather, and that he was sending them. I wasn't aware Elmer wrote poetry, and I feel they should be included in Elmer's story.

#### THROUGH THE HOLLAND TUNNEL IN A FLIVER (1929)

We approached the tunnel from the Jersey side  
where thousands of cars were ready to glide.  
We took our turn with cars galore,  
as they proceeded to enter the river bore.

As we went in we saw a sign  
"Thirty-five miles and stay in line."  
The best we could do with gas to the floor  
was 22 miles and not a bit more.

The cars in front had gone from sight  
and those behind were packed in tight.  
The police hollered "come on you rubes,  
don't obstruct or block the tube.  
With her ears pulled down she rattled and knocked,  
her fenders waved and her body rocked.  
She smoked and steamed and shimmied bad,  
but more speed she never had.

At last we reached the New York end,  
and daylight there seemed like a friend.  
At last we found a place to park  
we felt like Noah when he left the ark.

The experience was great and we got a thrill.  
To drive thru again I never will.

**JIMMIE BRENNAN**  
Congratulations Jimmie Brennan,  
Best wishes from us all.

The evidence is proof enough  
For why you had to fall.

May this charming girl that you've deceived,  
Find all that's good in you,  
And realize right off the bat  
That what you've promised is true.

May you never have a dog house  
The same as most of us,  
Into which you'd sometimes have to crawl  
To avoid an awful fuss.

We warn this kennel's quite a place  
To lay and gnaw a bone  
And ponder o'er the mistakes you've made  
For which you must atone.

There's sure to be a more pleasant way  
We hope you can teach us how  
To enjoy a happy married life,  
Start the example now.

Our very best wishes for your success,  
We're certain it's bound to be.  
Unlock the successful happy way,  
Don't lose or hide the key.

#### TO SHERRIE LYNN

I used to wonder, sometime back  
Just what I'd really do,  
If ever I became the 'boss'  
Of a treasure just like you.

The plans I'd made and tho't I'd keep,  
Don't seem to work at all.  
'Cause often now I'd like to sleep  
When you decide to bawl.

It seems you're hungry night and day  
And demand that you be fed.  
I wonder now, who must have put  
Such ideas in your little head?

I might complain for hours an' hours  
And tell how I'm abused  
Wow the plans I'd made before you came

I've discovered now just can't be used.

So keep it up, Miss Sherrie Lynn,  
And yell commands with all your might  
I'll always meet them with a smile -  
My previous plans were just not right.

Signed, Grandpop (Sherrie is Margaret Corrington's daughter; Robbie,  
Robbins' granddaughter.)

### FRIENDLESS

I live in a house by the side of the road,  
I'm no longer a friend of man.  
My home is surrounded by air machines  
Just try and sleep if you can.

It must have been man, I'm sure it was,  
With all the abuse he could muster,  
That developed this terrible machine,  
And called it Pavement Buster.

Of all the contraptions that man could devise,  
There's nothing so quiet disturbing.  
The dishes rattle, the radio squawks,  
It really is unnerving.

The directors of labor I once tho't nice  
But now I have learned to hate.  
They seem to know to plan their work  
When they're sure I'm twelve to eight.

They know I must sleep some time in the day,  
So keep their men instructed,  
To keep gouging, punching, and driving away  
Till everything is busted.

There's conduit to bury, sewers to change,  
There'll always be ditches to dig.  
They're never truly happy  
Unless this jigger's dancing a jig.

I guess I'll move back away from the road  
Move back as far as I can,  
Where I'll be assured of a quiet sleep,  
And continue to be a friend of man.

## THE OLD LUNCHPAIL

I've made many a trip  
From camp out to the job.  
I've tried to satisfy the hunger,  
Of my boss, the man called Bob.

I've been laden with sandwiches  
Fruit, cake and ham.  
Some times I change the fare,  
And it's soup, vegetables and jam.

My bottle is always filled with milk  
Or something to quench the thirst.  
At times I'm packed so full,  
I'm afraid my sides will burst.

But for all this I won't complain  
'cause I know I fill the bill.  
But the overtime that I put in,  
Is sure against my will.

I never get a moment's rest  
Because of my trip back home  
I don't seem to mind the food  
But the return trip makes me groan.

I've carried bolts, screws, bricks and rags  
Paint, oil, chains and nails,  
And many other numerous things

That weren't meant for dinner pails.

Someday I'm sure to lose my grip  
'cause I've stood about all I can.  
But I'll carry my secret to the grave  
In order to protect my man.

(Signed) O.B. Joyful

(As told by James L. Lopez.)

## **The Chester & Marilyn Rogers Story**

My name is Chester Raymond Rogers. I was born November 29, 1915 in Kewanee, Illinois which is about 150 miles south of Chicago. This small town had three major industries: Walworth valves, Boss work gloves and Kewanee Boilers.<sup>1</sup>

My father's name was Clifford Raymond and my mother's name was Nellie Page. My father worked for Walworth for 10 years and then became a decorator of the interior of buildings. Finally he became a Manager of one of the buildings in Chicago, Illinois.

I graduated from high school in Kewanee. I worked as a machine parts Inspector for 2 1/2 years in Chicago. I was making \$19 a week.

My uncle, John Rogers, was a boiler-maker in the Aruba refinery. I saw him when he was in the States on vacation in June 1937. He talked with me about getting a job in Aruba. He mentioned something like \$150 a month, plus room, board and laundry. This sounded pretty good.

In October of 1937 I received a letter from the Personnel Office of The Standard Oil Company of New Jersey in New York. They offered me a position in the Mechanical or Operating Departments. I chose the Operating Department. I filled out and returned some papers they had sent me. Next I received a letter from New York in April, 1938 saying I was booked on a Grace Liner leaving New York in April. One day before sailing I received a telegram from the New York office canceling the Grace Line trip. I was instructed to report to the Personnel Office at the Everett Refinery in Boston with my papers (Visa, passport and police good conduct report).. At that time the contracts for new employees were for two years. If the employee quit before his contract was finished he had to pay his own fare home.

At the hotel, where I was staying, in Boston, I met Ed Hastings who was scheduled to go to Aruba at the same time. Ed was the brother of Ray Brown's wife, Mona. Ray Brown was the head of the Safety Department at the time.

Ed and I were spending our own money on our expenses and still

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<sup>1</sup> *John Rogers, Chet's uncle, had previous service in Indonesia and South Carolina before coming to Aruba. He lived in Bungalow #314 in the colony. When he retired he had 28 years of service with Esso.*

hadn't been given any funds by the company. At the Personnel office we were informed that we were sailing to Aruba on the Tanker S/S *W. H. Libby* on April 20, 1938. Ed and I informed the Everett Personnel Office that we only had enough funds for two days so we had better be on the ship as scheduled.

On April 19, we were transported with our luggage to the dock and boarded the S/S *W. H. Libby*. Two other men also boarded for the trip to Aruba, but I can't remember their names. The ship didn't leave until April 21. The next day at sea the Steward asked for our papers. We told him that the New York Personnel Office had our papers. The Steward was very worried because the Captain would be very angry. With no papers we would not be allowed to land in Aruba. The Captain would have to return us to Boston.

The ship arrived in Aruba on Saturday April 29, but because of no room at the docks it had to anchor offshore of Venezuela as was the custom at that time. On Sunday April 30 the ship docked in Aruba at 10:a.m.

George Hemstreet, from the Aruba Refinery Personnel Office, came aboard the ship and handed each of us a large envelope and said "here are some things you need." These were the missing papers plus a check for our expenses getting to Boston, hotel, food, etc.

George delivered us and our luggage to the Lago Heights bachelor quarters. These were similar in layout to the *sheep sheds*, which were another type of housing available in those days. There were four buildings, each containing 12 separate rooms with a bed, desk, chest of drawers, and a chair. In the center of the square formed by these buildings there was a utility room with showers, toilets, and washbasins. The main difference between these quarters and the *sheep sheds* was that the Lago Heights quarters had framed screens in the windows that could be removed for cleaning or repairs. These buildings were intended to house employees from Surinam and British Guiana, who were being recruited for office clerks. The larger Bachelor Quarters were being finished in the colony and we were to be relocated to them as they became available.

There was a row of *sheep sheds* to the west of the new Bachelor Quarters that were being built. Howard Jenkins was one of those who did not want to move from the *sheep sheds* to the new Bachelor Quarters.

The eight new quarters each had forty rooms and was built in the shape of an "H" with the "legs" of the H pointing north and south toward

the sea. They were two story structures built on the hill above the dining hall.

At supper time a bus took the new arrivals to the dining hall. There I was introduced to Jim Bluejacket who was the Welding Department General Foreman and a well known personality.

On Monday morning after our arrival, the newcomers reported to the Personnel Office for their job assignments. Ed Hastings and I were taken to the commissary to get work clothes. Ed was assigned to the Hydro/Poly Plant area and I was assigned to #5 and #6 Combination Units. I was sent to see Paul A. O'Brien who was the Assistant Division Superintendent. He said I would start on the 4 p.m. to 12 midnight shift that day. After supper at 3:30 p.m. the newcomers walked from the dining hall, through the colony gate and to their units. George Wilkins was Shift Foreman and Ben Cobb was Assistant Shift Foreman. George took me to #3 and #4 Combination Units. There I was introduced to Tarpy Miller who was the Operator. He gave me strict instructions on what I was expected to do. Stay on the unit, learn the procedures, and keep alert to what was going on. My first job was to follow the experienced old Aruban fireman around and learn his job. I was given all of the tricks of the old fireman. These tricks have stayed with me to this day.

Later in that shift I was reassigned to #5 and #6 Combination Units. At that time one new foreign staff employee was assigned to each unit. As it turned out #3 and #4 already had two new foreign staff employees and #5 and #6 only had one.

"Doc" Ramsey was the operator on #5 and #6 Combination Units and a strict disciplinarian like Tarpy. I was working with Ramsey for four years.

Each unit had two furnaces, a Cross furnace and a Reducer furnace. The control house for both units sat between the units. Two reciprocating reduced crude charge pumps and two cross furnace charge pumps were on each side. The furnaces and the tar pumps were on the south side of the control house. One reactor for each of the two units sat on top of the control house. There was a door on the east and west sides and one on the south side facing the furnaces. The control panel with all of the measuring and controlling instruments was located inside the control house on the north side. The operating personnel were: the one Process Helper who did all of the odd jobs on the unit such as taking samples, cleaning up spills, etc; the Fireman (one for each unit) took care of the two furnaces for each unit such as changing burners as necessary



and keeping the temperatures steady at 830 - 840°F on the Reducer Furnace and 910 - 925°F on the Cross Furnace; one Houseman who read and recorded all of the meter readings on the panel; The Levelman (one for each unit), whose job was mainly outside, made sure all liquid levels were correctly maintained plus taking gravities on all products; one Assistant Operator and one Operator for the two units double checked the work being done by the others. The pressure on the Cross Furnace was maintained at 750 psig.

Shortly after I began working in the Pressure Stills I noticed that the young newcomers began to disappear. They apparently couldn't meet the standards set by the operators.

I moved into Bachelor Quarters #4 after about six months in Lago Heights. This was about the time I became an Assistant Operator. In the bachelor quarters, one bathroom was shared by each two adjoining rooms. Two persons were assigned to each room in BQ #4 and all were shift workers. At various times three men were assigned to each room in the other quarters when housing became a problem.

While I was Assistant Operator and on one 8:a.m - 4:p.m. shift the pressure on Cross Furnace of #5 unit exceeded 750 psig and climbed to 900 psig. It was impossible to move the outlet valve so the Operator shut off the fuel to the burners in the furnace. The Operator opened the blowdown valve to relieve the pressure to the blowdown drum in the Central Pumphouse. Next the feed pump was shutdown and the blowdown valve was closed. When the pressure dropped down below 750 psig the burners were put back into service; the feed pump was put back into service. In the investigation of the incident they determined that instead of opening the blowdown valve it was better to shut down one of the furnace charge feed pumps.

Four years later I became an operator and four years later I became an Assistant Shift Foreman. 18 months later I became a Shift Foreman. I became Maintenance Coordinator in 1950. Two years later I became Process Foreman. The Process Foreman determined what each unit was to produce and issued the orders to change operations according to demand.

I was on vacation in 1942 and was planning to go to college. However I found that I would be drafted if I was no longer working in Aruba. Aruba needed me and the government considered my job essential to the war effort. So I decided to postpone my further schooling and return to Aruba. The person in charge of the Draft Board where I was registered was very disgruntled when communications were received

from Standard Oil of New Jersey officially requesting that I be deferred.

When the German submarine sank the Lake Tankers at 1:30 a.m. on February 16, 1942 I was asleep in my room in B.Q. #4. It was my day off. The explosions awakened me. My windows faced the refinery and I could see bright light coming through the open shutters. But when I looked out the windows I could see no fires in the refinery. Upon further investigation I could see the flames were from just outside the harbor. I immediately went outside and looked seaward and saw all of the flames. The lights in the Guest House just west of the BQ came on and someone yelled "turn out the lights" and the lights immediately went off again. My friend Bill Eagan was hard of hearing and I woke him up to tell him about the fires. As we were on the porch we could see the tracer bullets from the submarine sailing over the refinery. From the seaward end of the porch we had a ringside seat of all of the activity.

Marilyn also remembers when the first Americans came and set up their camp near B. A. Beach. It seemed unusual that they were issued no ammunition for their rifles. She also remembers when the Queens Own Cameron Highlanders came in 1940.

Marilyn remembers when the German submarine torpedoed the Lake Tankers just outside the San Nicolas harbor on February 16, 1942. She remembers you could hear the survivors of the sunken Lake Tankers hollering for help in the water.

It so happened that the Holtane family was scheduled to go on vacation in February, 1942. After the submarine attack the company chartered a plane to evacuate the families wanting to leave because of the attack. The Holtane's were included in that schedule which led to some confusion. The company later initiated a policy that those families who were evacuated would not be allowed to return until after hostilities. As a result of this policy the Holtane family could not return for some time, so they were living in California.

Marilyn graduated from Lago High School in 1942. Marilyn and I were married in September of 1942 in California. Marilyn went to Chicago to live with Chet's sister and Michael was born there February 1943. Joyce was born in Chicago in September of 1945 and graduated from Lago High School in Aruba. Phil was born in Aruba in February of 1953. Kate was born in Aruba in October of 1966 We lived in Bungalow 512 and in 1954 we moved to Bungalow #251.

### **MARILYN'S STORY**

Marilyn Holtane was born in Los Angeles, California on September

9, 1924. Her sister, Vivian Holtane Spencer, was born in Panama in 1921. In 1928-1930 Marilyn and her family lived in Laganillas, Venezuela. This was on the edge of Lake Maricaibo. She remembers seeing the fires when the oil on the surface of Lake Maricaibo burned and destroyed the Venezuelan workers housing on shore and on the lake sometime during that period.

Her father, Theodore "Ted" Holtane was a machinist and was working in Panama in 1921. He worked for Creole Petroleum in 1928 - 1930. In 1934 he transferred to Aruba. At the time there was serious shortage of housing in the colony. Lago had established a policy that new employees had to wait three years before they could bring their family. Mrs. Holtane, Marilyn and her sister, Vivian, arrived in Aruba in 1937. At the time Terry Smith was working in the Personnel Department. He met the Holtane family and helped them get to Bungalow #313. Marilyn and Vivian entered Lago High School in 1937. Vivian graduated in 1940 and Marilyn graduated in 1942.

In 1938 they moved to #812; in 1940 to #314 which their uncle, had occupied previously. Ted Holtane retired in 1950 and the family went to California.

## **RETIREMENT**

Chet retired on 11/1/75 when he was 60 years old. He had planned to retire when he was 55 years old, but the company made him an offer he couldn't refuse so he stayed 5 more years. The Company allowed him to stay beyond his final retirement date to allow the children to visit over the Christmas holidays. Chet said he enjoyed the first month of retirement watching the packing of his household effects prior to leaving Aruba.

During his final years in Aruba Chet said he was vacation replacement for the various Superintendents around the refinery. Because of a lack of a college degree he could not be promoted.. The family finally departed January 4, 1976.

## **The Jimmie Rosborough Story**

After graduating from Eureka College in 1928, Celma and I were married and moved to Chicago to work. Later that year, a friend of a relative of mine told me about a job possibility in Aruba through Standard Oil of Indiana. I interviewed shortly thereafter 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.

After the usual six to seven day trip to Aruba, I lived in a bungalow with several other bachelor foremen. No one in the refinery really knew what to do with me; they weren't too sure what I was doing or what my job really was all about. 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.

As a condition of employment, the Standard Oil of Indiana VP promised me a house shortly after my arrival and passage for my wife shortly thereafter. There were about 50 bungalows built at the time, and I was assigned to Bungalow # 128. Sometime during the winter of 1929, Celma took the train to New York, a small launch out to the tanker, and then had to climb a rope ladder to get aboard. The Captain wasn't too thrilled with passengers and so the trip to Aruba wasn't the best.

Celma was very popular. Bungalow 128 was part of "bird cage row" - a group of three room bungalows all occupied by young married couples. Lots of good times remembered and lots of Scotch. Pete & Eleanor Linster and Ellie & Belle Wilkins were part of this gang. A short time later, I remember buying a second hand Model A Roadster with a rumble seat for \$150. One of the things I wasn't too popular for was the fact that I had a telephone (one of the very few in the Colony). The reason I had it was because I had to get up at all hours of the night to go out and "gauge a tank."

Basket ball was a big thing down there in the early days. I was on the Lab Team and played forward along with Grady Burnett. I remember a six foot center named Herman Bechtal. George LeMaire was also on the team.

Our first son, Dick, was born on 6-4-31 in the hospital by the refinery - a small one story building. Ralph & Beulah Watson sat in the hospital with Celma & me waiting for the birth. Beulah was a lab

technician at the hospital and was a big help. Dick was one of the first babies born in the Colony.

I remember a fire in the lab later in 1931 caused by a broken seal that allowed gas vapors to escape and then ignite. As I reached under the table to turn off the gas, my cloths caught fire. I ran out and jumped a six foot table before being covered with a blanket. The Chief Chemist, Dr. Reid, took me to the hospital in a pickup truck. Recuperation took almost four months and was very painful as not much was known about burns at that time.

When our second son, Jim was born on December 2, 1935, we moved to Bungalow # 418, a two bedroom house. Our third son, Don, was born on March 22, 1939. After the war, we moved to bungalow 553 where Susan was born on October 15, 1948. Our last four years were spent in Bungalow 1521



This circa 1976 picture attempts to capture the unusual sight of barrels set apparently helter-skelter in the hills in the back roads. Actually, they are carefully placed around small trees to keep the burros from eating their foliage until they are killed.

**Photo courtesy V. D. Lopez**

## **The Berend “Tex” Schelfhorst Story**

My name is Berend (Tex) Schelfhorst. I was born in 1911 in Almelo, Holland. I attended Technical College, Amsterdam.

I was 22 years old when N. P. Schindeler and I sailed from Holland on the *S/S Ingrid Horn*. Nicholaas Schindeler and I were the last of plus or minus 150 Dutchmen that Standard Oil of New Jersey had hired as Foreign Staff. We were hired by O. H. Shelton in Amsterdam. This was by way of a trial to replace the American Foreign Staff. My rate was 4th Class Operator and I was placed in the Oil Inspection Laboratory. This laboratory was in a shed across the main road through the refinery and opposite the old ice plant.

Standard Oil of New Jersey wanted to operate the refinery with Dutchmen as was done by Shell Oil Company in Curacao. This was because the Dutch were paid lower wages than the Americans. As a Fourth Class Operator I was paid Fls. 1.20 per hour, American contractors Fourth Class Operators made \$0.60 per hour. When the United States went off the gold standard the monetary exchange rate went from Fls. 2.50 to Fls. 1.80 to the dollar. This meant that I made more than the American 4th Class Operator. This went on for years as pay for each rate increased. (Fls 1.20 versus Fls 1.08) Finally the Company decided to place all foreign Staff on the dollar payroll. Apparently the Company policy was changed due to different circumstances such as needing jobs for displaced Company employees from other locations. You can understand that we were not popular and considered as price cutters. It took years to overcome this. We considered this as a typical example of mismanagement. We didn't know about this program at the time and neither did the Americans. All but 40 of the Dutchmen involved left the company after a few years.

After a 21 day trip we arrived in Oranjestad on March 31, 1933. Mr. Harold Atwood, Refinery Personnel Manager met us upon our arrival. He drove us to Lago in an open 1926 Ford.

The first American I was introduced to was Chief Gilbert Brook wearing his Sam Brown belt and a cowboy hat.

Nick and I were assigned to Room 16 in Bachelor Quarters No. 6. After that I went on shift work and a seven day week.

My first boss was Syd Tucker who immediately put me to work

sweeping the floor and washing the windows. (Imagine this as your introduction to your new profession.) Later I was assigned to perform the normal work in the Oil Inspection Laboratory.

After a year I was transferred to the Chemical Laboratory under Dr. James Reid. My colleagues there were: Dr. Broz, Tim Binnion, Art Opsahl, and Jim Rosborough.

In 1946 I was transferred to Equipment Inspection Group where I was involved in material testing and corrosion inspection.

I was also married in 1946 and lived in Bungalows 117, 383, and 126. My neighbors were Ferrow Himes, Lou Ballard, Fletcher "Paddlefoot" Dunbar, Bert Teagle, and Andy Tully.

The refinery guards were only stationed at the gates. I don't think there was any patrolling. They carried no club or weapons. There was also a Dutch Marine at the gates.

One of the entrances to the caves under the Lago Colony was fenced in and was opposite Bungalow #383 where I lived at one time.

The Baby Beach was located east of the new Esso Club and Lone Palm Stadium on the south coast of the island. It was very popular with the mothers of small children. The beach at Fontein was noted for the dangerous undertow. That area was a good place to go for a picnic. The Rodger's beach was more for older children and grown-ups and sailing; the sand on the beaches was crushed coral and sea shells. I remember Jim Downey and Miss Olsen (who married Bill Ewart). I remember the 4th of July celebrations in the early days and during the war years; the parades in the colony with the American Legion, the Dutch police, and the Dutch Marines; the baseball games at Lone Palm Stadium; the picnics at the picnic grounds near Baby Beach; the Community Band playing; all nationalities attending

I remember some of the doctors: Crismon, Borbonus, Hendrickson, and Kretschmer. De Ruyter, Waasdorp, Wevers, Bettink, Dreveling, Meiners.

The nurses I remember: Hayeze, Heffernon, Steirly, Mitchell, Wylie, Clark

The first hospital was located in the area between the dining hall and where the Cat Plant was located in 1945. It was rather simple and most of the patients were housed in one main ward. The boss was Dr. Sandvoss, a German. His assistant was Dr. R. C. Carrell. In 1936 or 1937 the new hospital was built north of the dining hall and in the area

where the spheroid gasoline tanks were later built. Before the hospital was completed it was decided that that space would have to be occupied by the spheroid tanks. Narrow (30") gauge railroad tracks were being used to move material to certain areas in the refinery and colony. The partially completed hospital was cut into three parts and was moved to its final location by means of specially laid tracks. Since the surveyor who laid out the path of the track liked to drink during his work the path of the track was not exactly straight.

Tony was the barber in the Esso Club Barber Shop. Most of us went to Vink's Barber Shop in the village. With some drinks it always took the whole evening. Later his nephew opened a shop in the colony, close to the elementary school.

According to my guess the *sheep sheds* would accommodate about 20 people. They were occupied from 1930 to the end of the war. They were later moved to Lago Heights for contract personnel, schools and clubhouses.

Our first club house burned down in June of 1942. Many of the firemen became very interested in the liquor storage room. I spent more of my time in the Marine Club and the Eagle Club. But during the war years I was often in the temporary club that was made up of Army Barracks that were assembled in a square with the center open to the sky. This was where our open air movies took place. Our new club was opened about 1950 between Rodger's Beach and Baby Lagoon. One of our long time, well known, bartenders at the club was "Courtney."

Our water system was a little complicated. We had salt water for the fire hydrants and toilets. We had brackish water for our showers. Fresh water replaced the brackish water in our showers later on. The brackish water came from a horizontal tunnel connected to the Mangel Cora well which was located above the Baby Lagoon. Rainwater filtered down into this tunnel and well when there were rains. This water floated on top of any salt water that might be in the bottom. The salt content varied between 400 and 1,000 parts per million of NaCl.

Fresh water was originally brought in by tankers that had been fitted with special tanks. It was said some of this water came from the New York area, notably the Hudson River. Later the evaporating plants in the refinery furnish some water and eventually we received water from the government-operated desalination plant at Balashi.

We had a bus system that had a bus circulating through the colony. The bus came by every half hour to the commissary. Mario Croes was



the bus driver. I think he was the brother of Frank Croes who later owned and operated the Esso Filling Station later located just outside the colony gate, at the entrance to San Nicolas.

Our Community Band leader was Jan Koulman. Some of the members of the band were Les Seekins, Leonard McReynolds, and Merle Fisk.

The Dance Band was called the "Funmakers." Leader was Marvin Case; some of the members were Andy Hogue, Neil Spigt, Nick Schindeler

The Engineer's Club house was located just east of the "new" Commissary. The club had a woodworking shop that was well used by the members. They held monthly meetings with refreshments and had speakers for each meeting.

Cary Daly was the pusher of the Skeet Club. His able assistant was Laurence Bailly.

I was a member of the Flying Club and flew all of the planes. We did stunts which today are considered reckless. Pushers of the club were Skippy Culver, Bill Ewart, Alex Shaw, and John McCord. There were sufficient foremen members so that maintenance of the De Vuijst Field and the planes was taken care of on the "government job" basis. (A term used to indicate that the work was done unofficially and not recorded on the "time sheets.") The original instructors were from the Army Air Force. Instruction was given at the Oranjestad Airport.

The Yacht Club provided Sunday afternoon sailboat races. Later there were more motor boats and water skiing. The pushers were Lewis MacNutt and Gene Goley.

The first flight of the KLM was made by the "Snipe." The plane landed at the beach in Sabeneta. The same landing field by later used by Viana's airplane. (Actually there were two planes involved. They were German-made, tri-motored Fokker's.)

The first commercial airport was located where the present airport is located. Then in maybe 1936 this field was renamed the Dakota Field. This airfield is now called the Princess Beatrix Airport.

The original road, San Nicholas to Oranjestad, went through Frenchman's Pass and then along beside the airport area. I believe the route of the present road to Oranjestad was established about 1931-1932.

The original small gauge railroad for the phosphate mines was still

in place when the oil business came to Aruba. This railroad extended from the Lake Tanker docks up past the dining hall and into the colony. In the early construction days it was used to move material to temporary storage sites in the colony area. It was also used to transport foreign staff workers to and from the dining hall at noon time

The retirement parties used to take place at the picnic grounds, at the American Legion building, the golf club and later the Esso Club.

I was on the all-Dutch, "Woodpickers" bowling team. We had lots of fun and drank lots of liquor. We won the championship once.

The day Holland was invaded by Germany during WWII was May 10, 1940. All Germans and their allies were picked up by 5:00 A.M. and transported to Bonaire by Lake Tankers. The French cruiser *Jeanne D'Arc* appeared before Oranjestad and wanted to land Marines. Later they were permitted to land. Further that day lots of talking and listening to the radio. On the day of Holland's liberation I guess there was a lot of drinking! When the French Marines landed they didn't stay too long. I saw them.

The Highlanders stayed in Aruba until February 13, 1942. The American Coast Guard Unit from South Carolina arrived on February 11, 1942. The Scotties and the Yanks shared 8 hour guard duty for the two days before the Highlanders left.

The Americans installed anti-aircraft guns at various locations and one was on top of Number 3 Laboratory. They also installed foundations and bunkers for three 155 mm canon on Cerro Colorado Light House hill. The foundations and bunkers can still be seen on the hill. They also installed some mock guns on the outer reefs. When the American troops left in 1943 they were replaced by Puerto Ricans.

The Tank Farm Guards were recruited from non-operating department personnel. J. S. Harrison was the boss with two sub-commanders; L. S. McReynolds was one and the other was a Power House man. I was one of the guards. Winfield Wilson, Frank Roding and I don't remember who else were also members of this group. This temporary guard group lasted about 4 months. We had Skeet Club rifles and the .22 rifles from the old Gun Club. We had 4 hours on duty and 8 hours off duty.

## **WORLD WAR II**

The German submarine U-156 attack Lago at 1:30a.m. on February 16, 1942. The Lake Tanker, *Oranjestad* was torpedoed and it sank. The Lake Tanker *Pedernales* was torpedoed and it caught fire. It did not sink

but drifted to the west and north of Oranjestad where it came to rest on the beach. A tug later brought it to the Lago's dry dock. There the badly damaged center section of the ship was removed and the bow and stern sections welded together in Lago's dry dock. It was sailed to a ship yard in the U.S where it was reconstructed

The tanker *Arkansas* had just arrived at the Eagle Pier in Oranjestad. It had just come out of dry dock in the United States and was still gas free. It was hit by one torpedo but because it was gas free there was no explosion. The torpedo exploded inside the ship but no one was injured. A second torpedo missed the *Arkansas* and landed on the Eagle beach. The next day a Dutch Marine officer was killed trying to disarm the torpedo.

The anti-aircraft shells fired from the deck of the German submarine did little damage. One shell hit crude tank #112, but only made a dent because the shell was a "dud" and it didn't explode. Another shell hit a house in the village but did not explode and no one was hurt.

Investigation of German Naval records after the war revealed that the 10.5mm deck gun on the U-156 was damaged when they fired their first shot at the Lago refinery. The crew failed to remove the gun muzzle plug before firing the gun. They only had anti-aircraft guns to do the actual shelling of the refinery. The ammunition was "dud"; that is it did not explode on contact with their target. The submarine had to retreat because of Allied action that began taking place.

Some days before the submarine attack Tony Federle caught an S. O. S. from a torpedoed ship in the Caribbean. This was the first indication that German submarines had penetrated into the Caribbean.

At daybreak on February 19, 1942, as later verified, two flares were fired by the American cruiser *Missouri*. At the time the cruiser sighted what they thought was a submarine just off of the eastern end of the island. Evidently no thought was given to where the flare casings would land. One went through the roof of the old club and did some damage to the Library. The second flare casing came through the roof of my room and demolished my desk about 1 foot from my bed. A new car battery was sitting on that desk and of course it was demolished too. From there the casing went through the floor, bounced when it hit the coral below and ended up in the radiator of a car parked in the community garage behind Bachelor Quarters 6. I was sound asleep at the time. It was quite a happening. I never saw the company make repairs so fast. At 4:p.m. my room was repaired and my desk was returned later.

Lots of people arrived and took away the damaged items. About 7:a.m. I heard from the Coast Guard that these were flare casings from the U. S. *Missouri*. At the lab when I told what I had been told nobody believed me and Sy Rynalski (head of the lab) called me a traitor. I was so damned mad that I never spoke to him again.

Later it was officially announced that it was indeed a misfiring from the U. S. *Missouri*. There were some American reporters still there in Bachelor Quarters #6 who had filed stories on the German submarine attack on the 16th. They jumped on me for a story on "how it felt to be alive." These stories showed up in American newspapers but they stated that these shells were from a German attack on the island. (Part of the confusion was caused by the spelling found on the shell casings. The word "Fuze" was interpreted as being the German word for "Fuse." Actually both spellings are used according Webster's dictionary.)

During the war we had to put black out shields to cover the windows. Headlights of the cars were painted blue with a 1 cm wide x 2 cm long slit of clear glass in the center of the lens for showing a very small light to drive down the road. The tail lights were also painted with blue paint and a small slit left for a very small red light to be seen at night.

There were shortages at the commissary during the war years of 1942 and 1943. The German submarines picked on our supply ships. Our spare tires were confiscated by the company and put in storage.

### **ROYAL VISITS**

I saw Queen Juliana's first visit. The Women's Club decorated the Esso Club patio for her visit. My wife was assigned to catch gold fish in the Lecluse fish pond at their bungalow for use in a fish bowl. She also trimmed palm tree leaves used for decorations. I also saw Eleanor Roosevelt on her visit during the wartime.

### **ARUBA EXPERIENCES**

- Russell Ewing had a special place for keeping his orchids. It was behind his bachelor quarters. John Moller and Mrs. Frank Roding also raised orchids.
- After the war we had classes from professors from the United States during the summer months. One of these was professor Atwood who taught public speaking. Another was professor Funda who covered the subject of corrosion. (These were instructors who were teaching the equivalent of college summer courses.)

- Tom Hickey sold liquor in Bachelor Quarters #3. Later Otto Sauer (who was in charge of the Cold Storage section of the Commissary Department).
- Mrs. Gregersen (whose Danish husband was in the Engineering Department) sold Danish silver and Royal Copenhagen porcelain.
- Mrs. Frank Roding sold flowers. (Her husband was also in the Engineering Department).
- Al Pomeroy (Also in the Engineering Department) repaired batteries during the wartime shortage.
- Vicellio was the name of the pilot who flew Viana's plane which operated before KLM took over the route. Manual Viana was just becoming a recognized automobile mechanic and later Chrysler dealer in San Nicholas. He organized the first plane service we had for the island. He had a route between Curacao, Maracaibo and Aruba.
- John Pandellis was the fellow in the village who gave painting lessons to Lago Colony residents. He was from Dutch Guiana and his daughter, Lislot, worked in Fanny's clothing store.<sup>1</sup>
- There was a boxing match between Hale Honey and Marty Smits about 1934 at the Esso Club. It was billed as a fight between the United States and Holland. Smits won on points.
- In the strike that was experienced by Lago in 1951 many of us from the offices were put in the operating department. I and Steve Sery, also from Engineering, were assigned to the Transfer Pump House reporting to Klaus Dillard. Don Evans, at the time the minister of the Lago Colony Church, came around with food, coffee, etc. Dillard collected much of these items and locked them away where we couldn't eat them up. Otherwise we had a good time.

During the early years the company furnished light bulbs, shower curtains, cutlery, etc. Later on all of this changed. I think it was after the war we were billed for water, electricity, telephones, and rent. Also during the early years we had ice boxes and block ice was delivered every day. We also had kerosene stoves and you called when you needed a supply of kerosene. Telephone booths were provided at various locations because everyone didn't have a phone in their home.

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<sup>1</sup> *In 1985 there was a large painting of his on the wall in main hallway in the Colony Maintenance building. It was a beautiful moonlight scene of the Sea Grape Grove near the Colony gate which leads to the refinery.*

- The first golf club was at Savaneta and the fairways were on both sides of the road. After the game golfers had to pass through the village to get to the colony. It was always hard to avoid stopping for a couple of drinks. No one had to pay cash in the village. You signed a slip and paid your bill after payday once a month when you did the town. Fanny's Bar and the Moose Club were two places I remember did this. Taxis were on credit and the drivers collected on payday at the dining hall.
- My nickname, Tex, originated in the lab around 1935. This was because I greeted people with "good night" in the afternoon. Apparently they were making fun of my English. This name has been very convenient in later years.

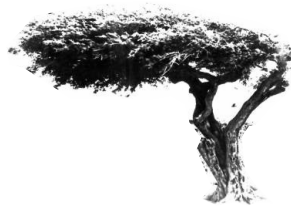
### **WORK EXPERIENCES**

I remember how L. G. Smith, our refinery manager, used to make visits in the refinery. I also remember that he made visits to the Laboratory No. 3. Usually he visited with me because I was engaged unusual projects, such as . . .

