

In 1948, Fred was put in charge of the "knock" (or octane testing) lab, where he remained for ten years. At that point, he was assigned to special instrumentation, charged with researching and then installing chromatographs for chromatographic analyses.

Perhaps the Eaton's, especially Fred, are best remembered for all the extracurricular activities they enjoyed. Fred was active on the School Board, active in the church (among other things, he fixed and maintained the church organ) and, of course, he fixed radios and record players (in his garage) for many colony residents. Vera taught Sunday school and Girl Scouts. Some of you readers may remember the many Canteen dances they chaperoned.

Fred and Vera retired to Winter Haven, FL, in August 1964. In 1992, they moved to Peoria, IL, where they lived close to daughter Alice and her husband, Kyle Spitzer (also, of course, raised in Aruba). Fred died in April 1995 and Vera in July 1995.



Bob Denton at the sheepsheds, 1940.

Photograph courtesy the Paria Allen Kent collection.

## **The George Echelson Family Story**

Our family lived at Bungalow #146 from approx. 1954 to 1965. Mom's name was Martha and my father's name was George. They had two sons, Douglas and I (Duncan).

We lived on the same street from 1946 to 1965. Originally we lived in Bungalow #144 and moved to 146 when I was about 9 or 10. 146 had a slight view of the ocean, so it was considered a better house.

As for Bungalow #144, I mainly remember the wonderful sea grape tree. I spent many young hours climbing that tree and gorging on seagrapes.<sup>1</sup>

George Echelson, was a mechanical engineer turned automation engineer. I believe that he was involved in helping to automate the refining facilities. I have always imagined that he finally automated himself into early retirement.

Father retired somewhere around 1965-66. He worked for JG White and Kellogg, etc. after his time in Aruba. He finally retired to Dallas and died in 1984.

My mother, Martha, was involved in the Junior Esso Club for many years. In addition, she was involved in many plays in the colony. She loved to sketch, paint in oils and write poetry. Martha suffered a stroke in 1997 and died in 2001.

My brother, Doug, was a Down's child who always lived at home and was taken care of by Martha until she became unable in 1997. After a heat stroke and a number of problems with his esophagus he died in early 2000 at the age of 54.

*<sup>1</sup>I remember stuffing myself with seagrapes from a tree in the Meisenheimer's back yard when they lived next door to us. My aunt Phyllis and uncle Shep Semmens and family lived there before the Meisenheimers.*

## **The Sidney George “Sid” & Annie Faunce Family Story**

Sid Faunce was born in Thibodeaux, LA and in 1927 married Annie Songy of Ama (a suburb of New Orleans). He was employed with the PanAm Oil Refinery in Destrehan, LA when he accepted a more lucrative position with Standard Oil in Aruba.<sup>1</sup>

He went to Aruba in 1929 as a First Class Machinist. By 1936, when the living conditions improved in the Lago Colony, Annie joined him there. Sid resigned a couple of times in the early years and traveled back to the States, but always came back. He spent his career in the mechanical department ending as a zone foreman in Catalytic and Light Ends. The last two bungalows the Faunce family occupied were #348 and finally #351. Only one of their five children (Margie) was born in Aruba. The other four, Sidney, Patsy, Richard and Albert (Tinker) were born in New Orleans. All of his children did however grow up from infancy in Aruba. The only exception was the one year following the WWII submarine attack. Annie sailed home with the children while Sid remained in Aruba.<sup>2</sup>

Sid finally retired to New Orleans in 1957. Sid passed on in 1982 and Annie followed in 1993.

<sup>1</sup> *His son recalls his dad chuckling as he recounted the fact that he beefed up his credentials to get a better position during this job transition.-----*

<sup>2</sup> *Mom was just telling me the Faunces lived across the alley from us when we were in Bungalow #510. She said that looking over their fence she could see some of my dad's tools in the yard. The Quiram's apparently also lived behind us there and their father put in a 6 ft. fence to keep us from throwing rocks at his girls. Mom was happy when my brothers built a fort, thinking we'd be home more. She didn't know that forts were made for attacking. She spent more time peacemaking than she intended.*

## **The William E. and Roberta W. Fremgen Story**

As told by Steve Fremgen.

