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

SHIPS TRAVELED

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

JOB ASSIGNMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WORKING CONDITIONS

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

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

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

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

## CUB SCOUTS

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

## GOLF

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

## FISHING

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### TEMPERATURE PROBLEMS

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

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

**PROMOTION**

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

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

## SAILING

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**RECREATION IN LAS PIEDRAS**

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

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

## CARIPITO REFINERY EXPERIENCES

### AN ASSIGNMENT TO CARIPITO

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

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

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

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

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

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

### THE THIRD TIME

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

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

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

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

## AN ACCIDENT AT THE CARIPITO REFINERY

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

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

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

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

**THIEVERY IN CARIPITO**

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

**DUDLEY'S FISHING TRIP**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**SHIFT INSTRUMENT SUPERVISOR DURING WORLD WAR II**

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

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

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

## LAKE TANKER FRIENDS

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

## A TRIP ON AN OCEAN GOING OIL TANKER

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

## A TANKER TRIP TO CUBA BEFORE WORLD WAR II

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

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

### TANKER TRIPS TO EUROPE

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

### DOING A GOOD TURN

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

### THE CAPTAIN HAS A PROBLEM

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

told to make a log of his mistakes.

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

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

**ARRANGING A TRIP TO NORWAY**

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

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

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

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

**ARRANGING A TRIP ASHORE**

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

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

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

**EVERYTHING GOES AS PLANNED**

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

**A GENEROUS INVITATION**

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

home.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**THE SHIP'S OWNER**

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

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

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

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

**MY RARE LIQUEUR**

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

## THE CAPTAIN'S SON

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### THE CAPTAIN'S DAUGHTER

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

### ANOTHER NORWEGIAN CAPTAIN'S INVITATION

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

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

### SHIPS ADOPTED BY SCHOOLS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**ROY ELLIOT**

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

**THE WHALER KILLER BOATS**

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

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

Norway.

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

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

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

**THE CARIPITO REFINERY**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

straight!

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

## EMPLOYEES COUNCIL

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

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

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

## NEW FCC UNIT DEDICATED

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

## CHECKING ON INSTRUMENT DEPT. SUPERVISORS

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

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

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

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

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

**REPORTS WRITING**

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

**WORLD WAR II**

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

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

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

## WARTIME ANECDOTES

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

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

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

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

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

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

## JOB ANECDOTES

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

- In the 1950's at the Edeleneau Plant at the West end of the refinery

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

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

- They had us install the gauge glasses in the Edleanu plant boilers without the Microsite normally used to prevent the sight glasses from being eroded by steam. After they had been used for a time they would leak. We had to change gauge glasses every two weeks, but that was because they were below the water level. They had two of their own 225 p.s.i. boilers to provide the uncommon pressures intrinsic in their operations.

- The acid from the Treating Plant and Alkylation Plant which was sent to the Acid Plant for restoration was stored in small black tanks which were 15 feet in diameter and 20 feet high. On one hot, sunny day, during a stretch of warm weather, one of the tanks foamed over. The acid spill produced a cloud of sulfur dioxide which spread rapidly, gassing the people in both of the units at the Acid Plant. Panic-stricken, they ran in all directions. Some fellows ran down on the docks, but even there the gas was so concentrated that they gasped for

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

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

**Photo courtesy M. G. Lopez**

# The M. John Ten Houte De Lange Story

## BEGINNINGS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## ARUBA EXPERIENCES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## WORLD WAR II

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

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

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

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

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

# A John Denton Story

## JOHN DENTON RELATES THE FOLLOWING:

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

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

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

# The Henry Devolder Story

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Source:** ***Aruba Esso News,*** **July 24, 1942**

Early "pioneers" - date unknown

Front: Ans Schindeler, Dorothy MacNutt, Walker, Nydia Krottenauer, K Jensen, A. Halpert, Elsie Koopman, Dorothy Davidson
Back: P.E. Jensen, A. S. MacNutt, A. E. Krottenauer, Karl Walker, M. A. Davidson, N. P. Schindeler

**Photo courtesy A. S. MacNutt**

# The Dr. Lee A. Dew Story

## MEMORIES OF THE BAKERY AT LAGO

My Father, Allen Dew, operated the bakery at Lago beginning in 1929 until 1940, when operations at Lago were phased out and the bakery contracts turned over to Jefe De Veer, operator of bakeries in San Nicholas and Oranjestad.

"Dew," as everyone on Aruba knew him, was born in Carterville, Missouri, a small lead and zinc mining town. After working at a variety of jobs he was inducted into the Army during World War I. After the war he learned the bakers' trade, and became a bakery manager for the Federal Bakeries system, operating bakeries in Savannah, Georgia, and later Northampton, Massachusetts.

In 1929 he signed on with Lago and was one of the first to arrive at the site of what was to become the Lago refinery. At this time, no wives were allowed, but the next year, after the first bungalows were built, his wife, Irene, joined him and the following year I was born. While not the first American child born at Lago, I was certainly one of the first.

The bakery was located near the Main Gate between the refinery and village of San Nicholas. It was right across from the old commissary building. While it was a very plain building, it was a wonderland for a child. I remember many details about the bakery, but especially watching the revolving shelves of the oven, as the pans of dough would be put in, and then slowly revolve until they would come around again all nicely browned.

Many different kinds of bread were made at the bakery, and Dew prided himself on the fancy breads and rolls which they made. Often I would go with him to collect palm fronds, which he used to put the creases in Vienna bread. It could have been done with a knife, but by laying palm fronds across the dough as it was rising he got a much neater cut across the top of the loaf, which suited his sense of order and symmetry.

All kinds of special desserts and pastries were made, too, and I particularly liked to be at the bakery when it was closing time for the commissary. Then he would cross the street and pick up unsold products which we and the bakery employees could take home.

Flour and other supplies were brought to the bakery by railroad, a

siding came to the back door, and sacks of flour were unloaded from the flatcars directly into the storeroom. I can remember spending many happy hours playing on the flour sacks, or on the flatcars which might be found on the siding. From the front door of the bakery could be seen the shipping office, with its signal flags for vessels entering and leaving the harbor and radio antennas.

Another happy memory of the bakery was the big refrigerator, where my father always kept cold cuts, cheese and other snacks for visitors, and where, on Saturdays or on holidays, I could go and have a hot roll and salami for lunch.

I don't remember how many people worked at the bakery, but I do know they were of a great number of nationalities, as was so much of Lago's work force. Jamaicans, Cubans, Trinidadians, Chinese, Hungarians, even a Swede as I recall. Many were highly skilled bakers and pastry chefs, although for the really intricate jobs such as wedding cakes, Dew always did the decorating. He was a consummate artist at decorating cakes and turning out special pastries, such as éclairs, tarts or puff pastry for parties and receptions of which there were many in those days.

Part of his job, too, involved victualing ships, and he got to be well acquainted with many of the ship captains who visited Aruba, whether it was on British freighters, Norwegian whalers refueling for the trip from polar seas, or the occasional warship which would pay a call as World War II began.

The bakery and its products were also important for the many bachelors at Lago, men who did not have their wives with them and who lived in the various bachelors' quarters. Because many of them worked shift work, and, of course, ate at the mess hall, the daily (or nightly) coffee break, complete with fresh doughnuts or pastry, was an important and looked-for touch of home and familiarity.

Because we were at Lago early, we had one of the first bungalows, number 19, on the water front just a short distance from the refinery gate. Our next door neighbors in No. 18 were a Dutch family, the van Mauricks. He was a harbor pilot, and his son, Cornelius and I were good friends. Life at No. 19 was delightful. It was a typical two bedroom bungalow, located where later the water distillation plant would be built. (The company moved the house to a lot by the new hospital up on the hill in 1942.) From our back yard we could watch the ships entering and leaving the harbor, since this was before the new harbor entrance was opened, and there was a constant stream of traffic as the lake tankers

ferried crude oil from Venezuela and bigger tankers and freighters from around the world called at our port.

## MY BEGINNINGS & CHILDHOOD

### BIRTHDAY

I was born in the first Lago Hospital, run by Dr. A. R. Mailer, whose main job in 1931 was obstetrics. It seems that with the building of the first bungalows and the bringing in of the first wives in 10930 the stork got quite a workout. In fact the hospital was so crowded when I was born in September of 1931 that I was placed in an open dresser drawer, as the limited number of bassinets were all full.

At 18 months, I made my first trip back to the United States, for a two-month leave, and on the return trip to Aruba, on the tanker *Pan Bolivar*, we ran into a hurricane. My parents often told of strapping me into heaving bunk with my father's belts, and how the morning after we had first hit the storm, he was the only one of the passengers who was able to report to the mess for breakfast. Today, in the days of comfortable flights from New York or Miami it is hard to believe that the best passage to Aruba was by tanker. One of my earliest memories is of our trip home in 1938. I can still see the catwalk from the castle to the stern, with seas breaking over the well deck. I can remember, too, the novelty of the thick crackers served in the mess, although I cannot remember anything else about that trip, taken when I was not quite seven years old.

### SCHOOL

There was no kindergarten at Lago, and so, when I was five, my mother and another lady started a kindergarten, which met in the community building. I don't remember how many kids attended, but I know that there were a couple of Dutch children. I remember early one morning one of the Dutch marines on Aruba coming by our house to talk to my mother about enrolling his child, and I was quite impressed that this marine, in uniform, appeared at breakfast time. It was still peacetime, of course, when military uniforms were almost comic opera in appearance, especially the tropical kit of the Dutch marines which looked like something out of the nineteenth century, with their absurd straw hats and black belts.

I was in the first grade at the time. School, even on Aruba, had to intrude into the lives of children. I started first grade in the fall of 1937. Ms Edith Greer was the teacher. The first and second grades were in a separate building next to the main building, which had two stories. The high school was on the other side. It was a short walk from our house

down the street, then up a flight of stairs to the school yard. I only remember the names of two of my first grade classmates. They were Marjorie Smith and Susie Mingus.

My second grade teacher was Ms Ethel M. Alsdorf, with whom I did not get along very well. I was quite relieved to escape second grade. I was promoted to the third grade in the impressive two-story building. This was real status. My third-grade teacher in l939-1940 was Ms Myrtle Parham, fourth grade was Ms Beatrice M. Olson, and fifth grade, in the traumatic year 1941-42 was Ms Helene de Lhorbe.

**OUR HOUSE**

Aruba was a marvelous place to be a kid, if you lived in the Lago Colony. Our house was a typical two bedroom divided by a bath on the north side. It had a large (or at least it seemed to me) living-dining room and kitchen on the south side. There was a small front porch with a main door leading into the living room. A back door lead from the kitchen directly out to the street. Naturally this was the door that everyone used.

The bedroom windows on the north side caught the trade winds. Through the window of my bedroom I could see the street light. I could also see the lights of the bachelor's quarters on the hill beyond the light. The road leading to the Esso Club passed under that street light and on to my right. In the kitchen there was our kerosene stove and a breakfast table. There was a sink and counter top with cupboards above and below on the west and south side of the kitchen.

The kitchen was the domain of Elrica, our maid and friend. Elrica was from "Statia" she said. St. Eustatius is the full name of that 8 square mile island. It is one of the Netherlands Antilles group. I was born shortly after she came to work for my parents. She is one of my earliest and fondest memories. Elrica cooked my meals as a small child. We played all sorts of games together. Indeed I was probably closer to her than to anyone other than my parents. Fruit vendors, with trays of fruit piled high on their heads, were frequent visitors to our back door. Our family made regular trips to the harbor in Oranjestad for produce. Venezuelan schooners lined the dockside there. (Today these schooners are all motorized and not nearly as colorful.) Every Friday we had baked red snapper, my mother’s favorite. A highlight of our family table was my father's chili, the best anywhere. He kept a pot on the stove at the bakery, and often would bring it home a special treat. But perhaps the most persistent memory of childhood food on Aruba was KLIM. This, of course, was the powdered milk that I was forced to drink at every meal.

Our yard was rather famous through the Lago colony because of our garden. Both of my parents were great gardeners, my mother especially enjoyed the many tropical plants and flowers that could be grown on Aruba. She often described herself as "Aruba's happiest citizen" because of the great joy she experienced there. Weekends were often spent on excursions to remote parts of the island, such as Boca Prins or Fontein to gather topsoil and goat manure to be carefully brought home and rationed out for the plants.

My parents lived for a time in Florida, and there became familiar with Australian pine, which grew in sandy and saline conditions. Dew reasoned that if the Australian pine could grow in Florida it could grow in Aruba and survive on brackish water, so he wrote to a friend in Florida to send him some pine cones. He brought home large fruit cans from the bakery, filled them with dirt, leaf mold and goat manure, and planted the seeds. Soon we had hundreds of little Australian pine trees growing all around our house, along with the coconut palms planted from sprouting nuts found on the beach and sea grape and almond trees.

One day at the bakery he noticed some date seeds which had been thrown out by one of the bakers were beginning to sprout. He took them home and planted them in cans like the pines. Soon we also had a thriving date orchard. When the trees were large enough he began transplanting them, especially at the new golf course. Many were given away to friends, or used as landscaping at various places on the island. Today in Aruba there are date trees and Australian pines which are living monuments to the dedication of my parents to bringing life and beauty to desolate spots of coral.

But the focal point of my childhood life in Aruba was our yard, bathed in its almost eternal sunshine. We had a large patio built around a big almond tree and even bigger coconut tree. The patio was of brick, which we got from the brick pile by the Acid Plant and carried home in the trunk of the car. It must have taken a hundred loads to build the patio, walkways and retaining walls in the garden. Across the front of the house, next to the street, was a row of sea grape trees. These shielded the house from some of the road noise. And a picket fence started by the back door and went around the west side of the house. On the east side were the driveway and garage, connected to the house with a lattice fence about 8 feet high. We kids used to climb from the porch rail to the top of this fence. On the top of this fence there was a 2" by 6" board. We would walk on this board to the roof of the garage. Thus this back yard was really private, and was filled with all sorts of flowering plants, trees and shrubs. Whenever we would find a sprouting coconut on the

beach we would bring it home, and had quite a few bearing trees. In addition, we had a fine lawn, carefully watered and tended.

Because the back yard looked out directly on the ocean, there were always things to see and do. Native fishermen cast their nets in the shallow water of the lagoon. Ocean going freighters and tankers could be seen passing the island in an endless stream. Some waited at anchor off the reef for clearance to proceed into the harbor.

## PASTTIMES & HOBBIES

Eating was a major sport on Aruba where there were numerous good cooks. Dinner parties were a standard form of entertainment. Also the food at the Esso Club was an anticipated treat. We often would go to Oranjestad for dinner. Invariably it was a Chinese dinner.

Since my dad went to work at 4:00 a.m., he often got off early in the afternoon that gave us time for all sorts of afternoon activities. Oranjestad was also the place where we shopped for all sorts of items. One of our favorite shopping places was the Aruba Trading Company. My treat, if I had been good, was a box of cookies called Children's Own Biscuits, from the Aruba Trading Company.

But my favorite place to eat, other than the bakery, was the free lunch counter at the bar at the Esso Club. My father would take me in, set me on a bar stool. Then he would buy me a coke. Next we would make sandwiches from the breads (fresh from the bakery, of course.) cheese and cold cuts at the "free lunch." There were also bowls of pretzels on the bar - quite the treat for a small boy impressed with being allowed into a man's world.

There was a sea grape tree by the back step at the back door. My play area was under this tree. The house was setting on concrete piers with a moat around them. These moats were kept filled with black oil, by the Colony Service. The moats were there to keep out crawling insects such as cock roaches. I soon discovered that I could make excellent roads with a mixture of dirt and oil from these moats. Of course these roads were for my little cars and trucks. I built endless roadways, imitating every new building project at Lago.