- At the Chemical Laboratory I was often involved in rare jobs besides regular assignments. (Often these jobs were off the record). For example one time Art Upsahl and I tried to imitate Bols gin. Art got hold of some Juniper berries and with available alcohol we made several trial runs without much success. We did better making Lemon Gin. We used glycerin, gin, and lemon peels. The only thing was this drink made you sleepy.
- We also furnished the colony with a remedy for athlete's foot. The client provided some cold cream and we mixed it with some benzol and salicylic acid. It seemed to work very well.
- Then we had to check the rainfall in two locations in the colony. This was always good for a food trip.
- Many people brought in "gold" ore. Samples were mostly "Fools Gold," iron sulfide. We just stuck it in a muffle furnace. Real gold (seldom found) did not disappear. Also during the gold rush in Honduras we got a lot of this stuff from Frank Campbell and Hale Honey.
- During the war years I worked on aloë refining more or less for Casy Eman. He later built a factory in Oranjestad for producing aloïne which was used in medicines.
- To repair our sports planes which were a framework covered with linen we needed "dope." John McCord bought us lots of old film

from Eddy DeVeer. (He was the man who had the concession for showing all of the movies on the island.) By dissolving these films in a solvent we made a pretty good substitute.

- We also worked on making an artificial rubber to make large bait fish for Stewart Harrison, the Process Superintendent for the High Pressure Stills.
- A more scientific product development was the Vanadium recovery from flue dust, coke, ashes etc. Venezuelan crude contained many elements and Vanadium was badly needed to make stainless steel.



## **The Nicholaas Piebe Schindeler Story**

My name is Nicholaas Piebe Schindeler. I was born on October 20, 1911, in Leerdam, Netherlands. Leerdam is famous for glass wares made there.

### **EDUCATION**

I attended the Amsterdam Technical College for four years and graduated from college with a Mechanical Engineering Degree. In those days the year before you graduated you spent a year on four different work sites to gain some practical experience. Your supervisors grade you on your efforts and send a report back to the college. First I was in a boiler factory at the receiving end of a pneumatic riveter. Then to the Amsterdam Municipal Streetcar Company (never drove one), a sugar refinery (too much of a good thing), and the Dutch Army (compulsory). I remember in one location I was given a file and two pieces of 1/4" boiler plate. I was to file one edge each of the two pieces for a tight fit. When you held them together and held them up you should not be able to see light between the filed edges. You really had to earn your degree because there were not enough jobs for graduate engineers. Final exams were held once a year. You could take it every year until you made the required grade.

I graduated from college during the depression. Job opportunities were extremely rare. I completed my compulsory military service and the required practical experience and graduated in 1933. I was extremely lucky to receive a job offer from the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey to work as a chemist in the Aruba refinery. My major in college was mechanical engineering, but they took me anyway. When Tex Schelfhorst and I arrived in Aruba we were assigned to the Oil Inspection Laboratory. Our immediate bosses were Bob Ballard and Hank Despain. Syd Tucker was the big boss of that laboratory.

I visited the personnel manager, Harold Atwood once a week trying to get a transfer to work more in my line. After an interview with Elmer Wheeler, Instrument Department General Foreman, I did get a transfer to the Instrument Department in August of 1935. I replaced John Moller who was transferred to Process Design and Testing under Charlie Greene.

While in the Instrument Department I was co-author with Ed Hillstead of a manual which weighed about two pounds. This report was



titled "Fluid Rate of Flow Meters" which was used as a guide to computing orifice plate sizes and the coefficients to use with them. He also did considerable development work on flow measurement in general and the orifice holding ring used in the Aruba refinery.

This holding ring allowed the orifice plate to be fixed in the holding ring. This enabled a mechanic to center the orifice plate more accurately between flanges. The orifice taps were drilled in the holding ring. This could be done in the machine shop. It was not necessary to take the flanges to the shop for drilling and tapping. This in turn allowed orifice plates to be installed between any flanges that were suitably located for accurate measurement.

### **GOING TO ARUBA**

I knew Herman Cousy before he went to Aruba. Martin Smit was someone I knew in Holland who arrived after me. Tex Schelfhorst and I were interviewed by O. H. Shelton in Amsterdam. We traveled together on the *S/S Ingrid Horn* and the trip took 21 days. We arrived in Aruba on October 31, 1933. We were met by Harold Atwood, Lago's personnel manager.

In 1937, being on vacation in Holland I took a job as manager of "Netherlandsche Minneapolis-Honeywell Co.", Brown Instrument Division. Not being able to forget Aruba I resigned my position in 1938 and came back to Aruba a married man.

We had a 23 day trip on the *S/S Queen Mary* to New York and the *S/S Flora* from there before arriving in Aruba on March 25, 1938.

### **JOB MEMORIES**

- Ans and I lived in Bungalows 206, 204, 355, 426, and finally 76 when we lived in the Colony. Ans was 19 when she arrived in Aruba.
- Padu Lampe was about 15 years old in 1933. He was a self taught pianist. He was a popular artist and wrote and recorded many Aruban songs.
- Some of the ministers who served in our Lago Community Church were: Paul Rishell from 1934 to 1940; William Bigart from 1940 to 1943; Percy Dawe from 1944 to 1948; and with Don Evans arriving in 1948.
- Emmy Suylen was the old time Dutch accountant who worked in the Instrument Department. He was one of those who lived in the *sheep sheds*. He was a nephew of Pastor Hendricks of the Catholic Church in Savaneta. He was hired locally but later became an expatriate

employee. He kept the utility records (primarily for Bill Ewart.) Around 1936 he transferred to the time keeping section in the Accounting Department and was assigned to work for Leon Rought.

In the Instrument Department he had a contest one day with Ben Whittpen. Ben operated a mechanical calculator and Emmy did it all in his head. He won the contest. It was amazing how he could go down a long list of four column figures and come up with a total in very short order. He left Aruba in 1938 or 1939 and died in the 1950's.

### **SOCIETY MEMORIES**

- Our maids were mostly from the British Islands. They were paid about \$1 per day during the 30's and 40's. Later they made a little more.
- The Lago Community Council came into being in 1945.
- Ella Poole was our next door neighbor from 1943 to 1946. She played bridge at night and took a nap in the afternoon. She was always complaining about our kids keeping her awake. One story is that one afternoon an electrician was working on an electric line on a post near her house. He was apparently in a happy mood because he was whistling away. Ella asked him to stop whistling because it was disturbing her sleep.
- We had a party one night and it was in the wee hours before we got to bed. Early the next morning Ella called and complained that our kids were making so much noise that she couldn't sleep. I said, "Ella they are keeping us awake too!"
- It is a Dutch custom to visit friends on their birthday. In Aruba, you had to prepare for it. The women often went in the morning but the men went after supper. You could count on having 20 or 30 people at night. They always brought birthday presents. These gatherings could wind up a little noisy at times. These parties were not limited to the Dutch. American friends also participated and not only during the war. Actually we had bigger and noisier parties after the war.
- There was a small group that provided the music for dances that were held at the Club. The members of the band varied as new employees arrived and others left. I particularly remember one group because I have photograph of them.

The members of the 1935-1936 Pan Am Funmakers as far as I remember were:

Marvin Case - 1st Saxophone, Clarinet, Leader

Jim (Squeekie) Norcom - 2nd (Tenor) Saxophone, Trombone

James Dickie of All American Cables - 3rd Saxophone, Trombone  
Neil Spigt - 1st Violin  
Nick (Piebe) Schindeler - 2nd Violin  
Marty (Pansy) Smit - 3rd Violin  
Bill Stambaugh and Freddie Maltin (Of Saybolt Lab) Piano  
Jack Schnurr - Tuba  
Andy Hogue - Drums

I forget the name of the young paleface who played the banjo and  
was our Crooner

### **OUR FAMOUS RECORD**

Our group of young Dutch bachelors has many memories of our happy go lucky existence. One of them was that somehow we wound up with a record player but only one record. On one side was "The Beer Barrel Polka" and the other side was another piece that was popular at the time. So we alternated playing first one side and then the other. When the record became noisy because of scratches we would apply liberal portions of Vaseline Hair Oil. No one would give up and buy another record.

### **WORLD WAR II**

All Dutchmen who had served in the armed forces in Holland as conscripts were called to duty on September 1, 1939 when WWII broke out. They were stationed at Savaneta where the government kept a contingent of marines under Captain Van de Spek. All of those called up became "marines" regardless of the branch of service they had served in as conscripts. And they retained their rank that they had when they had completed their service as conscripts in Holland. So I became a Marine Sergeant in spite of the fact that I had served with the Royal Engineers. Lago-ites who became sergeants were: John Moller, Airie Gravendyk, Karel Egers, John Eeltink, Fritz "Herman" Cousy (who always claimed he was a lieutenant, but actually wasn't), Bill Koopman and perhaps others. The only lieutenant we had from Lago was John Hamelers. John ten Houte Delange and Bouten were our only Lago corporals. Also from Lago we had several privates: Paul Gordijn, Bart Kriek, Herman Tielen and others.

I was lucky to be released after almost a year at the request of Lago because they needed people in the Instrument Department. Bill Koopman and John ten Houte De Lange were also released. Most of the others stayed in the service for five years and some advanced to be officers.

In 1941 when I was released from military service I returned to the Instrument Department. In 1944 I was transferred to the Engineering

Department. Next I was transferred to the instrument engineering squad, then later went into the coordinating group.

Piet de Vuijst was a Shell lake tanker captain who was a reservist since he had 6 years of service as a Navy Air Force officer. He became head of the coastal defense in Aruba when the war broke out. After the invasion of Holland, on May 10, 1940, he became a military commander. His promotion came about when Captain Van de Spek, who was in charge of the Dutch Marines, bungled the job of capturing the German ships off West Point in May of 1940.

The Dutch Coast Guard had a few small ships at their disposal. I would classify these ships as pilot launches and one small tug. This latter vessel had a 37 mm gun and did shoot at a surfacing submarine. This wasn't the submarine that made the attack on February 16, 1942. In this case Commander De Vuijst was not on board the vessel at the time. I don't remember him receiving a medal but it is quite possible. The Dutch were and are very generous in bestowing medals, frequently for little or no accomplishment, but just for faithful service.

## **HOUSING**

Houses were originally assigned through what I would call a "patronage" system. It was very important whom you knew. In 1937 Lago developed a formula in which service and salary played a major role.

Houses were at first "renovated" on a four year basis. Later this became a five year basis with bathrooms and kitchens given an extra paint job after 2-1/2 years.

Modifications were allowed (extra rooms, screened in porches, patios, etc.) originally at the occupant's expense. The so-called improvements were estimated, when the occupant left that improved residence and the cost was charged to the new occupant. Later these improvements were capitalized and the rent was increased by 1% of the capitalized amount per month.

The fresh drinking water was originally brought in by tanker from the Hudson River. Later we augmented this with evaporated seawater from #1 and #2 Evaporating Plants in the refinery. When the Dutch government expanded its Desalination Plant at the Spanish Lagoon we discontinued importing drinking water and used government plant water exclusively.

The salinity of the Mangel Cora brackish water well varied widely, depending upon rainfall but we kept the salinity to about 1000 parts per

million by injecting fresh water into the supply line to the colony. Brackish water was used in the showers and lavatories. Salt water was used in the toilets.

Large appliances and cars could be ordered through the commissary but the commissary only acted as receiving agents for the orders. They were handled through the Storehouse and the New York Purchasing Department. This meant that discounts normally given to the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey applied and also the goods were shipped cheaper.

My last three years, 1964 to 1967, in Aruba I was placed on special assignment answering directly to the President and Vice-President of Lago. My assignment was to get rid of employees in a way that was acceptable to our management, our employees, the Union, the government and the population of Aruba. One of the systems I devised and developed was "Job Placement." I had to find jobs for people on our payroll anywhere in the world, help them to get to that place and give them a "golden handshake." In this function, in 1965, I received a letter (forwarded by the New York office) written by Arnold Hanson who was president of Gettysburg College. He (Arnold Hanson) was looking for an engineer but since they could not afford to pay much he thought he might interest someone who was semi-retired. Frankly, I was interested myself, but Bud Murray would not let me go, at least not with a "golden handshake."

I wrote letters to Red Ward, at that time teaching drafting at the University of Copenhagen in Denmark, and Al Clark who was building an airport in Athens, Greece. Both Red and Al had left Lago under the 50-15 program where they had been supervising engineers in the Engineering Department. Both wrote back that they were interested so I told them whom to contact and wrote Arnold Hanson a letter to inform him. Incidentally I don't know whether you remember Dr. Hanson. He was in Aruba on a sabbatical, as a consultant to Lago, to teach our local union how to behave like a union. Anyway when I felt I was ready to leave Lago in 1967, I wrote Arnold Hanson a letter just to find out whether he knew of any vacancies in higher education for whatever I had to offer. Much to my surprise I received his reply in one week telling me that the job at Gettysburg College had never been filled yet and suggested that I come over to discuss it and case the joint. I did, and I liked the place, they made me an offer I could not refuse, and, after some arm twisting, I convinced Bud Murray that Lago could operate without me. Actually, I did not pick Gettysburg; Gettysburg picked me.

After Ans and I made a trip around the world in exactly 80 days I started here on ground hog day, February 2, 1968, and I had a second career here until my mandatory retirement September, 1981.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>*Piebe and Ans had seven children, all born in the Lago Hospital in Aruba. They were:*

- *Hans - born 1943 - lives in mountains in California*
- *Marie Anne - born 1944 - lives in St. Martin and Ft Lauderdale*
- *Tom - born 1947 - Lives in Brisbane, Australia*
- *Ted - born 1947 - lives in Mobile, Alabama* -----
- *Patricia - born 1952 - lives just outside of Boston, MA*
- *Ronald - born 1958 - lives in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida*
- *Linda - born 1959 - lives in West Palm Beach, Florida*

## **The Darlene Schlageter Story**

My father and Bob's father went down to Aruba in 1929. My father's name was Koepke. I went down to Aruba with my family. My mother and I arrived in Aruba during March of 1930. You had to double up with somebody else for a while until your house was finished. We lived with a family for the better part of two months until our house was ready.

I can't recall the name of the people we stayed with. They didn't stay in Aruba long. She didn't like it there. I think our house was No. 74.

I was gone from Aruba twice. In 1935 I went back to the States and got a job with the company in New York. It was a temporary position. I decided I didn't like New York. I didn't stay and I came back in the latter part of 1935.

We were married in the fall of 1936 in Ida and Coy Cross's home. My parents weren't there. I have a boy and a girl. Gary was born in 1945. These days Gary and his wife both work about five miles due east of here. So I do get to see them very often. Since they live a short distance away and they have baby sitters I don't take care of the kids too often. But they often come over and stay with me for a while.

### **RETIREMENT**

Bob and I bought a small mobile home in Arizona. I go there during the winter time and I am here in Denver in the summer time. Arizona has such a wonderful climate.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>-----  
*Apologies to Darlene and Bob, but the foregoing is all the story that survived for telling here. There likely was more to it, but it is buried amidst the Byzantine-like, myriad of memorabilia, notes, tapes, books and petrified candy left behind by the passing of J. L. Lopez, and we could never hope to find it before another twenty years goes by and we don't finish this book.*

## **The Thelma & Bertram Schoonmaker Story**

Bertram ("Schoony" or "Bert") Schoonmaker was born on January 19, 1905 in New York City. He was educated at Suffield School, Connecticut, Peddie in New Jersey and Culver Military Academy in Indiana.

He went to Paris in 1923 on a vacation with his mother and decided to stay. After a period working with American Express, he joined the French office of the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey and remained with them.

My name is Thelma Schoonmaker. I was born in New York in 1912, and moved to Paris with my family in 1926. I attended St. Agatha School in New York City, the American High School in Paris, the University of Berlin, and the Sorbonne.

Schoony and I met in Paris. We were married in the American Cathedral there in 1935. In 1937 we were transferred to the Cie. Algerienne des Petroles Standard in Algiers. Our first son, Philip, was born in Paris in 1937. Our first daughter, Thelma, was born in Algiers in 1940. Shortly thereafter the children and I were evacuated to the United States when France fell. Schoony remained in Algiers until a year later when he was brought to the United States by the Company. The Company then sent Schoony to Aruba in March of 1941. The children and I went to Aruba on the Grace Liner, *Santa Paula*, in June, when housing became available. In those days the Grace Line deposited its Aruba passengers in Curacao. The children and I traveled on the "Snipe" KLM plane which I swear "flapped" its wings. I will never forget the sinking feeling I had when the plane landed at the little old airfield, and I saw the cactus wasteland. The old building was still standing when we left Aruba.

It was used as canteen and headquarters for the Air Force during the war, and there were some wild parties there.

We lived in Bungalow #417; near "five corners." The Eaton's lived on our left after the Forrest's. Behind us lived the John Mechling's, Van Oyen's, Daley's, Salzmans, and Nixon's among others. Two teachers who came down on the *Santa Paula* with me later married Lago men.

Schoony was always in the Personnel Department even after we



came back to the states in 1955. He worked in Rockefeller Center until he retired in 1960. He was active in bowling, Boy Scouting, amateur dramatics, the Anglican church in San Nicholas, and typed the Pan-Aruban for a long time. He loved scouting and worked very closely as Assistant Cub Master with Jack Opdyke from 1945 until we left in 1955. We went camping at Dos Playas and Krystal Mountain a lot.

After the initial German submarine attack on Aruba on February 16, 1942, Theresa Mertens and I took over the Nursery School with the help of Mrs. Grape, and it was kept going, first on the playground, then at my house with Ruth Watkins as my partner. In between, the school was held at Elizabeth Johnson's house when Nellie Johnson and I taught together. It was great fun, and most of the colony kids were our pupils. The Watkins and Mertens have remained fast friends of ours. Jim Watkins and my Noel were born just a month apart at Lago Hospital, and I visited the Mertens in Belgium when I went there last May. When we left Aruba, Jean Leary became Ruth Watkins' partner.

The Pan-Am Club first opened on New Year's Day in 1930. The name was changed in 1932 to the Esso Club when Standard Oil Company bought the refinery. This is the club that was burned down on June 7, 1942.<sup>1</sup>

Schoony was a devoted scout volunteer, and spent many days working with the Cub Scouts. I remember one camp at Dos Playas, when it poured and several scouts, whose families were away, spent the rest of the night at our house when the camp was broken up because of flooding. Unfortunately, the campfire, over which the boys had been hovering, had been made with creosoted logs. When the kids flopped at our house about 2:00 a.m., they didn't bother to wash up or undress, and the next morning beds and walls were black with creosote smoke.

As an aside our daughter, Thelma, and Janet Opdyke were Den Mothers of two of the dens of the Cub Pack. They were probably the youngest and least qualified. They were 13 years old and did a good job! Two Den Mothers were needed for 16 little boys who wanted to be a part of the Cub Pack. No Adult mothers were available!

Queen Juliana made two visits, one in 1946 and one in October, 1955. We were at the reception for the first one, and during a lull in the

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<sup>1</sup>*The old Bowling Alleys (8 of them) were added to the west side of the old club in about 1939. Of course they were burned when the Esso Club burned down. The new Bowling Alleys were built in 1942 as a separate structure near where the new High School Building was later built.*

official presentations, Thelma declared in a loud voice that "She isn't the real Queen, she isn't wearing a crown." Francoise Mertens was one of the little girls presenting flowers.

When Prince Bernhard came in January 23, 1950, the Nursery School was asked to present a gift for Princess Maijke, who was of nursery school age at the time, and we ornamented a tea cloth with ironed on crayon pictures, Bonnie Von Montfrans made the presentation.

I also vividly remember how impressed I was when Eleanor Roosevelt came.

As many brides and grooms often could not get their families to Aruba for the ceremony, Colony women often filled in. I served as witness and Maid of honor when Dave Mortlock was married, Thelma was flower girl - and I was Hans Wolf's "Mother."

Jack Opdyke is the authority on the Caves: I visited them with him. The entrance is near Bungalow # 1557.

Colony women who did not leave the island after the submarine attack had a wonderful time during the war years. There was hardly an evening when there was not a dance at some camp or other, and convoys of cars and/or jeeps took us out to help keep morale strong. The daddies took over baby-sitting. Of course, all homes were open to servicemen at all times, and we all had our special friends. I remember worrying that there would be no presents for the children one Christmas, as the tankers were only bringing the most necessary supplies, and, on the great day, my kids were swamped with gifts that the soldiers had had brought in. Many of the children were "mascots", and Philip and Thelma were always being whisked off to spend the day somewhere with the troops. They had a great time, Phil even had a Lieutenant's uniform complete with insignia.

The Queen's birthday was always an occasion for a parade. As a Girl Scout Leader, I took part as did Ruth Kilpatrick, Petey Wiley, Eileen Roff and Thelma Smith.

Speaking of Scouting; the Girl Scouts ran two very successful summer camps, one at Palm Beach, and one at Balashi. There was also and international camping experience with the Padvinsters both in Aruba and in Curacao. I was very happy to be instrumental in getting the Girl Scouts Thanks Badge in 1950 for Ruth Kilpatrick, who really devoted herself to Scouting, and was a marvelous organizer.

## **The Alexander Huntly & Esther Rosaline Shaw Story**

Alex was born in 1895, raised and educated in Alness, Scotland. He was a young man when he immigrated to the United States with his mother, and brother, Hugh. Alex later became an American citizen, and they settled in Seattle, Washington. His mother spent a year with Alex and Esther in Aruba.

He worked in the Salt Creek oil fields of the Standard Oil Company of Indiana. The Salt Creek fields are now owned and operated by the American Oil Company. He has two patented inventions, and he was working on a couple more ideas.

### **ESTHER**

My maiden name was Roe. In 1992, my brother received notice of a limited edition of a biography of the Roe family, going back to our English forbearers, and I have asked him to order a copy for me. I do not know when the family came to this country. At the time of the civil war, a family of eight brothers lived on a plantation in Virginia. Four of the brothers joined the Confederates; four joined the Northern forces. My paternal grandfather, John Wesley Roe, joined the North. When the war was over he married his childhood sweetheart, Rosaline. They had four children, my father being the eldest.

I was born on in the little mining town of Creede, Colorado. Not long before, in August of 1876, Colorado had been admitted to the Union as a state. My father, a state senator, was reported to have introduced and passed more bills than anyone. Although he was creative and talented as a politician, my father's interests were not shared by mother. When he was asked to run as a representative of the state of Colorado, my mother put her foot down. She said it was either politics or the family. He couldn't give up his two small children, so he shelved his ambitions.

He left politics, and he pursued gold mining and other ways of making a living. After the Indians had been moved to their reservation, new land in Colorado was opened for settlement. My father took a claim. Claims were handled quite simply then. If, for seven years a man worked seven acres of his choosing, it was his. Nothing was easy. Settlers had a hard lot. Cattlemen and sheep men were at odds, but they had a common enemy in the settlers.

My father decided everyone needed bacon, and we raised Duroc Jersey hogs. The nearest neighbor was three miles away and there were no schools or telephones. My father got the community together to build a one-room school and hired the wife of one of the settlers as a teacher. After a sudden blizzard that almost froze my five year old brother and me to death, my mother determined she would rather have ignorant children than dead ones. Ordering school books from her sister from Grand Junction, she taught us herself.

Eventually I graduated from the University of Colorado in Boulder. I first met Alex at a dance in Casper, Wyoming.

### **ARUBA MEMORIES**

Alex arrived in Aruba during the week of June 16, 1929. He was Assistant Superintendent of the Power House, Electric and Instrument Departments during the days before the Electric and Instrument Departments became a part of the Maintenance Department. Bill Ewart, the Superintendent, had Alex's deepest admiration and respect.

When Alex went on his first vacation in 1932, he and I were married in Casper, Wyoming. In Aruba we lived in Bungalow Number 320 until 1953. The George Mathews' lived on one side of it, and the Gordon Owens' lived on the other. The George Royer's lived across the street.

Alex, Igor Broz and Bob Dorwart built a telescope, grinding the lens, and constructing it from scratch. It was installed in their front yard of Bob's house. The Venezuelan coast could be seen clearly through it. I do not remember what became of it.

The only wedding that I attended in Aruba was that of my cousin, Lydia Varney. My paternal grandfather, John Wesley Roe, was Lydia's great grandfather. Lydia was a Lago School teacher for two years. She and Jim Lilly planned to be married when she had completed her school year contract, but Jim was transferred to Venezuela. They wanted to be married before he left so that Lydia could join him as his wife at this new assignment. While Alex and Esther were taking them to Oranjestad for their civil ceremony, their car broke down. Jim and Esther pushed, but to no avail. Alex finally managed to obtain another car. Jim and Lydia arrived just as the Dutch officials were leaving. The ceremony was performed in Dutch, the language of the marriage license.

### **WAR MEMORIES**

During the War, when any light that could be seen 10 feet way was considered a menace, Alex contrived a way to black out the bungalows.

In those days we did not have air-conditioning. Our windows had a system of wooden louvers that were operated somewhat like the mini-blinds so popular in the southern part of the U.S. The window frames had a vertical center post. The wooden louvers were mounted in the two halves and could be operated separately. Under normal conditions the louvers were pushed up to close the window. Each home was provided with 3/8" thick wedge shaped pieces of wood to keep the louvers in the closed position.

Alex cut the two vertical side strips that supported the middle of the horizontal "leaves" of the louvers. The upper half was always closed at night. He designed a curved hood of plywood that fitted over the lower half of the louvers. Air could always circulate through the open lower louvers. In the daytime, we opened the upper half of the louvers.

At the beginning of the war the Lago management said that all women and children who wanted to leave could leave. If they did, they could not return until the end of the war. I chose to stay. I felt I could be of more use in Aruba than I could in the States. I do not remember just what I did, but I was always busy.

On the north side of the Colony, the tank farm where all the aviation gasoline was stored consisted of squat, elliptical shaped tanks. Some people called them the "Tomato Patch." I called them the "Pumpkin Patch." These were silver at the beginning of the war. The tanks were painted black during the war because they were too visible to surfaced submarine attacks on moonlit nights. If one shell hit one tank, a good part of the colony would be flooded with burning gasoline. The residents of the colony were all aware of this, and everyone had a plan for the anticipated attacks.

One day, the dreaded announcement we hoped would never come was made: "Prepare for an attack." Alex was at work in "the plant," as he called it. I tried to think of anything I could do in preparation. I took a shower, put on fresh clothes; new shoes in case I had to cross the sharp coral, put my passport in my pocket (so I could be identified if I were hit by a stray bullet) and waited. The attack never came. I have often wondered why I thought it was so important to be clean if I did not think I would survive.

During the war our food supply was precarious. If a ship carrying our food and water from New York were sunk we would be in dire straits. I did not want to put in a big store of food so I collected several cans of "Klim." I then got together several containers of fresh water which I changed every few days. I always kept a pitcher of prepared

Klim in the refrigerator. Alex was very fond of it. I thought that in the event we were without food or water the Klim would give us nourishment and liquid to sustain us for several days.

### **LIFE IN THE COLONY**

Alex was one of the founders of the Aruba Flying Club and bought the first private plane used there.

When he first landed in Aruba, his behavior became erratic and he became exceedingly nervous. Dr. Carroll diagnosed it as thyroid trouble. Esther's uncle, a surgeon in Denver, had gone to school with Dean Lewis who was the head of Johns Hopkins hospital in Baltimore. A letter was written to Dean. After receiving Dean's answer, Alex and Esther went to Baltimore, and Alex underwent an operation for toxic thyroid condition. Lewis said it was the worst case he had ever seen, and it would take a year for Alex's system to adjust. Not long after Esther and Alex returned to Aruba, Alex began having severe stomach pains that had him walking the floor for hours. He returned to John's Hopkins where he had an operation for stomach ulcers. He enjoyed good health from that time.

Our maid Philopia was impressed by Alex's name, Alexander Huntly Shaw and named her first baby after him. She said she wanted him to have a distinguished name.

Alex died Sunday afternoon, October 15, 1953, in an automobile accident in Aruba. He was 58 years old. Apparently he had been doing some work on his plane at the De Vuijst Field of the Aruba Flying Club and was driving home on the road from this airport. He was apparently driving fast and turned over as he was making a turn. He died instantly. He is buried in the cemetery in Oranjestad.

Bill Ewart was very helpful in arranging my affairs in Aruba before I left in 1953.

### **LIFE AFTER ARUBA**

After leaving Aruba Esther decided she wanted to travel. She attended Duke University for a semester to learn more about places she wanted to see on what a two year trip around the world in 1956.

## **The Harold Lincoln Sholes Story**

My name is Harold Lincoln Sholes. I was born on May 13, 1915. I graduated from Manning High School, Ipswich, Massachusetts in 1933. The next year I signed on the *S/S Nantucket* training vessel harbored in Boston, Massachusetts for a two year course to learn seamanship. That winter of 1934 I met my wife Anna Dyer. She was attending a college in Boston, Massachusetts.

Upon graduation from the training course in 1936 I went on to seek employment and my first job was with the United States Lines in New York. I shipped out with them as an Able Seaman. The ship was a combination passenger and freight vessel. I was dissatisfied with the life and overall environment and I said well I am going to try something different. So after two months of that I went back home and looked around for something else that might interest me. While I was a cadet on the training vessel one of the officers had been a Captain with the then Colonial Beacon Oil Company which also operated out of Boston. Having a lot of influence over the cadets, he kind of pushed the oil tanker business at us and we heard a lot about it. At that time he had retired from the Colonial Beacon Oil Company and had taken a job as an instructor the training vessel *Nantucket*, which I had recently joined. I remembered the efforts on his part in talking with the cadets to convince them to go into the oil business. Of course he was kind of biased in that line and I realized that it was more or less inevitable. So I said well I'll try the oil tankers myself.

I went down to the shipping office that Colonial Beacon had which was actually in Everett at the refinery there. Standard Oil Company of New Jersey had, shortly before that, bought out the Colonial Beacon Oil Company. So I actually signed on with Standard Shipping Company. They were using the old *Beaconoil*, *Beaconhill*, and several other vessels whose names included *Beacon*. However the vessel I happened to board was the *E. G. Shuebert* which was in port at that time. So I joined the *Shuebert* as a seaman. At that time I was eligible, having a license from the Coast Guard, to sail as a 3rd Officer. However there was no berth open at that time. Just because you have license doesn't mean that you can always obtain that position. I sailed on the *S/S E. G. Sheubert* for a trip or two, and I applied for an officer's berth with the Company. And while I had hoped to receive such a berth as soon as possible at the time, it was not immediately available.

My first Third Mate's assignment was given to me after the completion of the International Life Boat Races in the summer of 1937 in New York harbor. I had just completed a vacation which all of the life boat crew had received in appreciation of our efforts. At the completion of my vacation I received a Third Mate's assignment on the *S/S Cerro Ebano*. This was one of the tankers that had recently been purchased, along with several sister ships, from the Pan American Oil Company. She had just joined the Esso fleet. At that time it was called the Standard Shipping Company and was a part of the Esso fleet.

As a matter of fact I have a couple of pictures taken of the ship at sea on the way to Scotland. I believe we had loaded in Aruba before going to Scotland.

At that time there was no "International Union" of officers. The Company maintained its own seniority policy and as you might expect the individuals were very conscious of promotions. If I met "Charlie Brown," and here he was Second Mate and I was still Third Mate, even though I had more service than he did. I went into the office and complained.

When two Esso ships met at sea it was unusual if they knew who the Captain of the other ship was. Radio officers were not allowed to have private conversations with other ships. It is illegal to have such conversations. As a matter of fact the only radio traffic allowed had to be of a business nature. The idea was to keep the airways free for emergency communications.

A very good friend of mine, Captain Black, who used to live about a mile from here, worked from the Keystone Shipping Company. He is retired now. This was the old Molasses Line. I don't know where we ever got that name. They used to run creosote out of Trinidad. This was from the big tar fields that Trinidad still has. I remember later on when I was Captain he and I met at sea. He was going one way and I was going the other. We passed close enough that I could see the name of his ship. I tried to call over from the bridge, but the voice wouldn't carry. So I tried to call him on the radio telephone. He wouldn't carry on a conversation because it wasn't of an emergency measure, and it wasn't of a business nature. Just socializing is not permitted for a very good reason. You could ask him what weather he experienced overnight or you could say we are doing all right over here, but that is all. One day I met him down at the grocery store several months later, and I said, "I tried to call you because I was just coming from home." And he said, "I wouldn't dare to. The radio officer is required to initiate the call and



when you finish you have to hand the microphone back to him. They are very strict about socializing by radio between ships. And I can understand why. If you had everybody shooting the bull all the time by radio you would be cluttering up the airways. Somebody might need help and that is something you always have to be alert for. Somebody out there 10 miles from you or 100 miles from you might need help. You never know. It might be fire, collision, man-over-board.”

I can't say now what was the name of the second ship that I served on. I was on the *Esso Bayway*, the *A.C.Bedford*.

I remember when John D. Rockefeller died I think it was the summer of 1936. I remember we got a message at sea and the message read: "If safety permits John D. Rockefeller, founder of Standard Oil of New Jersey, will be buried at 11:00 o'clock on such and such a day. We suggest you recognize this by stopping the engines, ceasing all work for one minute beginning at 11:00 o'clock." (When such messages are received it is left up to the Captain to decide if it is safe. Safety is always very important.) You know Rockefeller was always noted for the fact that he was always giving away money. And we all thought, "Oh! Boy! I wonder if he left us any money!" But you know we never got a dime! Naturally you couldn't stop your engine if you were in a harbor, or about to dock. You have to use a little common sense. In our case we were able to do this. So we stopped all engines, ceased all work and I can't remember whether we tooted the whistle or not to let all other vessels know of our observing this courtesy. Of course the ship kept on moving. You can't stop the forward movement of the ship just because you turn off the engines. I thought that was interesting. Imagine at that time Esso had 80 ships and all of them stopping their engines at the same time all over the world. I knew of 80 or 85 ships that were in the fleet at that time.<sup>1</sup> Now there were a lot of ships that were under the Panamanian flag and other flags. And then there were comings and goings. After World War I there were a lot of German ships, like the Reidaman Line. A lot of them came over to the American fleets as reparation for World War I. They were still running a lot of those ships. A lot of them were diesel ships. These ships were being manned by German crews and had German officers. At the beginning of the war the company took off the German crews and replaced them with American crews. They had to. The sad part was that all of those men were good Esso employees, and would have done well, but naturally they couldn't let them operate these ships because, after all, they were German and they were loyal to

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<sup>1</sup> According to records there were 135 ships in the Esso Fleet.

their country. You gotta be.

That's how I got into the Navy. Mr. R. L. Hague was a big man for uniforms. That was another thing he was remembered for. R. L. Hague was the manager of the Marine Department at the time. He thought we looked kind of sloppy running around in sport shirts and old clothes. He felt we looked like we were all out on a party or something. He wanted all of his officers to look like officers. I still have my hat in there. So anyway he came forward and he got permission from the company to buy every officer one complete set of uniforms. Kaki, coat, jacket, kaki hat and a heavy winter coat. We had to buy any replacements. Of course from then on we looked fine. But you should have seen some of those old fat officers. They did their work, but they had no pride in how they looked. They went around in shorts all summer long. They were a riot when they first put on these uniforms. At the same time in a polite way he had encouraged all of the officers to join the Naval Reserves. Now if the Captain was in the Naval Reserves he could fly the Naval pennant on the yardarm when we entered port. When we entered a port we had that Naval Reserve pennant, the Esso house flag, and anything else that you needed to put up there. We were proud of that. So I went along with the idea and joined the Naval Reserve along with everybody else. I was a Third Mate and an Ensign. And they gave us those real natty uniforms that looked real nice. These were the uniforms supplied by the Company. We didn't have the Navy buttons, but otherwise they looked the same. The cloth, the cut, the suit was identical.