My parents were William E. Fremgen and Roberta W. Fremgen, and they arrived in Aruba in August of 1944. Both have now passed away and I do so wish that I had been able to glean more of the details before they were gone.

Their first bungalow was #212 (before I was born), near the barber shop. Later, they had moved to Bungalow #47 by the time that I was born in February of 1946. We had many Dutch neighbors, and as a toddler I began to speak Dutch much more than I spoke English, which confounded my mother (I must have done that on purpose!). My dad worked in TSD initially.<sup>1</sup>

For some reason, my father left Lago about 1949 and we moved to Brownsville, Texas (my brother Eric was born there January 1950) for a petrochemical project, but we returned to Lago in 1950. By now, since we had left, we had no bungalow and had to live in the Colorado Point apartments for a while. When Bungalow 29 became available about 1951 (dates are fuzzy, but it had to be in that time frame), we moved into that house on the lower road.

Bungalow #29 was ok when we first moved in, but with the renovations that followed, we ended up with a beautiful huge patio and large gardens, all protected with a high privacy wall. That was a tropical haven, and we loved that house. Later on, the company started to tear down all the houses in the median on the lower road, and soon we were the last house remaining. I do not know if pressure was being forced on my dad to move from there, but in 1961 we moved to Bungalow #1578, the last one out on the last row of the "New Houses". My brother Stuart was born in Oct. 1961 when we were in Bungalow #1578. In the interim, dad had moved from TSD and had been manager of the acid plant. (sulfuric acid was used as a catalyst in one step of the refining process) In 1964, dad accepted the position of manager of the Exxon affiliate Intercol, and managed the refinery in Cartagena, Colombia.

In 1966 we returned to Lago once more, but by this time I had been going away to college for a few years, and later that year I entered the USMC. In 1967 when I visited, the folks were living in Bungalow #1521 (Rosborough's old house as I remember it), and that had a view towards the little lagoon and Venezuela. Pretty gardens and location

made that house a nice place.

My folks left finally in 1968. I still have my dad's old office name plate: "Process Foreman." I know that he was instrumental in replacing 8 of the old style furnaces with the late model ones (no longer there) that Howe-Baker built in the 60s. When dad left Lago, he went to work for Howe-Baker in Tyler Texas and was a project manager for many refinery units that were built internationally. Dad passed away in Tyler in 1989. Mom passed away earlier that same year of cancer.

It is hard to look back at the wonderful years there at Lago and remember all the friends, and put so few words down which describe that time. Many friends with whom I shared all the memories are still with me frequently in my thoughts. The times out on the reefs that I spent spearfishing and scuba diving are real parts of me, and even enter into my dreams today.

We all shared life experiences that made us more than friends; we are today part of an extended family with whom we share friendships and memories. I think that is why we feel that need to seek out those who understand our own feelings about that time of our lives at Lago.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*"The old TSD list that Vicky Brown supplied shows all of the hire dates and bungalows from that time. I have a copy of that list if you would like it," advises Steve.*

<sup>2</sup>*Sounds familiar. See what my father said about Lago friendships in the front of Volume I "The Lago Colony Legend—Our Stories."*  
-----

## **The Gibbons Family Story**

As told by Ted Gibbons

I arrived in Aruba in 1940 after traveling to Curacao on board a passenger ship the *SS Rotorua* with my mother and sisters, Audrey and Elizabeth. We sailed from Southampton England, and didn't know if we would be able to complete our trip as the ship was torpedoed 3 days out, but didn't sink and we were able to continue our trip on one engine. Naturally the convoy we were with continued on and we continued our journey without any other ships escorting us. Arriving in Curacao we then boarded a 3 engine plane which looked like the Wright brothers had built and continued our trip to Aruba.