Just to the left of our yard was the pilot dock. This was where the Dutch pilot boats were moored. These little boats had rounded cabins meant to deflect choppy seas from entering the boats. And at all hours of the day and night these little boats were darting out to a ship outside the harbor. Sometimes they were carrying a pilot out to an incoming ship. Sometimes they were picking up a pilot from a ship that had just left the

harbor. It was fun to visit the pilot dock. And the pilots were quite the envy of us boys because they got to ride on all the big ships. And we could only watch from shore.

Later, the refinery began to expand eastward into the residential area of the Colony. And a water-intake facility was built just west of our house, with a long jetty jutting out into the lagoon. This Jetty became the fishing pier for the neighborhood. A little string, a small hook, and some frozen shrimp from the commissary, kept us boys occupied for hours. There many varieties of beautiful fish which inhabited these sheltered waters. And, occasionally, we could hook a good-sized red snapper or sand shark.

To reach the water intake jetty we traveled on the special Lago sidewalks. Of course these sidewalks were the water pipes. For boys, these pipes, set above ground of course, were ideal playthings. (I later realized Lago would have had to dig pipe trenches with dynamite. It was easier to install and maintain the piping on low concrete piers.) They could be climbed on, walked on, fought over, and generally made use of. They were large pipes, of six or eight inch diameter, "just right" for us to walk on in our canvas Keds. Keds were the only kind of shoes any of us ever owned on Aruba.

The road by our house was subjected to heavy traffic all day long. This was because we were located next to the Gate into the refinery. This was particularly true as the refinery and housing area expanded during the 1930's. A highlight of any day was the passing of a Caterpillar tractor. In those days Lago used Caterpillars for all sorts of jobs. These were the tractors having metal treads instead of wheels. And they came in all sizes. Today rubber tired wheels would be used. When we would hear a tractor coming we would always search frantically for a board or plank to put in the road for it to run over. And we would follow it along the road until we got tired. One day a large crane was moving slowly along the road by the Club. My father, who knew the driver, put me aboard for a short ride. This was quite an experience for a 5 or 6 years old kid.

Another piece of equipment frequently seen was a crane truck, number F-7, which was used by the blasting crew. The crane was used to place the heavy mat, which they used while blasting. They were blasting holes for utility poles. The mats were placed over the dynamite charges before their ignition. This was done to prevent flying rock from damaging nearby facilities (and small boys). This truck was a chain-drive vehicle with solid tires. I have the picture I took of this truck as it

was working near our house. That was one of the first pictures I ever took.

One of the greatest treats for me was to take a trip by car through the refinery area where I could see the small gauge railroad trains there. Another great treat was to go by car to Oranjestad, where there was the possibility of seeing the trains there. These were the trains that ran on the two-foot-gauge Eagle refinery railway. I was always on the lookout for train movements. And carefully catalogued all the cars parked at sidings. It was particularly exciting to drive down to the bakery, down the main refinery road. This road paralleled the tracks. And by the finger piers with their double lines of railroad, because it was here that most of Lago's rail activity took place.

The Eagle refinery, at Oranjestad, with its smaller tracks had English locomotives and Dutch cars. The trains at Lago were all American made. We used to enjoy buying fresh fruit from the docks at Oranjestad and watch the activity in the harbor. The activity in the harbor was so different from the businesslike operations at Lago. Nearly every Sunday we would take a drive to some part of the island, often with a picnic at Fontein beach, Palm Beach, or the dunes at the California Lighthouse. Or we might stop at the gold mines at Bushiribana or the smelter at Balashi. Sometimes, too, we would stop at the airport to see if there were any planes, a relative rarity in the 1930's.

School in Aruba was fun, largely because of the free time. We played baseball every chance we had. We played "work-up," which could be played with any number of kids. Marbles were also popular, and everybody carried around a sack of marbles. Our sack of marbles contained "glassies" and "steelies". A few of the boys had bright clear red marbles, which had originally been license plate decorations on cars. Nearly everyone had a bicycle, it seemed, and the bike rack at the school ground was always crowded. We had a short cut when walking to or from school which by the third grade I was able to use. The short cut involved climbing the face of the cliff from the level where our bungalow was to the higher level where the school was located. It was a great day when I became big enough to negotiate the shortcut, and no longer had to use the "baby" stairway.

Bicycles also meant that we could adventure in all sorts of places. One such place was the old phosphate mines by lighthouse hill. My mother would have been appalled that I sometimes rode my bike out to the old mine caves and explored them. On other occasions we rode down by Baby Lagoon to the sand dunes to engage in rubber gun fights.

Sometimes we even went as far as the old rock crusher, located near the base of lighthouse hill. This was a formidable place, near stark, threatening rocks and pounding, sea.

The beaches, however, were our favorite spots. Baby Beach, with its clear, calm gentle waters, was the favorite spot for mothers and young children, and it was here that I learned to swim. There were small wooden changing houses, with wooden walkways leading out **over** the water. However we always wore our suits to the beach so that would not have to change. Often ships or pleasure boats would pass beyond the reef. And occasionally a native fisherman would be patiently casting his nets in the placid water. When I was about 9, I received swimming lessons. These lessons were given at the diving dock at Rodger's Beach. Those completing these lessons were allowed to go swimming without adult supervision.

Kite flying was another favorite occupation. We were inspired, no doubt, by the Chinese who worked in the Dining Hall. They would fly their very elaborate kites from lighthouse hill. I remember dragon kites and all sorts of other elaborate and gigantic kites. And sometimes they would have fighting kites and engage in elaborate battles. We kids then would try to imitate these battles with our home-made kites. Our kites were made of bamboo, string and tissue paper and held together with flour paste.

## HOLIDAYS

The most important events in a child's world, however, are holidays. Christmas was heralded by the arrival of the Christmas trees, delivered by truck fresh from the ship. We would eagerly wait alongside the road for the truck to appear and drop off our tree. Since we were one of the first houses, we usually got a "just right" tree. I sometimes wondered what kind of tree the people living "way up on the hill" got. Christmas for us was somewhat different from most of the Lago Colony families. My mother's cousin, L. C. Stabe, was a “stillman” in the Pressure Stills. Stabe was a bachelor, and lived in the Bachelors' quarters, but was my favorite babysitter. He always came to our house for holiday meals. And often come for supper, when my mother would fix his favorite food, dried navy beans. Apparently this was a delicacy, which they did not have at the mess hall. When I would come home and smell navy beans cooking, I always knew Stabe was coming for supper.

The Fourth of July was celebrated by a parade, featuring the Drum and bugle corps of the Lago American Legion. After dark there was a fireworks' display out over the water. The fireworks were launched from

the point where the new Esso Club was built. It was quite a spectacular show, with the colors reflected in the water. We boys also looked forward to the Fourth of July for firecrackers, which could be set off in nooks and crannies in the coral rock. We loved to play at blasting with firecrackers, and it is surprising that we were not hurt.

Easter meant Easter egg hunts at the baseball field, with special prizes for those kids lucky enough to find the special eggs, and the Queen's birthday meant a sack of candy for us school children. But for a child growing up in the Lago Colony, every day was like a holiday. Our bungalow, No. 19, was just a short walk from the Lago Club with its many activities. At the soda fountain giant ice cream cones could be had for a nickel, candy bars for 10 cents and comic books for a quarter. And, on an allowance of two guilders per week, I was really rich. A kid could also watch the action at the bowling alley or pool room or go across the street and rummage for stamps for one's collection at the post office. There were movies at the Lago Club on Fridays and Sundays. And on Sunday mornings there was Sunday school, held at the school building before the building of the Lago Community Church.

## VACATIONS

Our trips home, to the States, were important events. The earliest trip I can remember was in 1938, when we came up on a tanker to Bayonne, N. J. It was in the spring, and I remember my first experience with cold weather. I was outfitted with a coat and "long pants." Up to then I had been wearing "short pants." We returned to Aruba on the *Santa Paula* of the Grace Line, leaving New York on April 29, 1938. The ship did not dock at Aruba, but, if my memory is correct, we disembarked into a tug and were taken ashore.

## WORLD WAR II

All of this “world” was to change dramatically beginning in the fall of 1939 with the German invasion of Poland. I don't know what my first memory of the war is, but I can remember playing a game called "The Russians and the Finns," a take-off on cowboys and Indians. The Finns were the good guys, however. The German invasion of Holland on May 10, 1940, was a time easy to remember, however this brought the reality of war home to us for the first time. One of the most vivid memories for me of those days was the building of the bomb shelters. These were Quonset-hut shaped steel structures reinforced with sandbags. These structures appear to have been a silly idea when seen in retrospect. But they symbolized a world suddenly becoming very serious for us kids. We did not take them completely seriously, however. We kids soon found that these shelters made good latrines. And soon the atmosphere

in them was such that most people would have probably rather risked the bombs than the shelters.

In another vivid memory I see my parents and me driving to Palm Beach. Upon arriving there we see the German ship, *Antilla*. This was a small vessel, which had been scuttled by her crew on May 10, 1942, when Germany invaded Holland. I seem to remember a Dutch marine on guard duty on the shore. We made quite an outing of it with a picnic on the beach. About this time, too, my father took me to visit a German fellow he knew in San Nicholas. I remember being impressed with a picture of Hitler, which had been set up in his front room. It was almost like a shrine. Shortly afterwards, he was arrested and interned by the Dutch authorities. I remember my parents talking about him, and saying that he was probably a spy.

It was in this atmosphere that we returned to the States for our family vacation in 1940. On this vacation we flew to Curacao and boarded the Grace Line's *Santa Rosa* for the trip home. By the summer of 1940 it was war time for Europe. Huge American flags were painted on both sides of the ship. These flags were brightly lighted at night to demonstrate her neutrality. It was with a sense of relief that my father woke me early one morning and took me up on deck. He wanted me to watch our ship enter New York harbor and pass the Statue of Liberty.

The French marines, 180 in number, landed on Aruba on the night of May 10, 1940. They were transported to Aruba by the French auxiliary cruiser *Primauguet*. They were supposed to reinforce the small Dutch garrison in Aruba. I can remember the French, with their berets topped with a red pom-pom. (The pom-pom was a yarn ball about golf ball size.) I also remember they seemed always to be driving around like crazy in their trucks. One time they had a wreck on the road near the Club. This caused quite a bit of excitement in our neighborhood. On July 6, 1940, the French marines left Aruba. This was the day the French Government surrendered to Germany. The actions of the French military unit were unpredictable.

The American cruiser *Vincennes* made a courtesy call, docking in Lago's harbor one day. They were followed by the destroyer *Rowan* the next month. My father took me to visit these ships as they lay in port. We also visited the Dutch submarine *014* at the Oranjestad docks. The bakery was often called upon to help supply visiting vessels. As a result of this my father was a frequent guest aboard. And sometimes he took me on these visits. One of the most fascinating of these visits was to a Norwegian whaling ship. And I still have two whales' teeth, mounted on

a teak wood plaque, as souvenirs of this visit.

There was a unit of the Dutch Colonial Army stationed in Curacao. A contingent was transferred to augment the forces in Aruba. These were artillery men who set up some gun emplacements. These emplacements were set up on the other side of the island. As a result we at Lago saw little of them.

The departing French marines were replaced by a unit of the British army. These troops were a part of those stationed in Curacao. This contingent of 120 troops saw brief service on Aruba. The arrival of the British made us realize there was a war going on. These troops were replaced on September 3, 1940, by the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders. This 520 man unit of Scots was professional troops. They included 18 year old young recruits first time away from home. Also included were survivors who had been recently evacuated from Dunkirk, northern France. They were also skilled at public relations. They put on performances at the school with their pipes and drums. And they explained the traditions of their uniform and equipment. The officers were guests at the Club for movies and other activities. There was a young boy with the Scots who had claimed he was 18 years old when he enlisted. And the army found out in Aruba that he was under age. He was pointed out to me one night at a movie in the Club. The Scots were housed in Savaneta. Sometimes they marched from there, through the refinery, to the area around Baby Lagoon. There they conducted training. This put their line of march right past our bungalow. It was quite a thrill to hear the pipes and drums in the distance as they approached. And it was a sight to watch as the soldiers marched by in their battle kit.

The Scots departed Aruba on February 13, 1942. I remember their parade through San Nicholas, past the main gate of the refinery, on to the docks. My mother bought me a small union jack, which I waved as the troops marched by. Radio Berlin promptly notified the world of the name of the ship and the embarking date. This showed us the efficiency of the Axis intelligence network on Aruba.

Two days before the Scots departed more than a thousand American troops landed in Aruba. Their landing date was February 11, 1942. Some air corps troops had arrived earlier to begin the job of expanding Dakota airport. The upgraded airport had to accommodate the bombers and other military aircraft. It had to be lengthened and strengthened. The runways had to be able to receive loaded bombers. They had to be prepared for nighttime traffic. American G. I.'s were soon to be seen

doing sentry duty at important points around the refinery and Colony. One guard post was at the first road junction inside the colony. This was where the main road divided near the Dining Hall. One road went up the hill and by the club. The other branch of the road went by our house and past the swimming docks. I remember going down to talk to the soldiers on duty at the road junction.

We boys also visited the troops as they were trying to get settled in the sheep sheds. There they were housed in crowded quarters. And it became quite a mark of status to wear a pin, ribbon or insignia of some sort given to us by the soldiers. These young troops were probably quite delighted to find themselves among Americans. And the colony residents welcomed them with open arms.

The first blackout came about this time. And the lens of all automobile headlights had to be painted over. Only little strips of light could be shown. I also vaguely remember that all spare tires had to be surrendered to authorities. I remember wondering at the time how the refinery could be blacked out. How were they going to black out the brightly burning flare a couple of blocks from our house?

On Sunday night February 15, we went to the movies at the Club as usual, and then home to bed. Shortly after 1:30 in the morning my father woke me from a deep sleep, saying we had to get out of the house. There was a strange red light in the sky, and I remember a considerable amount of noise. We got into our car and drove along the road to a point near the church, where we stopped. There was a crowd of people and we watched the drama taking place right off the reef. A German submarine had torpedoed two lake tankers lying at anchor off the reef. One, the *Pedernales* was aflame. And the other, the *Oranjestad*, was broken in two and sinking. We could hear the roar of the flames of the burning oil, and hear shouts. Eventually the *Pedernales* burned through her chain and began drifting off. We could see flames off in the distance where other ships were hit. According to knowledge we gained later it was the German Submarine U-156 that did the damage. The commander was Kapitenleutnant Werner Hartenstein. A fatal error damaged his 10.5 centimeter deck gun on their first shot. Antiaircraft shells they fired were defective. Tracer bullets were fired, but no damage done. Neither the refinery nor the colony suffered from the attack by the submarine.

After some time we left the area of the church and went to a friend's bungalow near hospital hill. This was the home of the Farquarsons and their bungalow was near where the new hospital was later built. Their bungalow, unlike ours, was nowhere near the spheroid tank farm. These

tanks were at an elevation above our bungalow. If a fire occurred among these tanks, burning gasoline would have flowed right by our bungalow. Since it was nearly dawn, my father dropped us off at the Farquarsons' and he went on to the bakery. People would want bread whether we were at war or not. I went to sleep, and missed school that day. And I doubt if much studying was done by the few kids who did appear. Incredibly, I understand that some people slept through the whole thing! Many bungalows were not as close to the seafront as our bungalow. We had a ringside seat so to speak.