So in 1939 when WWII came along I was Second Mate at that time. Several of our ships were taken over by the Navy because that was what they were built for. The *Esso Gettysburg*, the *Esso Chattanooga*, the *Esso Annapolis*, and there was one more. They were taken over by the Navy and made into aircraft carriers. Any Naval Reserve officers on board the ship usually went along with the ship. They would be reassigned to the Navy. I think it was in March of 1942 I was ordered on active duty. Even though you are given a clothing allowance when you go on active duty I was fortunate that I already had my uniform from the Company. All I had to do was change the buttons. I was taken off my ship and, as an ensign, I was sent down to Washington to work with the Marine Cadet Corps. At that time it was organized to assemble a bunch of cadets who would be trained to later serve as Merchant Marine officers. These fellows would be trained to serve on the new ships being built. At the height of the war we were building three ships a day! These were Victory ships, Liberty ships, cargo carriers. The Liberty ship was a big old work horse that did everything, with very little speed, very

little power, but did the job. The main thing was they could be mass produced. These were the ones that Kaiser and others built. There were a lot of other types of ships being built. They also had the "T-2's". These were ocean going oil tankers. There were a lot of those ships. What we have now is the Merchant Marine Academy which is at Kings Point, New York. This is a genuine 4 year academy. It was all started in Washington, D. C. just prior to WWII. Walter P. Chrysler gave the United States government his entire estate on Long Island. The whole shebang. His lovely big home became the administration building and there was plenty of room for putting up other buildings for the school. It was a wonderful start for the academy. When I first went to Washington, D. C. that was where the core of the whole system was set up. You had to be a Midshipman to get into the academy. At that time it was a three-year course; later a four-year course. They had to have some sea training on a ship as cadets. They had to have scholastic training ashore. The graduates could become a First Mate in the Merchant Marine or they could become an Ensign in the Navy and go into active duty. They had their choice. If the Navy couldn't take them when they graduated they were always in the Reserve and the Navy could call them later. The government and the companies' Merchant Marines worked together very closely on this endeavor. On each ship built four deck officers and four engine officers were required. There was the radio officer too. There were 24 new trained officers needed every single day of the year!

A lot of Esso officers went into the Navy and were in command of naval vessels. I went into the administrative part of this endeavor. Part of the time I was out in California. I was teaching Navigation, Seamanship and things of that nature. The company was very generous in compensation and things of that nature whenever any of the personnel, not just the officers, came back from the service. As a matter of fact I earned my ten year service button while I was in the Navy. When I came back to the company, and on my first trip back to New York they gave me a check for \$15 or \$20 and a ten year service button with a diamond in it. The pay-master brought it out to the ship and said, "Harold, you have earned that money because on the last ship you were on for the company before going into the Navy you were in the war zone and this extra pay is just now catching up with you. I think this was when I came back to work in June of 1947 when I rejoined the Company. The ship I was on was the *Esso Sao Paulo*. This was a propane carrier. It didn't bother me what cargo we carried, because one is as bad as the other. Look at what happened to the *Esso Patterson*. It blew up here in Baytown. It was loaded with a cargo of kerosene. The whole center of the ship blew up sky high. It opened up the ship like a can of sardines. I

was as sea at the time but it was on the radio. It didn't take long for that news to get around. She was loading kerosene, but they found out what happened. What they think happened was that it had had a previous cargo of gasoline. And they were loading the cargo on top of a little gasoline. In those large cargo tanks it is always impossible to clean a tank completely dry. You would have to be down in there and wipe it up by hand. So they ignored that little bit of gasoline. The ship had been inspected and it was satisfactory to everybody concerned. The thinking was that one barrel of gasoline wouldn't hurt twelve thousand barrels of kerosene. That was the attitude, and I have to agree with that thinking. They think that the kerosene coming into the ship under such tremendous pressure stirred up static electricity. They found out later that that agitation created a static electricity charge inside the product. And the gasoline vapors were ignited by a spark caused by static electricity. In all of the years we have been loading kerosene like that no one ever gave it a thought. From that point you must remove all traces of gasoline unless you are going to load another gasoline on top of it. The gasoline is removed with a hot water wash.

One time I think I was on the *Fort Settlement*. It was an old T-2; built during the war. It was an Esso ship. She survived the war. Anyway we were going down through the Red Sea. You know people think about Arabia, and the Red Sea, and Iran and all of the Persian Gulf area and they think of it being hot, 140 degrees in the shade. I have seen it snow. We came across the Mediterranean and approached Suez and here comes a storm. We had to heave to. I mean it was a blizzard. Maybe we were 100 miles from Suez. So the weather finally calmed down but they had a violent storm. Apparently this storm went on down the Red Sea and across the Sinai Peninsula. Finally we went through the Suez Canal, picked up the pilot, and went on through the canal which is 87 miles long or something like that and into the Red Sea and on our way. Early the next morning I am up on the bridge and the boson was there looking on. And he said Mate, hey look there is something out there. It was just the break of day and sure enough it looked there was a man in the water. I rang stop on the engines. I was Chief Mate, so I had to call the Captain. And sure enough we got alongside of two men holding on to a box. We circled around to get the way off the ship so we could stop it. Then we put a boat over the side I took the life boat and we rowed up to these men. One of them proved to be an Italian citizen and the other was an Arab crewman. He was the Chief Engineer of a merchant ship and that storm had gone right on down the Red Sea and sank their ship. He kept pleading with us to look around. So we did for a couple of hours circling around, but we never found another person.

We found out that his ship had sunk the night before in that storm. There were boxes and barrels floating around. And he and this crew member had grabbed this box and held on. This was maybe only half of a days run south of Suez. We got them on board and they had a life ring with them. The ship was registered in Misawa, Eritrea. That is the northern half of Ethiopia. They are still at war with Ethiopia today. Like all life rings it had the name of the ship painted on the life ring on the top half and the Misawa, Eritria on the bottom half. I can't remember the name of the ship right now. We kept the life ring. And eventually when the ship got here to Baytown I took the life ring ashore and gave it to a bar owner right here in Baytown. This fellow used to have ship supplies and he hung it up on his wall. It was there for years until he closed down the bar.

I was only on two ships in the Navy: The *USS Navasota* and the *USS President Adams*. This latter ship was a command ship. The admiral in charge of the some of the activities in the Pacific had to have his headquarters on that ship. She was also a marine transport and also hospital service and supplies. It was like a freighter. It was no bigger than some of the ships you see everyday going up and down the channel. I guess you could call it a troop transport.

## **The Loesje Marie Elizabeth (Koopman) Sint Story**

I was born in 1938 in the Lago hospital. My father's name is William Arnold Frederick Koopman and my mother's name is Elsie Henriquez Koopman .

I remember going to kindergarten in a building next to where the Junior Esso Club used to be which was in the lot next to the wartime Esso Club.

My mother's father was Leonardo Johan Meadus. He died when he was about 82 years old and her grandmother died within two weeks. Her family members are descendents of one of the two Croes families that came over from Holland. Johan Croes family was Jewish.

We lived in bungalow 526 in the Lago Colony. I don't remember any other bungalow. I have a picture somewhere which shows our yard with just the coral, some pipelines, the house and the beginning of a garden. When I graduated from high school in 1956 we had two patios, a nice garden, and a fish pond.

You should have seen my father's garage when he retired to Holland in 1959. He used to do all of his own plumbing and the neighbors used to call him instead of a plumber. He also had his dark room built up in the attic and did the developing of his film there.

### **COLLEGE**

I had two years of college in Gainesville, Florida and the same year my parents retired, I married. Then I lived in bungalow 134 with my husband. And then we moved to bungalow 164, just above the upper tennis courts. Next we moved over to 203 which is right across from guest house 90. The new high school was opened in 1951. It had louvers and no air conditioning.

### **ARUBA GRADUATION CLASS**

There were 30 in our graduation class of 1956. I remember most of them.

### **BALLROOM DANCING**

Mr. Downey taught all of us kids ballroom dancing in the old auditorium on the second floor. This was the 6th grade and 7th grade. Jim Downey didn't allow any of the school kids to smoke. And any

smoking that was done had to be done on the sly. Parents didn't allow their children to smoke either. I didn't smoke until I went to college and I still do now and then.

There were no drugs on the island as yet.

### **COACH DOWNEY**

Jim Downey was a great coach. He was a great disciplinarian. He didn't smoke and he still doesn't smoke. He was married briefly to an Eman girl. And now he's married to every girl who was born here in Aruba.

I was on the Lago Community Church Board of Governors for two years before I went to Holland. I consider myself the person who lived the longest in the Lago Colony: First as a child and then as a mother.

## **The Lloyd Gaston Smith Story**

Lloyd Gaston "L. G" Smith was born in Normal, Illinois in 1891. He went to school in Chicago and University of Illinois, receiving a Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering Degree in 1913. Three years later he married Lucy Fairhall of Danville, Illinois in 1916.

His career began with Standard Oil of Indiana at Whiting Indiana as a draftsman and three years later was engineer in charge of the Cracking Plant. In 1922 he became Refinery Superintendent in Casper, Wyoming. In 1927 he and Tom Cooke journeyed to Aruba and located the refinery.

He moved in 1928 to the Chicago office of Standard Oil of Indiana and then in 1929 moved to New York as Refinery Head for foreign refineries and domestic plants, e.g. Destrehan, Tampico, Hamburg, Savannah and Aruba. In 1932 Standard Oil of New Jersey bought the foreign properties of Standard Oil of Indiana. L. G. Smith went to Standard Oil of New Jersey as Deputy Refinery Head. 1933 found him moving, along with his wife and 6 children, to Aruba as Manager of Lago Oil and Transport Company, Ltd.

Still climbing, in 1935 he was elected President of Lago Oil and Transport Company, Ltd. and in 1946 at age of 55 he left Aruba to join Standard Oil of New Jersey in the Refinery Coordination Department. Some years later he was made Sr. Vice-President of Creole Petroleum Corporation in New York.

L.G. retired in 1956 after 43 years service in the Oil business. He died September 9, 1958 at Media, Pennsylvania where he had built his retirement home.

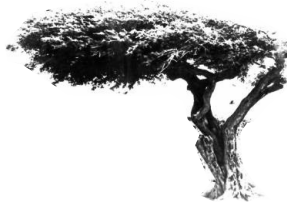
Lloyd made it a point to know all of the foreign staff employees' names and details of their families. At least once a week he would walk through the refinery and visit with the operators on the units. This was in the morning when there was a staff meeting in the High Pressure Stills office. He found out where morning coffee meetings were held in the Watching Department Office and on the tugboats in the harbor and would drop in on them unexpectedly. Of course everyone kept their break a short one.

He wore a hearing aid which was a boon for him. At one time he had three of his children practicing on their musical instruments. He removed his hearing aid and was not bothered as he read his newspaper.



**CHILDREN:**

- Winifred "Winnie" Eloise, Lago High ('35). She married Everett James Esselstyne in 1937. Saw company service 'til 1950 in Aruba and various other locations. She died in Washington, D.C. in 1970.
- Ronald "Ronnie" Fairhall, Lago High ('36); Colgate University, married Ann Armstrong in 1943, 3 daughters, retired from Exxon 1979. He and Ann divide the year between Miami and Cape Cod.
- Edmund "Ned" Joseph, Lago High ('39), Colgate, Air Force in 1942. Married Earlene Speights, 6 children, retired 1965, he died November 1988 of massive heart attack in San Antonio, Texas.
- Gerald "Gerry" Lloyd, Lago High ('43), Colgate, U.S. Navy. M. D. from Washington University Medical School ('51), specialized in ear, nose, and throat surgery U. of Chicago. Married Ellen Compton, began practice in Cheyenne, 8 children.
- Lucy Elizabeth, finished high school Manhasset, NY, Roanoke College Virginia Education and Psychology ('52). Husband Jack Burton Stewart, four children lives in Lynchburg, Va.
- Marjorie Ellen, graduated Manhasset High, Colby College with a degree in Biology. She husband and 2 children live in Cheyenne.
- Sarah "Sally" Sandra, born in Lago Hospital, Aruba, Port Washington, NY High School, Oberlin College ('60) Social Sciences and Music. Married Eugene Hutchinson ('60), they live with their four boys in Chicago.



## **The Addie & Reg Storie Story**

### **HOW I WENT TO SEA IN 1926**

I finished school when I was 14, as was usual in those days. I helped out in our business, a delicatessen/restaurant, with no idea of what I wanted to be. My grandmother, a professional artist who lived with us, had strong ideas about putting my artistic talents to work. I had already won two awards for my watercolor paintings. She discussed with the owner of a local tombstone business, who had a showroom displaying marble angels, cherubs, and the like, the possibility of my being apprenticed to him. I am sure she thought all of the contents of the showroom were created by this monument mason and his staff. The outcome was that I should have a trial period before any apprenticeship papers were signed. Soon after this the owner, Mr. Hancock, had a severe accident. I continued to work with the foreman for about 9 months, helping with all kinds of stone work, but no angels, these I soon found out were all imported from Italy. It was at this time that an uncle returned after being away for two years on one of the Andrew Weir ships, the *Glenbank*. He was the Chief Engineer. He suggested that I go to sea as an apprentice Deck Officer, since there seemed to be no artistic future with Mr. Hancock, it was decided that I should go to sea. My uncle introduced my mother and me to the manager of Andrew Weir and indenture papers were signed, binding me to the company for 4 years. They would pay me 40 pounds over the period, provide me with shelter, food, bedding, and give me the opportunity to learn all about sea-faring. The rest was up to my mother and me. I had to have uniforms, everyday type, and dress, both winter and summer whites, work clothes, and all the important books to study from. It proved to be a very expensive venture.

The day finally came when I received my orders to join my first ship, the *Roseric*. She was loading coal in Cardiff, a Welsh seaport. A long train journey put me there about 4:00 a.m., so I had to hang around 'til 9:00 a.m. when I reported to the office, met the Captain who told me how to find the ship in this very busy port. Finally I got on board, reported to the First Mate, and was introduced to my fellow apprentice with whom I would share a cabin. He had been aboard a couple of days so he was able to show me the "ropes" so to speak. This was February, 1926, just a month before my 16th birthday.

Our cabin was really the spare, or passenger cabin, upper and lower bunks, settee, desk, small wardrobe and wash basin. At that time,

company policy did not allow apprentices to have their meals in the dining saloon, so we went to the pantry, picked up our plates of food, and took them back to our room to eat. That policy was changed two years later when apprentices were served at the second sitting with the junior officers.

### **ANDREW WEIR**

Andrew Weir was a very large shipping company, with round the world trade. They had their own ex-captains stationed in every major port, heading up a staff to look after the interests of the company, the needs of the ships, and to arrange for cargos. The *Roseric* was known as a "tramp" steamer, that is, pick up a cargo here, take it there, then get orders to go some place else for a cargo. It made for a very interesting life. During the 7 years before I was sent to Aruba I was in just about all of the major ports in the world, and a lot of other places hard to find on an ordinary map. Nauru and Ocean Island where we loaded phosphate rock, brought out to the ship in surf boats, one large basket per boat -- 6 weeks to load; this we took to New Zealand and Australia. Rabaul and New Britain where we loaded copra (dried coconut), there to 4 islands in the Pacific, which reminds me -- the uncle who suggested that I go to sea was born on another Pacific Island, Pitcairn.

### **ARUBA**

I came to Aruba by a quirk of fate. Having passed my examination for First Mate some months earlier and notified my employer, Andrew Weir & Co. (Bank Line) that I was ready to return to work. I became increasingly impatient at not hearing from them so I decided to go to the head office in London and report in person. This entailed a 5 mile walk to the train station, a one hour train ride, followed by a bus ride, a journey of about 3 hours in all.

I started off about 9:00 a.m. and 15 minutes later it started to rain. I was about to turn around and go back home when a car pulled up and offered me a lift. That was the only time that had happened to me in all the months I had walked that road, fate as it turned out. I arrived in the office about 1:00 p.m. and was told to wait, as they were busy getting a number of Lake Fleet officers processed to depart for Aruba the next day. After an hour's wait I was told one of the officers had withdrawn from the group and there was an opportunity for me to take his place. I took it and the rush began. Taxi to a photographer for passport pictures (one hour service), taxi back to the office for paperwork, then back to pick up my pictures, a wild dash to the Passport Office which had been requested to stay open, (by this time it was past normal office hours). Taxi back to Andrew Weir office for final instructions, tickets, and most

important, a cash advance. Back home at about 8:00 p.m. via bus, train, and taxi. Then there was the chore of rounding up my possessions (after being home for 8 months) and packing.

At 7:00 a.m. the next day a taxi was waiting to take me to London and the boat train, and eventually the ship was to take the group of fellow officers to Aruba and the Lake Fleet. The Lake Fleet incidentally was at that time owned by Andrew Weir Bank Line. My first spell in the Lake Fleet lasted 3 years and all due to some kind stranger giving me a ride on a rainy day.

### **EARLY DAYS IN THE LAKE FLEET**

My early days in the Lake Fleet were spent in a relaxed atmosphere; there was no night navigation so the ships sailed in convoys, leaving Aruba late afternoon to arrive at the Outer Bar of Lake Maracaibo at daybreak. The Outer Bar was a narrow channel through a huge sand bar guarding the entrance to the lake, a natural opening at this point in time, later to be dredged and controlled. The return trip was governed by the tide, ships could only navigate the Outer Bar at high water, and this determined how long the convoy remained in Aruba.

Conditions in Lake Maracaibo were rough and wild, drinking and gambling were the norm, the oil workers were paid in gold coin and it flowed freely. The loading terminals were crude, with the villages of La Salina and Laganillas being built on stilts right over the water, gambling dens and so called dance halls abounded, the Bucket of Blood being one well known.

The dictator Gomez was in power with corrupt officials everywhere, smuggling by a good number of Lake Fleet officers was a very profitable sideline. Some of the officers carried a veritable store, pajamas being a great favorite. The Venezuelans wore them as street clothes. Cigarettes and hard liquors were the Captain's domain: They could buy these items out of bond (no duty) in Aruba, re-selling a \$2.00 bottle of scotch for \$40.00. This practice was greatly curtailed after the revolution in 1935 and the downfall of Gomez. During the revolution oil continued to flow and ships were sailing in and out of the lake, but with many delays. Gunfire and the sight of fires burning in Maracaibo were common. Rumors and tales of rape, looting, killings, and the public burning of dead bodies abounded. Expatriates were leaving by any means they could find. I was First Mate on the *Punta Gorda* with Captain W. Thomas (who later became Marine Manager.) We were loading at La Salina when the Captain was requested to carry 40 expatriates to Maracaibo, men and women. The men got off there; the women (30)

stayed and in fact remained on board several days, finally coming to Aruba with us. The Captain and officers gave up their rooms and "camped out" on the upper bridge deck. Food and drink were being sent out to us until we received clearance from customs to sail.

Another voyage I remember vividly was the time the *Punta Gorda* took a cargo to Barbados where Andrew Weir Co. had a small refinery. One of their ex-Captains, Keith, was manager. Discharging was very slow through a small underwater pipeline. The bulk of oil had been pumped ashore; the tanks were being drained when someone on shore closed down the pipe line. The rubber hose between the pipe line and ship started to leak. This happened about 1:00 a.m. just as Captain Thomas and I came back from an evening "on the town" arranged and paid for by Captain Keith, (Chauffeured car with two very attractive young ladies.) We feel this was a ploy to keep us out of the way while he deliberately closed down the pipe line because he was short of oil before our arrival and hoped to cover himself by an oil spill, no doubt claiming thousands of gallons pumped over board, when in fact the loss was minor. The local authorities however, treated it as a major event. Captain Thomas was arrested, the ship was impounded, and police in old fashioned British Navy Uniforms (Jack Tars) rowed around and around the ship in small boats, Gilbert and Sullivan style. This continued for several days until all the legal formalities had been taken care of, and we were allowed to sail.

Soon after I returned to England and operated my own restaurant and travel agency for almost a year. I then joined a new ship the *Misoa*, a much larger Lake Tanker and was soon back on the lake run. Many changes had taken place, lights had been installed both on the Outer Bar and the Inner Bar, there was no longer the need to wait for daylight, and ships no long sailed in convoy.

The ships in the fleet were of several groups. The first was the Invar class, being quite small, carrying about 2500 tons. Each after that were larger, the *Andino* (Built in Germany), the *Misoa* and the *Bachaquero* carried about 10,000 tons. Change of ownership was about 1939 but the fleet continued under the British flag until the end of the war, when they were changed to Panamanian registry. The captains and officers remained British as did the pay. The parent company, Esso, did try to establish a decent pension plan for us but ran afoul of the British government, who insisted that all funds be invested outside of Esso. We ended up by receiving an annuity. Mine, after 21 years service amounts to £18 (\$30.00) a month. I do however receive a British Merchant Navy Pension.

## GERMAN SUBMARINE ATTACK

I was First Mate on the *Ule*, on dry dock. The first I knew about it was when the Chief Engineer awakened me some time after midnight. There had been a dance at the Marine Club the night before. We went up to the bridge, in fact we stood on top of the wheelhouse to get a better view, never gave it a thought how vulnerable we were. Tracer shells were flying over head; the sea outside the harbor was ablaze with burning oil. We could hear the crackling of the flames, an awesome sound and a sight I'll never forget. The source of the burning oil was the Lake Tanker *Pedernales*, anchored outside and to the windward of the harbor entrance. A torpedo struck amidships breaking the ship's back and causing the anchor to drag free. The *Pedernales* drifted towards Oranjestad where she grounded and was later towed back to dry dock where the mid section was cut out and the two ends joined. She sailed to the U. S. A. in this odd condition and was fitted with a new mid-section. I dread to think what the result would have been had the burning oil come through the harbor, instead of remaining outside.

Up until this time no war-time precautions were taken. The refinery and the colony were a blaze of light and the ships were running with lights. This of course changed at once. It also changed the operation of the port. Mr. Patterson, the Manager, (and I can only believe he was Marine Manager not General manager) gave orders that no ship was to sail out of St. Nicholas without a naval escort and life rafts. The tankers piled into harbor until it was wall-to-wall ships.

Being an inventive sort, I drew a plan of a small life raft to be "man-handled." It consisted of (4) 50 gallon drums, 2 on each side, welded together, separated by 1 inch angle iron which would support an expanded metal "deck." I handed the drawing to Mr. Sheriffs (Port Engineer) first thing in the morning. By afternoon a raft was constructed to my plan. A group including Captain Thomas (Port Captain), an American Naval officer, Mr. Patterson, and others watched the test: Dropping the raft 30 ft. from a crane into the water. It withstood the test but it was decided to construct much larger ones, and to mount them on skids. Production of these started immediately. Every welder on the island was put to work, and within days ships started to sail again. I felt good about my idea being adopted and would have felt even better had I received some sort of official thanks. I learned years later Mr. Sherriffs took credit. About that time I was transferred to Caripito, Venezuela, as Asst. Hydrographic Surveyor. This job entailed making regular surveys of the Maturin Bar at the mouth of San Juan River, servicing the buoys and river lights. We lived on a 2 story house-boat anchored a few miles

up river from the bar, and about 50 feet from dense jungle. At this point in the river an anti-submarine net was installed, of which we were in charge. A small tug was used to tow the line of buoys supporting the heavy net to piling on the other side of the river. I held this job about a year. Spent my vacation in New York with side trips to the Ward's home in Pennsylvania, where my future wife, Put, lived with her parents.

Back in the Lake Fleet I was soon promoted to Captain, and soon made Relieving Captain. This meant making one trip on each ship allowing the regular captain a three day rest. Later I was assigned as Supernumerary Captain on the ocean going tankers going into Lake Maracaibo to load, if only a part cargo. My job was to advise the Captain of the local hazards and conditions, and how to dock his ship at the terminal in La Salinas. Another honor I was given was to greet Princess Juliana of the Netherlands at the Airport on behalf of the Lago Marine Department. I was introduced to the Princess as Prince Storie. Of course I was wearing my captain's uniform, 4 gold bands and gold oak leaves on my cap. The same uniform I had worn at my wedding a few months earlier.

#### **BRIEFLY -**

It was I who brought the wild Ocelot from the Lake for Lil Huffler - Hendricks.

The *Invercaibo* and *Inverrose* went to Freetown, West Africa as oilers for the Navy during the war with Captains High and Saunders in command.

The *Misoa* and *Bachequero* went to the British Navy, converted to tank landing craft, and served in the North Africa. In England on vacation when the *Misoa* was returned to the company, I got the job of taking her to New York for re-conversion. On the way over the Chief Engineer informed me that we did not have enough fuel to reach New York, so I put in to St. John, Newfoundland, only to find that Lend Lease, under which the re-conversion was to be paid for, had stopped. We were held there for 4 months.

We left Aruba in 1954.

## **The Captain Lionel Stuart Story**

Captain Lionel Stuart was born on December 31, 1903 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He landed in Aberdeen, Scotland in 1912 when his father returned to settle down in his homeland.

Lionel's father became the Secretary of the Banchory Golf Club some 16 miles west of Aberdeen. When Lionel's father asked Lionel what he wanted to do in life. Lionel said he wanted to become a golf professional. This ambition was based, at the age of 9, on more than hope since he had played three or four times with the legendary Harry Vardon. Vardon had told his father that he thought the youngster had a future in the game. Lionel's father would have none of it, feeling that he would just become a club servant with no access to the clubhouse etc.

### **THE MERCHANT NAVY**

It was thus that, when he left Aberdeen Grammar School, Lionel joined the Merchant Navy, although his father had given him membership of Banchory Golf Club in 1912. Lionel sailed the world over from 1919 until 1929. He started out with the British Mexican Petroleum Company.

He sailed from Belfast, Northern Ireland for the Andrew A. Wier Company as the captain of the Lake Tanker *S/S Ule*. He arrived in Aruba on June 16, 1929. At the time the Lake Tanker fleet consisted of 8 tankers. The job of this fleet was to sail to Lake Maracaibo crossing the sand bar and picking up a load of crude oil from the company loading terminals there. Then sailing back to Aruba, again crossing the "bar" at high tide. In those days the fleet belonged to the Pan American Petroleum Company. His employer later became the Esso Transportation Company Ltd.

On his first run to the lake he sailed as an observer with a seasoned captain who was to orient him to the task. The seasoned captain became ill and was left in the hospital in Maracaibo. Captain Stuart had to bring the loaded ship back to the San Nicholas harbor in Aruba, dock it in one of the more difficult of Lake Tanker berths.

He served as master on a number of the Lake Tankers, ending with the *S/S Cumarebo* and came ashore in 1943 for liaison, and convoy control work for the fleet. He transferred to the Lago Oil & Transport Co. Ltd. payroll in April of 1947. He was lucky to get through the war years uninjured.



When he came ashore he was made chief dispatcher in the Marine Department. He later worked as Signal Tower Operator. In May of 1954 he was promoted to shift supervisor - Harbor Operations. In this role he was described by Marine Manager J. H. Brown III as "the backbone of the Marine organization."

His passion for the game of golf was unabated over the years. During his service with the Lake Tanker fleet his ship was fitted with a golf practice net and the ratings were given golf lessons at the drop of a hat. He played the game all over the world during his years at sea. His crew always knew they would find him, on the nearest golf course. He was called the long-hitting Captain in Aruba because of his long-hitting golf shots.

### **LIFE IN ARUBA**

Captain Stuart's wife, Dorothy, arrived as a young bride on August 29, 1929. In Aruba the Stuart family lived in bungalows 60, 53 and 923 in the Lago Colony. Daughter Dorothy's account runs as follows:

We all had such a carefree, wonderful childhood days on our little island in the sun and although we spent WWII in Aruba, we all had everything we needed. I can remember in the early days when we lived in bungalow 53 along the waterfront the colony bus was driven by "Mario." All of us kids would spend our free time driving around the colony, back and forth to the commissary with him at the wheel. He was without a doubt a kid's best friend. Even our parrot "Bootsie" would signal Mario's bus approaching. At the top of his lungs he would shout "Mario, Mario" to warn us and Eva, our faithful Grenada born maid. She would hurry out to put our commissary order in the box on the side of the bus.

Eva Paul came to work for us from the Lago Hospital in 1934. She was with the family until the day she left Aruba herself in 1957.

Speaking of animals, we had monkeys on yards of clothes lines so they couldn't run away, parrots, dogs, cats, budgies, canaries, and a squirrel.

Our most beautiful cat was "Spotty", the Ocelot my father brought home from the Venezuelan mainland. It was just a baby kitten and had been deserted by its mother. My mother fed it with a doll's bottle and then fed it Pablum.

One of the funniest stories my father told us about the early days was when there were few cars; most were Company cars. One of the engineers of the Lake Fleet had a donkey but he had trouble identifying

it. So one day he had its tail cut short thinking that this would help him find his donkey. However when he returned in two days he found that all of the donkey's tails had been cut short!

In Aruba you could get your automobile driver's license when you were 16 years old. Thus by inference you became of age when you were 16.

It was a blessing when air conditioners arrived on the island. It made it so much easier for the fathers working shift to sleep in the daytime and the kids didn't have to tiptoe around.

My father tells me that when the Marine Club was first built there was no nursery or crib for the babies whose parents wanted to dance. So I was laid on the billiard table to sleep while they danced and they knew I couldn't fall off.

After school we used to race home, put on our bathing suits and head off bare footed across the coral to the T docks and big docks. I don't remember being taught to swim or dive, but we all could.

I was six weeks old the first time I went to sea with my father. I sailed to Lake Maracaibo many, many times with Daddy and there was nothing I enjoyed more in my youth than going for a trip up the lake. I even spent many school vacations with friends in La Salinas. I returned home one time with green hair caused by the chemicals and disinfectant in the swimming pool there!

We all accompanied my father when he took the *S/S Cumarebo* to Martinique in 1938 to bunker the *S/S Normandy*. To us this was the most beautiful passenger liner in the world and I'm proud to say we spent a whole day on board of this Queen of the Seas.

On another trip we went through the Panama Canal - in 1937. What a pity when one is really too young to appreciate fully all of these journeys. But in a nutshell we were all so happy there.

We remember the New Year's Eve dances in the Marine Club and as the clock struck midnight all of the ships blew their whistles in the harbor and it was a sensation never to be forgotten. Since then we have never experienced a New Year like it, and never will.

Aruba will always be in our hearts and our memories will never fade away - they are indeed a gift of God.

## **RETIREMENT**

After 30-1/2 year of service with Lago the Stuart family retired

from Aruba on August 29, 1959. Captain Stuart says, "The saddest day of my life was the day I left Aruba."

After retirement Captain Stuart returned to Banchory, Scotland with his wife. They built a house there and at the age of 56 he was appointed professional at the club in 1959. His retainer was agreed as precisely nothing. He wanted to be Club Professional for the love of the game. He quickly settled into his familiar teaching role helping all of the local youngsters. He was also able to use the club making skill which he had taught himself.

In 1969 he had, unfortunately, a heart attack and his specialist advised him to give up the job. He could not stay away, however, and he has helped his successor in the shop, continuing to start all of the competitions etc. just as he had done as professional.

He could not play golf anymore in his 86th year but he continued on starting and tournament duty.

His wife, Dorothy, passed away in 1986 but he is proud to tell you of his ten grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren.

He was seriously ill during September, October, and November of 1991 but he made a miraculous recovery. Although he doesn't get out on his own anymore he is still very much alert. He has spent 77 years as a member of Banchory Golf Club.

## **CHILDREN**

His daughter, Dorothy Katherine, says she was the first British baby born on the island of Aruba on October 31, 1930. She has three brothers and all four children were born in the Lago Hospital and completed 12 years of schooling in the Lago Community Schools. Dorothy graduated from Lago High School in 1948.

Kenneth is married, an officer in the Canadian Signal Corp., since October, 1991, stationed in Victoria, Canada. He has two sons and two daughters. He graduated from Lago High, Class of '58.

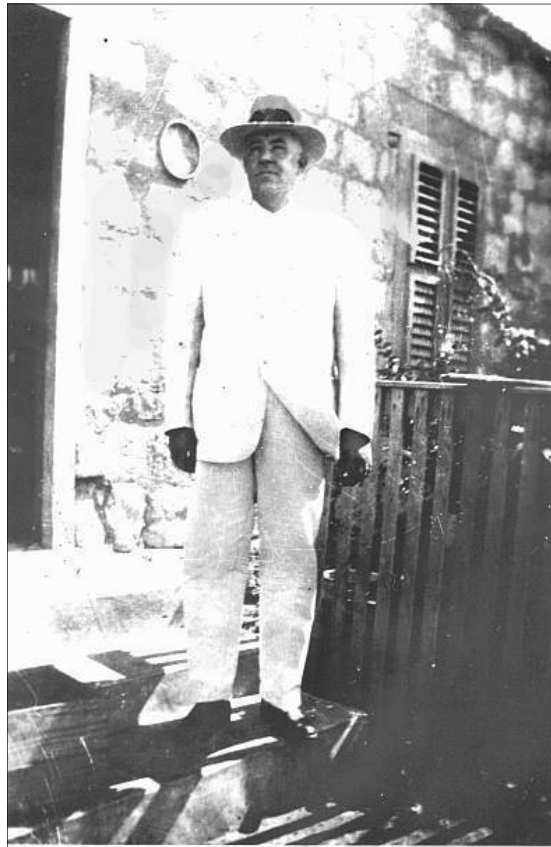
Charlie is married; has two sons; and lives in Ontario, Canada. He graduated class of '53, Lago High, and is retired from the R.C.A.F.

John is married; has three sons; lives in Ontario, Canada. He graduated class of '50, Lago High; and is also retired R.C.A.F.

Dorothy was christened in the home of Captain R. Rodger who was in charge of the English personnel on the Lake Tankers. At the time there was no church in the Lago Colony.

After graduating from the Lago Colony High School in 1948 she became the high school secretary of Ira P. Hoffman and Ray Zaner. In 1951 she transferred to the Executive Office and became the Marketing Department Secretary to Bill Kaestner and Bud Bissell.

On March 21, 1953 she married Dr. Lex de Boijj (dentist in San Nicholas and Oranjestad). Their first son, Stuart Alexander, was born in the Lago Hospital on June 29, 1954. In May of 1956 Dorothy and her family left Aruba to settle down in Holland.



Captain Robert Rodger  
First manager of Lago Refinery

**Photo date and origin unknown**

## **The Dean Vincent & Doris Thompson Story**

I was born in Lisbon, New York. My father was a wheat farmer in Saskatchewan after WWI. I went to Hope College and Cornell University and later received my doctorate of education degree at New York University in 1971.

On a Sunday morning in June of 1951 I drove into a small town and picked up a copy of the New York Times. There was a two inch ad looking for a school principal, with at least four years of experience, between thirty and 40 years of age, and a master's degree in education. I told my wife, Doris, that I might answer the ad. We got a free trip to New York City, for the family for the interview, which was 400 miles away since we were in upstate New York. I was the supervising principal in a small town in northern New York State, and we had roughly 500 students. We were centralized, had 12 rural schools, and were in the process of combining them and moving them into a modern building.

When I started school in Saskatchewan, I rode a horse to school. If I fell off, the horse returned home and I finished the remainder of the two mile trip to school on foot.

We didn't know Aruba existed until we found it in the Atlas, and saw it was just north of the equator. I was 34 years old, and we had two children when we arrived in Aruba.

I started in 1951 and retired in 1977 at the mandatory retirement age of 60. As the principal, I oversaw kindergarten through the twelfth grade. Aruba's largest graduating class was in 1959. There were 38 in the class, but four didn't make it. The four entered summer school and earned the credits they needed to graduate. There were 36 faculty members and grade one had three sections in the beginning. We later broke down to two sections of grade one, and in the end we had only one section.

We finally left the four wood and stucco buildings on the lower campus, and we had our first commencement in our new upper campus auditorium in 1956. That was the year we moved down to the air conditioned Industrial Relations building. The medical department moved in with us in 1972. By that time there were 150 youngsters in

kindergarten through grade nine. To keep the enrollment between 100 and 150 youngsters, we were delighted to offer qualified children of the island residents a place in our school system. Many of these students were children of employees of Lago contractors. When the company had two desulphurization plants built, there was quite a variety of imported contractors: Parsons was one, and Bechtel was another. These were a source of students and we were delighted to have them join us. Our system was down to classes of six or seven students.

Now that we are retired I can talk about Lee Raymond, the president of Exxon, who was the former president of Lago Oil and Transport Company between the years of 1975 and 1976. I reported directly to Raymond. There were only four in our kindergarten, when Raymond brought his triplets to the island. At the last annual Houston Exxon meeting, I ran into Lee and he told me his boys are now graduating from college.