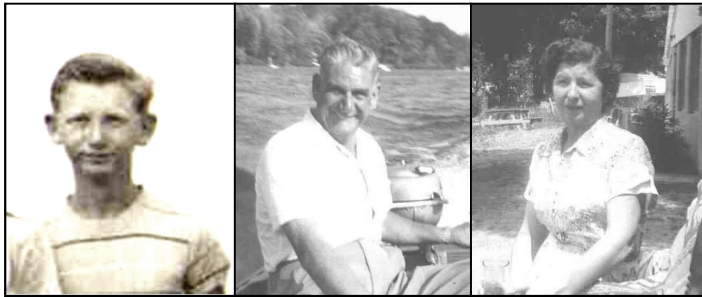
Our first house in Aruba was Bungalow #476 located on the last row of houses. Behind our house were the large white fuel storage tanks. Directly across the street from us were the Aulow's, then Walter's, and further down the street was one of my graduating classmates Johnny Hagendoorn. Just up the street from us were the Morris's, and I often bowled against Larry but can't remember what bowling team he was on, but do know he was the manager and set up the bowling teams. Our second house was just two houses up the street at Bungalow #480 with a concrete block wall all around and a large patio. It was previously occupied by the Hawthorns. From this house we made our final move to Bungalow #516 up on the hill close to the hospital.

My father was the dry-dock supervisor, and he and his crew were responsible for keeping the shuttle tankers in service. During the submarine attack when some of the tankers were torpedoed, the *Pedernales* was hit but didn't sink and floated down just off shore from Oranjestad. After the ship had burned out, my father and his crew cut the ship in two pieces, then towed the two sections to the dry-dock and rejoined them with steel plates and structural steel. The ship was then towed to the states where it was rebuilt.

I left Aruba after graduating in 1950 and my mother and father left a couple of years later as dad had a massive heart attack and had to take a medical retirement.

My sister Audrey stayed in Aruba awhile longer as she married Gene Molzer while in Aruba, and he was the manager of the New Esso Club.

I used to play a lot of golf while in Aruba and some of the best and most memorable rounds I ever played were with Bill Helwig, the Burbage twins, Bob Norcom and Al Leak.



Ted Gibbons, his father and his mother.

Photographs courtesy Ted Gibbons.

## **The Frank & Gladys Gladman Family Story**

As related by Shirley Gladman Ruff

Doesn't seem that it is possible that it has been over 40 years since the graduation of the Class of 1951. Dragging out the 1951 school annual didn't help Shirley remember which one she was in the picture until she remembered that along with Kathleen Spitz she was the tallest girl in the class.

Her father arrived in Aruba in September of 1939. Shirley, brother Bob and their mom arrived in May of 1940. As she recalls, we arrived on the Esso Aruba the same day Holland was invaded by Germany. They lived in Lago Heights until there was a vacancy in the colony and then moved to Bungalow #49. The Gladman family lived next to the Armstrong's. Later they moved to Bungalow #339 and then next door to #341 where they spent many years.

They were three days out of New York going back to Aruba on December 7, 1941. the day Pearl Harbor was bombed. Shirley can remember her father talking about the Santa Rosa (of the Grace Line) making the trip in record time. They were in Aruba for the duration of the war. Etched in Shirley's memory is the night the lake tankers were torpedoed outside the reef and all of the many torpedoed at that time.

She remembers Miss Parham in the third grade and those infernal flashcards to help us learn the multiplication tables; Miss Olson in the fourth grade; having trouble with penmanship then. She still thinks Mildred Wright was the Class of 51's 6th grade teacher. Nor will she ever forget Maude Thomas and how she made the students keep their fingernails short for typing. She made good typists of them. And then there was Miss Stadleman and all of the lines they had to memorize from the "Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner" and how she had them write the Iliad and Odyssey in modern terms.

Shirley left Aruba in 1948 and finished the last two years of high school and graduated in Springer, New Mexico where she lived with cousins. Jim (her husband, Jim Ruff) enrolled in medical school the fall of 1955. She worked at a bank while he was in school in Kirksville, Missouri. He did his internship in Lamed, Kansas and then back to New Mexico they came. Socorro to be exact and still there. Their daughter, Lauren Lee, was from there in 1961.

Brother Bob stayed with the folks in Aruba and graduated in 1954. How he loved softball. Went to Eastern New Mexico University in



Portales, New Mexico on a scholarship. Graduated with a degree in Business. Graduated June 2, married June 4, and started working at Clovis Air Force Base on June 6.