**EVACUATION**

A day or so later, our school building was shaken as if by an explosion. We said it was either a depth charge or the firing of heavy guns. A short time later, parents began arriving to pick up their children. They were taking them to places further away from the tank farm. Our school building was downhill from gasoline filled tanks. We were still sleeping at the Farquarsons throughout this time. We returned to our house only for changes of clothing and similar necessities. The decision was made to evacuate some dependents, and we were put on the list of those to go. My father's job was disappearing, thanks to Dutch government orders. They were demanding that auxiliary functions at Lago be turned over to Aruban nationals. The Aruban national in this case was Jefe De Veer. He operated bakeries in Oranjestad and San Nicholas.

The morning came when we were to be evacuated. So carrying only a couple of suitcases, we reported to the air field. By this time it was full of military airplanes and a beehive of activity. At this point the only safe mode of travel to and from Aruba was by air. We were loaded onto an airplane and flown to Maracaibo. There we found ourselves comfortably housed in Lago facilities complete with swimming pool.

After a day or so at Maracaibo, we boarded another plane for Panama. I remember that there was an American MP aboard the plane. As we approached the Canal Zone he carefully checked to make sure all the windows on the plane were blocked off. The curtains on the windows were adjusted so that none of the passengers would be able to see the canal or the defense works around it. We spent a day in Panama City. Then we flew to Guatemala City, where we spent the night. When we arrived in Brownsville, Texas we were still in our tropical clothes. One of our first tasks was to go to a department store and buy "American" clothes. For me that meant long pants, and the first pair of leather shoes that I could remember. We then experienced a two day train trip before arrived at our home in Missouri. In those days every

transportation conveyance was crowded with military travelers.

## LEAVING ARUBA

My father remained on Aruba until late summer of 1942. He was busy phasing out the bakery and overseeing the transfer of the facility to Mr. De Veers. He was offered the job of manager of the Commissary but declined. He felt he should be with his family in Missouri. He also felt the Commissary job would be a temporary one. When he returned to Missouri in August he was permitted to ship out two barrels of household goods. Everything else, our car, furniture, clothing and other possessions had to be abandoned. He managed to sell some things. Other items had to be given away. Due to the tremendous expansion of the refinery during this period our bungalow was relocated. It wound up on a new site on hospital hill. Our garden with all of its improvements and trees was bulldozed. I was told a water distillation plant was built on the site.

A set of 3 "nested" teakwood tables, a mahogany coffee table, some carved ivory, and two whales teeth represents souvenirs of our 'happy days' in Aruba. Another treasured "keepsake" is an oil painting of our house done by a man who lived in the bachelor's quarters. He painted the view from his window. I have an ongoing interest in the history of Lago. The eventful days of 1942 that so altered my life are of particular interest to me. I wrote an account of the attack on Aruba by the German U-boat 156. It was published in the February 1978 *American Legion Magazine*. The U-boat war in the Caribbean in 1942 is of particular interest to me.

## ARUBA THOUGHTS

People sometimes ask me about growing up in Aruba. They ask how my childhood on Aruba was different from growing up in the States. The answer is, not much. Our schools were American schools and were very good. I was pleasantly surprised to find that I was about one grade ahead when I returned to the States. We played the same games, had the same holidays. We generally thought of ourselves completely as Americans. The only real difference was that on Aruba we escaped the Great Depression. We lived in a rather unreal society. We were carefully segregated from poverty. We were not involved in politics or decision-making. It was a patriarchal society in which the Company made every decision for you. How much income you would have to what Christmas tree you would get was decided for you. It was an idealized world. However, for us kids, it was a world of eternal play, and eternal summer.

My growing up on Aruba was different, perhaps, from the other

Lago Colony kids. Our bungalow was located on the edge and not in the middle of the Colony. My world was much more refinery and sea oriented than many of the other kids. I spent many hours by myself. It so happened there were not many kids in my neighborhood. I also spent many hours within the refinery gates. Since my father's job was not in a hazardous location I could be with him on the job. The fathers of the other children usually worked in hazardous locations. Other kids seldom went through the refinery gates.

My parents were not really refinery people, not oil people. My father's job had nothing to do with the processing of oil. Company politics held no interest for my family. And we were not drawn into any of the Colony cliques. My father was an out going man who made friends with everyone. He had friends outside the Colony as well as inside. He had no racial or national prejudices as did many of the expatriates. Our family was much more self sufficient in our interests. This may be one reason; of course, why we were "expendable" in 1942 . . . we were among the non-essentials.

Looking back on my childhood one thing becomes increasingly clear. It was a unique privilege for me to be a part of this experience. Not only did it provide me with a happy childhood but some unforgettable experiences. I realize now that I was a part of a great historic event. Lago existed as a part of the late colonial era. This was when the old world of the Nineteenth century was still unshaken by nationalism, or separatism or any of the other isms that have come to characterize our time. The Dutch political empire and the American economic empire co-existed. They were compatible together. The cosmopolitan world of the Lago refinery really was two different worlds. There was the comfortable world of the Lago Colony. We had our modern houses and Commissary. We had our clubs and golf course. We were a little middle-class America in a resort environment. Then there was San Nicholas with its squalor. Some houses were little more than packing crates. No self-respecting Kentucky pig farmer would let his animals survive under such conditions.

I can remember when we would drive our maid, Elrica, home to the village. She would disappear into a narrow alley between two shacks that I called "Elrica's hole." I did not think about it at the time, but I have wondered since what kind of living conditions she had. I am sure she was saving her money so that she could return to "Statia" with a dowry. I'm also sure she was making much more as a maid than she could have made on her home island. But she also represented the disparity between our great comfort and her poverty. I am afraid this disparity still exists

on Aruba. It is bound to increase with the phenomenal birthrate on that troubled island.

Still, Aruba was home, and when I return I still feel as if I am coming home, even after all these years.


Image of a faucet in sidewalk at the Faucet's gate. It was there when we left in 1955 and I looked for it to take this picture when we came back in 1976.

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

# The Brian Fredrick "Freddie" Dirkz Story

## CORRECTION TO *ARUBA, PAST AND PRESENT*: FREDDIE'S STORY

Let me begin by talking about the book by Johan Hartog, *Aruba, Past and Present*, talk about a fault in the book and set the record straight as to just what had happened to my grandfather.

I was born in 1911. Both of my grandmothers were born here in Aruba. My last name shouldn't be Dirkz. My father married my mother in church and did not go through the necessary civil ceremonies. This meant there is no civil record. My last name should be Gomez. My mother's maiden name was Dirkz. My grandfather's first name was Brian, and my grandmother's first name was Frederica, and that's why my father gave me the first names of Brian Frederick.

My grandfather was born here in Aruba. Simon Zacharias Gomez, my great-great grandfather and the patriarch (root) of the family, and Coco Gonzales came here during an uprising in Venezuela. This was during the time of Cipriano Castro who was the dictator (1899-1908). This was the dictator in power before the dictator Juan Vicente Gomez (1908-1935). They were natives of Spain during Simon Bolivar's time. (Bolivar was successful in defeating the Spanish in 1821) They fought on the side of the Venezuelans helping them obtain their freedom from the Spaniards. However things got too hot and they had to get away for a while. My great-great grandfather stayed here and got married with the Lampe family. The other one, Gonzales, went back to Venezuela. One of the big shots of the army was waiting for him when he arrived and he was killed.

## THE LAMPE FAMILY

The Lampe family came here in the 1700's. When I went to Holland, with my father, we passed through the place our family, a family of fishermen, is from. It was Flushing—across the sea.

My grandfather, Pieter Lampe, used to own property in Oranjestad. His wife had died and he lived with his slave in his house, Casa Salinas, near what is now called Roger's Beach in the Lago Colony. He was killed by his slave, Gerard Lampe (Slaves had the same last name as their master). The crime happened on April 21, 1829. Gerard was the last person to be hung in Curacao.

**WHAT HAPPENED:**

Gerard told the authorities that they used to keep drinking and cooking water in a barrel in the house. (We used to call the dipper "Coco." because they made it from the cocoanuts. Even after they were made from tin, we still called the dipper Coco.) As the slave was getting a drink of water from the Coco, he let the excess water run over his body and drip back into the barrel. Pieter said, "No wonder they call you people pigs." The slave got mad, and when Pieter fell asleep, he opened up his head with a hatchet.

There was considerable blood on the bedroom floor so he brought sand from the beach to hide it. Then he took the body to the beach and set it afloat in the Lagoon.

When Pieter's family came to visit Pieter they asked where Pieter was, the slave replied that he went fishing with his net. By mid day, Pieter still hadn't returned. Pieter's bed was made from rocks and a plastering material we called "Cauti." The ceiling was so low that blood had splattered on it and one of the visiting family noticed it. They called a meeting outside and said it looks like something has happened to the old man. They tied the slave up and began to question him. Cleaning away some of the sand, they found blood. They took him to Oranjestad and the authorities asked what he had done with the body. He said he had thrown in into the sea. One of the men of the visiting family paddled out in the old man's canoe and found the body floating in the lagoon. He tied it to the canoe and paddled it back to the beach.

**FREDDIE TALKS WITH JOHAN HARTOG:**

One day I was driving down the road in my car and came upon Johan Hartog, the author of *Aruba - Past and Present*. He was out walking as he liked to do. I stopped my car and he got in. I told him I had read his book and I didn't agree with some of the things he had written. He said, "For instance, what?"

I said, "The story about the murder of my grandfather, Pieter Lampe. You mentioned he was killed over near Fontein on that side of the island, and that isn't true. He was killed in Casa Salina which was located near Rodger's Beach in what was later the Lago Colony. Johan Hirases' father was the one who found him."

Hartog said, "What you are telling me now is what I tried to find out when I was writing the book. I went around gathering information for the book, and I got the wrong information from the people I questioned."

## FREDDIE BECOMES A LAGO EMPLOYEE

I went to work for Lago in 1924. My job was as "waterboy". I carried drinking water around for company personnel. I was the lowest paid employee at that time. I earned .25 Netherlands Antilles Florins (NAFls) a day. We worked 6 days a week and this came to NAFLS 1.50 a week. Some people earned NAFls 1.00 a day. [1]

Some people walked to work and others rode donkeys. In the early days people only went home at the end of the week. They brought cooking utensils and kaffri corn meal and seasoning with them. They cooked fish they caught every day and made bread with the corn meal. This was the "pisca and funchi" that was the main Aruban diet in those days. At first they slept in hammocks and later in barracks that the company built for them.

## SOME ARUBAN FIRSTS:

### FIRST BARBER

Manuel Geerman was the first Aruban barber in San Nicholas. His last barber shop was right near the gasoline station on the east end of the village.

### THE DREDGES USED IN SAN NICHOLAS HARBOR

A bucket type dredge, the *Red Canton*, came from the States, and worked for a while, but it didn't do much. There were no tug boats.

The three-masted phosphate schooners had trouble negotiating the harbor. The winds were tricky. They had to maneuver the schooners by means of ropes from shore in order to bring them up to the docks.

The dredge was moored near shore until it rotted, and they had to blow it up with dynamite to remove it. Before then, laborers from the other islands lived in the dredge.

Later they had a bucket type dredge that worked. In the beginning the dredged material was carried out to the ocean and dumped.

At that time I was working in the mess hall. Later I went back to

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[1] *I first met Freddie when he was 21 years old, in 1932. I was working in the Oil Inspection Laboratory, down near the #1 Power House in the refinery. He was in the Sulphur Lab where they tested various hydrocarbon products for their sulphur contents. In those days the Sulphur Lab was located up near refinery gate leading into the Colony.*

the office where I used to be an office boy, the first office that was run by Enriques and Eilas Art used to be in that office addition by the "White house." Then two Americans, L.B. Cagler and Albright arrived. They called Cagler "Half-Pint" because he was so short. Of course, Albright was a little bigger, but he wasn't what you would call a big man. I remember I was amazed that Cagler was a chain-smoker. He kept lighting a new cigarette with the butt of the old. He bought Chesterfields or Camels by the carton.

One day I went around to mail a letter, and when I was coming back, I saw Cagler and Enriquez, the two head guys at that time, walking down the road. I asked Cagler what was going on. Cagler said they had gotten into a fight with Albright, and had quit.

The two remaining guys took over the office. The boss over them was the first Superintendent, the one who carved 1926 on the rock that used to be near the "White House." He was a nice husky guy who chewed tobacco, Frank W. Levitt. He lived into his ninety's. One man told me he had met Levitt in South Caroline some years ago.

Then there was Jack Keaton, and two brothers by the name of Volk: One tall, one short, never got along because the skinny one drank too much. Next was a fellow by the name of McKing; he lived upstairs in the Whitehouse.

With the exception of a while when he went to school, Watson was here all the time. He and Fred Penny, an Englishman, ran the Receiving and Shipping Department.

Captain Robert Rodger and William Clark came in after things were surveyed. They left. Rodger came back but Clark never returned. Rodger opened up an office in Oranjestad, and that's where Casey Eman and Bunch worked with Rodger down there.

**THE FIRST CAR ON THE ISLAND:**

The first car on the island was brought here by Doctor Hopkins. I still remember the color of the car. It was yellow. I was going to school then. The doctor and Johan Beaujon put it together because it was dismantled for shipping to Aruba. There were no ships large enough to bring it to Aruba already assembled. Beaujon and John G. Eman drove it for him. The first time I saw it, John was driving and Doctor Hopkins was with him.

**FREDDIE'S FIRST TRIP TO ORANJESTAD:**

The first time I went to Oranjestad from Savaneta was to see a cock. Johnny and his father came up to San Nicholas with his horse and buggy

and my father borrowed it. Oranjestad was something to see. It was a big city.

**"FIRST" FREDDIE CORRECTS A RADIO PROGRAM:**

Years later, a friend said, they are having a quiz program on the radio about the old days. I tuned in the program and they were asking if anyone knew the name of the very first ship that came into the San Nicholas Harbor. I called and told them it was the Francunion. The guy told me I was wrong, and proceeded to tell me what its name was and that it had been brought in by Frank Beaujon.

I told him, I'm not asking you which ship it was, I'm telling you which one it was, and Jose Rollas was its captain. The ship was just outside of the harbor and calling for a pilot to bring him in and dock him. The only problem was there wasn't any pilot. A laborer I knew who had some experience in moving ships in the harbor volunteered to bring it in. There were two Lake Tankers, the Francunion and the Inver Colony.

I came inside Lago in the Main Office and told them to correct the person who was running the radio show.

**FIRST OCEAN GOING TANKER SHIPS TO ENTER THE HARBOR:**

The *Cerra Ebano* and the *Cerra Azul* were the first ocean going tankers that came in to San Nicholas harbor. They came in the same day as the lake tankers. That was a big day and there was a fiesta dance to celebrate it in the house of Captain Rodger. The first two large ocean tankers had sat at the lower end of Sabaneta for a long time. The smaller lake tankers came over from Venezuela and pumped crude into the ocean going tankers, and when they got a full load, they went to the States.

One of the small lake tankers, the *San Nicholas*, was converted into a dredge to keep the channel at the mouth of Lake Maracaibo open.

Pedro Greo, who used to work in the Laboratory then, and I served the people at the fiesta.

**HARBOR SURVEY**

There were two Englishmen, Watson and Gray. They were the ones who did the survey of the San Nicholas harbor. My uncle, Gabriel "Gabby" Werleman, and Manuel "Manny" Geerman started to work the same day I did. They were hired to row Mr. Watson and Mr. Gray around the harbor as they took soundings and surveyed the harbor.

**BUNGALOWS WERE BUILT AND MOVED**

There were bungalows built to the east of Captain Rodger's house in the concession. The old Laboratory Number 1 was built to the south

of Capt Rodger's residence. Then there was a Main Office. One of the bungalows was occupied by three girls, Lottie (McReynolds) and her sister Sylvia Gravenstein, and Peggy Edwards. John Alden, my boss lived in one of those bungalows. One of the bungalows became an office. That picture you will find in The History of Lago with some of them sitting on steps, some of them on a porch. Pete Barker, Corella, my brother, Max DeCuba, T.C. Brown, and his assistant, Bernardino "Etty."