#### **DORIS**

In 1952 I started the Community Christmas Choir by calling on anyone in the colony who I thought would want to participate. The choir continued until we left in 1977, with the exception of 1957 when I was sick. In later years I had to scour the whole island community for enough voices. It was called the Aruba Island Christmas Choir, and some years we had to hold four concerts to accommodate everyone. Two concerts were held in the colony, the company's public relations department put up a band shell in the sports park in Saint Nicholas, and we held one there. Oranjestad was the site of the fourth concert, and it was usually held in either one of the churches or the cultural center. Jennie Greene, the wife of the engineering department's Charlie Greene, played the organ for the first concert. Bodil Frolund did the 1952 concert. Ruth Collins was another player in that concert as was Carter Miller. After their departure, we called on the church organist. We had a Dutch school teacher who played the church organ in the 70's, and the last year was done by a colony woman who was an accomplished pianist and organist. I have recordings of many programs. Tom Hagerty was a great bass, and Leonard McReynolds played the kettle-drums. Don Evans originally had the Christmas Choir.

In 1962 I went back to teaching school full time, and did so until we left. I taught history, social sciences, social studies, English, was class adviser, and published the year book.

Ev Biddle brought together people like Jan Koulman, and the accountant, Hugo Upsalt. Yes, we put on maybe four or five big musical

comedies. The first was a minstrel in March of 1955, and then we did a Gay 90's revue. Ev Biddle, the hospital's anesthesiologist, was the organizer of all of these events. He was a frustrated producer and writer. Ev collected sheet music and old time records. He claimed to have had as many as 60,000 records in his house at one time. I have about 400 tapes of his library. Ev, an ex-marine who lived in Florida after he retired, died about 2-1/2 years ago.

I remember Edna (Dorwart) Seitz having her music appreciation programs in her yard, particularly at Christmas time when she featured Handel's Messiah.

Peter Storey, who married Joanne Rae, became an inspiring influence in the community in later years. I don't think the church would have fared as well as it did if it hadn't have been for Pete. He was really a moving force in the community church, and he was a talented singer. Peter was involved in the dramatics club, as was Don Evans' wife.

Our Toastmasters Club in Oranjestad sponsored an event similar to a mock national convention, the United Nations. People came from all over the island to play the part of the representatives from different nations. Dorothy Joseph, the librarian, helped me a great deal with this.

Jim Downey, who came to Aruba in 1947, was on contract with the Lago School system until we left.

We had women's fashion shows in the early 1950's. These were organized by the Women's Club. The dresses shown were from Mrs. Whitfield's and Mrs. Leon's shops.

In the early years the Lago Colony School system operated according to the State the superintendent was from. Originally there was just one teacher. Over the years there were three superintendents who were the chief school administrators from 1933 to 1951. Dean Vincent Thompson was in that position from 1951 through 1977. Ira Hoffman was one. William Mileham was one. The third one was Mark (I can't remember his last name). In 1939 the school was accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The school reached its peak enrollment of 590 students in 1954. The school was geared toward preparing the students for college. A comprehensive secondary education experience was not offered; rather preparation for college was stressed. The majority of students desired and were capable of college and university training. The men brought to the Aruba Refinery were selected and placed in supervisory positions. The majority were engineers, accountants, medical doctors. Each received training

particularly during their early service there. During their later years they were the instructors for the local personnel who were being trained to replace them. Beginning in 1951, with the arrival of Dean Thompson, the school operated under the New York State grading system. It is interesting that 80% of the graduates of Lago Community High School during the ten year period of 1954 to 1964 attended college in the United States and Canada.

In 1964 Lago initiated an early retirement program in their efforts to reduce the number of Foreign Staff employees and cut operating costs. The emphasis was on upgrading more local personnel to take over more of the supervisory positions throughout the refinery. Thus from 1964 onward there was a decreasing number of students attending the Lago Schools. This meant there was a decrease in the faculty staff. From 1954 to 1958 there were 34 faculty staff members and 540 students; 1958 - 1962 there were 25 staff and 418 students; and 1962 to February 1964 there were 19 staff and 305 students.

There was a high turn over of teachers. One out of every three had to be replaced. Average tenure was two years. Faculty attrition was attributed to marriage, desire for a new experience, and dissatisfaction with the fact that the teacher was a company employee and did not function the same way as would be the case in a public school. The policy in the days prior to 1951 was that when a teacher married she had to resign from the school. Due to circumstances this policy was discarded after 1951. It was not that easy to find replacement teachers. Our first year in Aruba, 1951-1952, nine teachers were married before January 1952. The teachers were company employees and considered as having tenure as long as they wanted.

One of the most traumatic times when we were in Aruba was when the big lay off came in 1964. This was when anyone who had 15 years of service and was 50 years old received "an offer you couldn't refuse." Those who didn't take advantage of this offer had no guarantee of how much longer they would be employed and they would not receive any of the layoff bonuses being offered. The cutoff date was January 31, 1964, and that took the heart right out of the school. Over 80 men were let go. I remember Sunday, January 31, 1964, and we went out to the old airport in Oranjestad. It teemed with people who were leaving, and we were particularly struck by the number of people who had no idea what was in store for them. We had a new Minister, Reverend Main, who replaced Don Evans. Evans went down to Buenos Aires for a couple of years. All of these people leaving just took the heart out of his church. Our new minister was only there two years. Then we had a succession of pastors



who would be there a couple of years and then move on. In 1965 we had to take out the 11th grade. That was the year that Gordon Hendrickson (Dr. Hendrickson's son) would have been there.

The company really tried to tailor the layoffs such as to keep the high school going. Dr. Glenn Hendrickson tried very hard in Management Staff Meetings to keep the 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grades open. And then our youngest daughter who was born in Aruba had to go away to school at the end of the 9th grade. And others had the same problem. The kids were only 15 years old.

### **DEAN**

When we came to Aruba in 1951 we lived in Bungalow 142, across from the elementary school. It was a four-room bungalow, but it was very, very hot. I thought I would have to leave Aruba because of the heat. There was no air-conditioning and the houses were too close together. There was no breeze. I thought when school was out on Friday afternoon how wonderful it was going to be on the week end. It was going to be quiet. It was so noisy all day long. Every Sunday morning all 600 kids came down for Sunday school. They tormented us for most of the morning. We moved to Bungalow 604 where we lived for two years. Bungalow 463 was a two-bedroom, and we moved there because we were expecting our baby. We had a boy, a girl, and one on the way when they decided we qualified for a five-bedroom. Bungalow 463 was our home for two years. Bungalow 413, the one the Willie Miller's had lived, was our next place. We left there and moved up to Jimmie Rosborough's bungalow, Number 553. It was next to the end of the 500 row, near the point. We lived there from 1958 until 1965. The Company tore that house down. I loved it there. We were all alone, away from everybody, and we had a wonderful view from the point. The sea was on three sides. Then we moved to 1576 in 1965 where we lived until 1970. Bungalow 49, the one under the cliff by the old elementary school was our next one. Dean's father and mother were coming to stay with us that winter. Dean had just received his doctorate and we planned staying only one year longer. Dean's father died in the spring. The company made it worth our while to stay on. Both Dean and I taught, and we stayed in Bungalow #9 for seven more years. When we left, it was still in use. We enjoyed that house the best although 553 had a better view. Five fifty-three is now used as a vacation house. When we lived in 553, we really didn't need air- -conditioning; there was nothing to stop the breeze on the point. The only complaint we had was the effects of the salt air on our belongings and the house. In our house in Houston you can see some of the original Lago furniture. In 1962, Lago went out of

the business of furnishing the houses. Whatever we had in our houses was yours, they said, and you were responsible for its upkeep. Up there at the time we had a six-room house. And we had more furniture than you can believe. It all came with us to the States when we left. Some of the furniture fell by the wayside. It wore out.

We had a fellow who was in Aruba on a training assignment and his son was a high school junior. He and Barney Ellis were burning some old tires up on top of Colorado Point, and the fire made a big cloud of smoke, and a big stench. They were disciplined by the Mayor of the village, Norm Shirley, or Walt Spitzer, the Police Chief, I think. Years later, the boy finished college, and he entered the Air Corps. He was considered for a position in the Strategic Air Command, and a government official came down to interview his high school principal. He wanted a complete run-down on the boy, not only academically, but his behavior as a citizen in the community. The incident of the tire-burning was the worst example of bad behavior I could tell him about.

There is a little story I can tell. The bright sunlight bothered my eyes and I wore sunglasses. And when I went into the delivery room at the hospital when I was about to deliver Kitty, I wore my sunglasses because the overhead lights were so bright. And finally Ev Biddle, the Anesthesiologist, said "Doris I don't think you really need these glasses anymore." He gave me a little anesthetic and took my glasses off. We all had a big laugh about that because I minded the light so much. All the rooms in the hospital were white and the bright light reflecting from the sea made me squint. Years later Ev was still laughing about that. He didn't think I needed those glasses then.

We moved the school down to the air-conditioned Industrial Relations office. And in 1973 or 74 we were having a program in the conference room up on the second floor of the school. In the winter of '74-'75, the Company had brought in some Dutch Engineers to demolish the Hospital Building. They were arranging the explosives so that they made the building fall inward on itself. Their work was quite loud and noisy, but I kept the door open so I could see when they set off the charges. You couldn't hear the explosion, but we saw it. I think the government wanted Lago to give them that building to use as a retirement home. Lago wanted to keep housing inside the Colony to avoid installing special lines for the utilities.

There was a complete switch of school policies when I arrived in 1951. Until then there had been different policies used depending on the different principals or administrators who were in charge. Immediately I

reorganized it using New York State's system as a model. For teachers, students, and parents alike, it became a stable curriculum. The Company was primarily located in New York, and the arrangement suited them. We used a variety of text books, selecting them based on our curriculum. A committee of teachers decided which ones were to be used.

We had teachers from many states. Myrtle Parham was from Texas, Maude Thomas was from Texas, and Millie Wightwood was from Connecticut and New York. I'd like to think we got the best. There were a variety of attitudes and opinions. If someone came up with a "Coin-Your-Idea-type" suggestion that sounded good, we'd try it. We couldn't mess with the curriculum in one sense of the word. The standards were set in terms of the New York statewide examinations. When the State of New York put out a new examination of three hours' duration, for example, that was the standard by which our high school youngsters were measured. We offered the same courses New York State offered. I felt that individual teachers wouldn't make up an examination that would be as rigorous as it should be. Every year we gave the SAT examinations to our youngsters and we compared their scores to those of their peers in the New York State School System. Year after year, our scores were above average. More than 80% of our students went on to some of the best college and universities.

We had a School Advisory Committee that functioned as do the PTA's in the states. When I arrived Dr. R. C. Carrell was chairman of the committee. Glenn Hendrickson was another chairman. Many citizens in the Colony served on this five-member committee. Marge Fisk, Ruth Collins, Lloyd Monroe, John van Ogtrop, Jim Maxey, Gene Goley, Patty Curtiss were chairmen of the Committee.

Doris is a Canadian, and I'm from upstate New York. Somehow, we wound up in Houston. Our three children living here was one reason, I guess. I have continued to teach since I retired, and I haven't missed a year. Presently, I'm teaching at the University of Houston's downtown campus.

## **The Garth Eugene Viele Story**

### **CHILDHOOD**

My name is Garth Eugene Viele and I was born June 1, 1915, in Medford, Oklahoma. My family later moved to Okmulgee, Oklahoma where I went through grade school and high school.

My father worked as an operator for the Cities Service in their Okmulgee refinery. He was a wax house operator for 20 years. Okmulgee was a booming oil town then. I remember when I was a little kid I went to work with him and watched what he did. One man ran that whole operation. Pop unloaded the machine and barreled the wax into wooden barrels. He pressed the paraffin, chilling to help get rid of the oil. It was melted, and then run through on a chilling drum, and it came off as a large sheet of wax. This sheet was run into the barrels, and headed up. The plant closed in 1939, and my family went to a farm they'd bought Missouri.

In Okmulgee High School I was somewhat better than average student. In Okmulgee, during the 20's and 30's, we had a very solid educational system. Our superintendent of schools was an educator from Cornell University. In junior high school we had what was called finding and broadening courses. In that program we were exposed to about everything you could think of. We had tin, automobile, printing, drafting, woodwork, and electrical shops. The students just dabbled, and didn't get too deeply involved. It was a time to find ourselves. If we became interested, we went to advanced classes.

I liked woodworking, and I took it through my senior year in high school. My mother had a high school education, and my father had an eighth grade education. According to them, your education wasn't finished until you had college. I couldn't see any application of woodworking in higher education except to teach it, and I didn't think I was cut out to be a school teacher.

A lawyer friend of mine who was instrumental in getting me a job asked me if I planned to go to college. I allowed that I was, but I didn't know where or how. Oklahoma A & M was where most of the fellows went from our area. He told me he had influence at Oklahoma University in Norman, Oklahoma, so I said that would be okay with me. He lined up a job, and I was off to the races. I hopped on the bus as soon as I knew where it was. On the bus I got to talking with a fellow. By the

time I got off, we had agreed to try it as roommates. We rented a room for \$6 a month. He had made grandiose plans while he had taken time out from school to work for several years, and he was ready begin again.

I worked my way through school by holding two jobs. One was as a \$15 a month laborer under the NRA (National Recovery Administration). I also worked in the chemistry department, and it paid my rent. I worked in the cafeteria for three hours every evening to earn my meals. In those days there was a \$9 library fee and an \$11 lab fee. Text books were probably my biggest expense. Most of them sold for \$8 or \$10; a handbook was maybe \$20 and there weren't many of those. My activities during the period between 1935 and 1939 consisted of working and going to classes. I saw one football game in the four years I was there.

In junior college I got interested in Chemistry. As I got into second year of junior college, I determined that engineers were better paid, and I switched to Chemical Engineering.

I got mostly decent grades at the university, but I did best in the engineering courses. They seemed to make more sense to me. I wanted to go overseas because I had heard they paid more. I graduated from Oklahoma University in Norman, Oklahoma in 1939 with a B.S. in Chemical Engineering.

### **COMING TO ARUBA**

O.H. "Jumbo" Shelton of the Standard Oil of New Jersey Overseas Personnel Office had visited our University the year before and hired Neal Lamb for Aruba. That year Shelton wrote a letter to the dean of the engineering school telling him he wasn't able to call on them personally, but that he would like to have someone from Oklahoma University that year interested in going overseas. I sent my name in and I was the only one interested in going overseas so I was sent instructions to have a physical exam and send them the doctor's report. Next I received an acceptance letter which said I was hired and mentioned a departure point and date. Later I received instructions to proceed to Bayway, New Jersey and the company refinery there.

As it happened my folks were in the process of moving to their farm in Missouri.

I traveled to Bayway, New Jersey and discovered there were six of us hired to work in Aruba. Dave Mortlock, graduate of Georgia Tech University, and I went into the Process Department. Mike Tooey, a Pennsylvanian (also a graduate of Georgia Tech University), ended up in

Lago's Metal Inspection Department with my roommate, Bill Long. Lou Ballard, who was a graduate of Kansas University, went to Oil Inspection Laboratory as a shift leader. C. "Buck" Johnson, graduate of Syracuse University) was placed in the Lago Laboratory. I don't know how they made the selections; I guess it was according to our degrees. They did tell us where the openings were and did give us a choice.

In the past they had hired engineers for Aruba who had no practical training. This group of young engineers was placed in the Student Engineering Training Program conducted at the Bayway Refinery in New Jersey.

Our training consisted of six assignments of one month's duration. My first one was in their Motor Fuel Test Lab; the next was in Process Control. I spent a month in the Mechanical Department where they were building a refrigeration plant. The last assignment I had was at their old out of service Hydrogenation Plant. They were setting up a pilot unit to process benzene for munitions manufacturers.

During the six months of training in Bayway, we visited New York on weekends. Off duty at one o'clock on Saturday afternoons, some of the fellows with a car drove over to the Big Apple, and I went along. We saw Mickey Rooney, Judy Garland, and all the big bands on stage.

Christmas was coming up and when I found we would be going to Aruba in January, I asked for time off, and we got a week at home for the holiday.

I had never heard of Aruba, but a week before I left Bayway there was an article in the Saturday Evening Post, The Lucky Girls of Aruba. That was the first and only mention I had heard of Aruba.

January 7, 1940, we sailed for Aruba from Bayonne, New Jersey. On the tanker with us was Oleta, who was going down to marry Howard Wade. Also with us were Ellie Wilkins and his wife, Belle. The ship's master of the S/S *Esso Aruba*, formerly the S/S *Pan Bolivar* was Captain Larsen. On the way down we were lounging on the poop deck, and watching the flying fish one day when the captain and three officers proceeded to conduct a sea burial. The deceased was in a cremation urn, and as the captain concluded the simple service, he scattered the ashes over the stern. He told us it was someone who had died at a seaman's home and wished to be buried at sea.

I remember Buck Johnson saying on the trip down that he was worried about getting stuck in a ten thousand dollar-a-year salary rut. I told him I was mainly concerned about my chances of getting INTO that

rut.

I was 24 when I arrived, and Neal Lamb was the only person I knew before I went.

We received \$130 a month while we were at Bayway; in Aruba, our wages went to \$165 a month. Junior engineers were a dime a dozen in those days. I remember Bill Ewart's wife, had arrived in September before they were married. One day while I was talking with her, I got the notion that she was making \$30 more a month than I was, and she wasn't an experienced school teacher either.

Roy Stickle, a chemical engineering graduate, was in the group that had received their orientation the year before us. He had just finished a year in the Metals Inspection Department when I got there. Roy told me it was too strenuous for him, and he arranged for a transfer to the Personnel Department. Pappy Meisenheimer, Don Stevens, Larry Engelking, and Neal Lamb were other members of Stickle's group.

## **WORLD WAR II**

Holland was invaded before I got there; the threat of war loomed on the horizon. The company hired ten young fellows as guards in the tank farm. I remember the power house guard, Jim Davis who was to become a leading local softball pitcher, and I remember Jimmy Ayers, the fellow who married Rosario, the Costa Rican girl.

We also had some French marines. They dressed in white, and when they came to the mess hall, they stacked their rifles before sitting down to eat. They came in groups of six, and I recall there were about 500 of them. The marines left a few days before the February 16, 1942 attack on Aruba.

That group was relieved by the Cameron Highlanders. None of the Aruba refinery guards were armed.

On June 8, 1942, we woke up and our room was full of smoke. The Esso Club was on fire. We got on the roof of our bachelor quarters and sprayed water on it to keep it from catching on fire from all the embers from the fire at the club. Men from the bachelor's quarters rescued the liquor from the club's storeroom. Most of it wound up in their quarters. The next day Watching Department Chief, Gilbert Brook, had to raid the quarters to recover most of the pilfered liquor.

Bill Sauer, an engineer who was the rabid Nazi, and his brother Otto were sent to the concentration camp in Bonaire on May 10, 1940, the time of Holland's invasion. The big guy at the Thermansaul, a store in

the village, was also interned at Bonaire. I.C. "Andy" Andersen, a young engineer, had just bought a camera there and hadn't paid for it. Anderson convinced the new clerks he had paid, and he got a free camera out of the deal.

I remember when Holland was liberated, Dutchmen in the colony celebrated with uncharacteristic abandonment.

Murdow MacDonald, a professor of religion, married Betty Russell, Tommy Russell's daughter, after the war was over. MacDonald was an old man who had been all over before coming to Aruba. I believe they retired to Glasgow.

After the American Coast Artillery unit departed for occupation duty in Europe, there was a detachment from Puerto Rico. One of these fellows, a sentry at the acid plant, accidentally shot himself while doing the manual of arms.

One day I.S. Moore, an army lieutenant from my home town, walked into the door of the church. Moore was a nephew of senator Moore of Oklahoma. When the unit was reassigned, his uncle pulled a few strings, got him out of the army and got him a stateside job.

Another fellow I knew was a navy lieutenant, Barret Gibson, who was in college with me. In Aruba he was one of those assigned to test the fuel oils for the navy.

I was talking to the Bigarts not long ago, and they told me they entertained soldiers during the war and their commissary bills were always so high they couldn't pay them. It seems that George Wilkins always had to bail them out.

### **LOCAL VACATIONS**

For my first two week local leave, I stayed on the island. When the war began, I took only 30 days of my first regular vacation on July Fourth of 1942. L.G. Smith was given my seat on the plane and I had to take the next one, but he apologized for it. They chartered Lockheed's in those days. There was a big life raft down the center of them, and they had blacked out windows. You had to stoop over, and then step off the life raft to reach your seat. They served cold box lunches consisting of a hard boiled egg, a big leg of chicken and an orange. When people started opening their boxes, cracking the eggs, eating the chicken and peeling those oranges, I became nauseated. I did better if I didn't eat anything on those flights.

My next vacation, in April 1945, was another occasion when I didn't



take all of my vacation. We routed vacations through Central America, making reservations almost a year in advance. On this trip there was Eddie Brenner, a bachelor, who worked in the light ends department; "Army" Armstrong ("Limey" we called him then); Julia and Johnny Sherman; Walt Huffman's wife, Dorothy. The first leg of it was by the old Fokker tri-motor to Maracaibo. A schedule change and we sat for three days under a mango tree, waiting for our plane. George Dickover was in Maracaibo then having been transferred from Aruba.

### **LIFE IN THE COLONY**

In the bachelor quarters my first room was 501, and next door was Sammy Wilson. Later on that year I moved to bachelor quarters number four, room 41. Bill Long lived in 442 until he got married.

Bill Long and I were roommates in number five bachelor quarters. Roommates Buck Johnson and Lou Ballard were both married at the time. Buck's wife was Nellie and Lou's was Amber. I believe Amber is still around, though Lou died some years ago. Buck went back to the States and wound up in refining coordination before he retired. He and Nellie live in Florida not far from the site of the annual Aruba reunion.

While we lived in the bachelor quarters someone was always grand-standing. Johnny Drew did some fast practicing with his bugle when he got off the graveyard shift at 8:00 a.m. Drew played in the American Legion Drum and Bugle Corps. Butch Borsch would come off his Sunday morning shift and spin that car of his around in the U of the bachelor quarters until he had awakened everyone. Then he went to bed.

As a bachelor I remember living in Bob Johnson's bungalow on birdcage row next to Joe Auer's. Birdcage row was the name of a row of 3-bedroom bungalows for newly weds or those with no children. Another time I stayed in Larry Engelking's bungalow on the other side of Joe Auer's, and on still another occasion I stayed in Merle Fisk's bungalow, which was next to Bill Curtiss's three-room.

The car in the garage near the bachelor quarters that was hit by the ricocheting flare shell case belonged to a guy who was on the Esso Bolivar, dodging torpedoes up around Cuba. I believe the Bolivar was finally hit. Pickles, of the accounting department, was also on that ship. Pickles was his nickname, and his real name sounded like pickles. Possibly it was Bickles. The shell casing fragments went through the ceiling of Tex Schelfhorst's room, through a brand new battery Tex had sitting at the foot of his bed, hit the coral under the bachelor quarters, and ricocheted to hit the bumper of a car parked in the garage besides the quarters.

We heard it and got up because we heard the shell explode. Other fragments went through the ceiling of the clubhouse and down through a corner of the library and they found them under the club on the coral.

Pat had been teaching school several years before we married. Pat was staying with her aunt and uncle. Pat and Lydia McBurney both became members of Kappa Delta Phi and kept track of each other. Pat first came to Aruba to visit Lydia. She and I first met at a party at Dave Mortlock's. Among others, the McBurney's, Pat, and I were invited. We got to talking and she was going to see some Kansas natives in Curacao the next day. I told her my uncle and my grandparents lived in Kansas. We had much in common. My vacation coincided with her return trip to the States, and we traveled together to Miami, Florida. She went on to Pittsburgh and I went to Oklahoma. On my return from vacation, I passed through Pittsburgh, visited her. We corresponded and she came to Aruba after school was out; we married on July 31, 1948. Lydia McBurney was Pat's matron of honor, and Cart Miller was my best man. Johnny Jones played the organ, and Dehlia Owens sang as ceremonies were performed in the Lago Community Church by a Methodist missionary minister. Reverend Don Evans was due to arrive the next day, and Reverend Percy Dawe had already left. The ushers were Larry Engelking, Pappy Meisenheimer and Lloyd Monroe. On our honeymoon, as I was leaning over the register to check in, rice fell from my pocket. Up to that point we were incognito and no one knew we were newlyweds.

Our first housing after our marriage was a four-room bungalow formerly occupied by Cy Yates. Across the street were Tom and Anne Wolfe. We left in January of 1956 for Colombia.

In an interesting aside, we made a trip to England in the fall of 1983 and lunched at Newark on Trent with Reverend Kirtley and his wife, the very same Methodist missionary minister who had married us 35 years before. We had been corresponding with him, but we had not seen him in all of that time.

When they started building the cement block houses I put in my request for one. Our house was number 1533, before I went on vacation. Clyde Moyer was the one who signed up for me, and he signed himself up for the one next door while he was at it. The McBride's were next door to 1533, and next to them was Eddie McCoart. T.M. Binnion was up the road. "Binky" Fuller had one up there too. Others in that addition were Tom Malcolm, L.D. McBurney, Lewis MacNutt, and then almost across the street was Art MacNutt. Cart Miller was across the street from

him. Anger Folmer, the doctor, was in there somewhere. E.L. Dodge was across the street from us; then the Ted Stanley's; then Ralf Humphreys; then Ed and Grace Babcaney.

I really arrived in Aruba at a propitious time. Men who arrived the year before lived in the infamous *sheep sheds*. Bill and Patty Curtiss and the Hemstreet's started out living in Lago Heights. I remember that some people were upset when I was assigned my first bungalow before Pat and I married. Lettie Janecek said, "Here we are in Lago Heights and you are a bachelor you've got a four room house in Lago Colony!" I said, "But I have been living here for eight years to get that house."

Lago Heights was originally housing built to the north of the Lago Colony for "local hire" people who held responsible positions in Lago and were from islands around the area. There were also personnel from Surinam and most office clerks were from British Guiana. Foreign Staff personnel lived in the Lago Colony. Due to a housing shortage some Foreign Staff personnel were temporarily housed in Lago Heights at this time.

Before I arrived, John Packky from Esso Engineering was there. His job was to iron out the problems with the pitch stills. They were injecting the high melt pitch into a water filled line and pumping it out to the pitch pile near B.A. Beach. In addition to the high melt line, there was a low melt line. To prevent plugging they had to inject gas oil into the stream. There were schemes to market this product, but none ever worked.

I wasn't much of a swimmer - I conducted all of my water sports activities in the Baby Lagoon. The only time I was ever out in a boat was with Larry Engelking. Larry and I were batching in his house while Patsy had gone to the States for some reason.

As far as Lago's teachers, I remember Myrtle Parham, who played the organ at the church when I first went there. I also remember Elizabeth Dickey, a big girl, who was a secretary in the main office building. Those were the days when the company bus used to pick up the office girls at number nine bachelor quarters. The bachelors caught the bus in front of the old post office building about a quarter of a mile east of the Dining Hall.

Right after the war, when automobile production wasn't keeping up with the demand, people acquired automobiles by buying from estates. Someone brought down an air-cooled Franklin with a large glass windshield and windows. Charlie Drew brought a Cadillac V-16.

I thought those retirement picnics in the period between 1953 and 1955 were great, and I never missed one. They were a world famous bargain. All you could eat or drink for five or ten bucks, and the best entertainment in the world. I remember the George Wilkins retirement party, but nothing specific about what was said. Actually there were so many of them I should be able to rattle off the people. I remember Kenney Repath's party because I got invited to his dinner. At that time I was acting Eastern Division Head - this was just before I left in the fall of 1956. Anyway they had this dinner in the guest house. Of course Joe Auer had done himself proud and I had never seen anything like it. At each place setting there were two or three wine glasses to be filled at the proper time with the proper wine. The engraved invitation said it was formal, and I showed up in a summer formal I wore for the first time. At the door Kenny made some comment I didn't catch, and I noticed everyone was in regular business suits. I left after telling Pat I'd be right back, and I went back home to change into a business suit. This was his company retirement party, an eye opener for me, the country boy. Of course I saw many of them in Iran after that.

We had square dances at the picnic ground, and Pat and I were involved in the square dancing group. Charlie Smith was one of the callers, as was Ferrow Himes, and Wayne Anderson. Each of them called a particular dance. Charlie's was San Antonio Rose. I never learned ballroom dancing, and didn't consider myself a real dancer. "Ossie" Osborne, of the power house, and his wife were there as were the Bill Norris's and the Lewis MacNutt's. It seemed as if we had these dances every week, and they brought in famous callers who stayed for a week. Feugot Smith was the one who brought these people. The women dressed appropriately and men wore cowboy boots. Paul Harth was on the verge of teaching ballroom dancing, and Pat and I were signed up when a cable came with the notice that Garth had arrived in Fort Worth. Pat and I missed those classes when we went to pick up Garth and complete the adoption process. We transferred to Barrancabermeja in January of 1956. Maureen was born April 10, 1958, and we went to Fort Worth to pick her up.

Retirement picnics were later held at the colony's American Legion hall. People like Johnny Sherman, Skippy Culver and Frank Chicarelli barbecued.

Julia Sherman had relatives who lived right across the street from my aunt in Wichita.

We weren't involved in too many social events, but I went out of my

way to find retirement parties.

I remember when Daniel Hussey came down from Bayway as a part of the management development program. He went to retirement picnics also and he was crazy about them. Gene Work had one and Dewey Johnson had another.

I remember the basket ball games when I first arrived. George Stoddard was one of the players. "Double Barrel" Strong, brother of "Single Barrel" Strong, was another player. Those fellows played some hot basketball. I didn't see how they could be so energetic in that heat; you could get heat exhaustion just watching them. Bill Long got out there and they ran him down in no time. Reverend Bigart was also a great basketball player.

The ministers we had after Bigart were Reverend Percy Dawe and Don Evans. I was president of the church association one time, and I attended church regularly. Not long before Pat got a job, I was on the committee with Lotje McReynolds. Lewis MacNutt was on the committee later. Carter Miller played the organ. John Emery, from Bon Terre, Missouri, was a very active and devout man. I remember he used to say that, being a carpenter and a lay preacher as he was, he was following in the footsteps of Jesus.

Lou Dittle came to Aruba from Barrancabermeja, Colombia. He was in Colombia during one of their revolutions. He had scads of stories about that time.

The Lago community council organization was started during the war. It was through this organization and their program of collecting donations for all the various charity groups that we first heard about the Edna Gladner home, an adoption organization. The Shirley's and Hazel Cross got their little girls through that organization. If you remember, during the charity fund drive the Lago community council conducted each year, you could specify where your charity contribution would go, whatever you wanted to give. Some people specified contributions for the Edna Gladner home. Ed Babcaney was treasurer of the community council then and he was the one who told us about it. Pat and I contacted Edna and I guess she liked us, because we were put on the list.

There used to be a musical group named The Gladner Playboys, a part of an advertising effort used by some flour mill up in Sherman, Texas. They made a movie called Blossoms in the Dust, and it was the story of how she got into the adoption trade. She was originally taking care of the mill employees' children, but she got into handling the

adoptions of illegitimate children. She got the Texas legislature to pass legislation declaring there is no such thing as illegitimate children, only illegitimate parents. They don't issue a birth certificate for illegitimate children until they are adopted, and then it is issued in the adoptive parents' name.

### **LIFE IN THE REFINERY**

There was a group in the Technical Services Department referred to as the Process Contact Group. These fellows were assigned to work with the various process departments towards solving any technical problems. Neal Lamb, the fellow I went to school with was in this group. His folks knew my folks back in Kansas. During the war he was called into the service, and his wife and son stayed with his folks.

I was assigned to the Process Contact group and worked with L. G. Lopez towards solving any process problems they might have in the Gas Plant.

Bill Curtiss and Hans Lang were also in the Process Group. They worked with the Power House people. Today Lange has a house just about a block away from ours, in East Hampton, New York. He is the president of some company in Pennsylvania.

Ray Zaner was a school teacher, until he found he could make more money in the Lago Laboratory than he could teaching. He and his family lived in the Colorado Point apartments and we went to visit them on Christmas morning while his wife was in the hospital. The kids colored their pancakes red and green with food coloring.

I remember Harry Mills when he worked at "GAR-1" and "GAR-2" which were compressor units built in 1945 as part of an upgrading program we had for our War Effort. Harry and Ray Imler were typical hard-bitten old timers. They are going to fall apart when they retired, I thought. Harry and his wife got married in their 50's. Harry was afraid of retirement, but once they retired and settled in Arizona, they were the happiest people in the world. He was heard to say he wished he had retired ten years before. Tiry Harrod, from Casper Wyoming reached 50 years of service while he was in Aruba.

Klaus Dillard, an operator assigned to the tank farm, was always wearing coveralls. Dillard was a perennial colony committeeman. He was always involved in an argument with the management over some company policy that he imagined was an insult to foreign staff employees. He felt the company was ripping them off.

Klauss found a Model T Ford in a stateside junkyard. It was a

skeleton of a car, having only four wheels, a motor, and a hood. He had it shipped to Aruba along with other automobiles being shipped in for foreign staff employees. When it arrived in Aruba, Dutch customs fined him 25 guilders for bringing junk to the island. After he had gotten it fixed up with a simple wooden body and painted it, he drove his jalopy to work every day until he retired. When he retired, the company refused to ship it home for him. In defiance of their edict, he dismantled it, secreted it among his boxes of personal effects, and it was shipped back to his home town that way.

I remember John Grey, the manager of the commissary. When he died in Aruba, his wife stayed for about a year, and then had a job in the New York office. I saw her at the last reunion.

The last time I saw Louie Crippen was in Bombay.

While Pat and I were engaged, I remember talking to Karl Walker one day. Karl asked Pat where she was born. Pat replied that she was born in Manito, Spain. I'll be damned if Karl didn't sweep the sidewalk of his uncle's house in Manito right across the street from where Pat lived.

Before the war I was interested in joining the Aruba Flying Club. I was at a flying club meeting in the old clubhouse, and I heard two guys talking. It seemed they wanted to buy a plane and start a social club. I never pursued it any further. I could have learned to fly, but I was young and didn't think I could afford it.

When they had that big fire on the number 10 viscosity unit, Dewey Johnson was the one who went up on the top platform and carried down Nick Weiss, the little Hungarian fellow who was so badly burned. I used to play tennis with Nick, and I was over at the catalytic cracking unit at the time. He had been an operator on number 10 for a long time, and another Hungarian buddy of his, Hyman, who worked in the acid plant. We lived in the bachelor quarters and we played tennis together. I thought that Dewey acted heroically when he brought Nick down.

The fire was caused by a leak in the back trap of the intercondensers on the unit's top platform. In those days, oil or gas leaks were blanketed by a steam lance to prevent fires. A lance was a five foot piece of 1" pipe with handles welded on each side in the middle. The lance was coupled to a length of 1" heavy duty rubber hose to a valve in a live steam connection. They were standard equipment at locations where hazards were known to exist.

Standard procedure was to use the lance as a tool to knock off the

insulation so you could find the location of the leak. If it were a small leak the lance was propped up so that a small flow of steam could be left running on the point of the leak.

It was later deduced that Nick Weiss and the other men burned in this fire had used the lance to beat off the insulation, but the line was so badly eroded inside that the lance knocked a big hole in the line and the escaping hot hydrocarbons produced a huge fire. Two men were badly burned, and Nick later died.

I learned something from that. Sometime later we had a leak at the catalytic cracking plant at some pumps. I had the men get a pair of pliers and very carefully cut the mesh chicken wire used to hold the insulation.

I saw Queen Wilhelmina when she visited Aruba. I was part of the official welcoming party in the lobby of the main office building, and we took her to L.G. Smith's office.