Gladys and Frank Gladman retired and moved to Amarillo in 1959. That is just 365 miles from Socorro so had lots of family visits. Shirley moved them over to Socorro in 1982 and had the horrible task of having to put them into the local nursing home. Gladys passed away in 1984. Just a little short of being 80, Frank had been physically incapacitated by a massive stroke in 1974 and he spent the last 5½ years of his life at Good Samaritan Village. He passed away Oct. 1988.

Shirley's husband, Jim Ruff, passed away very suddenly on March 5, 1987. At 56 years old, he had a massive heart attack. "Being a country doctor takes its toll and I guess I feel much cheated by life. We had talked about what we would do when he retired and what we would do on our 50th wedding anniversary. I was left with shattered dreams. I have been the director at the Socorro Senior Center since then and it has been good for me," commented Shirley.

Her daughter moved back to Socorro two years ago. She graduated from Southern Illinois University in 1985 and is graduate admissions officer at New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology here in Socorro. It is nice to have family in the same town.

### **MEMORIES**

- Do you remember the strike when they took a bunch of us out of school and we worked down in the refinery?
- Do you remember the old ESSO Club and the open air movies? That was lots of fun.



## **The Francis & “Kay” Griffin Family Story**

Francis Edward Griffin was born May 1907 and Catherine "Kay" Edwina Morrissey February 1908 in the small southern Massachusetts town of Somerset. Somerset is a bedroom community across the Taunton River from Fall River, MA and about 20 miles east of Providence, RI. Initially, commuters took the trolley and the railroad to Fall River. As cars became more affordable and roads more conducive, they were used to commute to Providence. With modern superhighways they even commute to Boston.

Frank's grandfather worked for the "railroad" and the Griffin house was only about a block and a half from the Somerset Village Station. Frank's grandfather started as a Conductor riding the trains to/from Boston daily and finally becoming a bridge-tender. He worked on the bridge over the Taunton River, about ¼ mile south of Somerset Village Station. Frank's son, Bob, didn't get to know his grandfather who passed away in 1938. Bob did get to know his Grandmother Griffin though and his Aunt Eleanor and uncles, Neal and Harry.

Kay's father was a janitor at the Somerset High School. The high school, located several blocks from his home at first, was eventually centralized further south in town. Bob spent time with them while attending part of 5th Grade in Somerset. He also spent time with them while attending Junior and Senior High School at a Preparatory School in South Byfield, MA. Bob also spent vacations other than Christmas and summer with the Morrissey family in Somerset.

Frank and Kay Morrissey attended Somerset High School. At the same time but in different classes were Neal Griffin, Bill Egan, Tom Egan and Marjorie (Egan) Proterra. Following high school, Frank attended Wentworth Institute (similar to a Junior College today) in Boston, graduating with a 2-year degree in Chemistry. Thereafter he joined New England Oil Company in Fall River, subsequently transferring to New Haven, CT as a Chemist in the laboratory. At the same time Kay went to school at Katherine Gibbs in Fall River, earning a secretarial degree. After graduation she worked for Mount Hope Power Generation Plant in Somerset.

While in New Haven Frank learned of the opportunity to go to Aruba. New England Oil was affiliated with Standard Oil of Indiana, the

company involved in the start-up of Lago. His application was accepted and he went to Aruba in 1929. Of course, given the level of travel, communications and world knowledge existing at the time, that was like going to the edge of the world. Dad originally roomed in the Bachelor's Quarters with G. L. (Lou) MacNutt, beginning a friendship lasting until they both died in their 90's.

In 1933 or 1934 it was evident that Lago was going to last, providing Frank his best career option with the world economic situation what it was, he made the decision to return to Somerset and marry his childhood sweetheart, Catherine "Kay" Morrissey. They moved into Bungalow #126. In December of 1935, due to citizenship problems, limited hospital capability and a difficult pregnancy, Kay came back to the States to give birth to a son, Robert Griffin. His mom joking he was a pain from day one, Bob was born in August of 1936 in Truesdale Catholic Hospital, Fall River, MA. When he was about six weeks old they returned to Aruba on the *s/s J. A. Mowinkle*. A lady later described that voyage, noting that Bob was a handful. Nevertheless life progressed for the Griffin family in Aruba.