**LEARNING ENGLISH**

I learned my English working with the Americans. You can't imagine that I didn't know one word of English. Right out of school, we learned a little Dutch. To go to school we had to walk from San Nicholas to Savaneta, and from Savaneta to San Nicholas six days a week. We went to church on Saturday.

Whatever we learned, we lost playing on the road. When we graduated, we didn't get a diploma. If Chinese had come instead of the Americans, we would be speaking Chinese today. We had to learn.

My uncle went to school in Oranjestad; he knew a few words of English, but not many. He came to live in San Nicholas to work in the phosphate mines and he had a little store that sold groceries and liquor. That house used to be right where the gate by the white house is now, near where the first crude oil storage tanks were built.

**WHAT HAPPENED TO PHIL HUNTER**

Do you remember what happened to Phil Hunter and his assistant at the original Pan Am Club? There was the old club that burned down during WWII. They left and went onboard a ship, direct because they had told a dark skinned engineer at the Club Bar: "Listen, finish drinking your beer and leave, because we don't cater to colored people here." That fellow just went mad. He said, "Don't you know who you are talking to. You are talking to a real American, an American Indian. Just wait for me, I'll be right back." And Phil and his assistant took off in his car. He boarded one of the tankers, ready to leave. The engineer went all through the club, all over the colony looking for him. Nobody would say one word. Phil never came back to Aruba again.

**THE LIGHT HOUSE KEEPER**

Johan Croes used to ride his donkey to come through the concession from San Nicholas every day. He used to clean and light the kerosene lantern in the old lighthouse lamp at Seroe Colorado and then go right back to San Nicholas.

# The Eduardo Dorsey Jr. Story

I was born in Galveston City, Texas on May 1, 1914. Later my father left the United States to go to work in Tampico, Tams, Mexico. He succeeded in obtaining employment with the Huasteca Petroleum Company in 1922 in a neighborhood in Vera Cruz in a location crossing the Panuco River to the south of Tampico. He began working in 1929 and left the Company in 1935. I was traveling with merchandise to sell in the petroleum camp at Cerro Azul in Vera Cruz. I had the opportunity to see the well known Well Cero Azul #4 whose production was calculated to be between 280,000 and 290,000 barrels per day.

I met Edgar Jackson in Mata Redonda, Vera Cruz on December 19, 1932. We became good friends and he has visited me in Mexico and I visited him in Pompano Beach, Florida after he had retired there. I also met Miles Epler and P. V. McDermott there in Mata Redonda. The unit they were working on was an M. W. Kellogg plant similar to the "visbreaker" and "cracking" unit in Aruba. Later on I became acquainted with Jim French and Andy Crump when they came as vacation replacements on these units. Cerro Azul was about 125 kilometers from Mata Redonda. The famous Cerro Azul #4 well with the production of 280,000+ bbl/day crude also produced a considerable quantity of gas. This gas was piped to Mata Redonda and when it arrived there considerable gasoline was recovered due to the condensation during its 125 kilometer journey. I noticed that the beginning pay here was very low so I decided to apply for work to the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey to Mr. Harold Attwood and I had the good fortune to receive a letter telling me to come to the office in 30 Rockefeller Plaza in New York City, New York. After they informed me where I was to catch the boat in New York I went to the Hotel Taft and later the Hotel Lincoln and finally to the Y. M. C. A. . . . it looked as if they were abandoning me.

But finally I left New York and arrived in Aruba on April 24, 1936. In the beginning I worked in the mechanical shops. I was assigned to Number 3 and 4 Combination Units (also known as the High Pressure Stills). I was there until June 30, 1935. I received a telephone call from Louis G. Lopez who told me that he understood that somebody had arrived from Tampico and he desired to get acquainted. And if it was convenient would I come by and see him after getting off of my shift. When I got off my shift at 8 a.m. I went by his office in the Gas Plant

where he was waiting for me. We talked for about an hour where I brought him up to date about Tampico and people we both knew.

After that he invited me to his house where he lived alone and many times we listened to his radio and made trips around the island singing beautiful old songs that he knew and I learned many of them. We often went to the club and had a few drinks and then we would go to our rooms. We had a wonderful friendship and I have many fond memories of those days.

I arrived there in 1936 and became very homesick in 1937 and took a leave of absence with the intention of being in my home for the traditional Christmas Eve dinner. So I left December 12, 1937 on the S/S *Canadolite* which arrived in Baltimore, Maryland where I took a train for Tampico December 25, and never did arrive home for my Christmas Eve dinner.

While in Tampico I became engaged to Alba Ruiz del Angel and on January 21, 1938 we were married.

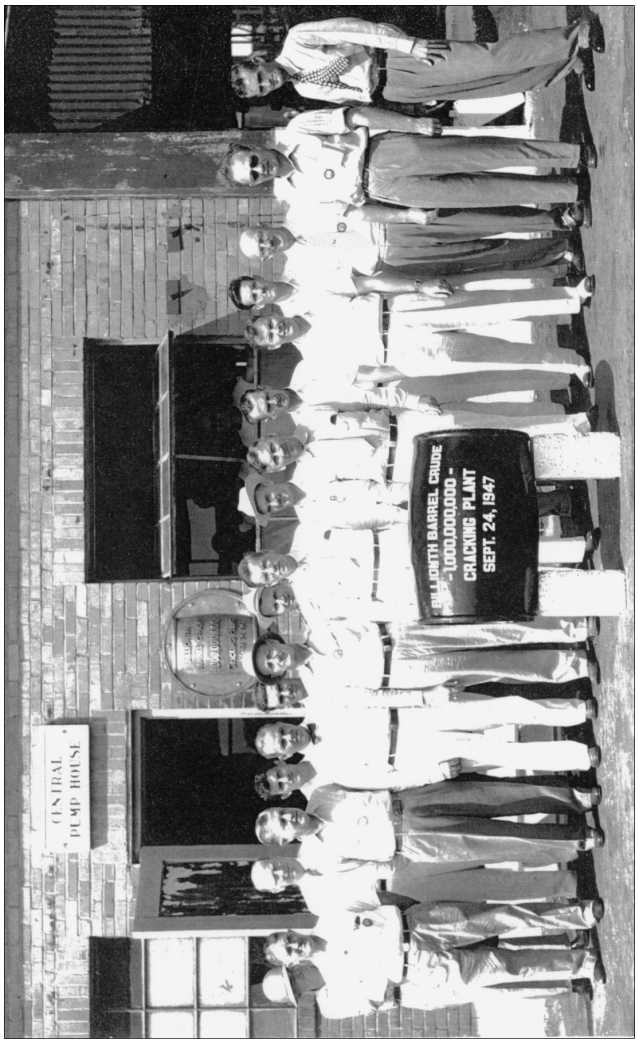
My friend, L. G. Lopez, wrote a letter for me in English applying again for a job in Aruba with a contract on the Dollar Payroll. And they offered me a job as an Apprentice Operator in the Pressure Stills. After my marriage and honeymoon I took a tanker in Tampico bound for Aruba on February 13, 1938. On March 18, 1938 the Mexican government expropriated the property of the oil companies and the government offered me one of the positions that were left open when Edgar Jackson and others left the country. I left Aruba on the *H. M. Flagler* bound for New Jersey and again I took the train back to Tampico. I went on the payroll of Pemex and worked on the Cracking Unit where Edgar Jackson had worked for them until I retired on October 27, 1970.

I worked for another company for the next 10 years and retired with another pension. Since that time I have gone to work in San Juan Del Rio, Queretaro, where I worked until October of 1986.

Now I have dedicated myself to read the books that I like and work around the house and visit my two sons. The oldest, Eduardo, was born October 20, 1938. The youngest, Edgar, was born March 14, 1951. Both were born in Tampico. The oldest is an architect. And the youngest is an economist with three degrees obtained in Belgium.

The friends I had in Aruba, besides Louis G. Lopez, were: Fred Corporan, Eugene Work, Jack Hagerman, Norman Orr (who was my first roommate), Dewey Haller, and my second roommate Dudley Morton

McBride, Tucker, Jim French, John Silvers, Si Yates, and Fred Vincent. And I mustn't forget Eddie Pfeiffer with whom I had many beers in the club, but the following day he was in good shape to work.




Left to right: O. Forbes, P. A. O'Brien, J. Lykins, Ben Cobb, C. A. Rogers, F. J. Griffin, W. Richey, G. Barnes, Bouten, J.J. Horigan, T. Kelly, O. Mingus, E. A. Wokk, J. J. Stone, Demetbos, E. Jackson, M. Smits, D. Vlaum

**Photo courtesy M. G. Lopez**

# The Edna Dorwart Story

## EMBARKING FOR ARUBA

My name is Edna Seitz these days, but I was Edna Mulvanie when I arrived in Aruba in June of 1938 to be married. We had a marvelous trip down on the *S/S Santa Rosa.* We sailed from New York City and my roommate was Barbara Maas who later married Dwight Fryback. Barbara was better known as Bobbi. Her father, Aimee Maas, was the manager of the commissary in the Lago Colony. On that same ship was Jane Richardson, and Lydia (later married L. D. McBurney). Now Lydia and I, both, were going down to be married and so we couldn't have been more at our ease because we didn't know much about anything, much less Aruba. We had a lot to talk about. We had great expectations for our new life on the island. When I look back, I realize we were so young and wet behind the ears that we didn't know from nothing. I wondered why we expected so much. Just blind faith, I suppose. All that we knew for sure was what our men told us in the letters they wrote, and even then they didn't begin to answer all the questions that arose when we got there. Bobbi very nicely explained to me, with Jane Richardson's help, about the Commissary bus that they had in the colony. There were square nickels that you had to give the bus driver. Bobbi was also generous enough to give me one of these square nickels, saying that if you wanted to go to the commissary or anywhere you just went out and gave your nickel to the bus driver. He would take you to where you were going.

## VENEZUELA STOPOVER

The first stop of the ship we were on was at Cartagena, Colombia. The next stop was Venezuela where an interesting thing happened. Bobbi had met a man on board ship who was an officer on the Grace Line. He and his wife were having a vacation. He was a stamp collector and he took Bobbi and me with him to visit a man who sold stamps down along the wharf somewhere. The officer was a very nice man and when we found the shop he was looking for he introduced himself to this shop keeper. The shop keeper was a radio repair man and had some electrical appliances for sale. While the officer was looking at stamps Bobbi and I wandered around the shop. We were just talking in general and we noticed the shop keeper was called away several times because it seems he was a ham operator. He was called to his radio. I learned years later that this was some of the network that the Germans had in all over the

northern coast of South America. This network was very important to the Germans because they were very sophisticated back in 1938 so you know what was happening by the time the war came along. It was always very interesting to know that we had been in that little shop and the man was German and it was very obvious he was a part of this German spy network. I am still astonished when I think that we had actually been in that little shop while a real German spy was transmitting secret information to his superiors.

### ARRIVAL IN CURACAO

When we arrived in Curacao, Bobbi's father was of course well known by anybody in any kind of business in Curacao. He had told everybody that his daughter was going to be on board the ship. So Bobbi was nice enough to take us all under her tow and we went with her to meet all of these people and then we went to a very nice barbecue out in the country somewhere. It was really an exciting thing, except Bobbi and I didn't have enough sense to know that in this culture women went in one place and stayed there and the men went into another place and stayed there. So all of these young girls who were our age were chaperoned and they just sat and glared at Bobbi and me and we just had a good time with the men. We did this wherever we went. Finally we were so tired that at one of the homes we decided to take a little nap. It was new to me to not have screens in the windows. The first thing you know a chicken popped up on the window sill and jump into the room with us and started pecking the floor looking for something to eat. There was a gorgeous bathroom where nothing worked. But that was that day and time and of course we just happened to get there when these things were sort of new to have in Curacao.

When we were in Curacao we talked to a man there who was the Immigration Officer. He told me all about his brother who was an Immigration Officer in Aruba and he had another brother in Curacao who was a policeman. We found the brother with his white gloves in the middle of the street there directing traffic.

## ARUBA ARRIVAL

When I disembarked in Aruba I had this trunk and all of this luggage because I was coming down to be married. I started talking to the Immigration Officer about his two brothers in Curacao and before you know it here came Bob. He had borrowed a pick-up truck to pick up me and my luggage. Bob came in and said Hi! to me and said Hi! to the Immigration Officer. The fellow helped Bob put the luggage on the pick-up truck. I never did open a single suitcase or my trunk! We never

had a problem with the people in Immigration!

In those days you went to South America first before getting to Aruba. Now there will be a lot of people who came to Aruba after that was changed and they went to Aruba first. But in the old days the ship took the other route. I think a lot of it depended on the cargo. The trip took 12 days. Also this ship didn't come into Oranjestad as it did later. It came into San Nicholas. Then we had to go through customs.

## LEARNING THE ROPES

My second day on the island, I decided I would like to get out on my own. The commissary was the logical place for a prospective bride to visit; I needed to know what sort of groceries they had in stock. I went out to the curb at the spot Bobbi described to me, and I got on the bus and I gave my square nickel to the driver, whom I later came to know as Mario Croes. He looked at me like I had taken leave of my senses. Everybody on the bus laughed uproariously. One of the passengers was kind enough to let me in on the joke: the bus was free for all employees and their families. Bobbi (Barbara) was not close at hand, and that was quite fortunate; I could have cheerfully wrung her neck! Eager for gossip, the inhabitants of the colony probably jammed the switchboard in their haste to tell their friends, and, like anything that happened in that small community, everybody knew about it before the sun set that day. I'm sure Bobbi got a big charge when she found her little prank had worked so well. I also learned that all new comers were subjected to such misleading advice.

With Bob Dorwart, my husband to be, I spent my first few days on the island arranging for a place to live. We then planned our wedding, and waited two weeks after posting the banns. Our nuptials took place in the Dutch Reformed Church of Oranjestad, and there was a small group from the Lago Colony who had known Bob, and a handful of my friends (whom I had met on my trip to Aruba on the Santa Rosa) and other guests. Following the ceremony, we went to San Nicholas for dinner, after which we joined a sizable group of Lago Colony people at a cocktail party being held for Mr. Colby from the New York office. The room was abuzz with the news that our company was giving a salary increase to the local employees in Aruba. Also they were planning to expedite the construction of new housing to be offered to them at a reasonable price. It was an exciting, stimulating and unforgettable evening; particularly for me, since, besides my friends who were those I met on the trip to Aruba and Elizabeth Dickey who I had met in Aruba, Bob was the only one there I knew. I couldn't wait to express my

opinion of the company's raise, and I picked a politely attentive man to tell exactly what I thought of it, and I asked his opinion. Much to my mortification, everyone began to laugh. The stranger I was talking to was Mr. Colby, the man from our home office who had brought the news in the first place.

After the reception we went to the home of John and Clara Mechling, where we'd left our suitcases several days earlier. Clara was about to take her children to the States for orthodontist work, a common practice among company personnel living in Aruba, since the (resident) local dentist was not trained in this sort of thing. Clara planned to be Stateside for as long as six months while her children's teeth were taken care of, and Bob and I were to live with her husband while she was gone.

