

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

As told by Robbert van Duin.

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

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

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

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

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

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

# The Homer Waits Story

As told by Homer Waits

## GETTING THERE WAS THE BIG ADVENTURE

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

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

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



my second wife, Jamie. I should also remember the name of the hotel in Maracaibo. I had the pleasure of staying in it on later occasions with George and his son Rusty on their way to Bungalow #32. I had other equally interesting experiences; among them, finding a tarantula

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **ACCOMMODATIONS IN LAGO COLONY**

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

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

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

#### **LAGO COLONY RECREATION**

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

#### **LIFE AFTER ARUBA**

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

#### **IN CONCLUSION**

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



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

Photograph courtesy Art & Kyle Spitzer.











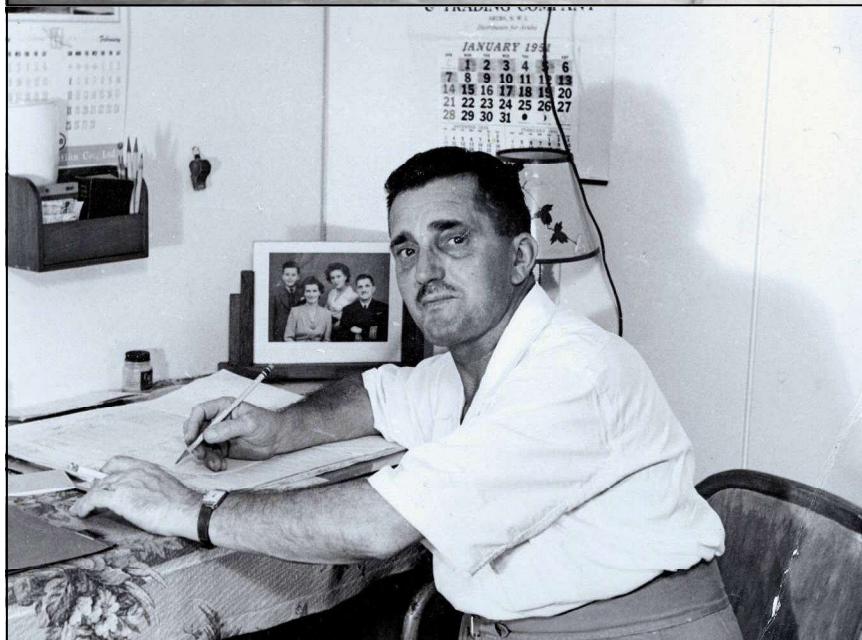


**Sikorsky S-43**

**Pan American World Airways**

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

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



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

Photograph courtesy the Paria Allen Kent collection.

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

Photograph courtesy Paula (Morgan) Young.

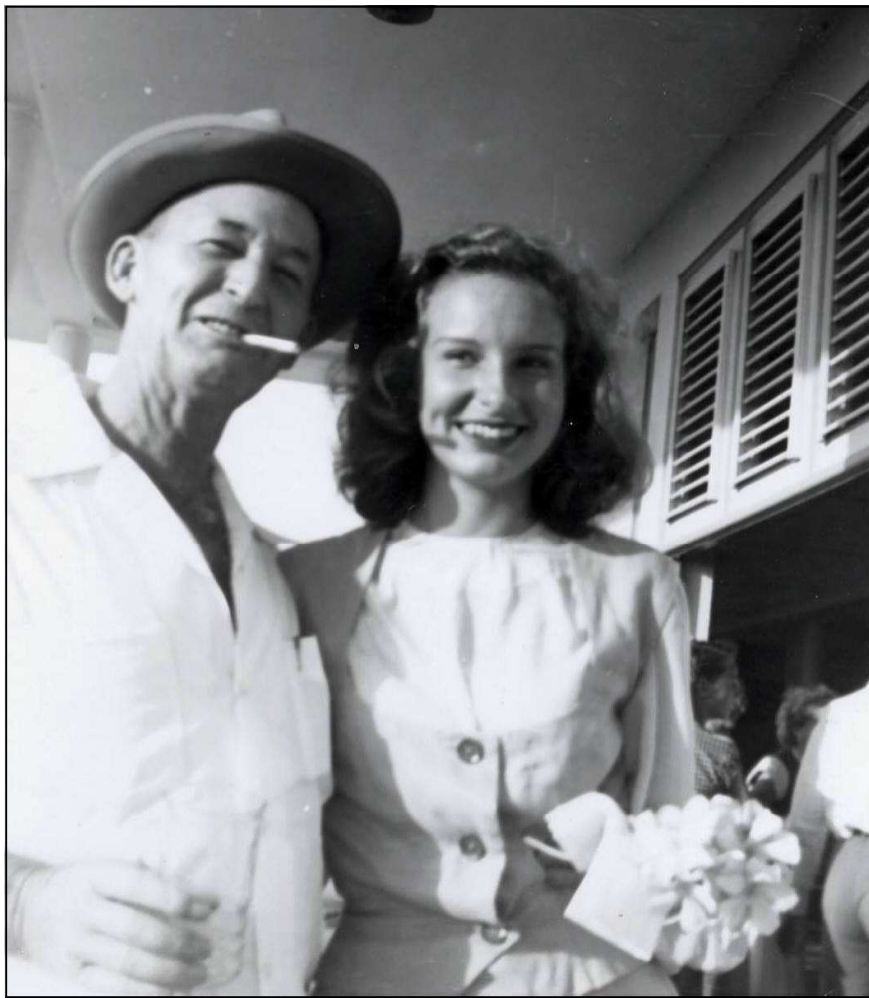


Above, top: Boca Prinz.  
Above, bottom: Inside the company Dining Hall. (Both early 1940's)  
Photographs courtesy the Paria Allen Kent collection.





Above, top: The colony Library.  
Above, bottom: The colony Golf & Country Club. (Both early 1940's)  
Photographs courtesy the Paria Allen Kent collection.



Mitzi Fletcher & Ted McGrew (1948-1949)

Photograph courtesy J L Lopez family. Source unknown.



Above, top: Guard Marine BQ, Oranjestad during WWII.  
Above, bottom: Carpenters Dept, early '40's.  
Photographs courtesy the Paria Allen Kent collection.





Lawrence of Aruba? Sand dunes in 1964.

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