Frank had originally started in the Laboratory in Lago and then moved to the Pressure Stills. He eventually went to Light Oils and then into management moving up to Process Superintendent, then General Superintendent and finally General Manager. The upwardly mobile Griffin's moved from Bungalow #126 to #72. Finally around 1950 they moved to Bungalow #287, next door to Casa Grande. The Charles Smith family was next door in #285.

Mom was not a "club" person or "sports" person, preferring to be involved in helping many of the younger men and ladies. It seemed like there were always bachelors, teachers, service men and the like around. I remember well during the War making weekly runs to the various searchlight and gun emplacements delivering pies, cakes, cupcakes etc.

We frequently picked up Scottish, then American and finally young Dutch Marines at the Savaneta Camp after Sunday Mass and brought them back to the Colony for a swim and then a good home cooked Sunday meal. Young Bob was in seventh heaven being amongst these "soldiers".<sup>1</sup>

*<sup>1</sup> I remember a guy named Beirne we befriended and who came back for visits. Only recently I learned he was in Aruba for just two months. Fascinating that I remember him after scant exposure over 50 years ago.*

About the time that Frank decided that Lago was a viable living he enticed his old "baseball" buddies from High School to join him. Bill Egan and Bob's Uncle Neal were first followed later by Tom Egan. Marjorie Egan came down to visit and Joe Proterra fell in love and proposed. Bob remembers being the "ring boy" in that wedding in 1939.

In a similar manner Neal Griffin met and fell in love with Mary, daughter of Stuart Harrison. They too were married in Aruba but left before the War to go to the Dutch East Indies in Palembang. That tour was short lived due to the War and they returned. They left Aruba in the late 40's for Billings, Montana. After Billings, Neal was in the Belot Refinery in Havana, then in Rio de Janeiro with Esso Brasileiro and finally with Creole Petroleum in Caracas. It is believed Bill Egan and Joe Proterra and Marjorie spent almost all their careers in Aruba with Joe spending some time on short term assignments in Europe before finally retiring.

In 1959 Frank was offered the position of General Refinery Manager for the National Iranian Oil Company refinery in Abadan.<sup>2</sup>

In 1957 the premier of Iran Mossadegh (who was a radical pro-Russian person) was overthrown (supposedly with the help of our CIA) and the Shah was put on the throne. AIOC (Anglo-Iranian Oil Company) was nationalized by Mossadegh in 1952 and taken from what was to become British Petroleum.

It was again allowed to reopen (as NIOC or National Iranian Oil Company) being operated by a consortium of Western Oil Companies (IOE&PC or Iranian Oil Exploration and Producing Company). For instance, when Dad was there his boss was from Royal Dutch Shell, the production fields were headed up by a man from Texaco and in Dad's refinery his secretary was from Shell, his finance man from BP and his Administrative Assistant from Standard Oil of Ohio etc. etc. The Shah had also contractually required that all the senior IOE&PC Western Officials have an Iranian Deputy. Hence, in Frank's office there were three desks: One for him, one for his Iranian Deputy and one for a Savak (Iranian CIA/FBI) Colonel. The Savak Colonel was to "protect" Iran's assets and quite frankly keep the lid on the situation. In their front yard one could look across the Shatt al Arab River which neither the Iranians or Iraqis could decide where the line between the countries was. The Iranians claimed all the way to the Iraqi shore and vice versa. Son Bob can clearly remember staring at Iraqi howitzers that only needed the pull

<sup>2</sup>*This was the same time my father transferred from Barrancabermeja, Colombia to Agha Jari, Iran where I visited summers while attending high school Stateside.*

of a lanyard to land some darn big shells in the front yard. He visited Abadan after his last year in College and once while in the Navy.<sup>3,4</sup>

In 1962 Frank accepted a position with Esso Petroleum in London. He was Vice President and Manufacturing Director for the British affiliate of Exxon and, as such was in charge of three refineries in Fawley (Southampton), Milford Haven (Wales) and at Whitegate in Cobh, Ireland. Kay the meantime had become ill with hepatitis while in Iran and was spending a lot of time in the States.<sup>5</sup> In the meantime, son

Bob met his wife-to-be in Puerto Rico while in the Navy. They were married in San Juan in 1964 and they too moved to CT (Stamford) in August 1964 and Bob went to work for Esso International in their Tanker Department. Their first daughter, Michele, was born in Stamford and of course the grandparents went crazy.