Don Hebner and his wife, two of the new friends we'd made at the party, dropped Bob and I at the Mechlings. They couldn't stay since they had to get the Pan Aruban ready for distribution the next morning. (The Pan Aruban was the 8-1/2" x 11", 10 or 12 page, weekly; colony news publication put out by a volunteer group of employees, and distributed every Saturday morning) Every light in the house was on; there was a party in progress with people we later came to know as the Baums, the Hatfields, and all the neighbors were in attendance. Bob and I stood outside and watched them for a minute. We decided a walk would be more relaxing than joining them, and if we took long enough, the boisterous crowd would be gone. It seemed like we walked for hours on Rodger's Beach in our bare feet--both of us had new shoes, and it was more comfortable carrying them than wearing them. When we finally got back, all lights were out and the place was still. We went to bed, delighted for the chance to be alone. At noon the next day, I met Madeline Reilly, whose first question was, "Where were you last night? We held a reception for you at the Mechlings, and you never came home."

"Reception, what reception?" I said.

"Why, John had everybody over to meet you. We had coffee and drinks, and we waited for you."

When I asked John about this he made a noise and looked at me like he wished I'd take a hike. He'd forgotten to tell us.

## HOUSING (OR NOT)

When I left New York, my husband-to-be was near the top of the housing list, but we spent months at John Mechling's waiting for our new living quarters. It seems that the Mexican government had appropriated

Standard Oil Company's oil fields for themselves, and all our people posted there were moved to Aruba while the company waited for developments on the International scene. I want you to know the displaced workers from Mexico got a place to stay immediately, while Bob and I fell even lower on the housing list.

Eighteen months passed before we had our own house, during which time we lived in 13 different places! After Mechling's, we lived at Harland Baxter's for another six months or so. Some places we lived in for a week or two while we waited for more permanent arrangements. Our circumstances were not unique for Aruba in those days. We were members of a group that lived in the houses of those who loaned us their homes while they were on vacation. They were called "vacation houses."

When they finally got their house, the lucky families would in turn put up other new people who were waiting for their house. The situation got so bad that at one point Bob and I ran out of houses to go to. Circumstances had developed where we had a place that would be available in a month, but there was absolutely no where else we could stay until then. For that month, we lived surreptitiously in a little structure on the beach Bob had built to house his boat! Brushing your teeth in the ocean every morning and going through your daily routine with no facilities of any kind is the kind of experience that causes one to learn to appreciate the amenities we all take for granted. In a way, it was also a wonderful time for us; we were away from civilization, alone by ourselves. The beach had a rough and untamed beauty--new driftwood washing up ashore each day, the rolling sound of the surf on the reef, the rhythmical lapping of the gentle waves on the beach, the cries of the gulls, and the salt spray that came like a mist at times. We waded among the minnows and smaller fish that swam in the shallow water, collected shells and hermit crabs, sea urchins, and investigated all happenings on our stretch of the beach. Somehow, it was hard for me to cope with the idea we had to live in a home-made beach house because the system failed us. I am sure everybody was aware of our plight; it's hard to believe they couldn't have noticed us out there on the beach. We kept a candle burning all night, and Rodger's Beach was in plain sight of the houses on the hill.

## GIRL SCOUTS

The week I arrived in Aruba, Bee Reynalski (whose husband, Cy Reynalski was in charge of the Technical Services Department where Bob worked) came to me and said, "Now listen, your husband tells me that you had a Girl Scout troop back there in the States. Now we are in

need somebody to take over our Girl Scouts."

## YOU'RE ELECTED

Well, it was true that I had a Girl Scout troop, yes, but I didn't feel I had enough scout training to do a proper job. She should have also taken into consideration the fact that I was new in Aruba, not to mention being a newlywed. But before you could say Jack Robinson twice, Mrs. George Wilkins came to visit, with news that they had already made up their minds that I was the ideal Girl Scout leader, and my presence was required at the next meeting. It didn't seem to matter much if I felt I was ready; I was the new Girl Scout leader. Reverend Rischel of the Lago Community Church had some reservations. For one, he wasn't too sure I was old enough. By this time, I had gotten into the spirit of things and I set to work convincing him. After all, I was married and thereby I should be old enough for anything. Well, I went to that meeting, and I became a Girl Scout leader; a post I held almost continuously for 20 years. I guided girls from the time they were Brownies until they became Sea Scouts. It was a memorable experience, and many of the girls whom I have taught grew up to be responsible members of the community, got married, raised families, and I still see them from time to time. Scouting was an important part of my life in Aruba.

Ruth Kilpatrick was the Chairman of the Girl Scout Committee, and she had been the Girl Scoutmaster before me. We only had enough girls to make up one Girl Scout Troop (11 to 14 years old). When I came along, she was somewhat relieved because she would now have the time to better organize the Brownies (for girls 7 to 11 years old) and the Sea Scouts (for girls 14 to 18 years old). I worked closely with Ruth for many years and we got along famously. Claire Goodwin was my direct Scout assistant for a good many years, as were Mary MacNutt, and, you must excuse my failing memory, a host of others whose names I can't recall off hand. Before Claire, I handled my troop by myself. Assistants, like Gertrude Preston, who coached us with the Sewing Badges, gave me help in specific areas. I organized the acquisition of qualified people to help me with each area of expertise. Help came from people like Louise Hassey and Mrs. Wilson (I can't remember her first name), and there were many of the girls' mothers who pitched in when they were needed most.

## CAMPING OUT UNDER THE STARS

The Girl Scouts had a summer campout my first year on the island. I arrived in Aruba in June and in August of 1938, I took a group of

young people on a camping trip, to a campsite near the present site of the Esso Club. We were there for about a week, tying our hammocks under some canvas awnings. Bob and a couple of the fathers made a kind of a framework for the hammocks to hang on. Canvas strips were used to fasten the hammocks to the framework. It was hot and dry in August, and old-timers had assured us we needn't worry about the weather; it never rained at that time of year. Somebody forgot to tell that to Mother Nature--it poured every night we were there. In the mornings, we hung our sheets, pillows, pillow cases, bedding, underwear, and hammocks on the leaf cactus to dry. When that little chore was out of the way, we would dig up some wet and soggy provisions to eat. Camp activities were next on the agenda. As one could imagine, camp activities were rather limited since it took us all morning to get things squared away. In spite of the weather, we had a good time. Among the women on the trip, I remember Jane Kurtz Andrea, who was then Jane Wilkins, Ann Mechling and Libby Hassey.

The next year, our camp was more organized and we weren't subject to the rainy weather we'd had the year before. Our Girl Scouts troop grew and somewhere along the way, I can't remember the year, I knew that we had become a bonafide organization that was the equal of any Girl Scout association anywhere. One year, when the French sailors were there to protect the island during the war, we had a camp out at Balashi. We also had a camp at the first Sea grape Grove. The fathers were at that first camp, and they were just marvelous; so helpful. They brought tarpaulins, laid out a camp, and put down wooden floors for the tents. There were 20 of us, including Claire Wilkins--the names of some of the others will come to me in just a minute--. We had a nice group of girls and we stayed for two weeks that time. There was strict rationing with the drinking and bathing water. We were very fussy with the amount of water the girls could use for bathing, face washing, and teeth brushing, etc. In the evening, when the girls got ready for bed, they would go to a campfire we had previously prepared and I got them all started on the nightly routine. Bob, who probably ranked among the world's best story tellers, would have marvelous stories with which to scare the girls, some of them rather macabre. When he began to weave his tales of blood, mayhem and horror, it was difficult to tear the kids away. Some stories he repeated several times during that campout, but they didn't seem to notice. They were a most appreciative audience. I quickly learned that this was the ideal time for me to take my bath, and I would slip away to the shelter for my basin that hung on the outside, bathe, and don my night clothes. I am mentioning this because a little later the girls came back from the campfire, and Arlene Silvers, Claire

Wilkins, and one other person became dreadfully upset when they found someone had stolen their suitcases. Well, I just knew that their senior counselors, Mary Jewel Walker and Libby Haasey had done the dastardly deed and were just teasing the little girls. I said, "Now, come on, this isn't the least bit funny. Give these girls their suitcases." They said, "But Eddy, we didn't take their suitcases." I wasn't easily convinced, and I knew that the suitcases couldn't have walked away by themselves. We hunted all night, and the next morning we covered every crevice, rock and bush, and still no suitcases. Frieda Cummings, our detective, discovered footprints in the sand that went in a different direction, and were too large to be a little girl's size. We called the Watching Department of Lago to have them send someone out. Gilbert Brook came with three Dutch policemen, and they quizzed all of us. I was the first, and I had to tell them why I was born, where I was born, and by whom I was born, as if that were crucial in deducing the whereabouts of the suitcases. The girls went through the same intense grilling, and none of them knew where they had been born. All they knew was they had been born back in the States somewhere, and they were really confused as to what that had to do with the suitcases. The three Dutch policemen, who called the suitcases "zuitcases," only succeeded in frightening them. For years and years the incident of the purloined suitcases was repeated and attempts to explain their disappearance fueled many a heated discussion. We never saw or heard tell of them. What worried me was, who were those people who left the big footprints, and where were they while I was taking my bath? You can rest assured I found a better method to bathe on our next campout.

The second Sea grape Grove campsite wasn't easily accessible, and we were only there for a little while. Balashi, our next location, was a superior site because it had much better accommodations.

By this time the camp had grown rather grandly, and we had two canopied shelters, and in addition to the girls' tents, we had tents for the advisors, the nurse, Margie Norris, the camp director, and any other supernumerary who might come along. We had water delivered on a regular basis. An assortment of people came in the morning and stayed all day to help us with any problems that arose. Chris Nielsen and quite a few people came out to help us with the day's activities. We discussed sophisticated things, such as a name for our camp, and we had a designation for everything. Like in *Alice in Wonderland*, we had the Jabberwocky. For sick call, we had a pillbox; for showering, we had a water container hung from the limb of a tree. We were able to refresh ourselves occasionally and that was a real treat after a day in the sand

and salt water. Normally, the girls used a little basin and a small amount of water with which to remove the day's accumulation of grime.

Mothers delivered groceries to us as needed and brought things that other mothers sent along, such as baked goods, prepared foods and useful condiments. If anybody had mail, it was delivered to their tent.

Our little daughter, Ginger, was really too young for our campouts. Her father would have been happier if she'd stayed home, but the older girls bedeviled me into letting her go with us. She spent more time with us than she should have, but as long as the girls agreed to take care of her, we allowed it. Ginger was a happy camper, and never inconvenienced us while we went about our scheduled programs. Sometimes mothers who had no babysitters brought their children. One of those was little tykes was Patty Osborn.

Those camps were very successful. At the end of each camp period we would turn the facilities over to the Dutch and British scouts from Oranjestad. They brought their own tents, camp directors and leaders. By that time we had a tarp-covered dining room. All the tarps were set up with one side open so the wind wouldn't blow them down. One night it rained, and my dear little girl scouts, who didn't know any better, stood on their beds and pushed the water-filled dips in their tent with brooms to make the water run off. When they did, the water poured in on their beds like it was coming from a faucet. You can imagine the pandemonium that followed.

The refinery used powdered catalysts in the production of petroleum products, and some of them were packed in lightweight 55-gallon cardboard drums. These drums were just marvelous for storage containers, and we used a number of them during our campouts. During the first night, the sound of falling coconuts hitting the drums had the girls out of bed and talking for at least an hour before they were able to go back to sleep.

A new kitchen aid, aluminum foil, had just become popular with housewives, and we learned it was handy for cooking potatoes or meat in the fire. It was the greatest thing for campers since sliced bread; you could use it to wrap leftovers, and you could even make soup or stews in it. If you wrapped stew meat, carrots and celery in it, and placed it carefully on the coals, in about an hour, you would have stew--no messy pots or pans, no dishes. Looking back, I realize that was probably the prototype of TV dinners; of course in those days, television was still in the planning stage.

There were abandoned gold mines nearby, and there was nothing the girls liked more than to climb in them, and play hide-and-seek. We made many side trips through Frenchman's Pass, and we hiked all over that area.

Frenchman's Pass is shown on a map of Aruba. It is about half way between San Nicholas and Oranjestad. It is a small valley with a roadway that winds off from the main road to Oranjestad towards Santa Cruz. Supposedly this is where a group of French sailors were massacred by Indians in distant past history.

During one of those outings, a little Aruban girl, belonging to a visiting Aruban family, wandered off. We organized a search party, and we hunted for hours. Finally, after much traipsing around and shouting ourselves hoarse in an attempt to overcome the sound of the surf, we found her. The experience of helping to locate the lost girl and return her to her family was an important lesson for our girls. This took place at Balashi after World War II, because during the war we were forbidden to be there as it was some kind of a defense post.

In the late 40's, Ruth Kilpatrick had become more than just a scout leader in Lago Colony. She was coordinating scouting activities of local scouting units all over the island. At the time there was considerable interest in Scouting in Aruba. We honored her accomplishments with a scouting day that included all the scouts on the island. It was quite sophisticated. There were all the scout activities that we did. There were all sorts of races, and it was very international. It was a marvelous experience for the girls. We did a lot of singing, of course each group sang in their own language, and we had many ceremonies.

We had many Girl Scout Sundays at church, and that proved to be a marvelous learning experience. Normally Catholic girls had their services in San Nicholas, and our Protestant Colony Scouts, Brownies, Girl Scout, and Sea Scouts had ours in our Lago Colony community church. Once in a while we were able to have a part of our service in each of the Catholic and Protestant churches with Girl Scout units from outside of the colony. (Regular) Ecumenical services for young people were a long time in the future. On Aruba, most of the different denominations had little contact with each other, and people from the village were not aware of the differences in their religions. Drawing them together in our Girl Scout experience was most satisfying.

It would probably be safe to say that there are many denominations today that do not condone intermingling of congregations. However more and more churches are having joint services on special occasions.

But in those days we are talking about this was something new and unheard of. This was what made it a memorable time in the life of the Girl Scouts who took part.

We had many hikes on our little island and covered much territory on them. In those days it was required that a Girl Scout had to hike 50 miles to earn a Hiking Merit Badge. All the members of our Troop would get it one year. At the beginning of the next Scouting year all of those girls would go around telling the new little scouts that they got their hiking badge the previous year. When those new scouts heard about that hiking badge, they wanted one. For the adult leaders this was quite something to say that you had to hike five 10 mile hikes because this was about all the time the adults could spend with those children during a year's time. The distance from the Lago Colony to Santa Cruz was about ten miles. After we completed our hike, the fathers, (particularly Bob) would bring hammocks, our big frying pan and the food. The kids would scurry about and gather wood for the cook fire, and we prepared supper. Bob would tell his stories for hours. You would swear to goodness that they could never sleep after hearing his dreadful horror stories, but the minute he was through and taps was sung they were out like a light. Hiking all day inevitably had them so worn down; they were too tired to be bothered with such things as nightmares!

## LIFE OUTSIDE OF SCOUTS

During my first two weeks in Aruba, while we waited out the wedding banns, I lived with the school principal and his wife, Alvin and Ethel Marks, their house guests: Doris Wease (I can't recall her maiden name, but I remember she was a secretary for Esso), Elizabeth Dickey, who had attended our wedding. The two girls were there because they were going on a vacation.

## NEW JOB

Everyday I learned a new lesson about life in Aruba, and for that I have always been grateful. In the fall when Ethel had to go to the States, Alvin found himself in a spot. His school secretary had been transferred with her husband to Venezuela, and because there weren't any readily available applicants for the job, he asked me if I would fill in for her while he located a replacement. I told him I didn't know the first thing about what a secretary did, but he assured me that it wouldn't be any big deal. I would help at library and I'd register the children for the new school term. He said I would only be there a week or two, but the job lasted much longer.

The senior class consisted of people like Mary Haasey, Igor Broz--

here again, if I could just remember their names, I'm sure everyone from the old days would recognize them. The first day on my new job, I registered the children. One of them was a beautiful blonde named Ivenson Muldijke. I can assure you, if you were a native of Pennsylvania who had never traveled, the spelling of Dutch names would give you trouble. The sequence of the letters in the Dutch words is not what you would expect; they aren't spelled at all like they sound. It was ironic that I learned about my job from people who were only a few years younger than I was myself. When they came to get books and help for their spelling in the library, I had a chance to talk with them. Igor Broz, a Yugoslavian, told me about life in his country, and I was fascinated by their culture. (Dr. Broz, his father, was a specialist in the Technical Services Department) He told me how he fervently hoped for a chance to attend school in the United States.