O.H. Shelton was the personnel manager who hired me and he also hired Charlie Greene ten years before me. I think he was from Oklahoma because one time he told me that as a young man he used to be a cotton buyer in Oklahoma.

Russ Ewing used to raise orchids behind bachelor quarters number eight.

Bill Curtiss is in Palm Beach, New Jersey.

Scotty Aldie and his wife used to take their two bulldogs for a walk up the cliff road every night.

I remember "Brownie" Kimmler and his Chihuahuas.

Wayne Richey, a process foreman, quit when they promoted Kimmler to operator. Kimmler said he wasn't ready to be an operator, but they promoted him anyway. They brought Wayne back as shift foreman, and he was eventually promoted right back to where he was before because he was a good man.

Julius Landau was the process maintenance foreman, and Gene Work was process foreman in charge of the catalytic cracking unit when I took over from him.

I don't think we had a Christmas tree until we had Garth. I remember Danny Moore and Cart Miller were in Dave Barnes' house one time while the Barnes were on vacation. Danny and Cart got a cactus and decorated it in place of a regular pine Christmas tree.



Fred Eaton was the guy who kept my radio working.

One time Refinery Manager Horigan found out that some guy stole a piece of pipe to extend a water line out to his patio. He made him dig it up and take it back.

L.G. Smith was our Sunday school teacher, and that's where I had the opportunity to become acquainted with him. He was like a patron saint of our community church.

We had the largest lawn in the colony. We had fill brought in and put out towards the cliffs. It extended about 25 feet out from the house and then dropped off to the coral. I planted a hibiscus hedge along the outer edge and an olive hedge on the road side of the house. Our lawn was St. Augustine, and was planted in soil that had been placed on the top of caliche.

At one time they were recovering 1,000 barrels of oil a day at one time from under the island. For a year before he retired, Harry Mills was in charge of the Sears and Roebuck recovery pumps. Several fellows were assigned that duty successively. I remember a fellow by the name of James Danker did it for a while. He married that beautiful Danish girl and they had a little boy.

I'm sure everyone has heard the story about the guy who was vacationing stateside in his car with Aruba license plates, but for the benefit of you who haven't, I'll repeat it. An Arubanite pulls into a filling station. As the attendant was filling his tank, he asked, "Did they ever pave that road to Oranjestad?" It turns out that the fellow had worked in the refinery in Aruba in the early days.



## **The Beulah Snidlow & Ralph Watson Story**

### **RALPH WATSON**

Ralph Watson was born on July 4, 1903, in Tyneside, England. He arrived in Aruba in November of 1924. Ralph was sent by the Andrew Weir Company who had the concession for surveying the San Nicholas harbor. Ralph worked on Lake Tankers for a brief time, and then was assigned to survey the San Nicholas harbor and the surrounding area to determine if it was suitable for oil transfer between Lake Tankers to ocean going vessels. Afterwards he was sent to survey around Lake Maracaibo. While Ralph was in San Nicolas he lived in the old Eman family house. This two story building, with living quarters above the store, was built in the days when sailing ships called on Aruba to take cargoes from the phosphate mines. It is said that as many as 100 sailing ships could be seen in the harbor during the height of the mines' productivity.

The old railroad was still there when Ralph was surveying, and he used the cars to carry his equipment, pushing them by hand. He often told the story about the wild goat problem they had then. These animals were such a nuisance that he had his men to work building a large enclosure, after which they captured them. The Aruban spectators of this debacle were highly amused by their efforts, laughing and shaking their heads in delight at the entertainment it provided. Goats were safely penned every night, but by morning every one had jumped the walls.

### **SALMON DREDGING COMPANY OF SOUTH CAROLINA**

Ralph said that, in 1925, the Andrew Weir Company sold out their concession rights to the Standard Oil of Indiana. The Salmon Dredging Company of South Carolina sent a dredge for the harbor. Also they sent their company engineer, a Mr. Levitt. He and Ralph lived in the White House. Ralph said the old bucket dredge cast great loads of shellfish on the reef and the dredge cook kept pots of fresh shellfish on the stove. They took most of their meals there, reveling in the savory seafood. He and Mr. Levitt ran the first pipeline built in Aruba, a two-inch line from Mangel Cora well to the future refinery's location. A small windmill was sent from the U.S. to pump the water from the well. They built a reservoir, and Ralph said he believed that Bill Ewart installed the little pump house. Levitt carved the date 1924 on one of the stones used in the

reservoir and that stone was later put in front of the main office building. According to Ralph, it was about this time or perhaps a little later that the preparation for building the refinery took place.

### **THE LIGHT HOUSE KEEPER**

An Aruban rode his donkey to the eastern lighthouse at Colorado Point, morning and evening, extinguishing and lighting the kerosene marker lights.

### **THE FIRST SUPERINTENDENT**

The first superintendent was Captain Rodger and Jimmy Farquharson was his assistant. They originally had their offices in Oranjestad. Captain Rodger was in charge of shipping and oil terminal operations

### **DR. HOLLAND REFINERY SUPERINTENDENT**

As the building of the refinery progressed, Dr. Holland was appointed Refinery Superintendent. The refinery was built by the Standard Oil Company of Indiana engineers, but the construction company of Chicago Bridge and Ironworks built the first tanks.

I have forgotten when the goats were finally eliminated from the colony but when I went there in January 1930 they were still plentiful, and a nuisance.

### **BEULAH SNIDLOW**

I was born on May 5, 1905, in Portland, Oregon. I graduated from the University Of Washington with a major in bacteriology and was taking graduate work in biochemistry at the University Of Chicago when I ran out of money and was forced to take the job in Aruba. I was 24 at the time.

I was hired to set up a hospital laboratory and do the x-ray work. The nurses' bungalow was full and so for three months I lived in a room in the hospital. It was across from one of the *sheep sheds* that housed the construction workers. The *sheep sheds* were wooden buildings that had windows that were no more than holes in the wall, and they had a wooden door that could be closed but usually never was. My first night in Aruba there was a party in the one across the coral from my room. Until early morning I was serenaded by the sound of beer bottles thrown from windows crashing on the coral. Shouting and singing went on until daybreak, and then the goats began their noisy early morning rounds of the garbage cans. As I lay awake that night, I wondered what had ever brought me to such a place.

## **THE FIRST HOSPITAL**

The hospital was a wooden building with a long "white" ward at one end and a "colored" ward at the other. In between were some private rooms, the surgery, x-ray and laboratory. The front entrance wing had Dr. Mailer's office, some examination rooms and the pharmacy and clinic. The doors to the hospital were the double barroom type.

## **JIM BLUEJACKET**

When any of Welder General Foreman, Jim Bluejacket's, welders had a minor accident, he brought them up to the clinic himself. As he came through the doors he gave a shout that resounded throughout the building. All who could possibly break away from what they were doing rushed to the clinic to listen and laugh at Jim's tales while his welder received attention. One time Jim got the flu and Dr. Mailer put him in one of the private rooms. Whenever any of us had a few minutes we gathered in Jim's room to listen to his stories. Jim called spying on your neighbors "doing louver duty." (A reference to the louvers on bungalow shutters.) Finally Dr. Mailer decreed that this practice was to be stopped. When Jim heard about Dr. Mailer's orders, he said he wouldn't stay if the girls couldn't come to see him. He got up, put on his clothes and went home.

## **THE FIRST HOSPITAL STAFF**

The doctors were, Dr. Mailer and Dr. Sher. The nurses were, Margaret Reeve (Jackson), Peg Hayter, Flossie Alheim, Birdie Bond (Thompson), Doris Steele (English) and Lucille Styles. (The names in parenthesis are their married names.) I, Beulah Watson, was the lab and X-ray technician.

The pharmacist was Harold Breraton and he was the real factotum of the place. I don't think the hospital could have run without him. He knew where everything was and how everything operated. I think he was from British Guyana. He was a splendid example of a gentleman. Other of the men and women who worked at the hospital were also superior people.

We all liked Dr. Sher, a hard working, kindly man with a good sense of humor. One day I was called to the clinic to take blood from a patient, an officer from a tanker, who had imbibed too freely and got beat up. His head was split wide open, but he was enjoying all the attention and was too anaesthetized from the alcohol to feel any pain as

Dr. Sher sewed him up. His shirt was in ribbons and soaked with blood, and he protested that he couldn't go back to his ship looking like that. So Dr. Sher got him one of his shirts, a Japanese silk shirt, and the

sailor went happily back to his ship.

### **OUR FIRST TRIP TO ORANJESTAD**

I don't remember when the road from San Nicholas to Oranjestad was paved, but it was just a dusty dirt trail when I went there in January 1930. There were no clothing stores for women or stores where one could buy cloth and thread. I needed a spool of thread, and was told by an acquaintance to peer into the houses along the main street of Oranjestad until I saw one with a bolt of cloth on a shelf. If they had a bolt of cloth, they might have thread. On the rare occasion when there was slack time at the hospital, Dr. Sher talked Dr. Mailer into letting him have the hospital car for the afternoon. He loaded us into the open touring car. We bumped over rocks, past aloe field and divi divi trees, hoping we would see a wild goat or something interesting. I loved the pungent smell of aloe although many people objected to it. A favorite trick to play on newcomers was to get them to taste aloe. Another was to wait until a newcomer had enjoyed a big stack of pancakes before showing him the kitchen. They would watch in revulsion as the grinning cook pushed aside the layer of cockroaches floating on the batter before dipping a ladle full.

### **BOB DORWART**

About a week after I came, Bob Dorwart came as a secretary. He was fresh out of high school trying to earn enough to go to continue his education. When he had collected enough money he went back to university for his engineering degree.

### **VIRGIL REEVE**

A few weeks later, Virgil Reeve came and set up his dental office. Virgil was the best player on the men's basketball team. There were many players of his caliber, and the games never lacked for audiences.

### **OUR LADIES BASKETBALL TEAM**

Betty Henley started a women's team in the days before shorts. No one had thought to bring their old high school middie and bloomer outfits, so we played in our heavy woolen swim suits. It didn't last long. Playing basketball in woolen swim suits in the tropics isn't the most agreeable sport in the world.

### **MY WORK DAYS**

Besides the six full working days, I usually had to work most of Sunday X-raying the drunks that had gotten beat up Saturday night. One Sunday there had been an unusually involved brawl and the ward was full. I was quite weary and my patience was about gone when a man with a very marked southern accent was wheeled in. I guess I made

some snide remark about the brawlers, and he became indignant. He was quick to inform me he was not one of those. According to him, he had been strolling on a side-walk in the village of San Nicholas minding his own business, when a couple of dark skinned policemen refused to get off the side-walk when he passed. He pushed them off. They weren't impressed by his attempts to enlighten them on subject of the proper etiquette required of dark skinned men while in the presence of a southern gentleman. The policemen gave him enthusiastically applied personalized instructions to demonstrate the correct behavior expected of citizens while in their presence. These attitude adjustments left him with various abrasions and contusions. That southern gentleman later went on to become quite prosperous.

Another of that night's casualties brought in by the police, a man who later became one of the upper company executives. This belligerent soul was thrown from the second story window of Fanny's minus all his garments. I must explain that Fanny's bordello was just outside the company fence, near the main gate to the refinery.

#### **SUPERINTENDENT BARTELLS**

Mr. Bartells was later criticized for being tyrannical, puritanical and hypocritical when he gave the order that any brawls at the Pan Am clubhouse would result in the people involved being expelled immediately. Personally, I was pleased by his edict. From then on, I had part of my Sundays free, was able to wash my hair, and I got more rest.

#### **FOURTH OF JULY 1930**

Then there was the Fourth of July 1930. The fireworks had been bought and were to be shot off a barge which was anchored just out from the diving tower in front of snob hill. Viewers' cars were lined up just above the barge to watch the display.

Ev Wade's car was next to ours, and he and his little boy, William, were in it. The first rocket went up, but the amateur in charge of shooting it off failed to cover the rest of the rockets. They ignited when the sparks from the first salvo touched off the stockpile of fireworks. The rockets screamed past us at a furious pace, exploding and ricocheting, creating monumental confusion and terror among the onlookers.

Spectators drove away as if they were being dive-bombed by German Stukas. Ralph and I began to follow when Ralph noticed the Wade's car was on fire. He jumped out to help. The upholstery and the little boy's clothes were on fire. Together, he and Ev extinguished the flames, and we rushed them to the hospital.

Ev wasn't badly injured, but William, seriously burned on the back of the neck, was in the hospital for quite some time.

In the meantime a rocket had gone through our radiator and another had taken off a tail light. One skimmed Ralph's head, and he was bleeding, but when we got to my house, and I washed his scalp, we decided it wasn't serious enough to go to the hospital. Ralph, still a British subject, said wryly, "Those Yanks are still trying to get even with us redcoats!"

### **MOVING INTO A BUNGALOW**

After living for three months in the hospital, I moved into a four-room bungalow with Y. Florey and Lotje Gravenstein (McReynolds). Florey was the only teacher that year, but that fall, when a new school had been built, we moved to a five-room bungalow. Louise Powers and Inez Cooke were added to the school staff. Lotje was Tom Brown's (Accounting Department Head) secretary. Later we were moved to a six-room bungalow Peggy Raymond, Myrtle Parham, Jenny (Greene) and Margeurite Fassler were added to the teaching staff.

### **NEW YEAR'S DAY 1931**

New Year's Day of 1931 was another nightmare. In addition to the beat-up brawlers, a couple who had given their son a BB gun for Christmas got into a fight when they got home from the dance. They fought over the gun, filling each other full of bb pellets in the process. I X-rayed one while the doctors worked on the other, take more x-rays on the other when they dug out what my X-rays showed. I was so exasperated; I couldn't help wishing that the tiny bb's had been .38 bullets.

### **NOVEMBER OF 1932**

In November of 1932 a hurricane blew up, took out the Pontoon bridge in Curacao, and headed in our direction. Weather forecasters warned it would strike that night. The westerly driving rain had soaked our beds and covered every low spot with water. We had hung sheets over our louvers, but they were soon soaked and flapping wetly.

Peggy Raymond and I were roommates, and for some unknown reason, fear and dramatic reactions from some of the others amused rather than disturbed us. Ralph came by and took me to the hospital to eat. He told me on the way down that he couldn't take me back because the men in charge were ordered to spend the night in the refinery. The canvas top of his car blew off and the water was up to the hospital porch, but he managed to drive close enough that I could climb on porch without wading. That seemed a little silly to me when I thought of it

later. I couldn't have gotten any wetter; I was soaked to the skin by the time I got home.

Virgil Reeve took me back to our house. The lights had not yet failed when the girls, some of them in tears, began to write last wills and testaments or farewell letters to their families. Peggy and I found our "Funeral March of a Marionette" record and played it, thinking that doleful dirge would cheer them up. It failed to improve their dispositions, and they yelled for us to shut it off. Not long after, the lights went out and we retired to our rooms.

With the aid of a flashlight we pushed our beds as far as we could away from the window and the flapping sheet. We got out what dry clothes we had, put on our winter coats and lay in our wet beds to sleep. Sleeping proved impossible. Peggy and I lay laughing and talking far into the night. Eventually I dropped off to sleep, but was awakened by Peggy's moving her bed so she could open her bureau drawer. I asked what on earth she was doing. Her drawer was full of beautiful clothes; her trousseau. She was to be married as soon as school was out that spring. In answer to my question, Peg said, "Beulah, I can't have my body washed up in these dilapidated clothes. I'm going to put on my good ones."

Years later in California, I teased her about that. Peggy was to be given a special award as outstanding teacher of the year in her Escondido, California district, but she died before she knew of her recognition.

## **MARRIAGE**

Ralph and I were married in June 1934, moved into bungalow 321 and I took up the job of learning to be a housewife and gardener in Aruba. I learned to cook on the kerosene stove and clean the burners, to carry fresh water in pails, use the ice-box (with block ice), break the eggs into separate containers so that the inevitable rotten ones didn't contaminate the main dish. I tried not to mind the over-ripe chickens (before the refrigerated tankers brought us the frozen ones). I learned to fight cockroaches in the kitchen, and land crabs and lizard in the garden.

I think the name of the author of *The Lucky Girls of Aruba* was Ben Robertson. (*Saturday Evening Post*, July 8, 1939) He died in a plane crash in Spain, soon after the article was published. I believe he was on his way to Europe as a war correspondent.

## **SLIM REED**

Slim Reed, a steward on one of the tankers, had left the fleet to



manage the mess hall.

### **MANUEL VIANA**

Manuel Viana had been a cabin boy on a tanker. He came ashore with a small tire capping outfit. He wound up living in a simple little Aruban house. He later got the concession for Chrysler cars, and was very successful as a car dealer. He bought planes and established the early air service between Aruba and Curacao. (Viana Airlines was bought out by KLM some time later.)

### **A. MINTON**

A. Minton was a WWI dispatch motorcyclist with the British army in France. After the war he went to Argentina and became a gaucho. From there, he went to Peru, where he became a friend of the president. When they had a coup, and that president had to escape to Chile, Minton relayed messages and carried packages to him. When another coup returned his friend to power again, Minton was made chief of staff. He rode a white horse and was the grand marshal of parades. Another coup sent Minton and the president on the lam. Minton wound up in Venezuela where he got a job as office manager in Dr. Sandvoss' hospital. Sometime before WWII, Dr. Sandvoss became a surgeon in the Lago hospital. Minton, ever in search of new ways to improve his lot, got the idea of buying a popcorn wagon and bringing it to Maracaibo. It proved to be quite popular, and make him so affluent he was able to purchase several others. Lamentably, one of the sons of Juan Gomez, the dictator, decided Minton was doing too well for a foreigner, and confiscated the wagons. Minton finally wound up as office manager at our Lago Colony hospital.

### **TONY AND JACK SCHNUR**

It seems that Jack Schnur was the one who really made a name for himself. In Aruba, he was in charge of the Lago foundry where castings were produced for machinery and equipment used in the refinery. This included the bronze memento awarded by Lago in 1945 to those who had been with the company in Aruba on the first day crude oil was processed, January 29, 1929. On March 15, 1945, the one billionth barrel was processed in the refinery.

During WWII, China began organizing their famous cottage industries for production of steel, and the manufacture of arms. They asked for help from the American Industries Development bureau, an organization for assisting countries in the development of needed industries. Someone was needed who could set up the industries, and teach the Chinese the necessary skills required. When questioned by

American government officials about Jack's abilities, Lloyd Smith replied that no one he had ever known could be so right for the job. Jack was dispatched to China. On the final leg of his trip, he traveled over the Himalayas in a sedan chair.

## **1962**

When Ralph and I visited Tony, his wife, and Jack in southern India in 1962, he showed us pictures of himself, and Chiang and Madame Kai Shek. He had letters of commendation from high officials. Included was one from Adlai Stevenson.

At the time of our 1962 visit Jack was teaching molding and pattern making. He had a laboratory and classroom. While we were there, a telegram came requesting his presence in Delhi for a conference. China had invaded Assam and relations between those two countries were a bit tense.

When Tony and Jack moved into the south Indian village, Tony asked what she could do that would be the most beneficial for its inhabitants. She was told that a meal for one child from each family each day would be the thing. Each evening, a flock of youngsters came to her, and they were fed. It was just after Christmas when we were visiting and she had a Christmas tree and presents for all the children.

## **QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY ARUBAN PARADE 1939**

My first queen's birthday Aruban parade was in 1939, and it consisted of one old truck filled with Arubans playing Wirri Wirris with cattle horns etched so that when a small rod was scraped over the etched ridges a rhythmical sound was produced. The truck was followed by one lone, staggering drunk who kept shouting, "Viva La Reina Wilhelmina," much to the amusement of the onlookers.

## **ESCAPED PRISONERS FROM DEVIL'S ISLAND**

We can't remember which year it was, but escaped prisoners from Devil's Island reached Aruba. The 11 Frenchmen and one Belgian were in a rather dilapidated sailboat. Followed by the French cruiser *Jean d'Arc*, they stopped at Trinidad for supplies. The fugitives managed to slip out of Trinidad without being captured by the cruiser and successfully made landfall in Aruba. The cruiser caught up with them and anchored outside Aruba's three-mile limit to await their departure. The men were put in the San Nicholas jail until their boat could be repaired and loaded with supplies. A collection was taken up in the colony and supplies were provided along with an outboard motor.

Ralph was a good friend of the harbor pilot, Captain Smit, and was

told to bring a movie camera when the boat was ready to sail. Ralph was with him when he towed the boat out before daybreak to avoid spotters on the cruiser. The boat was towed out past the reef as planned, and the pilot boat turned back for the harbor as soon as Captain Smit saw its sails were properly set. Suddenly the captain let out a yell. The sailboat had overturned and its men were seen struggling in the water. The pilot turned back and soon he had all the hapless ex-prisoners back on the pilot boat.

They were returned to the jail while another collection was made to buy them a new boat, and more provisions.

### **HENRI CHARRIERE**

Henri Charriere, another Devil's Island escapee, fled the penal colony with two other Frenchmen in 1933. They picked up three others in Trinidad, reached Curacao, and then went on to Colombia. After other adventures Charriere became a citizen of Venezuela in 1945. The title of the book he wrote about his adventures was "Papillon". This reference to the butterfly tattooed on his upper chest was the name he went by in the French underworld. It was first published in France in 1969. Charriere died in 1973 at age 67.

### **LOCAL LEAVE PROGRAM**

There was great joy when local leaves were instituted. Men were given two weeks of local leave after one year's service. This leave could be taken anywhere. Those with two years of service were allowed a thirty day vacation plus travel time to their point of origin. That gave us the opportunity to see other Caribbean islands and Venezuela, and we took full advantage of it.

Helen White, Trudi and Colin Ward and the two of us took a trip to some of the islands in 1939. We were on the little Dutch freighter, *Baralt*, and were in St. Martins when the radio message came that Germany had invaded Poland. We crossed to the island of Antigua in a sailboat, and while we waited for the 1923 Buick truck that was to pick us up, we talked to Mr. Thompson, the well-read port captain and immigration officer. We discussed the European situation, and Mr. Thompson declared emphatically that England should impose a Carthaginian Peace on Germany.

### **SUBMARINE ATTACK ON ARUBA**

After the German submarine attack on the Lake Tanker fleet in Aruba on February 16, 1942, most of my friends left, particularly those with children. I found it a lonely time, but we had an excellent library at the club run by Harriet Baldwin. The blackouts were uncomfortable in

the days before air conditioning. Tightly shut louvers and doors with heavy draperies were stifling. Lowell Thomas spoke to us from the radio, and the Time magazines brought in by tanker kept us informed. All were happy when the U.S. Air Force came and we could have lights again.

At the time of the submarine attack we were the only refinery making the high octane gasoline required by the Spitfires, and it was important for the Germans to put us out of commission. Seeing those Lake Tankers and the burning oil was a horrible and unforgettable thing, and I'll leave it to others to recount the war years.

The Lee Dew family left after the submarine attack. Lee was our Company baker and kept us supplied with all sorts of excellent bread and pastries. With him gone we were dependent on the outside bakery for our bread. A wild yeast infected that bakery, and the virtually inedible bread produced was an ominous dark purple. Most of us began to bake our own, and the island's limited supply of flour became so full of weevils that it took many siftings to render it usable. The adult weevils weren't hard to separate from the flour, but the larvae were impossible to get out. One lady in the commissary told me that she had sifted her flour 12 times that morning to no avail. She gave up and baked her bread, weevils and all. We all eventually did the same.

### **GERMAN SUBMARINE ACTIVITY**

The war's demand for increased production, and workers leaving to avoid the possibility of being killed or injured in an enemy attack caused a shortage of personnel in the refinery. Other islands were asked to send laborers.

A sailboat from St. Lucia crowded with workmen bound for Aruba was machine-gunned by a surfaced German submarine. Some of the helpless victims were killed outright, and many were wounded during the attack. So involved were the Germans in destroying the ship that they failed to detect approaching U.S. Air Force antisubmarine patrol planes until they were overhead. One dropped a bomb, scored a direct hit, and the submarine blew up.

### **THE ARMY AIR FORCE**

While the Army Air Force was in Aruba, tanker sinkings decreased noticeably, but the submarines always seemed to know when refrigerated tankers were in the area - a testimony to the effectiveness of German agents in the Caribbean. Many of them were sunk. Supplies became scarce, and notices of carcasses from Argentina, or elsewhere were as welcome as news of allied victories in Africa.

## **MARION WILEY**

Red haired Marion Wiley was head nurse at Lago's hospital. She was very grateful to the ex-nurses in the colony who cheerfully offered their services when the hospital was swamped with the casualties from torpedoed ships. Security was at an all-time high. Everyone who passed through the refinery gates was required to stop and show their badges. The one exception was Miss Wiley. She got big smiles and was waved through. Mr. Horigan, the refinery manager, was amused by that. He said they always stopped him; he didn't rate as much with the guards.

It was fun going shopping with her in the village if you weren't in a hurry; she was always being stopped to be told about ex-patients and their families.

Min and Joe Josephson lived across from the old hospital. Min was known as a wonderful cook, and she and Joe used to have bachelors over for special meals. Whenever colony people spoke of popularity, Min's name was the first to be mentioned.

The girls from Fanny's and other whorehouses had parades on Sundays. They dressed in long Japanese silk dresses and walked up and down the main road in San Nicholas until members of what might be called The Pre-moral Majority protested to the management of Lago. The houses were soon closed, and that made less work for me; the incidence of VD declined. One year an amoebic dysentery epidemic struck and the hospital was filled to the halls. I worked day and night to clear enough food handlers for the mess hall, bakery, and commissary. I contracted the disease myself, and had to be hospitalized.

In 1947 Celma Rosborough and I spent a week in the small charming little village of La Mesa, Venezuela, and I wanted Ralph to see it. Ralph and I spent our 1951 local leave in Venezuela. When we were walking about the village we saw a very beautiful garden and paused to look at it through the fence. I told Ralph that it looked more like an American garden than a Venezuelan one. We hadn't seen the elderly man who was working there, and were startled when he emerged to tell us it wasn't as good as his San Franciscan one. He invited us into his dirt floored, yet immaculate cottage, and two friendly well groomed dogs greeted us. A picture of President Truman had the prominent place on his wall. After the usual preliminary conversation, I asked him to excuse my inquisitiveness, but I was curious about why he was living there in La Mesa. He laughed and said that he was a young Finnish sailor who had jumped ship in the United States. He got a job with the construction firm of Chicago Bridge and was sent to Aruba. When that job was completed,

the men were reassigned to another in Venezuela where he eventually retired. His wife had died, but he had children in San Francisco. It wasn't as bleak of a story as I first thought. He told us the U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela was a friend of his and he could return to California any time he wished.

When we retired in 1954 we lived in Oregon and we were taking a dance class in Portland. In conversation with a student, we told him we had worked in Aruba. He asked if we had known Dr. Holland. He said after Dr. Holland left Aruba he worked as a draftsman and was a colleague of his. Dr. Holland talked a lot about Aruba and was very bitter about being let go. He said that he had 'stepped on a snake' and been 'kicked out.'

In 1963, Peggy Raymond, Ralph and I were attending the music festival in Aspen, Colorado. One evening we went to see the showing of a special movie in an auditorium. A short feature before the main attraction showed pictures of an island, not Aruba, but with wind blown trees similar to the 'Divi Divi'. A lady behind us said, 'It looks like Aruba.' I turned and glanced at her, but failed to recognize the woman, so I said, 'Did you say Aruba?' She said, 'Yes, my daughter lived there for a year, God help her'. Ralph turned around and said, 'I lived there for thirty years, God help me.' We all had a good laugh.

This reminds me of a story Louise Harrison, Stewart Harrison's wife, told. During the war she was on vacation in Louisiana. At a party a lady told about the hardships her soldier son suffered on a horrible island called Aruba. Louise said she was amused, but didn't tell the lady she had lived there.

Now we are 'hopi schuma, poco chocolate' (much scum, little chocolate) and a weekly trip to the grocery store is the extent of our travels. We have our books, magazines and television, and we are content in this retirement community with all the other decrepit old codgers.

Maybe someday we will go to a big Aruba reunion, where we will be able to say we have sweated in the tropical heat, drank gasoline flavored water, and smelling the sulfur dioxide vapors rolling in from the refinery. We kind of miss the cockroaches, lizards, aloes and cacti.

### **RALPH'S REFINERY MEMORIES**

Mr. Kane was in charge of the docks, but Ralph knew many of the wharfingers personally. From the early days they called him Mister Wachee. One day a pipe burst on the docks and the wharfingers fled the

scene. Nothing Mr. Kane could do or say would bring them back. Ralph, whose affinity for the workers was widely known, was called. He appealed to them to return to help with the repairs. One of the wharfingers said in Papiamento, 'Mr. Wachee, when pipe breaks, God can help. Me, no.'

Tom Cooke and Don Smith, VIPs from New York were in Aruba on an inspection visit. The day they were to visit Ralph's department he got dressed up - white shirt and tie, good white linen pants. Just before they were due to arrive, word came that a gasket had blown in the Loading Pump House. Ralph rushed over and in his attempts to handle the blow-out his pants were soaked with oil. He took them off and was soaking them in a bucket of kerosene when the visitors walked in. He greeted them in shirt, tie and underpants!

A large steam operated whistle in the Power House sounded at the 7:a.m. start of the work day in the refinery. The same whistle sounded at the 4:p.m. end of the work day.

There was also a smaller, higher pitched, whistle mounted on one of the tall structures in the refinery. This whistle was blown when one of the key personnel was wanted. It served the same purpose that a 'Beeper' does today. A long blast followed by two short blasts might be a pipe fitter was wanted. The person called would dial into the Central Pump house to be informed who was trying to get in touch with him. Everyone who heard it learned who was being called.

If a man gave notice that he was quitting, management's policy was that he be interviewed and persuaded to stay. A man from Montserrat came in to tender his resignation one day. When Ralph asked him why, he said, 'Mr. Watson, here it is: whistle, whistle, whistle. Whistle to come to work, whistle to quit work, whistle, whistle, whistle.' He added with a gleam in his eye, 'Besides, in Montserrat, behind every bush there is a girl.'

Not long before we retired one of the Arubans in his department came to tell him an interesting story. The man's wife was a teacher in a government school. The day before, as a part of her class work, she had the children tell her how they had spent the weekend. A little girl said that she had gone with her parents to the Misa Bu, the old church. The teacher had never heard of a church called Misa Bu although she had been born and lived all her life in Aruba, as had her parents, and grandparents. She questioned the little girl further, and the child offered to take her there. The next Sunday, the teacher and her husband went with the child and were excited by their findings. He told Ralph where

to find the church, and we went there the following Sunday. It was on the rockiest stretch of the north shore - on a high cliff above the sea. There was a narrow winding path part way, but we had to climb over rocks most of the way. The broken walls of a small building awaited us. The height of them ranged from three to six feet, and inside were the remains of a stone altar. On it was a fresh bouquet of flowers. Outside was a graveyard filled with stone mounds. In the later part of the sixteenth century or the beginning of the seventeenth century there was a community living near Savaneta. It was harassed by pirates lying in wait for Spanish convoys from South America. The women in the community were raped and the men enslaved. There was no priest in Aruba and the priest from Curacao rarely came to christen, marry, or bury the people. The community found a new, more secret location near the north shore and built their little chapel on the rocky cliff. Three hundred years of hurricanes and weathering had all but destroyed it, but the descendants of the original community continued to worship in the ruins. The people of Oranjestad and other churches in the north decided to rebuild it. When Ralph told the story to Mr. Horigan (Manager of the Lago Refinery), he sent a company bulldozer to clear a road and carry the material for rebuilding the little chapel. A church had given a Virgin Mary statue, and it was dedicated and renamed. I still like to think of it as the Misa Bu. After the ceremony the elderly Arubans who had known Ralph in the old days clustered around us. One older man with merry eyes said to him, 'Mr. Wachee, bo to bu, bo to gordo.' (Mr. Watson, you are old, you are fat.) Another laughingly pointed to his thumb and Ralph was reminded of the very early days when the man had cut a big slice from his thumb. There was no doctor closer than Oranjestad, and Ralph had picked up the piece of thumb, stuck it on, and wrapped it. The next time Dr. Nunes came, he had him look at it. It was healing nicely, but Dr. Nunes observed that Ralph had put the piece on upside down. His thumb had caused no pain, and the old Aruban had used it all those years.

Ralph knew and liked Louie Lopez. They were roommates in the hospital once, and lived in the same bachelor bungalow, Number 47.

## **RETIREMENT**

Ralph and Beulah retired in September of 1954. They retired after 30 years of service with Lago Oil and Transport Company, Limited. They built a home in West Linn which is near Oregon City, Oregon.

Oregon City was Beulah Watson's home town. At a ceremony in the Journal Building the Netherlands Acting Vice Council, Mr. R. M. Crommelin presented Ralph The Order of the Orange Nassau. This medal was presented in the name of Queen Juliana of the Netherlands.



The body of the medal is a blue Maltese cross set in gold and silver laurel and carrying the legend of the order "May God Be with Us". To the Netherlands it is the equivalent of the Order of the Knight of the Garter in England.

Ralph had previously received his American Citizenship granted for "...serving American interests abroad (during World War II)"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*Beulah died of a massive heart attack on October 5, 1984. Ralph, who had been ill for some time, succumbed to complications on October the sixth.*

## **The William Otto Weber Story**

### **GOING TO ARUBA**

I found out about the position with Lago from Brown Instrument Company. Brown had been taken over by Honeywell and I was part of the R & D involved in the development of the class 15 potentiometer. At the same time I was asked to handle a special group of instrumentation for a show job that had to go to Tulsa, Oklahoma. It was during this activity that I became acquainted with two fellows who were receiving special training to go to work in Aruba at Lago Oil and Transport Company. One of them was Bill White. I was impressed when I heard they were going to the Dutch West Indies. I could just see that they were going down there to sit under palm trees, have beautiful girls bring drinks to them, and have a wonderful time while they thought about work. As it turned out, I did more looking into the situation, and found you had to write to the overseas personnel in New York. The Personnel Manager was O. H. Shelton. My father told me my letter was too long. I had written two and a half pages. I told him the man didn't know me, and I thought I should give him a little background. I thought I was quite knowledgeable in instrumentation at the time, having taken the training course at Brown. That was the time when the first pneumatic transmitters and receivers had come out. I had to pass the physical. The strange part about that was the doctor was the same man I met when I came back to Honeywell many years later to get another physical to rejoin the company. I passed and soon I was on my way to Aruba.

In those days, the only way to get there was by boat, and I came on the *S/S Esso Aruba*. It was square-nosed, and had the triple expansion steam engine. We were 7 1/2 days from Bayonne to Aruba. My first glance at Aruba made me think it was a pioneer operation. As we rounded the point, I noticed the activity at the refinery. I was slightly disappointed that I was not in on the start of the operation.

When I arrived I was put up in Bachelor's Quarters No. 1. When I entered my assigned room I decided I needed a shower and wash my hair. All a sudden my hair turned to steel. I thought I was a goner for sure. I was put wise to the fact that the shower water was brackish and you had to carry fresh water from the outside spigot. There was a spigot on the upper and on the lower floor. You filled a bucket with the fresh water and dumped it over your head and everything was all right.

I roomed with a married man who was missing his family

considerably. He used to go out every night with his friends and get grossly drunk. He came home and I had to put up with that.

One night, one of his friends came around to put ice in our beds. It was in the wee hours of the morning and I didn't care too much for this. The guy didn't realize I was awake because he was slightly inebriated, so I snuck up on him and jumped on his back. He got scared and went charging out of the room, and since we were on the second floor, I darned near went over the banister. I told him never to come into our room again. He said I had scared the living daylights out of him and he'd nearly had a heart attack.

The way I solved the problem with the roommate was going out with him at night and seeing he didn't get so inebriated and got home safely. He missed his family so much he didn't stay long.