Frank in the meantime had returned to work part-time as a Consultant for the International Executive Service Corps. This Group still exists today and is for lack of a better term the Executive Peace Corps. Frank was responsible for evaluating situations in the Middle East to determine if they were worthy of support and the sending of volunteers to assist. It involved a lot of travel but, his main interest with the interface he dealt with many Middle Eastern leaders of business and the IESC Staff itself which was headed up by Frank Pace (ex Secretary of the Army under Eisenhower) and the Chairman of IESC's Board was

<sup>3</sup> *This is what started the Iran-Iraq war: Iran seized an island in the "no-man's-land" that Iraq claimed. While the Iranians had Abadan in firing range of Iraq, the Iraqis had a similarly situated chemical plant at Bashira. We apparently sided with Sadaam Hussein against Iran in this war and subsequently with Iran when Sadaam Hussein became intolerable.*

<sup>4</sup> *Bob adds that "the Iraqi Consul General to Iran at the time Dad was there was Tariq Aziz. You may remember he was recently Deputy Prime Minister for Saddam Hussein and is being prosecuted now. He is a Christian and quite a nice person actually." We met at a Christmas Cocktail Party in 1961."*

<sup>5</sup> *Bob interjects: "She never said anything to us but, I have always suspected she knew there was something more serious wrong from maybe 1960 onwards. Nevertheless, she had convinced Dad to build a "retirement home" in Newtown, CT and then further convinced him to retire to enjoy it in 1964."*

(footnotes cont'd next page)

David Rockefeller of Chase Manhattan Bank.<sup>6</sup>

But he did not welcome retirement as a single person. Late in 1966 he called Bob in San Juan and said that he was considering going to London to try and convince a lady to become his second wife. It was a lady that both he and Kay had known while they were in London as she was a Administrative Assistant to another of Esso Petroleum's Vice Presidents. Donny and Frank were married in January of 1967. Frank's son Bob was his Best Man.

After leaving IESC Frank also did some consulting with American Independent Oil (Aminoil) which is a Kuwait Company with production

and refining capacity in Kuwait. He worked at that until finally retiring from all activities in the early 80's. In the meantime Frank and Donny had a boy in 1979, giving Bob a half brother.<sup>7</sup>

Dad finally passed away four years ago and ironically it was caused by a fall. It is a marvel all the sicknesses he had where there were only marginal medical facilities available and all the rinky dink airlines he flew on without problem only to slip on a step in a small town in NC and fall and hit his head and bleed to death because he was on blood thinners and the bleeding could not be stopped. He was well into his 90s though and had been married twice in excess of 30 years each and was happy with his life, his sons and all the good things he did for so many.

After leaving Aruba Queen Juliana of the Netherlands made him a Knight in the House of Oranje Nassau as thanks for his efforts in building employee housing in San Nicolas, work with the Seaman's Club in San Nicholas and general support of the Government of Aruba. He and Governor Do Kwartz were very close friends and remained so in retirement with each visiting the other in their respective homes in Holland and the USA.

<sup>6</sup> *Bob reports: " I got antsy in the Fall of 1965 and accepted a position back in Puerto Rico with Sea-Land Service Inc. We moved back to the island in October 1965. Mom and Dad came to visit at Christmas time and Mom had dramatically gone downhill in the three months we had been gone. She was so bad that they had to cut their stay in San Juan short and then right after January 1 the fateful call from my Dad came that I had better rush to Danbury CT if I wanted to say goodbye to Mom. Ann (my wife) and I left Michele with Ann's Mother and rushed up and barely did get our goodbyes in. It was sad for both of them and us. Mom had so wanted Dad to retire and enjoy living in comfort of the good old US of A and I think Dad had welcomed the idea too."*

(footnotes cont'd next page)

<sup>7</sup> *"My two daughters have an uncle younger than they are!" exclaims Bob.*

Some biodata by Ray Burson with additional material supplied by Robert "Bob" Griffin.

## The Ed Holland Family Arrival Story



Frank Griffin at an Aruba reunion party.

