

# **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.

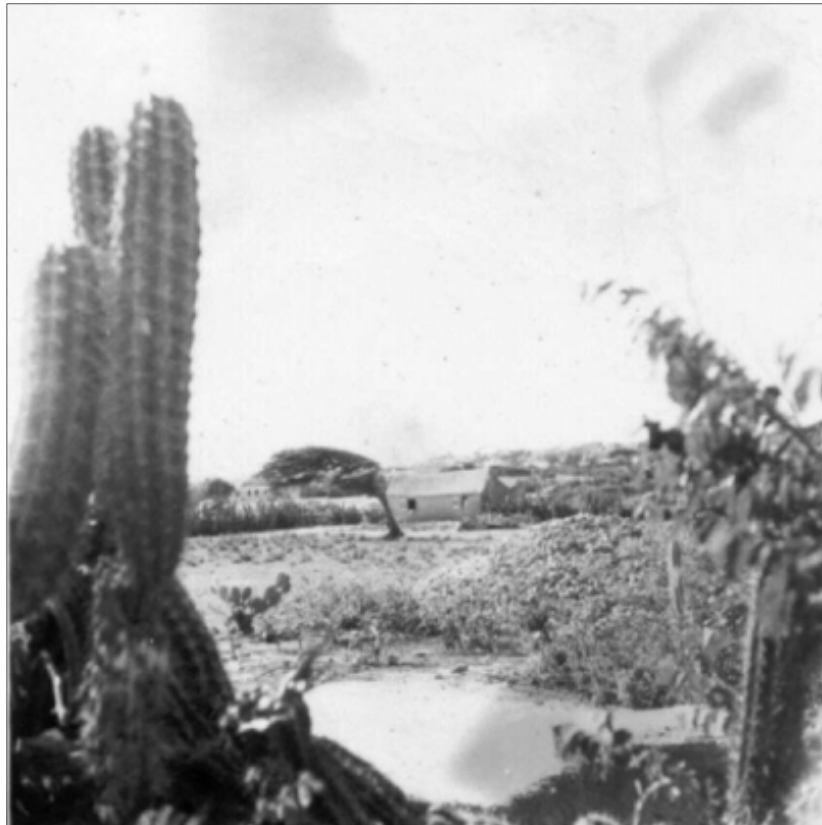
In August, 1937 the family came to Aruba on the tanker S.S. *Pan Bolivar*. Another passenger was Alvin Marks, the newly hired principal of Lago high school. The Colby family included wife Elizabeth (Betty), daughter Betsy, and sons Barry, Lyn, Whitney Jr., and Mason. After settling into a routine they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