Igor did realize his dream; he enrolled in Rice University. We later became close friends through his interest in tennis. He was Bob's tennis partner quite often.

## ROSE LAFEVER

Rose Lafever, a girl who came down to be a kindergarten teacher, was the sister of another teacher who had sent me a letter encouraging me to meet her and make her welcome when she came to Aruba. I did so, and Bob and I racked our brains to think of who we could introduce her to so she would have someone to take her out, and the first person who came to mind was Igor.

Igor was quite a photographer. It was his habit to prowl the island week after week; taking photographs for the contests he kept entering. After much coaxing, we conned him into agreeing to take her along on one of his outings. Now Igor was not the kind of man to show interest in the opposite sex, and he pretended taking Rose was merely doing a favor for Bob and me. They went to the northern shore of the island where he began taking pictures of fishermen's nets. Igor began experimenting with arranging his subjects in such a manner that they might be more interesting. He said Rose should pose by one of the rustic nets; her long, beautiful hair complimented them so nicely. That picture won a contest, and I always thought it changed their relationship. He was so pleased about it, he made an exception to his rule of working alone. From then on, Rose accompanied him on his photo sessions.

One night he brought Rose and a bat to our house. That afternoon Igor had been out on the golf course taking pictures of bats, and he thought I should know what one looked like. Rose had asked him to take

her to the dance at the girl's dormitory, and she was radiant in her beautiful full length dress. Because he was so excited about the bat in the shoe box, I am not sure Igor remembered she was with him. Poor Rose, she looked like she wanted to crawl under the sofa--the man who was taking her to the dance was more interested in a yucky bat. I had warned him not to let the bat get loose in my house before he came in, but wouldn't you know it, it got loose and flew all over the house. Much later we got Rose, Igor and the bat off to the dance.

I tried to explain to Rose about our kindergarten, telling her that the children had a habit of taking their shoes off when they got to school, but she didn't believe me. Everyone knew the kids didn't like to wear their shoes. Rose was adamant about the wearing of shoes in her classroom--she vowed things would change. She said, "They'll wear shoes in my class whether they like it or not. I won't have children coming to school without their shoes on." The next day, I walked past the school and there were Rose's kid's shoes--lined up on the porch Japanese-style, while their owners were bare foot in Rose's classroom. When they went home, Rose took them out and one by one, and waited while they put on their shoes. At least she could say they wore their shoes to and from school.

For a time, the relationship between Rose and Igor smoldered without really taking off. At a tennis match one day, while I was sitting with Igor's mother, I made a silly observation about the couple. There was a lull in the game and without realizing conversation would cease while Igor, Bob and their opponents readied themselves for another set, I said in a voice loud enough to carry over the hubbub, "Wouldn't it be funny if Igor married Rose and she would become Rose Broz?" My sentiments echoed across the hushed crowd at the tennis court. The tennis match was not the same after that; Mrs. Broz wasn't very happy about my remark, and Igor glowered at me from the court. Sometimes even the silliest things have a way of becoming truth, for Rose did marry Igor and she became Rose Broz.

**SIGHT-SEEING**

Our men were working quite a bit of overtime in those days; young student engineers were even working on Saturdays. I had a desire to see the much talked about the Natural Bridge that was on the other side of the island. One moonlight night when he had some free time, Bob decided it was time for us view the wave-worn (carved) cliff formation. The post card beauty of the Natural Bridge at nine o'clock on a moonlight night was wonderful to behold. We stood on top of the bridge until the tide began to come in. I became so afraid, I begged Bob to go.

I got to see it in daylight and it wasn't as intimidating as I thought it was that night.

I got the urge to share our island with people who weren't aware of its sights and pleasures. After the war I met Ernest Marbles, (or was it Bartels?) the first agent of the Intourist Bureau's new office in Aruba, through Don and Kay Evans. As I spoke with Ernest, I gushed about Aruba's sights and I wondered how it would be if people could enjoy them as we did. That same year, I had been elected president of the Women's Club, and with Ernest's help, Jane Kurtz and I worked hard to set up a tour of the places we had found. We noticed that most Esso people in Aruba rarely left the colony. When they did, they went shopping in Oranjestad, attended a few ceremonial occasions, like the 4th of July tour of the governor's mansion, and the most adventurous of them had been on picnics at the Sea grape grove or to our own B. A. beach, but they hadn't really tramped everywhere as we had.

That year, our Women's Club didn't miss much. Ernest took them to the bat caves, to restaurants in Oranjestad; to all the places you could possibly imagine, and he was always looking for more. He worked hard at promoting the Intourist Bureau. Sue and Karen Halleck, cement dealers from Miami, brought architects and before very long they had built Basa Rooti. So began the hotel experience on the island.

## CASINOS

Meyer Lansky introduced gambling casinos to Batista's Cuba, and they were a tremendous success. The notion of hotels and tourism in Aruba gained momentum after 1955 and it wasn't too long until a second hotel was built. When I left in 1958 the local government decided to get on the bandwagon and offer tourists more than the usual fun in the sun--gambling became legal on Aruba. Before that time any gambling that was done was on a small scale and no official action was taken.

## INDONESIAN COOKING

Ernest Bartels was the man responsible for the Indonesian houseboat restaurant. The owners, friends of Tina and Ernest Bartels, came to Aruba in it, and they got to talking one day and decided that a boat with an Indonesian restaurant on it would be a good idea. Everybody figured success was certain because Tina Bartels had a genuine talent for cooking. She was more than just a cook. She had lived in Jakarta, Indonesia and she knew cooking all the way from growing it to serving it. At the pleading of the women's group, she formed cooking classes, starting with a nucleus of 10 women. We would take turns preparing dinner, two women at a time, following Tina's

recipes. Tina was very precise about her cooking and we couldn't get away with any deviations. I take that back, there was one of us who did--let me see if I can think of the name. Oh, yes, she was married to the dentist there, it was Linda Grubbs. Linda got away with a lot because she was from Bali and Tina took it for granted she would be well versed in the art of cooking. What Tina didn't understand was that she had also been in the United States and she was familiar with such things as Waring blenders, electric mixers, etc.

Tina gave us assignments, and we had to bring them to class. Everyone except Linda almost worked our self to death trying to do it as the servants would have done it in Indonesia. Linda, having never had a servant, hadn't the foggiest notion what they did. She used her Waring blender and her beaters, and was the example of how perfectly food could be prepared. Poor Tina never did find out Linda cheated. The classes were a success and just anybody who cared anything about the preparation of exotic foods attended her classes. We had rijsttafel and we had Nazi Goering. Then the men became jealous, and they demanded she teach men's classes. I remember Doctor Reeves and some of the women who worked in the Lago offices decided to go to these classes, and had more fun than we did. They never invited us to any of their to-dos, but from what we overheard, we gathered they really had a good time. The house-boat restaurant didn't have to be a success; the interest it generated in Indonesian food was enough to keep us going there to eat every chance we got. A few years ago at a reunion, I had a chance to sample her student's cooking again. Tina Bartels had been after those cooks the same way she was after us. They didn't fool around; they did it right.

The experience of living in the 13 different houses before we got our own was educational. I've always maintained I didn't know how to keep house, but somewhere along the way, I learned. When you move from house to house, the average person can't help but try different arrangements. During each successive move, you tend to become more and more organized. I couldn't believe it when we had our own little bungalow, number 114. We lived there for 19 years and you couldn't have run us off with a ball bat.

Perhaps one of the nicest compliments my daughter ever paid me was the day she came home from school and said, "Now listen, mom, I want to know which of these things are ours and which belong to the company." To me, that was a compliment, because during my years with the Girl Scouts, I met many young people who didn't really appreciate how fortunate we were to have such nice, well made, attractive

company-supplied furniture. Many people, after living in a house, left it the way they found it. Some people replaced the company furniture with their own. We did a little of both, to the point that Ginger couldn't tell whose furniture was whose. She was never allowed to treat their furniture any differently than ours.

Bob made an isometric drawing of a three-bedroom house, and I furnished the cards for this tally (?) and all of my decorations had to do with a three room house. He framed copies of famous paintings we brought back from The Metropolitan Art Museum in New York, and we gave them away as prizes at our bridge parties; our way of thanking the many people who had helped us until we got our own house.

**KIDS AND PETS**

By the time I was carrying Ginger, the company decided we were eligible for a larger house. Bob and I had been discussing this issue for a while, and we told them no, we were staying on our old house. So what Bob did was build the "little house", a separate structure joined to the main house by the roof over the patio. When she grew up, she had her own bathroom and the little house served as a way station for the kids coming to and from school by way of the back gate. The kids never realized we had an intercom. People would say, "Aren't you afraid to have her out there?" I would reply, "There is no one in this community closer to their child than I am--I can hear her breathing all night." It was sort of nice; the intercom was set up so she couldn't move without our knowing that she was there. Sometimes I did turn it off because I couldn't stand the comics they were reading aloud. We had everybody's comic books--when kids tired of reading them, they would come to the little house after school and trade them for ones they hadn't read. Some of the kids who came were Roger Evans, and Buckey "Put-Put" Cullen, Pancho Klepetko, Sara Albens, and Betsy Green, and Sue Humphreys.

Outside of her little house, was a dog house for her dog, Rusty. Captain Patrick Hughes gave it to her because her mean old parents wouldn't give her a dog. Ginger was about seven when she got Rusty. The dog was hit by a car although its driver was going very slowly. Rusty deliberately ran in front of the car and it hit him. That night Bob was at a singing meeting that had something to with some island program. I stayed with Ginger until he came home, then we both stayed with her until 3:00 a.m. She held the dog in her arms until he died. He was buried in the dog cemetery down on the beach behind the colony before daylight came.

## TELESCOPE

We had a telescope as Bob was interested in astronomy, and he found that there were Dutch gun mounts up behind Lago Heights that were ideal for a telescope base. He managed to get one of the four foot mounts and had it set in concrete. Alex Shaw ground the lenses for it, and he constructed it with an adjustable prism so that you could look at the stars or out to sea. Igor Broz was helpful as were others. The 12-inch telescope had a wooden tube Bob had made himself. It was used by Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and everybody. Anytime anyone had a visitor they would bring them to have a look through our telescope. On one occasion, the Wilkins came to visit Jane and Don Kurtz. As they sailed away, they stood on the bridge with the captain of the ship and waved and sent all kinds of signals we could see through our telescope. Donny, a ham radio operator, was able to talk to them. Many people came to use the telescope to be able to see their families on deck when they sailed away. Needless to say, my Girl Scouts learned a great deal about the stars from that telescope.

## DORWALT'S PUB

On the face of the cliff below the house there were little crevices in the coral where we planted things. Some enterprising soul had built a flower bed there and we had a really nice garden in it. During World War II we introduced the practice of "musical evenings" once a month. We began them in our patio, but because of the blackout we were not allowed to do much entertaining out of doors. So we had soldiers and bachelors over. Elsa and Hans Trainey--he was a mechanical dentist--were accomplished musicians. One played the violin and the other played piano; that was how they met in Chicago. They introduced Bob and me to classical music. They helped us pick albums, and we bought a turntable and huge amplifier to play it in the patio. One thing led to another. Bachelors and soldiers sat by the hour listening to music and we served wine and food. By the time the war was at an end, we were entertaining as many as 100 people.

Ralph and Beulah Watson lived next door, God bless them. They didn't like crowds, so they opened their window, sat and listened to our music. We always stopped at exactly ten o'clock. In the end, many of the people were lying on the grass with blanket or they brought folding chairs. We provided coffee and Coke. We had a brick wall around our place and lights in the wall. The moonlight and the lights in the wall were the only lighting. It was too dark for introductions and you wouldn't know who was sitting next to you. Captain Reed of the emergency department was absolutely marvelous with the hi-fi

equipment. He provided his equipment and helped Bob set up. There two enormous speakers on either end of the garden, and they were loud, but balanced. Igor Broz would do the program; he announced what was to be played next, gave a commentary on the composer and orchestra. At some point during the program, I would ask two couples to be responsible for the next program.

Landmark old mining building on the north side of the island. Circa 1980's.

**Photo courtesy of Sharon Klein.**

# The James Michael Downey Story

James Michael Downey is the full name. I was born in the little town of Mount Morris, New York on June 18, 1923. This is a town in upper New York State between Rochester and Buffalo with a population of about 5,000 people. I went to elementary and high school there as a youth. My school activity was, of course, in gym.

I played a lot of sports, particularly baseball, to the extent that I decided to take that up as a profession. Of course in those days college was very expensive. I managed to get a scholarship through the influence of a very good friend of mine by the name of Eddie Sawyer who happened later on to become the manager of the Philadelphia Phils. I did manage to get to college for a year and a half. One day in 1941 I happened to be in the library when it was announced that Pearl Harbor had been bombed and the good old USA was now engaged in World War II.

## OFFICERS CANDIDATE SCHOOL

It wasn't long after that when we were on our way to a place called Newingburg College in Alabathat, Virginia. There we started our OCS, that pre-flight training program which was an Officers Training School. I spent a year there. Upon completion of this training I was sent to San Diego to begin my military service. I spent three years in the Pacific in the Marine Corps. Most of my assignments were with support troops. I returned back to the States in 1945. Then I had a stretch of duty in Augusta, Newfoundland. When the war ended I terminated my military service.

## AFTER THE WAR

Back in College I again took up the usual activities and I was active again in sports. My baseball career did pick up in college. I played on several outside amateur teams in the city of Rochester and eventually wound up playing on the New York State Baseball Team sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation. That was about at the peak of my career in baseball.

I did have an opportunity at one time to pitch against the Buffalo Bison's which was in the town of Ulbertson, Pennsylvania. I didn't do so well so I knew that my baseball career was at a standstill.

## ARUBA

I arrived in Aruba in September of 1947 as the Athletic director in the Lago School system. I took care of the students in the Elementary school as well as High School. [1]

On June 18, 1980 Jim and Ida Lee Every were married and Donna Lee was born on June 18, 1981.

## TRIP TO PUERTO RICO

Sometime after 1955 we made contact with the Army base in Puerto Rico and proposed an athletic competition between our school and the base school. They accepted and invited us to come over. They would put up our students in individual homes. We started organizing the details of the trip. We would charter a plane to take us over and back.

I believe it was something like 8,000 guilders for the over and back trip. Well we raised something like 4,000 in bake sales and everything and then it was divided up. We took over 60 students. Like 35 boys and 35 girls. Something like that. Each family had to pay the difference which was something like 200 guilders and we came up with it.

So the stage was set for this trip and we made a lot of plans. We had nice meetings with the parents. The children were going to stay at the homes of the other people. We had already corresponded with the people in a decent tone and being very tactful with all of the etiquette. All of the children brought gifts for their hosts. All of our children

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[1] *Jim retired to live in Aruba in 1964. This was after 17 years of Company service. This was when the Company was reducing the number of employees on their payroll. Shortly after his retirement he was brought back on contract to work as Physical Education Teacher in the Lago Schools. He worked on contract until 1972 when he retired . . . again.*

*In 1973 Jim bought the old Eagle Club in Oranjestad and six of the houses that were in that colony there. He made apartments out of the houses and rents these to visitors and others. At the old Eagle Club Jim established a TAI HUNG BAR AND RESTAURANT, a HEALTH CLUB, and has four Tournament grade Tennis Courts with night lighting. He promotes island tennis tournaments as well as tournaments with clubs in the surrounding area.*

*Jim is involved in the planning and arrangements for the Lago Reunions in Aruba. These reunions include the grandchildren of ex-Lago employees. Jim sometimes hosts an evening at his home for the former Lago students.*

dressed like they do for the Olympics, with blue blazers and white slacks. Believe me, they looked outstanding.