I didn't go to work right away, because the personnel manager's secretary, a woman by the name of Elizabeth Dickey, said he wouldn't be coming in for a week. The procedure was you had to get the okay from the personnel manager to go to work. The Instrument Department General Foreman, Paul Jensen, was unhappy about it, and tried to indicate it was my fault. I said it wasn't. The Assistant General Foreman, Mr. E. J. Hillstead, who we used to refer to as Mr. Bedstead, came around and asked me if I knew anything about the pneumatic instrumentation in the shop. Being honest with him, I said I knew a little. I realize it wasn't too hard to analyze the situation and calibrate the instrument. He thought since I had come from Brown Instruments, I should know everything about everything, and that sunk my points with him. He said something about ordering a dial for some precision indicator and hadn't received the right equipment. Being very honest, I asked if he used the right part number. He acted as if the part number wasn't too important. I looked at the part and the part book, and found he had ordered the wrong dial. There again, I got off to a poor start with Mr. Hillstead.

My first job was to help calculate orifice plates. Stan Chapman, Reede Holley, Jim Lopez, and I were involved with that. We used a three foot slide rule.

I arrived in Aruba in 1938. I stayed until 1952. The two Featherston boys were Robert and Richard, I think. Charline was the oldest.

Featherston was my ex-father-in-law. I divorced Charline in Aruba, and she left with the little boy we had. I agreed in the court that she

could take the child and raise him. She has made no attempt to contact me so as far as I am concerned, the issue is closed.

I met my present wife, Regina, while I was on vacation in Philadelphia. I found myself with time on my hands since all my friends were working. I was passing an airport, and decided to take up flying and managed to get a license, and at the same time, met my present wife. We agreed that if things worked out in Aruba, we would then get married. I wanted to make sure I could get a house in Aruba after we got back from that vacation. It was funny, when I sent her the letter saying things were okay, she was walking her father down the aisle for the second time. Her mother had died and he had decided to remarry her mother's best girlfriend. Everybody wondered why she was smiling and so happy. They didn't know she was leaving shortly to get married in Aruba. We're still doing very well. Unfortunately, Jean is having a bout with cancer, but we believe we have the thing licked. The doctor says everything looks pretty clear now, and her chemotherapy treatments are stretched out to every five weeks instead of four weeks. We hope in the near future, she will be able to get completely off the treatments. The treatments are very rough, but Jean has taken them in stride. She has lost all her hair, and I have kidded her that I am going to buy her a blond, a red wig so we can go out and live it up. You can see things can be bad, but yet they can be funny too.

Davidson brings up an interesting subject. He was dating almost every datable girl on the island along with me when we were single. He approached them with the idea of marriage, and every one of them turned him down. It was then that I asked my present wife to come down and married. About that time Jensen came to me and asked me to make a hurried up trip to go to Venezuela. I said, gee whiz, I just got married and I don't want to go away for a month or two. Why not send somebody else, and give them a chance? They sent Davidson, and that's where he met his wife, who was a nurse in the operating room. He popped the question, and they got married. I have always wondered if I had taken his place, would he have gotten married.

Davidson was a great outdoorsman. During the war, I used to wait for him to come in and relieve me on the shift. Time and again, I'd get a call from some P.T. boat that Davidson was riding around on. They would always say it was unfortunate, but that they couldn't get Davidson in time to make his shift because they had spotted a submarine and they were after it. Davidson would come in an hour or so later. I would have taken his shift and be waiting for him to come in and relieve me.

As I have said, he was a great outdoorsman. Dottie was a person who was afraid of drafts, took medicine for something or other, and was somewhat of a hypochondriac. He wound up selling his sailboat. His famous Packard was left to rot and rust. I heard the stories of how Davidson got married and how he took her down to the Bachelor Quarters to see his room. His sitting room was set up all nice. That was where he did most of his entertaining. You could come in, sit down and have a cold drink. She wanted to see the bedroom. They went in and she saw boxes of empty Coke bottles, 40 pairs of socks that needed mending, 12 pairs of shoes that were in bad shape, he had the sail from his sailboat lying in there among all the junk. There was one little path that lead over to the bed. Dottie got a fright, because she was a very precise person as far as taking care of the home was concerned. I heard the maids complain that she made them take all the books off the bookshelves and dust them every week. My maid was approached by Dottie to work for her, and she said no even though Dottie offered more money. They found a home on the point, the old Law place. Dottie wanted white rugs and furniture. There was so much white around, that poor old Davidson practically had to strip at the front door. She wouldn't let him in with all his dirty clothes on. When we went to her house for dinner one time, she had two roasts. One was well done, and the other was medium rare. You could get almost any kind of a drink in their house although neither of them drank much.

Ed Clevely was another roommate of mine. He was interested in photography and radio equipment. I had got together with him when he was a bachelor. For two years, he and I had a building over near the old *sheep sheds*, where we had a photographic business.

We were able to print 400 pictures a night. Those were contact prints. We did enlarging. Almost everyone in Aruba had a good camera. There was a store in San Nicholas that had good cameras, contacts and Leicas. We spend quite some time working on Lago employees' work. We even had a chance to bid on a special manual that Lago wanted to put together. It was to show the various departments where a person would work, the types of transportation, the living quarters, and the arrangements for food. Cleve and I bid on it, but we didn't get it. We did get a contract to make pictures of asphalt road surfaces to use as advertising material to sell their asphalt plant product.

We had a good time. One time I had the idea we should increase our production. I went down to the tin shop and had them make me three tanks long enough to handle complete rolls of 35 mm film. One was developer, one was fixer, and the other was the hardener. I was told that

any steel coming in contact with the steel or the film would be corroded and warned them to take special precautions. I painted the tanks with special paint, but the long tanks were almost impossible to coat the metal entirely. I put the solutions in them, put in fourteen rolls of film. We always did a good job, but they turned out half developed, undeveloped, and they were a mess. Cleve always worked in the shop with me, and he did all the figuring on all the chemical solutions. He marveled at all the answers I had for the people whose photos didn't turn out. I asked them if they took the lens covers off, if they had the right exposure. That time, I gave them another roll of film and offered to develop it free of charge. They had some new film at that time, and I got permission from people who had taken pictures of the Queen's celebration to use their film, and I made the pictures available to those whose pictures had been messed up. Everybody was happy. I finally sold the business to a fellow in the construction business. That was when we were changing the high pressure units and increasing their throughput. This one young fellow saw how we were doing the work, and he said he had always wanted to get into the business and wanted to learn about it. We sold him the equipment and got out of the business. It was about that time the war started. The Aruba Trading Company came to us and asked us if we would do the exclusive development of their pictures for 24 hours. If we did that, they would buy us a building, and provide us with new equipment from Germany. This included the new earthenware tanks, and automatic equipment. Because of the war, the shortage of equipment from Germany made the whole deal go up in smoke.

Cleve and I bought a boat built by one of the shipyard workers, a nice 28 foot motor launch with a 15 foot beam. It was a nice fishing craft. The day I went to pick it up, the fellows from the Yacht Club told me to take Chico along. He was one of the guys who hung around the club. He was so ragged and dirty, I told them I wouldn't let him on my boat for fear he would contaminate it. They said I should take him along because he knew all the shoals, reefs and so forth. I took him with me. On the way back, I got sea sick and Chico had to run the boat. Before long, there was a lot of smoke in the cabin, and Chico came to me. He said he thought the boat was on fire. I told him to let it burn. He said, no, he had to put it out. I was half dead and had turned three different colors from the sea sickness. He took up part of the deck, and found that the shipyard joker had put the water injection at the stern instead of the front of the boat. This meant that the hot exhaust pipe was lying on the ribs of the boat. The ribs had charred and almost caught fire. We doused the hot pipe with buckets of sea water to keep any thing from burning. The boat had to be put on the marine railway and the exhaust had to be

changed around. I finally put in brass pipe, and remodeled the injection and everything worked out fine. That boat was a poor investment. It had wide planks and it leaked like a sieve. We tried everything, even putting tar on the inside of the hull. One day I had it up on the dry dock and some guy came down to look at it. He asked if I wanted to sell it, and I told him I would. We talked about price, and he gave me a check. The last I saw of that boat, it had broke loose from its mooring, gone onto the rocks and bounced around on them, and it got a couple of holes poked in it. It was up on Rodger's Beach, sand had come in the stern where it was busted out, and the whole cabin was full of sand. We went down with axes and helped them chop it up. That was the last of that boat.

Fishing was good in Aruba. We used feathered lures and did much trolling. It took me a while to get my sea legs. I was showing it to one of my friends one day while we were still in the lagoon. I was just standing on the boat, and it wasn't even moving. I got sea sick.

The kind of fish we caught was tuna, barracuda, marlin, sail fish, dolphin, and jack fish. Most of the stuff was caught trolling. The seven foot sailfish I caught was while I was trolling. We went to Oranjestad and went out with the fishing fleet. They were operating in 100 feet of water and we had to use heavy sash weights to hold the rig on the bottom.

I've been back to Aruba several times since. One time we had a 45 pound tuna, and it took me two hours to get him in. That was a lot of fish.

Up until the time I left, Cleve and I got involved in radio repair work. I had a four bedroom house on the main road (they've since torn it down). I put in a nice garage and a nice workbench. Cleve mentioned he was interested in radios and he told me he had bought a number of Heathkits - test kits for testing radios. I got interested and built a couple of them. I felt that I should know more about electronics because we had bought Honeywell electronic potentiometers. You know the problems we had teaching the natives the fundamentals of instrumentation. They were talking about grid bias and c bias all over the plant. I thought there wasn't anything to this radio business. After I got into it, I found that they didn't know what they were talking about. They were just making noise.

Cleve and I formulated a radio repair business. We had a hundred tubes, thousands of resistors; we did much work for a place in town that had since fallen on hard times. We had so many radios I had to put shelves on both sides of my garage. We had a system whereby we could

fix four or five radios a night. We'd start out by checking all the tubes. Of course if the rectifier tube was shot, we'd look at the filters. If they were okay, we did a general signal check. If it didn't, we started checking voltages on the bases of the tubes. We managed to eliminate all the problems. In those days, the paper condensers leaked like sieves. Our most valuable instrument was the condenser checker. The moisture from the sea ruined many sets in short order. We got quite a reputation. Anytime I went to one of social affairs, I would find myself involved in coming back to the house and getting one of my amplifiers to replace one they had that didn't work. The Marine Department invited me to a big dance. The Scottish men and English men there had to offer me a scotch and soda, and then we'd had to have another. Before you knew it, I couldn't even find the machine they wanted fixed. After that, I insisted in looking at the machine before we did any drinking.

I guess I competed with the instrument shop on some of the sound projectors that were around the camp. We tried to help.

Larry Engelking left Aruba because one of his children was having trouble with allergies. They took the child up to an institute and found he was allergic to dairy products. He had to give him special care and diet, so Larry agreed to quit his job and stay there. He was working for a small refinery as both chief engineer and purchasing agent. Larry had quite a collection of old cars. I was in there one time when we worked for Honeywell (he was one of our salesmen) and we had talked about buying a control panel for a unit, and the salesman mentioned Larry's name. He said he remembered Larry saying something about remembering Bill Weber from Aruba. I walked into the office and here is old Larry bent over something working on it. I said, "Okay Larry, let's get off your \_\_\_ and get back to work." He got up and recognized me. I told him I wanted to talk to him about the panel, and he said I had to come home with him to see his family. He started to take me out the door, and I said just wait a minute, I wanted to see about the order. He told the man to take care of my order. We went back to his home and saw his family. Patsy was his wife's name.

Talking about Leo having a couple of strokes, it's funny because I have had one myself. I had it during the time I was at Honeywell. I had had high blood pressure and I wasn't taking good care of myself, burning the candle at both ends. I was on the road so much, I only saw my wife on weekends. One time I was on my way to Canada to make a presentation and I started feeling kind of funny. I didn't know what it was, so I went to lunch. I lay down, and when I got up, I took a step and fell on the floor. My left side just went out. I was out of business for six



months, but I made a fast comeback. I still walk with a funny limp. It never did come back completely.

Next I went to New York at the invitation of Fred Rich who came down to Aruba when I was still there. He was interested in our training program. He was one of the training engineers for Aramco in New York. Fred took me right to the chief engineer and they offered me a job with a salary I couldn't turn down. I called the wife and told her I would look for a place for us in New Jersey. I went home with one of the engineers and got a house the next day and I went to work for Aramco. That was a good deal. I had 14 years of service with Lago, and Lago was owned by the same company that had 30% interest in Aramco. My 14 years of service transferred to Aramco. I got both Lago and Aramco benefits.

#### **WORK AFTER ARUBA**

I had worked for about a year in the New York office, writing all their purchasing requirements and produced a design manual for them to install equipment in the field. Next we went to Saudi Arabia.

#### **LIFE IN THE COLONY**

The choir was quite good. The choirmaster was also the minister, Don Evans, and he really had a good choir. Reynolds and Hagerty were in the choir, Carter Miller played the organ, and I did solo work. *Oh Holy Night* was my big deal on Christmas. I think I sang it the best at one Christmas when I was half drunk. One time I had been at the church to practice the solo and I had left it to go to the club. While I was sitting across the dance floor in the old club, somebody said, throw me your glass. Across the floor, somebody threw one of those old beer mugs and it hit me on the head. I was wearing a white shirt and slacks, and it cut me to the bone. Blood was all down my back and I was a mess. The guy who did the throwing came over and said, "What have I done." I told him the heck with what he'd done; I needed to get to the hospital to get sewed up. Doc Brace had been in the club only 15 minutes before I had been hit and he had gone to the hospital from there. When I got there, he wanted to know what had happened. To keep the guy who threw the glass from getting fired, I said I didn't know who did it. They had to cut part of my hair away and stitch me up. That was when I wore a Panama hat. I looked like a bloomin' monk with the top of my head shaved off. I got the guy who did it to take me downtown and buy me a complete new outfit. In those days you could get one for five bucks. I used to have two of them. The wife and I used to go to the club dances and halfway during the dance, I had to go home and shower up and change outfits because I would sweat the other one to death. Those club dances were something. They started with a cocktail party at your house, and you as

the host would have to make the arrangements to get the table. The whole gang would go to the club with their own bottles. The club provided the ice and fixings. Lou (Walsons) was the inspector for Navy tankers. His wife was a prissy thing who didn't want to act like she liked to drink in front of the minister. Don Evans was there with his wife. Both of them were pretty good dancers. All Don did was smoke cigars. He would take a Coke, but never did any drinking. He was a heck of a good minister; he always gave you a good message. Lou's wife was careful what she said and did. She wouldn't even let me hold her close in dancing. Everything went fine until Lou got drunk. He had been drinking on the ships, and he was drinking heavily at the club. She got upset with him, and decided to dance close and drink. It was crazy. Sometimes the dances ended up in a fight, throwing bottles around. My last trip to the reunion a year ago, the club was still the same.

During the opening of the club they were serving free drinks to employees. They were frying up steaks in the concession area. The Chinaman running the concession came to us and said there was no gas. We went to the refinery and got 12 filled propane tanks and hooked them up for him. An hour later, he came to us and got us to go back into the kitchen. He showed us gas coming out of the electrical receptacles. We opened up the cabinet and found the contractors had piped the gas line into the conduit. If somebody had lit a cigarette, the whole club would have gone up. We had to shut the kitchen down and tell people to quit smoking for a while. We blew air through the conduits to get the gas out.

### **THE LA SALLE**

I was sitting beside a guy who was going into the army the next week, and he had a LaSalle sitting outside at the curb. It was in good shape except for the top. I told him to get a new top, and come over to my house just before he left for the army, and I would give him a check. I had it completely overhauled, all new plugs, reworked the carburetor, new starter. It was during the war, and I was only allowed five gallons per month by the quota system. I had Jewish friends in the oil business and I brought a bunch of silk stockings from Aruba. I traded them for gasoline. The day I took my car over to Bayonne, I had it filled. I had truck stamps which were good for 20 gallons. I saw the guys handling the car and I bribed them with the 20 gallons of gasoline in the LaSalle's tank. I took that Chrysler New Yorker I bought from Viana to the States. They brought it up on the *S/S Esso Aruba*, and they had to load it nose first because it couldn't be loaded horizontally. Later when they leveled it out, they about chopped off the front of my car. The lights, the

fenders, the grill, and the bumper were destroyed. I got a call from Personnel and they said they would take care of it in Bayonne. They said they would have it ready by 5:00 p.m. and I could come over and get it at that time. I saw the service manager sitting with his head in his hands looking very dejected. He told me I wouldn't believe him when he told me what was happening. The guy took it out for a test run and he stopped for a beer. He didn't look where he was going, and he backed into the truck. The whole thing was messed up. The car never worked very well. There was always something wrong with it. I used to drive it to New York, and out of the eight cylinders, four would have to be replaced. I sold the thing in New York and took a train home. Gasoline used to be 30 octane when it should have been 90 octane and you can imagine the damage it did.

We used to have a quartet made of Reynolds, Miller, myself, and one other guy. We used to sing for the company on occasions, and we did some barbershop quartet singing. I do have a picture of the four of us.

I had gone to Carapito, Venezuela on one of my trips and I was supposed to be a vacation relief for the so called engineer over there. This guy had been hired as an electrician. He had hooked up all the motors in the machine ship in series. Things didn't work too well. They decided he wasn't an electrician, so they put him to learning how to operate the crane. His biggest forte in life was operating a crane. They sent him to the States to get training, and while he was showing me around, I couldn't help but noticing all the controls were a mess. This guy tells me all I needed to do was get an easy chair and sit down. There wasn't much to do. He left one day, and for the fun of it, I pulled a chair into the control room. Doc Ramsey was one of the operators in the units in Aruba and he was transferred to Venezuela. He was a free spoken nut. I was rocking away, and he kept watching me. Finally he asked me when I was going to go to work. I told him that the guy I replaced told me that there wasn't anything to do. I put the chair away and went to work anyway. That was a crazy place to work. One day I took out a valve on the overhead part of the still. In the shop, I rebuilt it so I would have a nice tight shut off. I asked the operating people when they were going to bring the unit up. They said, sometime tomorrow. I said, great. I left the valve in the shop and went back to the quarters and cleaned up. I was wearing a nice shark skin suit in the club having a beer, minding my own business, and here comes the shift foreman. He asked me where the valve was. I said I had been told the unit was supposed to be put on line the next day. He told me they decided to do it that night. I found

Ramsey and asked him where the standby pipe fitter was. He asked me if I thought I was in Aruba. They didn't have any. He said I was the pipefitter. It was a two inch flanged valve and I told him I wasn't putting it in. He said he didn't know what was going to be done, but he would help me install it. We did, and the next day I talked to Charlie and told him the next shut down or start up they were going to have standby pipefitters and electricians. That was the last pipefitting I was going to do. It wasn't safe, we didn't have the right tools, and we could have done ourselves some damage as well as the equipment.

William Gillis was one of my roommates. He was quite a character. He was Scottish by birth and he was a sponger. Nobody wanted him as a roommate and he was stuck up in Lago Heights. I asked him to come and room with me. Old Scottie and I were working over at the Hydro Plant and we were using some of those old Brown circular case instruments with the three wire inductance coil. You had to give them a mechanical balance and an electrical balance. Scottie didn't know a damn thing about this and I taught him. He got to where he could calibrate the instruments. Old man Jensen showed up and asked Gillis what he was doing. Gillis started telling Jensen a real snow job, telling him how to adjust the instruments and calibrate them. Jensen came over to me and started telling me what a bright young man and how far he could go. He said Gillis needed a better job. I got Scottie aside later and told him since he didn't give me any credit for teaching him, the next time he didn't know how to do something, he was on his own.

When Gillis was my roommate, one time during Christmas, I'd gone to town and bought a bunch of booze to celebrate with the fellows in the courts. I was coming back from the club one night and I heard some singing and going on. I thought somebody was having a hell of a good party. The closer I got to the Quarters, the more I thought it was coming from my room. I got there and saw Gillis had brought all his friends and they were drinking my liquor. They were telling me what a wonderful guy he was, and how nice it was of him to give them all this liquor to drink and what a nice time they were having. I didn't say too much and Gillis was kind of sheepish about the whole thing. When the party was over and everybody had left, I told him we were going downtown and he was going with me and we were going to buy a whole new stock of stuff on his account. He almost died. He thought that was terrible. I think he was the one who worked for the (pony) transfer to the Power Department, and he was the one who got caught stealing food from the lower frozen food locker at the part of cold storage near the Power Plant. They had warned everybody that they found that stuff was taking out of

the area and they would have guards watching. I think Gillis was the one who came out with two bags of frozen food. They turned the lights on and there he stood with the two bags of food. They packed him and had him out that same night and that was the end of him.

#### **POST SCRIPT**

I saw George Echelson in Houston working for the Pullman Company as an instrument engineer. When I left Aruba, I became an instrument engineer in Aramco, and I spent some time in college at Drexel.

Reede Holly never seemed to age, he always looked the same. I just couldn't believe he had died. I heard he wasn't doing too well.

Echelson is the same old B.S. he always was. He puts on a big show. He and his wife are still together, but everything seems to be okay.

R.D. Mayer was the one who came to Aruba with L.D. White. I saw both of them in Brown Instrument Company when I decided to come myself. Charlie Casson and Bob Bonham and I had a plane at the airport. Bob and I used to fly to Venezuela to see Zucchini. Zucchini got set up good. He's got several stores set up by the government that sell meat to the Venezuelans at a fixed price. He owns several big apartment buildings, and is a millionaire. He was chased out of Aruba when the war started because he was Italian and supporting the Germans.

The German tankers that came to Aruba during the war with Italian crews to load oil were denied their cargo. It turned out that they were loaded oil to take back to England because the English had taken the women and children out of Ethiopia after Ethiopia began to get the upper hand on the Italians, and the English agreed to take the women and children back to Italy while the men stayed to fight the Ethiopians. As it turned out, most of the men were killed. Their favorite trick was to make them jump from the cliffs to the valleys below and they'd pour gasoline on the bodies and burn them. A few might have escaped, because when I was Arabia, I got involved in an Ethiopian coffee plantation with 10,000 acres, and I had to design the coffee processing plant. We bought most of the equipment from England. I have a little stock in it. The guys who were running it were traffic managers for Aramco and I didn't trust them too much.

Cunningham couldn't stand being away from his wife during the war, so he went back to the States and worked for Esso. He came back and got a better job. We all resented that to some degree. Bill (Weiner)

and I were friendly. He had an old car that he kept in good shape. He and I went out with the girls together and had a good time.

George Janson I met at the last reunion. His wife had died, but his sons were with him, and they were doing well.

I met Fryback's brother working for Honeywell in Boston. He looks like him. He was kind of hard to deal with when he was my foreman. He had a little game he had with me of trying to find something wrong with the equipment. One time he ran wildly around until he came up to me with a smile. He said my job wasn't perfect and I asked him what was wrong. He pointed to a pressure gauge that was turned the wrong way. I said, to hell with it, I don't care. I'm going to leave it that way. That's how fussy he was.

Hughes lived next door for Fryback (Bungalow 303). I had had the house originally. I had a rowboat down at the dock that I wanted to get serviced one night, and I loaded it into the company truck. Some natives helped me unload it and put it on a rack so I could scrape and paint it in my yard. This was about three in the morning, and I couldn't help but notice Hughes looking through the louvers, watching what was going on. The next morning, Hughes came into the office and said, "Being one of the junior executives in the organization, I couldn't help but notice you using company equipment and taking company time to do personal things." I said, "Yeah, so? I saw you looking through the louvers." He said he was going to have to talk to the old man about that. I allowed as to how it was all right with me, and I told him that if he was having a party on the 4:00 to 12:00 shift and needed a fan or some ice, not to bother calling me up. Those services wouldn't be available for him. He left disgruntled, and Janson came in after a while. He asked me how it was going, and I told him everything was okay except for one problem I wanted to discuss with him so he wouldn't be surprised. I told him I took a few minutes the night before to take my boat to my house and set it up in my yard so I could service it. If Hughes called and said something about it, Janson wouldn't be surprised. I asked him if he minded, and he said he didn't care what I did with my time as long as the refinery ran properly, and nobody complained.

It got to be quite a racket. When I worked the 12:00 to 8:00 shift, I used to make the rounds of the stills and talk to each of the operators and tell them that if anything went wrong, they had the telephone number to call me. I would check out all the men and check out all the jobs to see that they had the right equipment. I would go back to the shop, close it up, throw a bunch of rags on the floor, and lay down to sleep. One time I

slept until morning. Luckily I had the shop locked up, and I hear them banging on the doors to try to get in.

I had smashed up the company truck and I promised the guys a new truck. We finally got the new truck, and of course Jensen was quite concerned. He made everybody check and recheck the truck. When you turned the truck over from one shift to another, you were supposed to inspect the truck first, and sign off on it. When Davidson was on the shift before me, I took his word when he said the truck was okay. I was driving the truck around the refinery, and when it got daylight, I was stopped somewhere and I noticed the upper right hand corner of the cardboard liner of the roof looked as if it had been beaten with a hammer. I looked at the top and saw it had creases in it and looked like it had been touched up with black paint. It looked like a mess. There had been in some kind of accident and thought Davidson had had one and didn't tell me. The old man came in and I had to tell him. He was ready to take me out and shoot me. Here it was a new car and I already had it banged up. I told him I didn't do it. He said I had signed off on it when Davidson turned it over to me, and it must have been okay, or I wouldn't have signed off. I got a hold of Davidson, and asked him if he had had an accident. He said he didn't have any trouble. I told him I was going to get some time off again on that deal. We started checking around and found a native boy in the stockroom decided to take the truck for a ride when Davidson had it. He drove it around the building, and somehow he got too close to the casement windows we had around the shop, and creased the top of the truck. He got a hammer, straightened it out and started painting it. He didn't say anything to Davidson, and Davidson didn't know about it. Once we figured it out, we made him tell Jensen.

The amount of work and experience, both in the Training Division, as well as the actual work in the plant, has stood me very well. You'd be surprised how many people are looking for a chance to get hands on experience in instrumentation. I have been working with hospitals. They have been getting equipment with exotic controls, and they don't have the least idea how to handle it. I've gotten pretty heavy into the distributor control systems with the CRTs and so forth. I just signed a contract with Fisher and Porter to do some teaching for them. Their business has fallen off and I'm waiting to see what they are going to do about it.

In the meantime, I'm learning how to be retired and enjoy myself. I'm getting the wife to where she's feeling good.

I had old Romney working with me in the blackout, and he was going to go over the fence to the Oxy Plant without telling me. He came back and told me, "That man going to shoot me. They're going to kill me." I told him I would take him over to the plant in the pickup.

I remember the *S/S Esso Bolivar*. I saw that it was given back to the Germans because nobody had drawings of how the pipes were run. I saw the Germans come into Sidon to pick up a load of oil. My wife and I had come over on the *Esso Raleigh*, a naval tanker. Shortly after we were married, I wanted to have a fast trip home because the wife was pregnant. It was supposed to run four days, but we ran into a hurricane and it took seven and a half days instead of four to get into Bayonne. We had to eat aft with the crew on that shift. I ate breakfast six times one morning. Every time I threw up, I went back and ate again. The chef finally told me I should give up.

I enjoyed the tankers.





## **The William Ruben White Story**

### **LIFE BEFORE ARUBA**

I never liked the name Ruben and my mother didn't want me to be called Bill so I was called Ruben from the day I was born. I've gotten so now I don't mind it so much any more.

I was born in Snyder, Texas, which is about 70 miles west of Abilene, on December 19, 1906. My father's name was Edward Harris White and my mother's maiden name was Belle Thompson. She was from that area also. At that time you could be from a place and not live in a town. There might not be a town in 50 miles. In fact Snyder was about 50 miles from where I was born. My father was a Baptist preacher and a school teacher. At that time he was on a ranch north of Snyder. About all they had out there were cows and rattlesnakes. We had our experiences with both of them at one time or another.

One of my earliest memories from out there was of a bull in a herd and my mother was deathly afraid of that bull. I don't think there was anything to keep him out of the yard or any other place. I do remember the bull, but I don't remember any adventures with him. During my early years we moved a lot and I lived all over Texas. I think of Wichita Falls, in North Texas as more like my home.

When we left Snyder we went to Abilene because my Dad wanted to go to School. Simmons College was there. It is Hardin-Simmons University now. We moved over there. Well we were several other places in the meantime. I had one brother and one sister then.

My sister's name was Hazel and she was in Aruba. She married Otto Goodwin. Hazel died two years ago. Otto died about four months later. They went pretty close together. Otto was not related to Ward or Henry Goodwin. He was in the Electric Department and then became a Zone Supervisor in the Mechanical Department. He went down there in about 1936 I guess.

My mother died when I was 9 years old. We lived in Kerns, Texas then. Not too long after my mother died my father married again. He married a widow who had six children. There were three girls older than I and one younger and two boys that were younger than I. My Dad tried to go into "dry land farming" close to McGargle, Texas. Dry land farmers mostly raised cotton. The farm had to be so constructed that it would save every drop of water that fell. But they made cotton crops.

They didn't make them too often. We didn't know how to irrigate then but it is now irrigated. At that time it wasn't. It was really cattle country, but there was some farming.

My father got a farm and put in a crop of cotton, but we didn't get enough rain. He soon saw that it was going to burn up. So he loaded us all in a covered wagon and we headed east. There weren't many automobiles then. This was probably in 1915 because I hadn't reached my 10th birthday yet. There weren't any so called "Highways" in that part of the country. Back east you did find them. We had to "feel" our way; using Ranch roads and inquiring how to get from here to there. And we stopped wherever we found water in the late afternoon. Often we didn't, but if we did we would spend the night there.

I recall that we kids slept on the ground on "pallets", blankets and quilts, and my father and my step-mother slept in the wagon. My father would put a lariat rope around the whole "bedding area" at night. It was his theory that kept the snakes out. I don't know how true it was. I had heard it often at that time. I haven't heard it much since then. Well I never woke up with a snake in my bed! So I had to think that must be a pretty good idea!

We traveled across Texas to Oklahoma around Ardmore. That isn't far from the Red River, the Texas/Oklahoma boundary. The Red River was usually dry. There weren't any bridges but there were a number of roads that crossed the river. There we found timber and woods and obviously there was rainfall and lots of farming. As we went on into Oklahoma over about 30 miles of trail, which was 2-1/2 days to us in that wagon with the route we followed then and carrying the load we had incurred. I remember that trip very distinctly. We kids didn't ride much in the wagon; we could walk as fast as that team of mules could pull that wagon. We had a team of mules named Kit and Dot. They were small mules, but good stock. At that time I was in the third grade I believe. We were there a year and a half. Then Dad got another school and we moved away from there. We didn't move far as you look at it now, but it was far then.

I finished High School in the town of Haworth down in the Southeast corner of Oklahoma. I made an effort to go through there about 15 years ago. It was not the Haworth that I once knew. The little railroad had folded up. There had once been a pretty nice little town there with two banks and several what we called grocery stores. Those would be supermarkets today, but they were small stores then. When we went back through there the last time there was no bank; the railroad was

not there anymore. I didn't see a store of any kind. I saw one filling station. The High School where I had finished had been a two story building. It was called a Consolidated School in those days. A bus traveled around and brought kids to school. The top story of the building was gone. The school yard was fenced in and much smaller than when I had graduated. Well we knew we wouldn't know anyone there. We hadn't actually lived there. We lived 6 miles away. They only had a 2 year High School there so I had to come to Haworth to finish.

After I had graduated from High School my dad was hired as the principal of a Consolidated School in a little town called Arden just across the line in Arkansas. So we moved there and put in a crop of cotton. It was on the same railroad that went through Haworth, but it's not there any more.

This was the year after I had finished High School. I didn't stick around to harvest the crop because I managed to get hold of enough dollars to go to the Chillicothe Business College in Chillicothe, Missouri a good long ways from there. It was up in the northeast corner of Missouri almost. I took Bookkeeping and Stenography there and graduated in 1925. This was a "calling" which could get you a job. I only went one year for this. The College was a four year college if you majored in other courses. In those days it was important to get enough education and get you a job. That's what I did. After receiving my High School Diploma I found a job in St. Louis. However about that time a Law firm in Ashnow, which wasn't far from where my people lived, offered me a job there. So I left St. Louis and went down there.

I didn't stay there very long because the job didn't look very promising. So I left there and went to Wichita Falls, Texas where I got a job working for the Ford dealer there. He was a well known man in those days. He had the agency there and an agency in nearby Iowa Park and I think he had another agency in Henrietta, Oklahoma. I worked there about a year and was offered this job with the Prairie Oil and Gas Company out in Borger, Texas. The "Boom" was on it looked a lot more exciting and work where you might get along faster. So I left and went there. The Prairie Oil and Gas Company was later taken over by The Sinclair Oil & Gas Company.

Times were getting tough there in 1929. Borger is about 50 miles from Amarillo, Texas and at the time was a rough oil field boom town. In fact it was almost lawless and the "law" we had there were "wanted" men from other parts of the country, most of them. Eventually the Governor, Dan Moody, of Texas sent the National Guard in there and put

the place under Martial Law and then sent the Rangers in there to take over all of the law enforcement positions and hold an election. Otherwise you couldn't have gotten a fair election.

I worked for the Prairie Oil and Gas Company for three years and then the depression swept down on everything and the oil business was particularly hard hit with that you know. Many people don't know that now, but it was.

### **APPLYING TO GO TO ARUBA**

When 1929 came along I had sorta got the feel of things and it was fairly obvious to me times were going to become tougher. I hadn't lost my job as yet, but it looked like it wouldn't be long. My boss, the warehouse foreman, got a letter from a friend of his who had been offered a job on this place called Aruba. Nobody had ever heard of it. You couldn't find it on a map, at that time. He had decided that he didn't want to leave the country and he sent this letter down to my boss and my boss showed it to me and I got the address. It was 122 East 42nd Street, New York, New York.

And I wrote and told them I'd like to go. I said if you'll offer me anything at all reasonable I'll go. And I told them who I was and the things you write in a letter of Application. In a very short time I got a letter back with a Contract in it. The letter was from O. H. Shelton and they offered a Stenographer's job. I guess they didn't have any Stenographers down there at this time. They offered me \$150 month plus my board, room, laundry, and medical expenses. At the time I was making \$140 month plus my room but that was it. As it turned out that job with the Prairie Oil & Gas Company didn't last much longer after I left.

So I wound up going to Aruba in February 1930. We sailed from Providence, Rhode Island on the tanker the *F. H. Wickett*. It took us eight days to make the trip from New York down to Aruba. There was another passenger on the ship; I had met him in New York. We were both there at the same time getting ready to go. And he was a most interesting individual to me. His name was Charles Wynne. He was a Steam Hammer operator from Tulsa, Oklahoma. He was a big man. He confessed to me that he was going down for three years (two contracts in one) and save enough money to buy a chicken farm back in Oklahoma. He was seasick for most of the voyage, and I think, he had suffered considerable disillusionment even before we sighted the island.

In New York we stayed in the Lincoln Hotel. They gave us each a cash draft to go up and get our \$50.00 allowance for expense money

while we were waiting on the ship. When we got to the cashier, and I cashed my voucher and got my money, Charlie shoved his voucher under my elbow and said, "Sign mine too!" I said: "Charlie I can't sign it, you've got to sign it!" And he said: "I can't write!" He couldn't read or write but he did show me then that he could sign his name. It was sort of like drawing a picture, but it got him his money.

I had some interesting experiences with him. Charlie had never been out of Oklahoma and I had barely been out of Texas and into Oklahoma. So we were really seeing the tall buildings. I am sure we both got sunburned tonsils. We started down to the doctor's office for our physical examination. I think the doctor's name was Sharpe. I can't tell you now where his office was, but they told us how to get there. And we went in the subway all the way. By this time we had been on the subways a little bit. But some where's on the way Charlie and I were separated. When I got down there the doctor says, "Where is Mr. Wynne?" And I said, "Well I don't know. I started with him, but I lost him somewhere." And he got on the telephone back to Shelton's office and they didn't know what had happened to him. I got my examination and he still hadn't showed up. When the doctor finished with me he examined my teeth. I had never been in a dentist's chair in my life. After he examined my teeth he said, "Well all I can say about that is that these two are missing." And I said: "I never had any teeth pulled!" And he said, "Well you probably never had them!" I know now they were wisdom teeth, but I didn't know it then.