Photograph courtesy the Moritz collection.

## **The Eleanore and Eugene Holzer Family Story**

Eleanore (Ellie) A. and Eugene (Gene) Holzer arrived in Aruba on January 26, 1956. Susan Leslie was born in the Lago Hospital on December 22, 1957, and Gregory Andrew was born in the Lago Hospital on May 26, 1959. Gene was assigned to the Process Engineering group of TSD. They left Aruba in June 1962 on a transfer to Creole, New York. They returned to Aruba in November 1966. Gene was then assigned to the HDS project. They left Aruba in June 1973 on a transfer to the Benecia Refinery in California.

**From information provided by Gene Holzer**



## The Jan Koster Story

As told by Jan Koster

One evening I went to see my friend Jan de Boer. I had not been there for some time. He asked me if I had seen the ad in the paper where they were asking for tradesmen to go to work in Aruba. Jan told me that he had written. They looked up the fourteen day old paper for me and I decided that I may as well try also. However, there was one big obstacle. The application and also the resume of credentials had to be done in English. Here is where the better education of the family upstairs came in. I believe that Sis's<sup>1</sup> brother Jo did the job and it must have been a good one. Although I did not have much hope I decided I may as well start to study English. I did not have any trouble finding teachers. Everybody jumped in. The son of our family doctor gave me a book called The White Monkey, by John Galsworthy to read. What an optimist! However, once started I enjoyed the study and I worked hard.

A couple of weeks went by and still no word. Then, one evening when I came home, I found the family waiting with a very important looking letter. It said, in English, that I was expected to come to the employment office and meet a Mr. Shelton: He was here from New York to interview people for the job in Aruba. I tell you, I slept very little that night. When I came to the office the following morning there



Mr. Jansen received me very cordially. For a while we talked in English about my background.

Aruba Flying Club P1-19 over Lago Colony.  
Photograph courtesy J L Lopez family. Photographer unknown.

Then he turned to Dutch and went over the letters of recommendation he had received. There was one he questioned me in particular about. Yes, you guessed it---the yacht builder's: I had trained as a blacksmith and worked at a yacht works making fittings for the boats. The yacht builders were a class by themselves and had no use for us iron workers. I did not like to go to the place where we were supposed to eat our lunch and the other smiths went home for lunch. So I always stayed by my self at our place of work. One day the owner himself found me there and I was told to go and eat with the others. I told him that I could not see why, and he left it at that. But a few days later he came back. We had an argument and almost a fight. He fired me on the spot. I am telling this detail because it almost prevented me from obtaining the most important job of my life.

Mr. Jansen turned to me and asked if I was a communist. I told him I was not. I also told him that I might fly off the handle sometimes, but that if I was treated right I would give them no difficulties. He looked at me and told me to go to the company's doctor right away and then come back to him. Back in his office he told me that in fourteen days I would go to Aruba.

Well, I had to tell somebody right away. I went to see my Aunt Willy who lived in The Hague. I had dinner there and of course talked about my early days.

When I came home with the news it was received with mixed feelings, but we all realized that this would be my big opportunity. A couple of weeks of hectic preparation began. Everybody chipped in. Our family doctor who had been a ship's doctor on ships going to the tropics brought me an entire tropical outfit including a pith helmet. Later it proved to be of no use where I went, but what did I know.

#### **ON THE SEA TO ARUBA**

Now the time came to say goodbye to my family and friends. It was March 7, 1933. I had decided that I did not want anybody to see me off at the train station. There I met another fellow whom I knew from going to English lessons. He was also one of the lucky ones on his way to Aruba. His name was Jan Ouwejan. Together we went to Antwerp and found the way to our ship. It was the *Ingrid Horn*, a rather small **German** ship. It was mainly a freighter, but it had first class accommodations for about twenty passengers. I am not sure now, but I believe that all my fellow passengers were also going to Aruba. We sailed that night. Jan Ouwejan and I had gotten a cabin together. We waited until the ship was underway before we got into our bunks. It had been an exciting and tiring day so we both slept well.

~~---- Leaving Antwerp, in order to reach the open sea, a ship has to go down the Schelds River and through a part of Holland. But when we~~