What kind of surprised us all was that we didn't arrive at the Base Airport, but at the regular Puerto Rico commercial airport. We were met by a kind of rickety old bus. There was an Army driver and there was a black boy that met us. He was a representative of the school. We were not upset by racial considerations, that wasn't a problem to us, but personally I thought that we should have been met by the principal of the school or some one from the base. We got on this bus and took off to Ramey Airfield which is about 100 miles. It is on the other side of Puerto Rico.

I can't think of the city it is in right now, but on the way the bus ran out of gas. I thought this was something. When I asked the driver what he was going to do he said: "Well, I don't know. It's not my job to put the gas in it I just drive for the Army!" I said, "Well what are we going to do, just sit here?" ."Yes!" he answered. "Well who is going to come and get us?" I argued, and he responded, "I don't know. That's their worry, not mine!" "Are we going to sit here in this bus all night and wait until they notice we haven't arrived and come looking for us? Come on now we have to get a solution to this problem!" I exclaimed.

I remember I got so furious. So I said to the children if they wanted to stretch their legs, stay right by the bus. So they walked around the field and sat down. And two of the boys, I can't recall just who they were, said they had noticed a gas station about a mile back, it was just a one pump deal. So, by God, we walked all of the way back there and since they didn't have a can, we picked up some kind of container. One of the boys, a very bright boy, said: "Mr. Downey how are you going to pour this into the bus without a funnel?"

The people in the station didn't know what a funnel was or have one. So we bought a radiator hose, about 2 feet long. And it is a blessing that we did. When we got back to the bus we found that the neck of the gas tank was way-to-hell underneath there somewhere. So we poured 5 gallons of gas into that tank and that driver started up the bus like nothing had happened!

Well we arrived at Ramey Airfield and got off of the bus. I must admit that we had two very effective chaperones. We had Mrs. Garth Roby and Mrs. Lewis MacNutt. They were outstanding in meeting the people and in controlling the children. These ladies were up front and when we got there they were our representatives. They talked to the school principal. When the school saw our children come out of bus in a

very orderly style they were just flabbergasted. They probably thought we were a local group of kids that had come over to play kick-the-can or something.

So the children went to the various houses where they were supposed to stay. One of the ranking officers, not the commanding officer, came up to me after we had been there one day. He said: "Mr. Downey I have to compliment you, we never expected anything like this. This is almost unbelievable." It happened that Kyle Spitzer was the boy staying at his house. He said: "That boy has been the greatest influence in just that day at our house. And it is going over the whole base like wildfire."

Anyway we started the various activities. It was a beautiful base and beautiful school. They had everything. Their kids were tremendous kids. Our first event was pole vaulting. Our boys jumped over ten feet and their boys jumped about eight feet. Their coach was impressed.

Kyle Spitzer was one of the boys, and I forget the other two boys. We had a couple of boys by the name of Taylor who showed them how to play golf. Their kids didn't come close to them. Our girls played golf very well. When we hit the Bowling Alleys, our kids really did an outstanding job. We had these activities. The kids were on the golf course every week and the bowling alleys every week. The first Basket Ball game we played they beat us. They had a black boy who wasn't very tall, but he was very fast and a tremendous player. For some reason that game didn't sit right with me because this black boy took too much of the play away from everybody. We had another game and this time we tied this boy up and that changed the game.

But one thing did happen. I didn't condone this, but I did accept it in this game. This black boy would come down the middle and every time he went up the referee would blow the whistle "Foul". And this was a repeated - kind of problem. And we had some objections to those calls. The referee said to Jim Roby "What's the matter can't you handle this boy? Is he too good for you?" and Jim told me what he said. I said, “Fellows, look, there is only one way to solve that problem. I don't want to tell you that I condone it, but we are going to do it. When he comes down the middle again, (this was either Pieter Opdyke or Larry Riggs, one of my good centers) go after the ball. Hit the ball and hit it hard and drive it right into him. But keep your hand on the ball and don't touch him.” Well, this guy comes down and our man drove the ball right into him. Down he went. Out he went. Well, there could be a question on the type of play but he did not strike him with his hands. He drove the

ball into him because he was so big and the opportunity presented itself. Later on the guy did come back into the ball game. That was the only incident that developed in this area.

All the other games such as track and field went off beautifully. We had a get together and a social dance for the children at a very nice place. We were up there four or five days at least. Well our children impressed the people so much that they couldn't do enough for us and they wanted to put us on a military plane and bring us back to Aruba. We made a very favorable impression and that was one of the high lights of our school activities.

## OTHER OFF ISLAND SCHOOL TRIPS

In addition to that, the school made many trips to Curacao. We played over there many, many times and we also went to Caracas to play there. We went to the military schools. So we had our exposure to outside competition. We went to Surinam and Trinidad. And even some of the ships that came in. When these other teams came over to Aruba they were usually hosted by somebody else but we were a part of their program.

## OLYMPIC TEAMS

Some of the Olympic teams were sent around for games and one time we got a call from Curacao when they were there. They found out that we had a basketball team and they wanted to know if they could come over to Aruba. Local private planes brought this team over. But it happened to be in the summer time and we hadn't been playing basket ball and some of our players were out on vacation. So we have a very small representation of players. The game was rather a disaster, because these were top players and we weren't in condition. I was really upset, not because of the competition, but the way their coach proceeded to put an all out effort and they were leading by 40 points. So I said to the coach, “Why don't we stop this game and your team could give us some lessons. What are you trying to accomplish? We are in no position to play against this team.” But we finished the game and they took off again. If they had come when we had all of our team and in condition we would have given a better account of ourselves even though they would probably have beaten us.

## SUMMER RECREATION PROGRAMS

The other big school activity we had of course was the Summer Recreation Program. We had full cooperation from the company and people like Lew MacNutt, Joe Proterra, Bob Turfboer, Bob Vint, Tom Malcolm, Jack Friel - you could go on and name any number of people.

They even brought many young college students to be instructors and assist with the program. One person I remember was Johnny Litwyler who used to play with the St. Louis Cardinals. Later he went to Florida State as a coach and from there he went to Michigan State and from there he retired. He came to Aruba one summer. He was a friend of John Flagherty.

Johnny Litwyler told me the story about when he roomed with Tommy Holms who was a great baseball player for the St. Louis Cardinals. Johnny said one night Tommy went 0 for 4. So he couldn't sleep that night. Tommy said to Johnny; "You didn't have a good day at the plate today." Johnny said, "No, I was an '0 for 4' also." Says Tommy, "So did I. So what are you worried about?" "Yeah, but you're used to it!" retorted Johnny.

Our Summer Recreation Programs were quite an extensive program. There were 200 to 400 children in the program from kindergarten and up. A variety of activities - you name it - special activities - social graces - scuba diving - swimming - and then we terminated the program at the end of the summer with a tremendous aquacade. Bob Turfboer took movies of these activities and I still have several of the movies. They are quite interesting because they show the children as they are growing up. I usually show them at the Aruba Reunions. They see themselves when they were in the first grade and they say; "Is that me?"

## ATHLETICS AND OTHER INTRAMURALS

- As far as the Sport Park is concerned it was here when I came. They had a Sport Park Board and committees. Lago took care of that. That was Bert Teagle's job. MacKaya Reyes was the chairman of the activities. He worked for Lago. People were appointed by the Company to serve on a committee like the Golf Club, the Flying Club, and The Esso club. As far as me being personally involved I was like a member of a committee or a participant. I know we set up a baseball team as an island wide competitive team. It was called the Wilson Paints. Earl Cook and a number of fellows played on it. And every Sunday we would go to the various fields in Aruba and play against the other baseball teams.

  But it was mainly in the Lago Colony itself that there were Departmental teams as Technical Services, Mechanical, Personnel, Medical, Accounting, etc. We had some great soft ball matches. A lot of the people who came to Aruba were good athletes.

- I was not what you would call an active golf player. I participated; I went to Curacao once with the golf team, but I had a very high

handicap; I never took golf seriously; I never put myself to it. I was more interested in something like soft ball.

The Golf Club was very active. They had beautiful barbecues up there. They kept the Golf Club in A-#1 shape.

At the Golf Club one time they were going to plan a “Super Evening.” And they had plans to bring a "Dancing Girl" - some said a "Nude" girl and that hit the Colony like Wildfire. Only the men were supposed to attend this party. Unfortunately they advertised it about two months beforehand. It hit the island so hard that they had the government and everybody thinking that we were going to have a little too much vice out there. Next thing the wives of all the husbands got up in arms about it. Management got the word that they had better turn this thing down if they knew what was good for them. So Management had things well under control. Finally the day came and the men got all up there and all of the wives started coming. I can still see the Golf Club smothered with cars. When this poor little innocent woman came out there and did a "Can Can" which could have been done in the middle of the Colony you know there was absolutely nothing at all wrong. The wives got all red faced and started going back home. It was a topic for discussion for months! It must have been around in 1957 or thereabouts.

- I used to go out to the Flying Club an awful lot. I went to the beach for scuba diving, skin diving, sailing, and water skiing. There were people like Tom Lucas, Al Leak, that “were” the Golf Club. I was not the Golf Club. Hans Wolfe, Nelson (from the Marine Department) and I would go with a couple of other fellows to Golf Club on Sunday mornings and just golf.
- I shot skeet, but I didn't join the club. We would go up there on Sunday afternoons after golf and shoot a few birds. I did a lot of bowling. I still have some pictures of the teams with Whitey Riggs, Matheisen, and people like that.
- I bowled a lot every season over the years. We had some outstanding bowlers. Well we had every opportunity for improving our games because the bowling alleys were so handy-dandy. We could just go there and practice as much as we wanted.
- We were very active in tennis over the years. I didn't take part so much in the dramatic field in the Colony. George Cvejanovich and those boys were in the school plays. They put out some interesting plays at the school.

## THE COLONY

The Colony was self sufficient in all areas. We could lock that outside gate and get along by ourselves. The Commissary had all of the supplies necessary; and we had our own hospital; we had our own Utopia right there. That was the way it was from 1948 right up to 1960 when we started opening the Colony up a little bit.

Then in 1965 we had Automation and here we are in March of 1985 and on the 31st the refinery will be closed. No one would ever believe that. Today is March the 26th I believe and in about 5 more days 60 years of Lago will be ended. If you go up to Lago today it is a ghost town. And let's hope it will not remain like that.

## THE ESSO CLUB

At the Esso Club they had a fellow named Carlisle perform who was supposed to have been a ventriloquist. One particular evening he was putting on his show at the Esso Club, and he brought this donkey on stage. He was going to make the donkey talk. Bob Vint and others were involved in this "surprise" ventriloquist show. J J Horigan, the manager, was there. They had a full house. This Carlisle fellow was strictly amateur. He couldn't really throw his voice that well. So this donkey came on. I guess he was trying to imitate Mr. Horigan's voice. While he was doing this the donkey had to go to the bathroom.

Right there on the stage he unloaded. They didn't have any provisions for sanitation at that time and Bob Vint was going crazy. What the hell do you do? So Mr. Horigan got up and started walking. But he walked towards the stage. I remember there was a side door there. As he walked up people thought that maybe he was going on the stage to help with the sanitation problem, and half the front row jumped on the stage to start cleaning up the mess. Then Mr. Horigan took a left and went out the door and left all of those guys standing there, holding the bag, so to speak! The ventriloquist didn't last too long.

## ESSO CLUB ENTERTAINMENT

I remember that Bob Vint was always involved in getting top entertainment for the Club. There were big bands. One was Cab Calloway who was there several times. Louis Armstrong was another. We also had good movies.

## THE AFRICAN QUEEN

I had a boat called "The African Queen" which was kind of a landmark for many years. We went out fishing with Father and Son Cub Scout outings.

## ARUBA REUNIONS

Let me give you a little of the background of the origin of the Reunion in Aruba as I look at it. I can't recall what year it started, but in 1964 when so many people left Aruba there was a discussion going on in the Lago Community Church. Marge Oliver was in church activities when someone said wouldn't' it be fun if we had a Lago Reunion in Aruba. The immediate response was that that would be too expensive and too difficult to organize. I don't think you would get enough people interested in coming down. Well it was just a thought. And that is where it stopped. But as a few weeks went on the idea still came up in several conversations, so Marge decided she would put in the *Church Chronicle* a little article to see if anyone would be interested in coming to Aruba for a Lago Reunion. People could write in and if there was enough interest maybe we could develop something.

Well Marge almost fell over at the response that they had. They expected something like maybe 50 people but within something like six months 250 to 300 Lago people would be here for the first Lago Reunion. It was quite a hectic getting this thing organized. No one here was really prepared for it. No one anticipated such a big turn out!

None-the-less it went over and activities were made and everyone had a very good time. Following that Reunion, the Olivers left Aruba and then it was pretty well a dead issue as far as organizing the following one.

So before Marge left she said to me something to the effect that we don't know what to do with the *Church Chronicle*. There was something like 100 guilders left over and what to do about publishing this news letter. Otherwise it was going to die. So she got in touch with Ginger Dorwart and Sue Humphreys or one of them. Eventually they agreed to take over the *Church Chronicle*. So they did a beautiful job in taking over this publication.

But there was no one handling the Reunion. I don't recall specifically how I got involved. I guess I got involved in assembling some general information on how this thing should be handled. So I did contact the airlines and I contacted the hotels and I got sufficient information and then we put this into the *Chronicle*. This seemed to be a reasonable approach to the situation. However we did want to get involved in the details so we could choose the least expensive way of doing things. We wanted this to be a nonprofit type of organization. That's how we got it. We got it because there was going to be another agency to take this over. We realized if they took it over it would

probably be quite costly for the Lagoites to get down here and it might not be that attractive to them. So that started our interest in organizing this Reunion.

We originally had told the airlines that we would like to reserve the tickets, but we did not want to handle any money. We said the individuals would make their own arrangements at the special rates that we would quote and arrange their own passage. It's the same way at the hotels. We arranged the best possible buys for them and we made the reservations. The individuals would send their money to the hotels.

However there were some other expenses like the beach parties and transportation, etc. which would have to be paid from the start. So the committee asked everyone to send in $50, which was supposed to be used for the bus transportation to the Esso Club to the Rogers Beach for the barbecue and the trip around the island. This included their big dinner at the banquet at the hotel at the close of the Reunion. It was all calculated. So we didn't get too involved in heavy finances and we were able to keep expenses down.

Earl Cook worked on the Schedule of activities. We did all of the corresponding here. We were doing most of the contacts through the *Aruba Chronicle*. It worked out quite favorable. We had a wonderful Reunion. Aruba opened up their arms with activities and meeting old employees. It generated such a warm feeling that I believe these Reunions will continue forever.

There was one fellow I had never met by the name of Campbell there in the dark suit joining in. We wondered was he a stranger? Was he lost? What is he doing here? He was sitting on the bar so finally I said to him, "Remember you asked me what time does it start?" Then I asked, "Well did you get an invitation; did you know about it?" He replied, " Well, yes, I knew of it". Pressing on, I countered with, "Well, who are you? I don't think I know you". He matter-of-factly asserted, "I graduated in the first class of Lago High School!" Well, he turned out to be the celebrity of the evening.

# The Raymond B. & Jane C. Ebbets Story

## EARLY LIFE

I was born in Talara, Peru, South America, August 26, 1918. My father was working for the International Petroleum Company at the time. Jane, my wife, was born in Passaic, N.J. January 22, 1928.