In any case Charlie still hadn't showed up and on my way back retracing the route that I had come down on. At one of the stops there, it may have been 114th street, looking out of a window on the train I saw him on the platform over on the other side. He wore corduroy trousers and a coon-skin-like cap. He was a big man too, so he was easy to pick out. I managed to get off of that train and somehow get to the other side and get him. So I got him down to Sharpe's office.

The next thing that happened took place at the pier at Cutter Point, Providence Rhode Island. We were wandering around the docks while the ship finished discharging her cargo. We entered one of the shacks on the pier. In talking with the fellows there we mentioned that we were going to Aruba and one of them said, "Oh! A fellow around here just went down there about six months ago. His name is Griffin. Look him up when you get down there." It was Frank Griffin and I met Frank pretty soon after I got down there. But he didn't work in the same department and Frank was already on his way up. In Providence he was an Oil Inspector, but I don't know the job he went into when he got to

Aruba.

### **ARRIVAL IN ARUBA**

My first official encounter on the Island, immediately after debarking from the tanker was with Ward Goodwin in the Personnel Department. I don't think Joe Getts was there yet. Ward then was a giant of a man, "tall as a mountain and with an arm like a Sycamore tree." I have seen him several times over the years and somehow he now seems quite ordinary in stature. In those early days he was sometimes called "Bear Tracks". He was a participant in all types of athletic competition and very active in colony organizations. He had quite a sense of humor. I remember he tacked on Eddie McCoart the appellation of "Blind Tom McCoart". Eddie umpired most of the baseball games and often officiated in the basketball competition. Harold Atwood was then personnel manager. Harold fell upon evil times and left Aruba after writing and publishing a story (can't remember in what) about the people of the island. The local populace took almost violent offense at what they considered aspersions on their state of culture.

Anyway, after disembarking from the tanker, Wickett and I went right to the Personnel Office first thing. We made out our allotments for the folks back home. I was sending some money to my Dad because times were really tough for them at this time. Charlie Wynne says: "I'm going to stay three years and I am going to save enough money to buy a chicken farm. And I don't want my old woman to have to go to the washboard (take in clothes for washing for other people) to make a living." So they took down all of the information that they always obtained from new employees like: Next of kin, address where we came from, how much and to whom should they send the allotments and things of this sort and then they sent us to the *sheep sheds*. These were frame buildings built well off of the grounds on those piers with oil pots built into them to keep out the insects such as ants and cockroaches.

### **LIVING QUARTERS & ROOMMATES**

The room to which we were assigned was scarcely large enough for one person. There were three steel cots and Charlie and I and a Venezuelan fellow by the name of Jose who spoke no English were assigned to this room. Jose was a shift worker and Charlie, who was quickly stricken with violent home-sickness, spent more time drunk than otherwise; I didn't get much sleep in the *sheep sheds*.

Jose built ships inside of bottles. He used all kinds of bottles, usually whiskey bottles. These ships were all folded up when he slipped them in there. There was a string on each ship as he put them in the

bottle. And as soon as he got the ship where he wanted in the bottle he pulled gently on the string and the ship came up and looked like it was built inside the bottle. As I remember the string had a bow knot on it and when he pulled the right end of the string the knot came untied and slipped right out of the bottle. He built any number of them. He worked shift and he'd be out working when we got up in the morning and he would come in while we were gone and might be sleeping when we came in.

And that was wild country when we were first there. I never saw so many lizards in my life. There were all sizes. And I learned early to turn my shoes upside down and knock them against the leg of the bed each morning before putting them on. And two mornings in a row I knocked a scorpion out of my shoe. I never got bit but I was being very careful. Many people did get bit at that time.

Charlie would get letters from his wife and he would get me to read them to him. And then I would write his letters back to his wife. He had a son who must have been in his twenties and they were having a little trouble with him. Boys out in that part of the country in those days were pretty rough individuals. I can't remember the name of the boy, but I think Charlie's wife's name was Sarah.

They were building the early Bachelor Quarters then. At that time the *sheep sheds* were west of and not very far from them. They had already built Numbers 1 and 2 and were building 3 and 4 when I got there. The *sheep sheds* were about in the location where they later built the Alkylation Plant. There were about five or six of the Sheds and in the middle of them was a central shower and toilet area. There were some native's in these quarters I believe. Jose, a local employee? I am not sure. I never could talk to him enough to find out. He was still in there I believe when, after about four months, I got a chance to go to Number 2 Bachelor Quarters. I had to leave Charlie because he had to stay there for a while. But he was an interesting individual in that he never drank a thing in New York. He would go in a place where I would have a beer and he would have maybe a Coca Cola. He confessed to me that he had lied about his age, but he was 50 years old. This was one year beyond what they would hire at that time. He must have had it on his passport although I never did actually see it. He had worked there about three weeks when one morning I heard a yell down in the refinery. A long, Indian-type yell that you could hear all over. And I got out to see what was going on. And here was Charlie coming up through the refinery taking the entire road, weaving from one side to the other and he would let out a long yell and he'd say: "Momma's little red bird got out!"

I don't know where he got that, but that's what he would yell when he came home drunk from the village. He didn't make it to his work the next morning. And they sent up for him. And I thought well he would get fired now. But he didn't. They were after him to keep working. Apparently they needed him. He must have been a good steam hammer operator. He went through this for a long time. At the time they were building the harbor and Charlie must have been involved with driving piles for the piers. I never got down that far. I would walk down through the refinery on the main roadway to the Accounting Department. At that time they were located just about across the road from the Number 1 Power House. Actually we weren't too far from the Gas Plant as we would notice the gaseous odor when the wind changed. No buildings were air conditioned.

Charlie was there maybe six months when he came in and said: "I am going home. I can't stand any more of this." But Bob Miller got hold of him and talked him out of it. And he went back to work and worked for some time. And then he quit again. And then they got him to go back to work again. They must have needed him because they were taking a lot from him. I didn't think they would take that much, but they did. The third time he quit Bob said: "Okay we'll get you a tanker and get you out of here." And then he got to thinking about that and decided he didn't want to go. Well he did stay his 18 months and then he left. I never did know what happened to him after that.

When I moved into Bachelor Quarters Number Four I had two room-mates who were very early men down there. One was Roy Malley. He was from Fort Worth, Texas. And the other was Herbie Forcade who was a welder. He was a very nice individual, a big heavy set man. He was a pretty nice artist in addition to being a welder. And in our Bachelor Quarters, in the room that connected with us on the other side of the bath room, we had Austin Repass who was a pretty good welder, but he was a pretty heavy drinker. I don't think it ever interfered with his work at that time. Austin eventually got married and had a pretty red headed wife and they were friends of Betty and me after we were married. Of course I was still in the Bachelor Quarters at this point. I finished my first contract down there and at that time in the Accounting Department there were only five men who had stayed for a full contract. The others wouldn't stay that long. They had all quit. Americans didn't stay down there at that time.

## **PERSONNEL RECOLLECTIONS**

The first person I remember seeing and meeting upon arrival in Aruba was Leon Rought. Leon was then Chief Timekeeper. He was on



the dock when the *S/S Wicket* arrived and it appeared that the chief engineer had something for him which he had brought from the States - some little goody, I presumed, which was not readily available in Aruba. I was soon to learn that a great many ordinary little goodies were not available in Aruba at that time. I don't know how long Leon had been in Aruba before me but I know that he was regarded as a pioneer even then. I don't know when he left Aruba but he retired from there. Since we both were in the Accounting Department I came to know him quite well. At my then age of 23 he made a great impression on me as a man of the world. An impeccable dresser, he exhibited what appeared to me to be a great deal of polish, considerable culture and, an erudition (although then I didn't know the meaning of the word). One of his customs I will not soon forget. On each July 14th, as long as we were in Aruba, he brought to the office a large container of champagne cocktails. Just before the noon whistle he served us all and proposed a toast to Bastille Day. I don't think I ever did that before or since.

The doctor who was in charge of the hospital when I got to Aruba was Dr. A. R. Mailer. I broke my arm playing baseball and he set my arm for me.

Beulah Snidlow Watson was there when I had the dysentery too. Snidlow was Beulah's maiden name before she some time later married Ralph Watson. She was the one who ran the laboratory in the hospital in the early days. She was the one who found if we had dysentery.

### **COLONY LIFE**

I didn't meet Bill Legate on the job. But the first time I met him was in the hospital. We had an outbreak of amoebic dysentery and I was the first one in. I was in bad shape because we didn't know about this and it was just diarrhea and I tried to treat it myself for quite some time, eventually passing out in the Bachelor Quarters. They got the ambulance down there and took me to the hospital. During that night Bill Legate came in. I think he may have been the second patient. At one time there were about 40 patients with the same problem. They found that one of the Chinese cooks in the mess hall had it and was passing it on to us.

Dr. Mailer came right into the room where I was. There were four of us in this room. He pointed his finger and said: "That one and that one, we don't have yours run yet, but you two have amoebic dysentery!" And he pointed to Bill Legate and me. Then he had to get a book and let us read about it. We had a medicine that they still use today, but they give it in a different way. They gave a big hot salt water enema every day. I lost weight until I got down to less than 100 pounds! I got so I

couldn't walk; couldn't stand up. No one died at that time. Of course if you don't get the right treatment in time it gets into the liver and sometimes you have it all of your life. Back in the States some Texans died of it, but that was very early on and they didn't know what it was. The American doctors in Aruba did not have the experience to handle it at first. It took them a while to get up on it. They had cots in the hall and all over the place. There wasn't really enough room for all of us at the time.

When I came back to the States and got married, I spent all of the money I had saved. I told Betty that I was going to save \$2000. Well I saved \$1800. I came pretty close. I thought I would have some left, but by the time we bought all the things we had to take back with us it was all gone.

When we got back we lived in Bungalow #141. It wasn't far from where the school was later located. At the time they had the school in a frame building down towards the refinery. Maude Thomas was the school mistress at the time.

I think Fred Switzer was already there when I got there. He was going in and out of the Accounting Office a great deal because the Properties Accounting was right near my little department. He was over there to see Tommy Jancosek quite often. I was in the Stenographic Section of the Accounting Department. I think Mary Lopez worked for me once for a while. Mary's mother, Corinne, and I worked together. She went on the Private Payroll with Don Heebner and me. Don was in charge of it. When he would go away I would be the "Boss man" in charge of it. I don't recall if that ever happened while Corinne was in there or not.

One of the early people that I met down there and became very friendly with was Collins Luth. Collins headed up Colony Service for a time. A Ned Bell was the first manager of Colony Service. Collins worked for him. He was Ned's assistant. Later when Bell left, Luth took it over. Luth left us during the war because he was a reserve American Naval Officer. They called him into active service. After the war he became Postmaster at Niles, Michigan. That was his home town. And he went back there and got this job and spent the rest of his working days there.

I worked in the Private Payroll Section for a number of years. Mary Lopez worked in the Typing Department which was up in the new General Office Building. George Larsen and Lunn Easten were there when I went. Lunn left Aruba in 1956. His wife's name was Essie, but I

can't remember what her maiden name was before they were married.

The men that I knew down there in the early days were one of a kind. They didn't measure out by any mold that I had every known. Lunn Easten was British to the core. But having been born on the island of Montserrat he had many of mannerisms and thinking processes of the West Indians. He had the typical British love for the sea and ships. He began his Aruba career in the Accounting Department but ultimately managed a transfer to the Marine Department in the nautical, British atmosphere which he loved. Lunn was completely non-mechanical and his first car triggers the memory of a story worth telling. The car was a little stripped down Ford number with just enough body left to provide a seat over the gas tank and floor boards to rest the driver's feet when they weren't on the pedals. There weren't many cars at that time. The Company furnished vehicles to supervisors who needed transportation. A few of the boys were beginning to get cars. In it's stripped down fashion it didn't weigh much, which leads into the story that occurred one Saturday afternoon. He couldn't drive and I taught him to drive. He didn't know what caused this or what caused that or why you needed a battery. He wanted to know why we couldn't just eliminate that thing when the battery went down.

Lunn lived in Bachelor Quarters No. 2. I lived in that Quarters too at that time. He had a parking space just inside the side of the "H" that pointed toward the sea. He would come in on the back road and turn around that "L" of the Bachelor Quarters and around that end and swing back in and into his parking stall. He was still learning how to move the car around which he did strictly by rote. He had memorized each step necessary to get the vehicle moving, accelerating, slowing down and stopping. He knew all the moves and their sequence without much knowledge of why each was necessary or what function it performed. On this particular day he was out for a drive, was just finishing the complete routine and returning to his parking stall at Bachelor Quarters Number 2. His stall faced the cross wing of the building and to get to it he had to drive along the south side of the building, make two right turns around the end of the south wing and into his stall. George Larsen had the stall right next to him. George had an old car too. He liked to fish and was out a lot when he wasn't at work. On this occasion Lunn made the two right turns and headed in to park when, too late he became aware of a pair of long and muscular legs protruding into his parking stall. The legs were attached to the body of the fellow under the car in the next stall. Lunn did everything by rote. You turn on the key and you stepped on this pedal and that pedal. Seeing those legs sticking out there took

him by surprise. By the time he recognized what was there he was running over Larsen's legs. There was a very loud Norwegian bellow came out from under that car. He couldn't get out fast. And Lunn in the meantime realized he had done something wrong and he did the only thing he could think of and shifted his foot to the middle pedal, as you know on this old Ford this was the "Reverse" pedal. And he came right back over Larsen's legs again. By the time Larsen got out from under his car there were enough of us down there to sort of surround Easten and protect him. Because he wouldn't have lived.

### **THE "PAN ARUBAN"**

I wrote that story up for the *Pan Aruban*. I was on the *Pan Aruban* from shortly after I arrived there. I was on it for many years until my job changed and my schedule didn't fit in any more and I had to give it up. I did everything on the *Pan Aruban*. I typed stencils; ran the mimeograph machine; took over the various assistant editor posts and was "Executive Editor" when Bob Schlageter would leave the island on vacation or business trip. The *Pan Aruban* was started by Jake Forter and Reg Miller. I believe I came on at that time as sports editor. Aruba was quite a place for sports. We had to make our own entertainment and that's what we did. There was always sports news to be written up and I wrote the sporting news for a long time. Don Heebner was on it when I got there and he started me on cutting stencils. Then I got to writing for it. Ralph Boyd was sports editor for some time. Jake Forter was in the executive office at that time. (I guess you would call it executive secretary today.) He and Anthony "Tony" Palmer and Bill Legate were there.

Reg Miller worked over in the M & C Department. He didn't stay there much longer after I got there. He was a nephew of W. R. C. Miller. I think Jake Forter went over to the M & C when Reg Miller left. I think Reg Miller was there like 18 months. I barely knew him. He was a witty person and a good man. I think both of those people did a good job. I worked through all of the jobs and finally did the "World News" which we got by radio. It was not easy because the only radios you had down there then that had "short wave" was a radio called "The Wasp". I don't know who made it, but there were a few of them there. I got access to one where I could hear it in the evening. I took dictation. I used the Gregg system. I used to take notes that way at one time. I guess I have lost most of that skill by now.

We ran the *Pan Aruban* for about three years when we decided to write a history of Aruba. There was no written history of Aruba in any language as far as we could find. Mr. Leon of the store by that name in

the village was Dutch and he started out to write a history of Aruba. He collected quite a lot of material and then for some reason he gave it up. So he sold the material to a fellow who worked in the stenographic department where I was. He was an older man. And he was going to write a history. He got all of this stuff from P. F. Leon and then he decided to leave Aruba. He gave up on it. I think Jake Forter bought it from him for \$10.00.

We went through it and gathered other information and we wrote the first "*History of Aruba.*" I would guess that would have been about 1934. Jake Forter and I and Don Heebner printed this up separate from the Pan Aruban. It must have had 100 pages, maybe. They sold like hot cakes. Everybody wanted a copy and we got a call from someone. I don't know all of the details of that because Jake Forter handled that, but we wound up sending two or three copies to the Library of Congress. They had nothing in their files on Aruba at that time. I think we sold that thing for about three years and then stopped. Everyone that came in wanted a copy so we rewrote it, brought it up to date. I remember I had to write a chapter in there on the oil industry in Venezuela. It wasn't easy to get the information. You didn't have a library you could go to. Very few people knew anything about it. Lloyd Smith was down there by that time and I went to him. He gave me a lot of information about Creole Petroleum Company; in the early days it was "Lago Petroleum Company". Then we sold another 1000 copies of the new issue.

### **MORE PERSONNEL RECOLLECTIONS**

Jim Bluejacket was there before I got there. He was somebody everyone knew. I thought that Bluejacket was quite a character in those days. I didn't get out to the village too much but when I did I would find him out there drinking with a bunch of his old cronies. And the girls all knew him and the "Madams" all knew him. He was quite important in the Colony and I guess he must have been in the Company too. Bluejacket had been a big league baseball player. I think before he came to Aruba he was a pitcher with the St. Louis Cardinals.

I think Bob Schlageter was there when I got there and he was in the stenographic department. Bob's brother came much later and didn't stay long. Bob was just a kid out of high school. He ran the mimeograph and ditto machines. But after a time when he had gotten enough money together I guess. He went back and went to school at the University of Colorado and got his degree in journalism. Then he came back to Aruba to be the first Editor of the *Esso News*. He had a lot to do with putting it together and organizing the staff for it.

Another one who was there about that time who had done a lot of professional baseball playing was Harmon Poole. I don't think he ever got into the major leagues. In those early days we had a baseball field down in what later became the tank farm. This was down to the West side of the refinery below where Acid Plant was built.

Even before I left New York I heard about Harmon Poole. He had already won over \$5,000 playing poker! I don't doubt it a bit because they had the early poker games over at the *sheep sheds*. There was one little central building there that had tables and chairs. On Saturday nights particularly they would have a big poker game. You had to have a couple of hundred dollars to start with. I never played in that game, because it was too rich for me.

I remember that in one hand of "draw" poker Poole looked at his cards and said: "I want one card". Usually when you draw one card you are trying to fill a "straight" or a "flush" or maybe a "full house". Other people had drawn around the table. Bluejacket may have been in that game. The windows were open, and the wind was blowing, you remember how the wind blew there. When the dealer dealt the card the wind caught it and turned it face up. Well in "draw" poker you have to "burn" that card. You can't receive an exposed card on the "draw". You could expose one of your own cards if you wanted to. And the dealer has to give you another card. Harmon reached for that "exposed" card, which was the Queen of Hearts, like he was real "Hungry". And one of the other guys said: "You can't take it Harmon. Dealer, give him another card." Harmon was going to put up a fight because he really wanted that card. He actually turned white. I thought he was going to hit somebody but he eventually said, "Well all right!" He got up and went over to the window as if he hadn't recovered from the shock of being offered a card like that and he couldn't take it. Everybody assumed that it filled up whatever he was after. It turned out to be a big pot. There were several passed hands in there. They couldn't "open" because they didn't have "Jacks" or "Queens" or whatever the opening was. But Harmon eventually came back and sat down. He didn't even pick up the card that was dealt to him. The guy on his left bet quite a bit. When it came around to Harmon he didn't even look at the dealt card and pushed his whole stack of chips out to the pot. He was still mad and everybody thought he had blown his top so everybody called. There were two or three hands there. When everybody had finished betting, Harmon walked over to the window again, then he came back and turned up his hand which contained four Jacks! He made everybody pay for that. Nobody knew he had four Jacks and his whole act was to get people to

bet and come in and they did!

Poole played like that. He was a smart man in his way and I am sure that Harmon made as much money at things like that as he did from the Company. He worked with a fellow by the name of Tony Federle who was an electrician as was Harmon. I don't think either one of them had degree or anything like that but they were good men. They could do things that needed to be done. When the lights went out, they found the problem and fixed it.

Federle was a radio expert. At this time they had more short wave radios. Tony was a left handed baseball pitcher. He was a good pitcher. Federle played first base when he wasn't pitching. Harmon also pitched and played first base. They would spell each other.

The Accounting Department had Ralph Boyd who was also a semi-professional baseball player. He was maybe the best baseball player they ever had down there. He would usually beat them. But all of the games were tough games and they fought, lemme tell ya. Boyd was a dapper, astute individual with a little mustache. He was an excellent accountant. He was a good man. Tom Brown liked him. Ralph got along well and moved along well and became the No. 3 man in the Department. Garber was the No. 2 man after Tom Brown.

At first the No. 2 man was a fellow by the name of Eberly from Chicago. However his health was not good there. He had some kind of skin trouble, and the heat bothered him and he couldn't stand it. So he left. We had another man there by the name of Paul Brinar who was the No. 2 man for a short time. He was there when I got there. He was a very smart individual. He ran the place when Brown went away.

Brinar was killed in an automobile accident. He was coming back from Oranjestad one night. He might have been the first man, from the Company, who was killed in automobile accident in Aruba. A fellow by the name of White (not me!) was in the rumble seat. It was an Auburn Sports Car. Coming back from Oranjestad the driver "rolled" it. I guess he had too much to drink. Brinar was killed and White was banged up some. And a young doctor, by the name of Walker, who hadn't been there very long, was injured. I think he had a broken arm or something like that. White got skinned up I think. I think the authorities pretty well established that Walker was driving and he left Aruba to get out of the possible charges of manslaughter. So Boyd moved up to the No. 2 spot in the Accounting Department.

Just across the yard from us was the executive office and just next

to that was what we called the Engineering Department in those days. It later became the Technical Services Department. They were all down in the refinery. I know I walked several times from there down to the Marine Office which was near by at that time. I was "clearing ships" at that time. I was preparing ships documents pertaining to their cargos before they sailed. E. G. "Army" Armstrong was the one who took my place. I was getting ready to go on vacation and T. C. Brown told me: "We've got another job for you when you get back. I was thinking about this 'young' Armstrong to take over your work. What do you think about him?" I said: "Well he drinks too much Mr. Brown. You know you have to prepare these documents at night or Sunday when there is nobody around. They have to be right or you have trouble and I couldn't imagine anyone who always has a skinful of Scotch doing that." But T. C. said, "Yes, I know he drinks too much, but he is a pretty accurate worker. And I just thought I might try him." And I said, "Well you might try him, but I don't know." "Army" turned out to be very good on that job and no matter how much he had to drink he could prepare those documents. He seldom made a mistake. He was more accurate on it than I was. He was quite a one for playing practical jokes. You had to be rough with him, because that was what he liked. Some of his practical jokes were so rough I wouldn't want to write about them.

We had people in that refinery in those days that could do anything. Most of them were not college trained men. They had learned their trade through experience. Some of them came from company operations like in Tampico, Mexico. Some of them came from our refinery in Whiting, Indiana. Warren and Harry Steihl in the Maintenance and Construction Depart as well as Vernon Turner who headed up the Carpenter Department. When we needed something done and we didn't have the right part for it, they would find something.

The original 21 members of the Flying Club charter members that I can think of were men like: Bill Ewart, Al Donaghy, Roy Wylie, Marvin Case, Frank Roebuck, John McCord, Curtiss Osborn, Skippy Culver, Frank Perkins, Al Ayers, and Ottie Goodwin. Others involved were Charlie Greene, R.W.Linkogle, Whitey Riggs, Tony Schmitt, Don Blair, Ferrow Himes, Bert Teagle, Tom Malcolm, Rupert Burton, Bob Campbell, C.J.Perren, Boyd Bastian, Warren Stiehl, and Vernon Turner. We were flying from the Dakota Flying field in Oranjestad at that time. They gave us a runway to use and we built a hanger for our use.

Bill Ewart and Al Donaghy had done some flying before coming to Aruba so they were able to "solo" after a lesson or two. I think the first of the original club members to "solo" was Frank Roebuck. Roy Wylie



and I "soloed" about the same time. It took me about ten hours of practice before I was able to "solo".

When we started the Flying Club, I was one of the 21 charter members who put up my money to buy a Piper Cub. I think we put up \$100 apiece. \$2100.00 would get a Piper Cub brought in there. We formed a club and then we got the plane and we couldn't get bills for it. When we would write up about it they would come back and say: "Lend-Lease furnished you that plane. It came out of Lend-Lease and they will have to bill you."

But we could never get in touch with anybody in Lend-Lease that would give us a billing. So we had the plane and the money was in the bank. We flew the plane, maybe a year, and Paul Gordijn, who was one of the members at that time, ground-looped the plane and washed it out. At that time we were using the Dakota Airfield where the KLM commercial planes landed. When he realized that a big KLM plane was also landing on the runway he tried to get out of the way and in doing so he ground-looped the plane. The Piper Cub was washed out. He was soloing of course. I don't know if he had his license yet. It usually took us a while to get our license after we soloed. Anyway we gathered up the pieces and put it up overhead in the Hanger, on the rafters up there.

In the meantime the local Government had come to us and said, "We would like to have some of our local police officers learn to fly. If you will take four or five of them into your club we will give you the two new single engine Aeronca Trainers we have received. They probably got those through Lend-Lease too! We weren't actually in the World War II yet, but Holland was. So we got these two Army primary Aeronca Trainers and went right on flying. These planes were one P.T. 19 and one P.T. 26. We still had our \$2100.00 in the bank and still couldn't get a bill for the Piper Cub.

I remember I was Treasurer of the Club at about that time and I made my Annual Report to Tom Brown. I have forgotten what part he played in our organization, but he watched our finances. I went to him to make the report and I said, "Now, Mr. Brown, we don't have any liabilities except that \$2,100.00 for the Piper Cub and that has become more or less a contingent liability now. We can't get anybody to take money for it." He said, "It's a liability. If you got the plane and agreed to pay for it, it is still a liability you keep it on the books." So I said, "Okay Mr. Brown!"

In the meantime we had two planes and were flying. One day we remembered we had insurance on this Piper and we collected insurance.

Included in our Flying Club membership were some old construction-type men such as Vernon Turner, A. H. Shaw, Bill Ewart, and John McCord (who could build anything, it seemed to me). One day John McCord was with some of these fellows looking at the remains of the Piper Cub and he said, "Hey! We can put that thing back together; the parts are all up there." The next thing you know they had that plane put back together and it looked like a new one. It had been recovered and was all slicked-up. So here we had the insurance money and we had the original money we had set aside to purchase the plane and now the plane was back flying and we had two other aircraft and we hadn't spent a dollar on airplanes!

In the meantime the U. S. Army Air Corps had come in and flyers who had been put in the base there in Oranjestad. They were for the most part lieutenants. All were eager to fly, and they would give us our lessons so we were getting our lessons free! We were flying from the field in Oranjestad at that time. They gave us a runway to use and we built a hanger over there at that time.

When the Army Air Force pilots came into our Flying Club the first thing they did was to form "The Short Snorters Club." This was something that all of our military air men around the world, wherever they were, organized. A member or "Short Snorter" would ask you "Are you a Short Snorter?" If you said, "No!" then he would say, "You'd better be one!" We used a one guilder note, but most places they used dollars, but down there we were using Guilders. Of course the new recruit had to furnish his own guilder. He would make it out for you. He would put his name at the top of the bill as the "Organizer" or whatever they called themselves. I think he put the latitude and longitude, the date, and some other vital information, and he signed it and you gave him 2 Guilders. This happened anytime you wanted to join and if you were taking lessons at the Club. All of our Flying Club members became a "Short Snorter". I came across my "Short Snorter" bill some time ago and I gave it to my Grandson. I had a lot of signatures on there. Captain Royal S. Thompson signed mine. He was giving lessons to many of us. He was one of the Army fliers there at that time.

There is an interesting story about something that happened at the Officers Club out at the Army camp. It was a big club and they had a pretty big building. Many of us were invited out there to their parties. We could bring a date and any women because of course there was a shortage during wartime. A four-star General came through. I think it was General Andrews. The same one who was later killed in an airplane crash in Iceland or somewhere up there. They threw a big party for him

and I was one of those invited. We were all sitting at the bar having drinks and somebody said, "General are you a Short Snorter?" And he said, "Oh! Yes!" One of the rules of the game was that when you announced that you were a member you had to produce your "Short Snorter" bill. And if you didn't or couldn't produce your "Short Snorter" bill it cost you a "fine" of a dollar for every "Short Snorter" present. Well, I think that time it cost him something like \$300, but he paid up.

When I was in the Flying Club I never landed in Venezuela, but I used to fly over there and fly around the coast opposite us. That is, until we were told if we ever had to land over there we would probably never be heard of again. So I stopped flying over there, but I flew to Curacao a number of times. I wrote up a story for our Treasure Coast Trails paper one time about a trip I had made to Curacao. One time I flew to Bonaire and met the man who ran the resort there. This was originally the Dutch concentration camp for the German and Axis-sympathizer nationalities during the wartime.

I don't remember when we decided we would build a field over near the Golf Course on our end of the island, but it was after wartime flying restrictions were lifted. We named our Flying Club field after Commander Peter DeVuijst. At the time he represented the Dutch government on any naval matters on the island of Aruba. He was a nice guy. We all liked him. He did a lot for us. It was probably through him that we received the two Aeronca Trainers that the Dutch government had gotten through Lend-Lease from the United States. He didn't fly himself. He set up the rules for us and watched to see that we obeyed them.

Later we began to get members like Whitey Riggs. One time he took a plane out at night. This was before any of us were supposed to be able to fly at night. Anyway he decided he could fly at night. I think he had a skin full of gin at the time. De Vuijst took away his flying privileges for something like six months.

Later on a fellow by the name of Boyd Bastian, a young chemist, took up a plane out on a week end. He was a member of the Club at that time and was qualified to fly. He began buzzing cars along the Oranjestad highway. He ran several of them off of the road. Then he came down to the recreation area at Rodger's Beach and started diving on people who were swimming out there. And he flew the plane so close to the water that a piece was knocked off of one blade of the prop and he flew it back to the Flying Club and landed it, got out and got a saw and cut the other end off of the prop to match that one and took off again. I

believe it was on a Saturday. Of course the Government and DeVuijst and the company took a pretty dim view of these things and he stowed away on a tanker to get out of there. I was in the Marine Department at that time so it must have been right after the war. I wasn't flying much then, but I was still a member of the Club and I did fly occasionally.

I went to the Marine Department in 1945, during the war. I spent the war years there up until about 1952. It so happened that they needed somebody down there to do a job that I could handle. Lunn Easten was down there at that time and Lunn came up and talked me into making the change. I went down there as Lunn's assistant.

Then after the war was over Joe Andrea came down and he took me out of what I was doing and brought me in as an assistant to the Marine Manager. I stayed in that job until they did away with the Lake Tanker Fleet. They decided they didn't need it any more. I think that might have been 1951.

Soon after that I went back to the Accounting Department. In fact they cut down the size of the Marine Department and they didn't need an assistant to the Marine Manager any more. They also closed out their Finance and Insurance Division which was where I originally went when I transferred to the Marine Department. At that time Lunn decided to retire. He could take a layoff allowance and retire at that time. I could have too, but was still pretty young and didn't want to do it.

So I went back into the Accounting Department and went into the Systems and Methods Division and worked for George Barker, who was then head of the division. (I'll call him Barker for obvious reasons) Then George Barker left to go to Venezuela where he was offered a job over there with Price, Waterhouse Company in Caracas. His job was taken over by a young fellow who didn't last too long and then I was made Division Head. Barker had a nice young wife and a small boy and he fell for a very pretty East Indian girl in the village. He subsequently divorced the American girl and married the East Indian girl. Tom Brown didn't like this and the company didn't like that either. If you did something like that you could go up to a certain level, but you could never go beyond that in your career. So Barker who was a very smart man in his business didn't stay. He tried to get a transfer to Creole, but he didn't like what they wanted to pay him. Price, Waterhouse came along and hired him to go over to Caracas. I saw him some years later when I was over there on business.

Then I became Head of that Division. By that time we were putting in computers and I had to go to New York and take training in that.

Then I had to go to Venezuela for checking out programs because I.B.M. had a base over there. We purchased the IBM 650 for Aruba, the first of the electronic tape computers. It was still only half electronic; half of it was mechanical. It was electronic in that it used tapes. I put in that system. About five years later we decided it would pay us to get a new set up. And we got the IBM 1410. And I stayed there to see that put in. And then I went on a special assignment and finished out my time.

## **MEMORIES**

Some of the most interesting people I knew in the early days in Aruba I have already mentioned. I met Ward Goodwin when I got there and played against him in various sports. He was quite an important individual. Ward himself was a very interesting character. He played all of the sports and he was a big competitor. I played tennis on the company's team that traveled around. I played soft ball. I also played golf.

I remember when the Personnel Office was right down at the Main Gate where you went out into the village of San Nicholas. A Scotsman, Mac-something, started to come in the gate down there. We always had free passes to come in the Main Gate there. Everybody went through the refinery to get to this Main Gate to go into the village and we all came back to the colony by the same route. Mac was on foot on his way to the colony through the main gate. This Dutch policeman on the gate stopped him. Some sort of argument ensued and Mac knocked him down. The policemen wore those little pistols in a scabbard that strapped down and he was trying to get that strap off of there to get to his gun.

Ward Goodwin had seen the whole thing from the nearby Personnel Office and he came out there and as he saw it the Scotsman hadn't done anything drastically wrong except get in a fight and he saw a shooting was about to take place. Ward held the policeman's gun in the scabbard to get the Scotsman out of the scrape. Well then the Government was after Ward, but he was a good talker and he talked his way out of it: He had prevented a shooting and nobody was hurt.

Lotje Gravenstein was T. C. Brown's secretary when I got down there. Then when she married L. S. McReynolds she left the job. T. C. had a couple of other women come down from the States, but none of them worked out until Etta Williamson came along.

We had a man in the Accounting Department whose name was L. B. Foster. He headed up the Materials Accounting then and took care of the storehouse, commissary and things like this. He went "mad". He went off of his rocker. The company had to confine him until they could get a

suitable ship to send him to the States, so they picked out a bungalow that wasn't occupied at the time and they put Foster in there. Then they picked out men to be with him all of the time. One of the men they picked was Tommy Jancosek. Tommy had his new watch with him one night. One of the things that this Foster wouldn't do was wear a stitch of clothing. He took off all of his clothes. They had to pacify him and keep him inside. Tommy came on at midnight and he was letting Foster do pretty much of anything to keep him happy, except he had to stay inside. Pretty soon all of the lights went out in all of the bungalows down the street there and Foster said: "It's hot in here can't we sit out on the porch?" It was dark at this time and it looked like everybody had gone to bed so Tommy could see no reason why they couldn't sit out on the front porch. Like people with mental problems often are, Foster was pretty clever. They sat there and talked a little bit and finally Foster said: "What time have you got Tommy?" Tommy pulled out his new pocket watch, everyone wore pocket watches in those days, looked at it and said, "Well as near as I can tell it is 5 minutes to 2 and Foster said, "Let me see it." Tommy held it over to him and suddenly Foster grabbed the watch and threw it out on the coral, as far as he could throw it. Tommy was incensed and said, "What are you doing to my watch?" and he got up and started out to look for his watch. When he did, Foster jumped down off of the porch and took off down the street yelling like a "banshee". The lights began to come on in the houses all up and down the street and it took Tommy a little while to round him up and bring him back to his assigned Bungalow.

Tommy Jancosek was another of the most interesting people that I knew down there. He was a wonderful athlete in all of the sports that he undertook. Some he hadn't played before. I don't know if he had played much basketball. He never was much at golf, but he took up tennis and he got quite good at it. And handball. And at softball he was a star. As a softball pitcher he never lost a game in all of the five or six years that he was down there. I don't know how he did after he left.

The first Esso Club had not been finished when I got there and he was one of those who played softball out in that ball field that was on the west side of the club house. The Accounting Department had a team and Tommy was the pitcher for that. The M & C Department had a team. The Process Department had a team. In fact they had two. The Light Oils had one and the High Pressure Stills had one. I played on some of those teams, as well as Ralph Boyd, Red Maxwell, also Bob Campbell along with others.

I remember one night we were playing softball and Bob Campbell

was playing short center field. I was playing center field. I came running in to catch a fly ball and just as I got where I thought I had the ball I ran over Bob Campbell who was squatted down there to catch the ball. I actually turned a flip, but Bob caught the ball! I think we had a Texas team then. Gilbert Brook, Red Masters, Bob Campbell and I played on the team. I can't remember who the others were. We didn't win any big prizes, but we had a great time. We had no lights on the field at the club house in those days and the games often ended up after dark. The games were usually played on Saturday or Sunday.

When I first went down there they were just building the houses. They had some of them finished but there weren't many women in the colony. And 18 months later after Betty and I were married and we came back we had Bungalow #141. It was fairly new. Somebody had lived there a while, but they had just repainted it. We didn't have fresh water in the houses. There was a faucet out there between your bungalow and the next one. You had to go out there and carry your water in. We had brackish water in the houses. We used it for many things, and that is what we had in the showers. We had the kerosene stoves. Betty didn't know how to light the one we had when we got down there. I thought I could, but I couldn't. I know we went over and got Rachel Heard, Art Heard's wife, and she came over and lit the stove for us the first time.

By then the Pan Am Club had been built. It was Pan American because Esso hadn't taken over yet. I think it was in my first year there that Standard Oil of New Jersey bought all of that property down through there, Venezuela and other places in Latin America.

Doctor H. H. Holland was the manager of the refinery that was being built at that time. Nat Holland, who was an operator in the Light Oils Department, was his nephew. Doctor Holland was later replaced by Tom Cook and he was the one who got the employees together and told them they were to run the club, hire a club manager, and oversee its operation. The employees elected a Club Committee and they ran the club. I was on the Club Committee a little later on for a time. I think maybe the first committee was appointed, but after that the members were elected. The first manager we hired was Phil Hunter. He was a good club manager. We had dances there. And I had forgotten about the paper "Club Comments" that was published then. I was master of ceremonies for a while at the special dances that were held there. We had an orchestra that was formed early and it was a good little band. It was called the Pan Am Funmakers.

Most people left Aruba before the end of their contract and some people only stayed two contracts. In those days a contract was for 18 months.

The first Fourth of July that I was there I never heard so much hell raised in a small place in my life. Your life was in your hands if you got outside. Those guys were all hitting the bottle and it was a holiday of course. The new Pan Am Club was open, but it had been opened just a short time.

The Post Office when I first got there was a part of the Mess Hall. Later they built another building for it across the road, to the south, from the Pan Am Club House. Our first postmaster, who was a local man, committed suicide. He hanged himself. Later we had an Indian from India in charge of the Post Office.

### **WARTIME**

I was in Aruba when the submarine attack came on February 16, 1942. We never thought of submarines being in those waters. They had been attacking the tankers right around Puerto Rico and Haiti and the Atlantic coast of the United States. Nobody worried about submarines being around Aruba. We were wide open. Some thought was being given to organizing for operating under blackout conditions, but there seemed to be no big hurry. There was a spheroid tank farm behind the colony and these tanks were filled with 100 octane gasoline. This was one product the refinery was manufacturing as a part of our war effort.

Betty and I had gone to bed and we felt this explosion about 1:30 in the morning. It was a tremendous explosion. It didn't knock me out of bed, but I almost fell out of bed when it occurred. I went to the front door and looked out. Our house wasn't too far from the hospital. I told Betty that it looked like the commissary was on fire. Something must have exploded down there. I pulled on my pants right over my pajamas and Betty and I got in our car and took off. When we got up to the commissary a gruff voice said, "Turn out your lights you damn fool!" Then I realized that all lights were out in that area. I think they had pulled a switch somewhere and shut off all power up our way. We saw the Lake Tanker *Oranjestad* which was burning and men were swimming across the lagoon. Some of them so badly burned they didn't live over it, but they got in. Some of them swam across the harbor. I am sure they must have been desperate. They must have been pretty good swimmers too. I can't remember too much about what we did that night except that some people went to the "air raid shelters." The Company had actually built some shelters inside the community for us in case we



really had an "air" attack, and some people went to these little shelters. We didn't.

A battalion of U.S. Army Artillery had arrived just three days before. There was a squadron of the U.S. Army Air Force that had set up a base of operations at the Dakota Airport over near Oranjestad. Some planes flew over within a few moments. They didn't know what the hell to do. The artillery hadn't gotten organized or anything. They were stringing telephone wires all over the place down there. The emplacements for their 155's were not constructed as yet, but they got them up in a hurry after that. We had blackout the rest of that night because the lights were all turned off. The very next day we had an organization of "black out watchers." All the bungalows were "watched" and everything was blacked out. We could have some lights inside, but we had to have black out screens and people painted their shutters black. If any light showed you soon got a call. The refinery was shut down so blackout shields could be constructed for the furnaces.

In June of 1942 the Esso Club burned. I remember that people were walking around in the ashes and coals and coming out with cases of Scotch. Johnny Walker was one good brand and another was Pinch. Through the good graces of the U S Army the Company got four of those Army barracks units and put them together as a replacement for the burned down club, and they located it up across from the new Commissary Building. They arranged the four buildings in the form of a square and left an open space in the center and this was our outdoor movie very much like we had in the early days of the Esso Club. Of course when the movie was shown the light could be seen from above, but there was no light showing towards the sea. In the meantime our Flying Club field, which we had named De Vuijst Field, had been constructed near the Golf Club. One night we were at a movie at the "Temporary" Esso Club and an airplane flew over and then he came back and flew lower, right over the movie area. About the third time around Skippy Culver said I think that guy is looking for a place to land. We got a bunch of people to drive their cars out to De Vuijst Field, park on either side and turn their headlights on to illuminate the field and a DC-3 landed. He was just about out of gasoline and he didn't know where he was going to get any more. The whole island was blacked out except for our movie which he could see. He brought that plane in on that short runway. He had fresh vegetables flying them to some place in Venezuela. He got lost somehow and he had a young woman passenger with a tiny baby. She was going down to join her husband in Venezuela. We fixed him up the next day and got him out of there. The second DC-

3 to come in there followed one of our Flying Club planes in and that was some time later.

Some of the people I knew in Aruba who spent time in Dutch concentration camp for German nationals and other sympathizer nationalities in Bonaire were Gus Stutzman, Al Zucchini, Karl Schlageter, J. F. X. Auer, the two Sauer brothers. One of them ran a business out in the village. Otto worked for the company in the Cold Storage. In the early days he was also a "bootlegger". At that time they weren't allowed to sell any hard liquor on our end of the island.

### **RETIREMENT**

I took the layoff allowance and came back here. I left Aruba in April and my actual retirement date was in June of 1962. This was after a total of 32 years of service with the company. This was before the 50/15 layoff program. They were offering a layoff allowance when I retired and I couldn't have gotten it, except for the new Marine Manager whose name was John Brown III. He was a big, tall man and I think he might have come from Boston. He had seen service on a ship. He had a ship's captain's papers. I think he had graduated and had a degree from Yale. He was a man of some importance. I liked him; he was a pretty nice guy. He came to me with the proposition that if I would come down and survey and block-diagram all of the jobs and this sort of thing that he would talk to Tom Brown and see if I couldn't get the layoff allowance they were offering. They could give it to someone who had a certain number of years of service and whose job was no longer there. At the time I had the number of years, but the job I was on was still a "live" one. I went down and made this survey and we laid-off some people.

Betty and I have two children, a son and a daughter, who were born in Aruba. The oldest is the daughter who is married and now lives in Princeton, New Jersey. She has a son and a daughter. My son, Bill, lives in Dallas, Texas now and has been for 19 years with Texas Instruments. He has one son, Ron, who is a junior in college and has got it all lined up so that he will go right into the Air Corps.

## **The John & Eileen Whitney Story**

My name is John "Jack" F. Whitney, and I was born in County Wicklow, Ireland on January 12, 1892. My wife, Eileen, was born in Dublin, Ireland on June 2, 1898. She passed away June 2, 1981 on her 85th birthday.

I helped my father operate a dairy farm outside Dublin until just before the depression. Then I took a job with the Huasteca Petroleum Company in Mexico. I was located in Cerro Azul, Tampico. When the Mexican government expropriated the oil companies I went to California. I worked in the oil business for about a year.

While in California, Aruba came up. I applied for a job there and was accepted. My first assignment was to the Gas Plant in the Lago Refinery where L. G. Lopez was in charge. First I lived in Bungalow No. 10 approximately where the main office building was later erected. This was just outside the gate between the colony and the refinery. In 1945 I lived in Bungalow 726. My neighbors were Lou Ballard in 722, Stan Hartwick in 724, George Janson in 725, Rade Broz in 727, Cornelius Dunlap in 728, and Hugh Orr in 729.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*He retired from Lago in 1948 and lived in Riverside, California. He died August 2, 1988 at the age of 97. He has ten grandchildren born in six different countries:*

- *Bennett Stewart Whitney was born in Dublin, Ireland on March 27, 1918. He is a graduate of Trinity College in Dublin with an M.S. in Chemistry.*
- *John Frederick whom all called "Sandy" was a Wing Commander in the Royal Air Force during WWII. He visited Aruba in 1947-1948. He died in 1978.*
- *Samuel James whom everyone called "Buster" had dark hair and now works in the Canadian Civil Service.*
- *Arthur Vene retired from the American Air Force. He works for them in a civilian capacity in Denver.*
- *Donald Sidney was born in the Lago Hospital, October, 1931. He now operates a John Deere agency in Riverside, California.*

## **The Bennett S. Whitney Story**

I arrived in Aruba on April 2, 1945. I traveled on board the S/S *Princessa* in a 128 ship convoy from England to New York and it was a 21 day trip. This trip was arranged by Anglo-American Oil Company. I traveled from New York to Miami by train; from Miami to Curacao via a Lockheed; and via a Tri-motor Fokker (Snipe) from Curacao to Aruba.

My first assignment in Lago was as Shift Leader in Laboratory No.1 (Oil Inspection Laboratory). Then I became Chemist in Laboratory No.2 (Analytical Laboratory). Next I was Group Head B. and then Group Head A in the same Laboratory. Before I retired in 1974 I was director of all laboratories including Laboratory No. 3 (Development).

Hazel and I were married in Dublin on March 18, and arrived in Aruba May, of 1948. Bungalow 506 was our first temporary home in the Colony. Interestingly enough one of the first neighbors of the Whitney family in Aruba lived just two doors down this street. Louis G. Lopez lived in 509 and Jim L. Lopez lived in 510.

In October of 1950 Hazel and I traveled from New York to Aruba on the tanker, s/s Chattanooga. This was after a trip to California to visit my parents. Howard Garig who later went to work for Lago was an engineer on this ship.

Our daughter, Moira was born in the Lago Hospital on July 23, 1952. She attended the Lago schools through the 9th grade. The Lago High School had been discontinued so she went to a preparatory school in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

On the south side of the island the sand was mostly white coral. On the North shore of the island the beaches were covered with pebbles and coral sand. The coral sand was produced over centuries by the parrot fish, which eat live coral - digested the living part and excrete the shells as a fine powder. The local name for the parrot fish is "caca belly", which refers to the sand excreted by the fish.

Rainfall averaged 19.6 inches a year, but varied from 10 to 40 inches. Rainfall seems to run in cycles which closely followed sunspot cycles.

Humidity and temperature records at Beatrix Airport in Oranjestad give us the following averages for 1969. At around 5:00 a.m. the temperature was around 78.8 degrees Fahrenheit and the humidity was

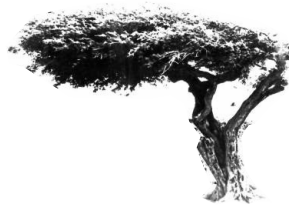
83%. At 1:00 p.m. the temperature was 87.26 degrees Fahrenheit and the humidity was 65.4%. The temperatures were obtained with a dry bulb thermometer.

The coldest was 76.64 degrees Fahrenheit at 5:00 a.m. in September. The hottest was 91.58 degrees Fahrenheit at 2:00 p.m. in June. Higher temperatures have been noted during hurricane season. This is when the trade winds die. When you put on a clean shirt it is soaking wet with perspiration before you get it buttoned.

We fished with look-boxes. Local fishermen fished in 90 fathoms. They used a heavily weighted line having multiple hooks. They retrieved the line over a pulley in the bow of their boat. It took about 15 minutes to retrieve the baited end of the line. Small fish netted at the shoreline was used as bait.

Arthur Whitney caught an 8 foot shark just outside of the Baby Lagoon and kept it tied up at the T-dock near the swimming area at Rodger's Beach. For a week he brought it out of the water for picture taking. He charged 50 cents for this service.

Jan Moller lived in Bungalow 64 before we moved in. He had orchids growing in the patio and on the cliff behind his patio. Then we got interested when we moved in and also had quite a collection. These orchids obligingly bloomed every year when we had our St. Patrick's Day cocktail party we had every year. Nell and Odis Mingus also had an orchid collection at Bungalow 69. The Beermans also had a collection in Bungalow 52. Russ Ewing also was another avid orchid grower.



## **The Nelwyn Grace Williams Story**

I was born in Patterson, Louisiana in 1911. My father was one of 14 children. I have many relatives in Houston. I had an aunt who was like a second mother to me, and I stayed with her when I was living and working in Houston. I am the oldest of four children. I had one brother, David. Meredith (Mert) was my youngest sister. Aubrey and Stuart Daigle were my nephews. Aubrey was born in 1913. My youngest son, Cliff, lives in Marquette. My daughter is named Dolores Nelwyen and she lives in Pasadena, Texas.

I had gone to visit an aunt in Destrehan and met Gilbert, at a Saturday night dance. Gilbert was quite a baseball fan and player. I was twenty and he was thirty. Gilbert and I were married on October 15th of 1930. He went to Aruba before me. Gilbert was on an 18 month contract when he first went down. I think it was December when I went to Aruba from Destrehan, Louisiana. I had just graduated from High School. I had a scholarship to go to college. I was told I could go to college or go to Aruba. I decided to go to Aruba.

Just before my son, Richard, was born I went back to Patterson so he was born there. Dolores was born in Aruba in the Lago Hospital which at that time was west of the Dining Hall.

Gilbert worked shift as an operator on the Rerun Stills in the Light Oils Finishing Department.

We left Aruba after the attack in 1942. We went to Maracaibo, Venezuela, and stayed overnight in the Creole camp. From there we went to Guatemala City, and then to Brownsville, Texas. One man got out and kissed the ground, proclaiming his happiness to see the good old U.S.A. Peggy Pollock might have been with us on that flight from Aruba. We grabbed our passports and clothes for the children. We were back in the caves near the hospital first. Then we went to the Rutherford's. We sat around the table, drank coffee, and stayed up all night.

We lived in a five room bungalow, Number 429, next to the club house. I used to bake cakes and pastries for the bridge parties at the clubhouse. I would make the candies and cookies or whatever the people wanted. The club would only serve ice cream and sherbet.

Everybody knew I made birthday cakes, and I used to make them on

order. One week I made three birthday cakes. Gilbert was famous for his whiskey sours and he used to make them for weddings. I made wedding cakes, home-made candy, and pies for Bill and Fanny. He was from California and she was from France. They loved rhubarb pie.

Paria Allen was a beautician in the colony and Ciolette Carrill was another. Ciolette had a heart condition, and could only eat certain things. I used to cook her one meal a day.

I had a wonderful recipe for two-tier wedding cakes. Eight egg whites were folded into the dough. Then, I took part of the dough, added pink coloring, and twirled it to put the pink design in the cake.

We sailed out of New York on December 5, on the Grace liner, Santa Paula, when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. We were off the Florida coast, near Miami when we got the news. We sailed on to Curacao where we caught a plane to Aruba. There were many people on that ship bound for Aruba. There were 35 people got on that boat knowing that they didn't have a life preserver. They wanted to get back to Venezuela. They wanted to get back to their homes.



# **The Richard Gilbert Williams Story**

(Son of "Sonny Boy" Gilbert and Nelwyn Williams)

## **MY EARLY YEARS**

I was born December 16, 1931, in Patterson, Louisiana and went to Aruba when I was 5 or 6 months old.

My mother and father had been living in Aruba and my mother came back to Patterson when it was time for me to be born.

My father was from Reserve, Louisiana and was working in Destrehan, Louisiana before going to Aruba. Ev Wade mentioned that he remembers my dad because he worked with him in Destrehan before going to Aruba. Destrehan is located on the east side of the Mississippi river less than 20 miles upriver from New Orleans. My mother was from Patterson, Louisiana, down near Morgan City.

## **GOING TO ARUBA**

It was in 1930 when she went to visit an aunt in Destrehan. While she was visiting her aunt she went to a Saturday night dance and that is where she met my dad. She was twenty and he was thirty. She was born in 1911 and he was born in 1901. They were married on October 15, 1930. Gilbert went to Aruba in November and Nelwyn followed him in December. She sailed from Destrehan directly to Aruba.

I remember my father was quite a baseball player. On Sundays when they played in Lone Palm Stadium I had to sit in the bleachers while he played ball. I always wanted to go swimming and he said: "no you just sit there." He also played basketball. He would take me to the club with him when he played and I would have to sit on the side lines. Sometimes he refereed.

In earlier days my Aunt Mert used to work in the Aruba Trading Company in San Nicholas. Her name was Mercedes, but we all called her Mert. Her brother, my Uncle Aubrey worked in the Personnel Department of Lago. Mert lived with us in the Colony. Uncle Aubrey used to live in the Bachelor Quarters and ate in the Dining Hall and sometimes with us.

## **FAMILY EVENTS IN ARUBA**

### **MY SISTER IS BORN**

My sister, Dolores Nelwyn, was born in the Lago Hospital in Aruba in August 1935. In those days the hospital was located on the right hand



side just as you went from the colony into the refinery. There was a parking lot on the west side of the Dining Hall. The hospital was located on the west side of the parking lot. They were both on the same side of the main road to the refinery. Small children weren't allowed to visit in the hospital in those days. I remember my dad holding me up to the window and I talked to my mother. I also remember that she held up my baby sister so I could see her through the window. I was just about four years old at the time. However I don't remember who was taking care of me while my mother was in the hospital.

### **SCHOOL HIJINKS**

I went to the first and second grade in Aruba. The second grade teacher was Mrs. Alsborough. She was meaner than s---. I remember one day Mary Frances Barnes came to school after being absent because she had been sick. Our teacher, Mrs. Alsborough said: "I don't believe you have been sick!" And without further ado she took Mary Frances by her ear and slung her down so she fell against the desk and broke her glasses. Boy! I remember that just like it was yesterday! It was no accident.

I played hooky a couple of days while I was in this second grade and I was scared to go back. I made my mother go with me.

Miss Myrtle Parham was my teacher when I was in the third grade. For the fourth grade I had Miss Olsen who later became Bea Ewart.

We lived in bungalow #429.

The first and second grades were in one building. The third, fourth, fifth and sixth grades were in another building. This building had an upstairs auditorium. Grade's seven through twelve were in another long building. The building with the Auditorium had fire escapes on each end that were huge, round, metal pipes. These were like the chute the chutes and we used to climb in there and play in there and then slide down. We did most of our playing in the fire escapes on week-ends. I remember we would sit on the rock wall around the school and see how many license plates we could copy down from every car that went by. This was on the road that started at the refinery gate which opened into the Lago Colony. The road went up the hill and past all of those three room bungalows and then past the school. (These bungalows were built for newly weds or couples with no children. This row of houses was locally known as "birdcage row.")

### **LIVING QUARTERS**

The first house that I remember living in was not too far from the

Girl's Dormitory. There was the Pan-Am Club and a big parking lot. There was a street below the Girl's Dormitory and we lived the second bungalow (#404) along this street. I realize now that they were building more bungalows in that area - extending the rows on up towards the light house hill.

After my sister was born we moved from that two-bedroom bungalow to a three-bedroom bungalow further up, #429.

I remember the details of the bungalow we lived in when I was 8 or 9 years old. It was up high enough that I could walk underneath the house without having to bend over.

Many people fixed up their yards beautifully. I remember the Massey's had a beautiful patio, fish pond and garden on the lower road. And the Turners up in back of us had a beautiful yard and patio and garden. You know many people took great interest in their homes and built some beautiful patios. At the time we were there not too many people spent much time on their yards.

I remember used to have picnics out near the tar pits on the north side of the colony. I also remember there were mango trees there. I also remember going to the beaches where the hotels are now and where we could get coconuts from the big grove that used to be there.

Aunt Mert is the one who took many pictures and had several albums of good pictures of Aruba. Many were of her and Aubrey and after she was married of the different cars she had. Every time she came to visit us in the colony in those days she came up in a different car.

## **MONKEYS AND ME**

There were some people who lived in the back of us who had a pet monkey. They had it chained to something like a dog house. And kids being kids, we teased that monkey. Next to us there were some Dutch people called the "Schoens" and they had a daughter named "Anna" and a son named "Neil." "Anna" was the oldest and she used to baby-sit my sister, Dolores, and me when my mother and dad would go to the movies or to a dance.

Dad had built a Patio on the left hand side of the bungalow. Neil and I were sitting in the patio one day and Neil said "so and so's monkeys' loose." I don't remember who the people were. A friend of my mother's "Anne Lampo" was visiting my mother at the time. My sister was about two years old. Across the front porch (this was before it was screened in) was a gate to keep my sister from getting off the porch. Neil who was a lot older than I was yelled "the monkey!" We both

started running up the front steps. Neil was old enough to jump over that gate and run into our house. But I was too short and I couldn't get over the gate. I remember the front porches of our bungalows had wooden steps. I remember screaming bloody murder for somebody to come and get me and I can remember my "Aunt" Anna came running to the front door. She wasn't any relation, just a good friend of my mother. She came to see what I was screaming about. I turned around and that monkey came up and through the steps underneath me and bit the little finger on my left hand. Anna grabbed me and the monkey ran off. I remember my dad threw me into the car and we went to the Hospital. And all the doctor did was soak it and bandage it. They didn't put any stitches in it. And you can still see the lump there on the end of my finger. I'll never forget that monkey! As long as I live!

There were some people who lived next door to us; I think their names were Brown. They had a pet spider Monkey. And the woman used to leave it in the trees outside the house in the evenings. He would come across the pipe line and scratch on our back door. I could put my hand out and he would crawl on my shoulder. Then I would take him back to Mrs. Brown. One day that monkey bit me on the ear. I wouldn't have anything to do with monkeys after that. I had been bitten too many times by monkeys.

### **CHILDHOOD IN ARUBA**

My fun was playing in the oil pots that were molded as a part of the concrete piers all the houses rested on. The little moat around each pier was filled with fuel oil to keep out the roaches and ants. I also enjoyed running on the pipelines that ran between our row of bungalows and the ones next to us. These were the 6" diameter pipes that carried salt water for our commodes and also served as our firewater lines. Smaller pipelines carried our: brackish water for our showers and fresh water for drinking. 4" diameter piping was the sewer lines. These were grouped together and supported on concrete piers throughout the colony. My parents told me many times to stay off those pipes. And they didn't know that I was on them unless I slowed down when I was running on those pipe lines. There was always a big bunch of cactus waiting for me when I did slow down. Inevitably I'd slip off those great big old pipelines and fall into that cactus. Then I would go screaming home. When I got home my folks would pick out those cactus needles. Oh! They would hurt terribly more when they were pulling them out than when they went in! And then after they had taken all the cactus out they would spank me because they knew I had been on those pipelines!

I remember one time when Mr. Manuel Viana was dating Mert who

was living at our house at the time. Mr. Viana owned the Chrysler dealership for the island and he lived in San Nicholas. He was in his car that was parked in front of our bungalow. My dad was on the ground at the driver's side of the car talking to Viana who was sitting in the driver's seat. I was on the passenger side standing on the running board holding on to the door sill. I was very small then I remember. And I was leaning back and letting go with my hands and then grabbing the door sill again. Well one time my hands slipped and I sat down in a bed of that needle grass. For a couple of months I was going to the Hospital so they could pick those fine needles out of my bottom. I'll never forget that! That time I didn't get a spanking. My folks grease my behind with mentholatum. Then they took me for a ride that night towards Oranjestad to keep me from crying. This must have been when I was five or six or somewhere in between. This was when we still lived in the two-bedroom bungalow, and before we moved to the three- bedroom bungalow.

I remember one time when the Colby family lived in the bungalow on the street behind our bungalow.<sup>1</sup> This was when we lived in the three-bedroom bungalow. It seems to me there were five boys and one daughter. The daughter's name was "Betsy." She used to sit on their front porch playing her piano accordion almost every afternoon. I only remember the daughter because I used to stand out in the yard and listen to her piano accordion playing. I don't remember the names of the boys or just how many there were.

When they left the Wayne Richey family moved in. Mrs. Richey's name was Helen. Dukie was my age and then they had two older daughters, Tommy and Patsy and the baby "Kelly." I told Kelly one time in later years: "I remember you when you were in diapers and used to sit in mud puddles in your diapers, happily splashing away." And he said, "You don't know how many people have told me that!"

In 1936 we were all in the states for the wedding of my Aunt Mert and Viana. The wedding was held there on one Sunday and the following Sunday we buried my grandfather. It just so happened that the whole family was there for those two important occasions. As a result of my grandfather's death some important decisions were made. It was decided that my grandmother should go to Aruba to live with us. My Uncle Aubrey and Uncle Stewart were to go to Aruba with us. Stewart was sixteen and still in high school. They all stayed a year. I don't

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<sup>1</sup>*This was W. C. Colby who was sent down from New York on a special assignment in the Personnel Department.*

remember if we all went to Aruba together or not. Aubrey got a job because he was on the island. I don't believe he was on a contract, but on the local payroll. He worked for just a year and then he went back to the states.

My Uncle Aubrey stayed in the Bachelor Quarters and grandmother and Uncle Stewart stayed with us. Stewart went to Lago high school for one year while he was in Aruba.

Nelwyn's Uncle Treville Daigle was down there for a year. He lived in the Bachelor Quarters I think. In reality I don't remember him being there at all. All I remember is hearing people talking about him and saying that he was the Barber at the Club.

I don't think I ever had a pair of long pants until I was in the sixth grade. All I ever wore was short pants. And when we went to the states it was always in the summer time and every one wore short pants.

My dad would stay in Aruba and go on vacation every other year. And he would always go to the World Series and it seemed they were always up north somewhere like Detroit or Cleveland. When the World Series was over he would buy a new car and pick it up at the factory in Detroit. From Detroit he would drive to Louisiana and join us for the rest of our vacation. At the end of our vacation we would all drive to Bayonne, New Jersey. There we would board a tanker with our car and go back to Aruba.

### **TRAVEL, INCLUDING TANKERS**

I don't remember any tankers we traveled on but I remember a Captain "Hefflinger" and he had a dog named "Carioca."

I remember we were going to Aruba one time and we were in New York City staying in the Lincoln Hotel, I think it was. We were scheduled to board a tanker in Bayonne, New Jersey for our trip to Aruba. Fellow passengers were some woman, I think her last name was Pollock, and a daughter named "Sandra." We were going to be the only two families traveling on that tanker. Kids will be kids and I was filling up balloons with water in the bathroom. I don't know where my mother was. I was dropping those balloons out of the hotel window on the heads of people below. Boy! Did I get a whipping for that! Sandra and I were both involved in that.

We were on a tanker one time for thirty days! It was a German tanker leaving New York and going to Aruba. They had engine problems and we were adrift for I don't know how many days. It took us almost a month to get from New York to Aruba. We finally got into

Aruba and dad was wondering what had happened.

I was always into mischief and I don't know how I managed to keep out of trouble. I remember we were on a tanker one time when the boat was rocking quite a bit. The deck would be at something like a 30 degree angle. And as you remember the railings were not enclosed. The tops of the railings on the oil tankers were about 40" high. There was a horizontal bar at the top and another horizontal bar at about 20" above the level of the deck. It would be easy for a small kid to slide between those railings and over the side. The deck, where our cabins were located amidships, was covered with sea water from the spray. I would slide from the high side to the low side and grab a doorknob. This is a good example of how a little boy can get himself into trouble due to his ignorance of what can happen. Suppose I had missed that doorknob. I would have gone straight through those railings and right on overboard. They wouldn't have missed me for some time and that would have been the end of me!

In 1940 or 1941 while we were in the states on a vacation, mother bought a house in Patterson, Louisiana, her home town. there too. She bought this house a thousand dollars so my grandmother would have a place to live. Then she moved my grandmother and Uncle Aubrey and Uncle Stewart into that house.

In 1941 we traveled to Aruba on the *Santa Rosa*. We were only a couple of days out of New York - maybe off the coast of Florida when Pearl Harbor was attacked on December 7, 1941. My sister and I were put to bed early that night and mother and dad stayed up all night in the dining room listening to the radio. The Captain didn't know whether he should continue to Aruba or go into Miami. But finally they decided to continue all the way to Curacao. And then we flew from Curacao to Aruba by KLM. My mother was always scared of flying. She always sat in the last seat in the back.

## **WORLD WAR II**

When the Island was attacked by the German submarine in 1942 all I remember is that my sister and I were sleeping in bunk beds. I was sleeping in the top bunk and my sister was in the bottom. In all two-bedroom bungalows the bathroom was between our bed room and our parent's bed room. When my mother opened the bathroom door the light shined in my eyes in the top bunk and that woke me up. And she came running in and she said, "Kids, we have to evacuate the house right away because the island is under attack by German Submarines!"

She grabbed my sister and I jumped down from the top bunk. Then

I ran into the living dining room area all the way to the kitchen door. All I could see was the flames leaping up towards the refinery. I thought the refinery was on fire. But it must have been one of those Lake Tankers that had been torpedoed and was drifting, on fire, to the west along the harbor entrances.

The next thing I knew my dad grabbed me around my waist and threw me in the back seat of the car and drove over to the Colony Church. That is where all the people, from our area had been told to assemble and a large group was milling around outside the Church.

All the bungalows in the area alongside the tank farm had been alerted. Whoever was doing the alerting threw rocks against the bedroom windows to wake up the people and tell them we were under attack and to report to the Colony Church. Our house was in the third row of houses from the tank farm fence. All the people in the area, which was south of the spheroid tanks containing av-gas, were considered to be in a very hazardous location. It was figured that if one tank was hit they would all go up together and all the houses along there would be flooded with all of that gasoline. All of these bungalows were at a lower level than the tanks.

All the people in these houses were told to report to the Colony Church. We were up there I don't know how long when a ship got torpedoed and all of a sudden the man said, "This is too dangerous!" At that point, as I remember, a group of us first went over to the caves near the sea grape grove. I don't remember how many kids there were, but when the airplanes would come flying overhead all the kids would come running out of the caves. We were all lying down on blankets in the caves. I guess our folks had grabbed up some blankets when leaving the house and brought them along. I don't think our parents slept at all that night. They were sitting up and talking. And I don't know how long we stayed there. But later on we wound up at the house of Jim and Jesse Rutherford who lived in Bungalow #477. This was in that group of houses just below the hospital hill. And we were in their house for the rest of that night.

Jim and dad worked together I guess and Jesse and my mother were very close friends. Jesse visited the family several times afterwards in the states. The Rutherford's invited us to their house that night. And I guess I finally went to sleep. The next morning we went back to our house.

I didn't go to school the day of the submarine attack, although they did hold school that day. And, as I recall, there were steps near the south

end of the school that went down to the level below the cliffs that the school was built on. I remember going to those steps and going down and then across to the waterfront above Rodger's Beach. From there I was trying to see what parts of the ships that had been torpedoed during the night were visible. I think about half of the parents kept their children home that day, because they didn't know what to expect.

The attack took place at 1:31 a.m. on Monday, February 16, 1942. We stayed in our house Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday nights. We didn't sleep in our beds as I remember. My sister and I were sleeping on the sofa in the living room. My mother and dad were sleeping in a chair. This was because we never knew from one moment to another when there would be another attack.

It was very early Thursday morning, February 19, 1942, when the flares from the American cruiser were inadvertently fired over the colony. The empty casing in which these flares were packed landed in the colony.

My Aunt Mert and her husband, Viana, went out on the Balcony of their Apartment that was over the Chrysler Agency in San Nicholas. They heard the noise and wanted to see what was going on. Mert said that it looked like big balls of fire over the colony. We didn't know what was happening but my sister and I were dumped off the sofa from the vibration of the shells. My dad threw us kids into the car and we took off again.

Anyway my dad came home from work that morning and said that they were evacuating all the women and children off the island as fast as they could. I guess it must have been a week or two after the attack before arrangements could be made and they finally flew us over to Maracaibo. We spent one night in Maracaibo and from there we flew to Guatemala City and spent one night there. From there we flew to Brownsville, Texas. From there we took the train to Louisiana to my grandmother's house.

After we left in 1942 he stayed in the states about a year and then we went back in 1943.

One time during the War we took a plane out of New Orleans and flew to Miami in a Clipper Ship. From there we went by Clipper Ship to Jamaica and from there to Curacao, I believe. There was Mert and her daughter and mother, my sister and I. Traveling by ship was not allowed at that time during the war. Just about a week later one of these planes just disintegrated when it took off the field in Jamaica! I remember my



mother telling about it!

I remember getting on a ship in Baytown, Texas and going to Aruba. That was when my "Aunt" Anna went to Aruba. We boarded at night.

### **LEAVING ARUBA**

I was in school there for six months. Then dad got tired of working the graveyard shift in black-out with the Arubans who always were trying to sleep on the job. The company was unable to give him a transfer back to the states at that particular time. And he resigned in June of 1944 and came back to the states. He subsequently went to work for some Seismograph Company working in the Gulf.

I attended the University of Southwestern Louisiana in Lafayette, Louisiana after leaving Aruba. When I went there it was called Southwestern Louisiana Institute. It was the second largest university next to Louisiana State University.

### **FLYING OVER ARUBA**

In April of 1963 I flew over the Island of Aruba as a passenger in an Air Force plane. We left Montgomery, Alabama and flew to San Juan, Puerto Rico. From there we flew to Curacao. In Curacao we landed and had something to eat at the Hotel; did some shopping and then flew to Montego Bay, on the north shore of Jamaica. From there we flew to Port-au-Prince, Haiti and then to Miami and back to Montgomery, Alabama.

In the fall of 1962 I flew from Montgomery, Alabama to Miami, Florida to Kingston, Jamaica where we spent the night. Then we flew to the Panama Canal Zone where we spent another night. We returned by way of Miami to Montgomery again. It was just cross water Navigational Flights to give the Navigators their flying time for the month. It was always cross water Navigational flight. I was just along for the trip. There were "x" numbers of Navigators who would go on the trip. It was a T-29 and they would fill up the plane with just anybody who wanted to go. I knew the co-pilot and he fixed me up so I could be a passenger aboard both times. I had just been called back to active duty from "reserve" status and sent to Montgomery, Alabama. I had been in the Air Force during the Korean conflict and this time I decided that I would just stay in the service. I was working in New Orleans until the time I was called back to active duty. This was when the East Germans had built the Berlin Wall in 1961 and I was called back to active duty. A year and a half after I was recalled I was sent to Germany. This was during the "Berlin Crisis."

During our flight over Aruba the co-pilot called and said, "Hey, you want to see your old stomping grounds?" Then the pilot said, "Why didn't you tell me you had lived on that island we could have landed there." He said, "I am stopping just to find out who would give us the best prices on the military rates that we could use on excursions to the Caribbean!" I think this was when Viana had interests in one of those hotels, his fingers were in everything. I said, "Well, I have friends who live on the island who I am sure could get us some good rates." The pilot said, "The next flight we have going to the Caribbean we will stop in Aruba." And he said he would make sure I got on that flight with him. And then I got assigned to Europe and Germany!