I attended grade school in Talara through sixth grade and then was sent to the States where I was enrolled at the Peddie School in Hightstown, N.J. in 1930 and graduated in 1936. I then attended Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pa. for two years. Jane attended school in Passaic N.J. and then went to Dean Academy in Franklin, Massachusetts, graduating in 1944.

## ARUBA

In 1939 I went to the New York office of Standard Oil of New Jersey where I was told they had a Student Operators Program for refinery work in Aruba.

My first trip to Aruba was made on the S/S *Santa Paula* along with seven other passengers bound for Aruba. We left New York City mid-June, 1939. My fellow passengers were Bob Denton, Hank Harley, Walt Gaupsas, Matt Farrell, Paul Nielson and Cliff Nilsen, all of whom were going to Lago. One other passenger aboard was none other than Mr. Furhman of Spritzer & Furhman.

We arrived in Aruba about 8 days later, including stops in Curacao and La Guiara. Our first sight of Aruba was the spheroid tanks, like big white mushrooms, and the stream of smoke. We could not believe that that was where we were going to work. One little old lady, a cruise passenger, said, "You really are not getting off here, are you?" We all shuddered with the same thought.

After docking, we were met by one of the Personnel Department's finest, who cleared us through customs and took us up to the main office (in the middle of all of the smoke). We were assigned to *sheep sheds* between Bachelor Quarters 7 and 8. What a shock that was; communal bathroom and cold, brackish water showers, steam during daylight hours and ice water after dark.

All of us were assigned to the High Pressure Stills for indoctrination. Only three out of the seven had had previous experience in a refinery, namely Bob Denton, Walt Gaupsas, and Matt Farrell. After

three months on the Stills, Hank Harley and I were transferred to the Hydro Poly Department.

It did not take me long to find out how to get to the golf club, which was then located in Savaneta, and to get on one of the baseball teams. Swimming at Rodger's Beach was also a part of life for the "bachelors" especially the "tag" games off the diving dock.

## LOCAL LEAVE (?)

Harking back to the first few years on the island, I recall that when we, the group, arrived we were informed that after the completion of one year (12 full months) of service we would be eligible for a two week "local leave." That one year period seemed interminable; but some how we survived. It was then that I had a most unique trip. For my first "local vacation" I decided I wanted to fly back home to New Jersey to visit my mother and family whom I had not seen for two years. What a trip! KLM to Maracaibo, Pan Am (DC-3) to Barranquilla, Colombia stay overnight and catch the "Interamericano", again Pan Am, to Miami, Florida. This plane was one of the first pressurized cabin planes built. From Miami I took Eastern Air Lines which left about 6PM and hedge-hopped up the coast arriving at La Guardia about 6AM. I had one week home and started the reverse procedure back to Miami where I flew out on a Pan Am "Clippership" to Port-au-Prince, Haiti and then on to Maracaibo, Venezuela. Then again after overnight layover, KLM back to Aruba just in time to go back to work on the 4-12 shift that day. I swore then that I would never again repeat that trip.

## WORLD WAR II

Two of the most memorable events in my mind were the burning of the old Esso Club and the night of the German Submarine attack. On the night of the latter, Eddie O'Brien and I were on 12-8 shift at the Poly Plant and had just gone outside the control house to have coffee and a sandwich. We had hardly taken a bite when we heard several explosions and then the sky lit up momentarily like somebody had turned on a huge flood light. Our first thoughts were that some unit has exploded in the refinery. However, we soon learned it was the lake tankers outside the reef that had been torpedoed. After blacking-out the unit, we watched the tracers, fired from the submarine deck gun, arch across the sky near the powerhouse smoke stack. Fortunately they really did no harm. We then proceeded to shut down the unit as did the entire refinery.

The U. S. Army forces that had been sent to protect the island had just landed a day or so before and were camped down in Savaneta. It was shortly after the attack that they set up the searchlights down behind

the new Main Office Building and the Radar Unit was set on a high point, to the NE of San Nicholas which they called "Gobblers Knob." The "Long Toms" (155mm) were, of course, set in place on Colorado Point. In addition to all the war equipment, the Army also brought their baseball equipment and a league was formed with Lago. The Teams included: Battery "A", Battery "B", Company "C", H & M Co., and Lago.

Somehow or other I became very good friends with Battery "B" players, Sgt's Jack Driscoll (who was the best man at my wedding after the war, February 1946), Mickey McGovern, Whitey Hasseler, Bob Cole, Harold Katzman and Pvt. Tim McCord. It was at this time in 1942 that I had moved out of the Bachelor Quarters to live with Bill MacKnight, who had sent his wife and daughter home to the States. The guys from Battery "B" were always welcome at the house when they were off duty. Bill and I had hired a maid to do the house cleaning and cooking and she got a big kick out of fixing meals for us and GI's.

**LEAVING ARUBA TO JOIN THE WAR**

I left Aruba in March, 1943, to go back to the States to sign up in the service. In New York City I met Stu Wood in the Abbey Hotel. He also had left Aruba and entered the service and was now an Ensign in the Navy's Oil Inspection Department. He suggested I go and meet with his commander who was looking for Oil Inspectors. However, due to the fact that I did not have my original birth certificate or my passport (which was picked up by the Government in Miami) I could not prove I was a citizen and that fell through. So, I was drafted and signed up for the U. S. Navy. After boot camp in Newport, R. I., I asked for and was accepted for Diesel School in Richmond, Virginia. While there, I volunteered for Submarine Duty and was sent to New London, Connecticut where I attended the Basic Submarine School and then Submarine Diesel School, finally graduating in February 1944.

It was while I was in submarine School that I managed to go visit my brother and sister who were then in prep school at Dean Academy, Franklin, Massachusetts and was introduced to a number of their classmates, one of which was Jane Cole, whom I married after the war. Small world isn't it!

After New London, I was sent to Mare Island Naval Shipyard in California. Then, on to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii and from there to Majuro Island in the Marshall Islands on the submarine tender *H. W. Gilmore*.

I volunteered for the *USS Sea Devil* (ss400) in November 1944. She was a "lucky lady" as I put in four successful patrols on her before

the war ended. We ended the war by being sent to Subic Bay in the Philippines. From there about 40 of us, officers and crew were sent back to the States on a troop transport for 30 days leave. It was during this period I decided to call up and see if I could get a date with Jane Cole, the girl I met at Dean Academy. I wound up spending my leave with her at her parents home in Passaic, N. J.

## RETURN TO ARUBA

I was discharged from the Navy, January 12, 1946, married Jane on February 16, 1946 and came back to Aruba in March 1946. As was the case in those days I had to line up six months of vacation housing before Jane would be allowed to join me there.

I went back to work in the Hydro Poly Alky Department and was assigned to the Isomerization Plant since the Hydro Plant had been shut down for good before I got back. Jane joined me in late May and after two or three weeks in the Alvah Rarick's vacation house we were assigned our first house on "Birdcage Row" Bungalow 111. From Bungalow 111 we moved to Bungalow 615, then 926 and finally 333.

During the time span 1946 to 1956 (I left in January 1956) Jane and I enjoyed living in Aruba. Our son, David, was born February 1947 and daughter Peggy in January 1949. Speaking of the Hospital, it was there in 1939, shortly after my initial trip to Aruba, that I found that I had at least one person on the island that I knew, Marion Wiley. She had known me years before when I was just a kid in Talara, Peru where she had worked before going to Aruba.

## TRANSFER TO ANOTHER DEPARTMENT

It was 1949 or 1950 that I was transferred from the Hydro Poly Alky Department to Technical Services Division to work in #1 Laboratory as a shift supervisor.

## LEAVING ARUBA AGAIN

### A NEW JOB, VISITING TALARA & RETIREMENT

As I said before, it was January 1956 that I left Aruba and returned to the States for good. I came up to New London, Connecticut and went to work for the Electric Boat Company as a Project Engineer. My assignment was the construction of two new Peruvian submarines. These were "Diesel Boats" similar to the boats built for the U. S. Navy during W. W. 2, but smaller in size. After the two boats were completed, tested and commissioned into the Peruvian Navy, I traveled with them to Peru as guarantee Engineer in 1957. On the trip down we stopped in Talara, my hometown, and refueled. While the ship refueled, I was gallivanting around visiting some "old friends" including the Fred

Horaceks who had left Aruba to go to Talara. I finished my assignment in May 1958 and came back to New London, moving once in 1960 to Lyme, Connecticut where I am now living. Finally, after 30 years of service with Electric Boat, I retired in 1986 and now spend most of my time on the golf course.

Sunset from the Talk of the Town's terrace Circa 1976

**Photo courtesy V. D. Lopez**

# The John Clarence Every Story

## THE BEGINNING

I was born on October 1, 1911 on the island of Saba, Netherlands Antilles. My father was John Levrock Every, and my mother's name was Bernadina Elizabeth (Hassell) Every. She was an aunt of the wife of Eugenus Hassell who was a long time Director of Apprentice Training in the Training Department of the Lago Oil and Transport Company Ltd.

My mother's ancestors were Danes who had settled in the Virgin Islands, my father was of Scottish and Irish descent, and both were born in Saba.

There were six children in our family. Marie Louise, the eldest, was 81 when she died in Saba, as did Julia Johnson at the age of 81, as did Doris Johnson at the age of 67. Winfred Sonres, who is 77, now lives in Bermuda. Dedric Every is 84 years old and living in Baltimore. I was the baby.

In his youth, my father worked as a diver at the British Naval Dockyard in Summerset, Bermuda. I have boyhood memories of him burning white lime from coral rock that washed up on the beaches. Lime is used in such masonry work as building cisterns to collect the precious rain water that fell on houses. When he was not burning lime, he made charcoal by charring wood in a kiln. He farmed for our daily food supply and we always had a cow or two, some goats, pigs, and chickens on our homestead.

## SCHOOL

I attended school in Saba until I was 14 years old, and I was sent to school on the island of Barbados for two years.

## THREE SISTERS

At 16 I sailed on a three-masted schooner, the *Three Sisters*, which was owned by four brothers who were my mother's cousins. Ben, Abraham, Tommy, and Carl Hassell were neighbors to us and we grew up calling them uncles. When I sailed on this ship Tommy was Mate and a gentleman by the name of Will Levrock was Captain. He had a First Mate license for steamships and had sailed as First Mate and Captain on American ships. A son of Ben Hassell, John Hassell, was with me on board. The ship traded from Curacao to the Windward Dutch Islands: Saba, San Martin, St. Eustacia. We carried a lot of people who went to

work in the refineries of Curacao and Aruba, and we also carried mail and supplies.

In 1932 the *Three Sisters* was caught in a hurricane west of St. Martin and the storm damaged her rigging. Her captain tried to reach St. Thomas under storm sail, but the ship was unable to be controlled. They ended up in St. Croix, and upon entering the harbor, she grounded on a reef. Ben Hassell came with another of the four brother's vessels, The Rhode Island, to dismantle the *Three Sisters*. She too, was driven ashore on the same reef by a southerly ground swell. Then they came with the *Mary C. Santos* and salvaged both vessels.

At that time the four brothers owned six vessels: *Three Sisters*, *Rhode Island*, *Mona Marie*, *Maisy Hassell*, *Mary C. Santos* and *Dutch Princess*. They traded between British Guiana, Barbados, Trinidad and the other islands. Ben was the eldest of the brothers.

Their father was also named Benjamin and he too was a sea faring man. When I was a little boy he used to sit and carve sailing ships out of pieces of wood for me as Christmas presents.

## WORKING FOR SHELL, LIVING NEAR INSURGENTS

When I was 17, a cousin of mine, Johnny Hassell, and I sailed on the *Three Sisters* to Shell refinery in Curacao to look for a job. We worked in the oil inspection lab there for almost three years.

On August 8, 1928, at the request of the Aruban government, a military detachment from Curacao took nine Venezuelan revolutionaries into custody. These men were taken to Curacao and jailed. Led by Rafael Simon Urbina and Jose Maria Fossi, these men had attempted to overthrow Venezuela's dictator, President Juan Vicente Gomez.

Urbina spent some time in Panama, and returned to Curacao on June 8, 1929 when he led a coup attempt on the Curacao Government.

At that time the Shell in Curacao, had two separate labor camps for the refinery laborers: one for the colored people from the English islands, and one for the Venezuelans.

Urbina and a group of Venezuelans invaded Fort Amsterdam in Curacao, seized guns, ammunition, and the guards. Among the prisoners taken, was Leonard A. Fruytier, the Governor of Curacao. The rebels commandeered the Red "D" Liner, the S/S *Maracaibo* and sailed to Venezuela with the governor as hostage. Smits, the *Maracaibo*'s Dutch pilot, intended to run the ship aground on the reef outside the harbor, but the governor convinced him to take the rebels to their destination. Once

in Venezuela, they set the governor free.

In 1928, I was living close to the scene of this action. On the morning of the excitement, a friend of mine who worked as a checker on the K.N.S.M. Wharf got me out of bed. He knew I could pilot a motor launch and they wanted me to assist the Shore Captain of the West Wharf in Curacao by ferrying some policemen across to the "Puna" side. The policemen were to hide on the wharf under tarpaulins covering the cargos. They intended to ambush Urbina's group as they crossed a pontoon bridge, and liberate their hostages. By the time I ferried them across, the Venezuelans had boarded the *Maracaibo* and sailed away. All we could do was help clean up. The rebels had played for keeps; one of the military policemen guarding the fort was killed.

After we had worked in the Shell lab for three years, Johnny and I discovered we were on a list of employees to be laid off. There was a crisis in 1930-31 which was brought on by Wall Street's stock market crash and the depression which followed.

## GOING TO WORK FOR LAGO IN ARUBA

Johnny found employment in Lago's Sulfur Lab with Freddie Dirkz at Lago. He sent word that I could find a job in Aruba, and I went to Aruba on the *Fidelma*, a two-masted schooner. At reduced sails, we left Curacao in the evening, arriving in Aruba early the next morning. From Curacao to Aruba, sailing ships went before the wind and with the four knot current. A trip from Aruba to Curacao was slower if you relied on the wind for propulsion.

I arrived in Aruba on of May 5, 1931 and the next day I started work. The personnel manager was Harold Atwood and his assistant was Ward Goodwin. I began in the Oil Inspection Lab, and remained until March of 1935.

During those days I was a bachelor and there were five of us who had rented a house in San Nicholas. The other four guys were: Joe Johnson and Willie Petersen, who worked in the Instrument Department, Cleve Hassel, a butcher in the cold storage, who was later lost on the Saba Bank with some others when their boat capsized, and Joseph "Sparkey" Marathon.

It must have been early in 1932 when Jim Lopez came to work with us in the Lab. He spent about six months on our shift, and went back to the states to continue his schooling.

On our shift I did distillation tests on gasoline, diesel oil, kerosene and gas oil. There were other tests from time to time, and I gave a hand

with any of the other tests in the lab.

Joe Johnson took gravities on the fuel oils as well as checking viscosities and running gasoline and gas-oil distillations tests. Like me, he was able to perform any of the tests we did in the lab. On our shift, except for the shift supervisor, we were the most qualified.

Ajax, a dark, well built Aruban fellow in his mid-twenties did the flash tests and took gravity readings on oils. His elderly father was in charge of washing the sample bottles. They were clear, square quart-size bottles with about a 3/4" diameter neck. After they had been emptied out and left to drain in a rack, the bottles were washed in hot, soapy water and rinsed. After they were dry, a cork was installed, and they joined the cases of clean bottles in crates at one end of the bottle washing area. All light ends product bottles received a new cork to avoid contamination. The bottle washing area was on the west side of our lab in a covered porch and the sample boys who brought the samples usually walked through that area to our "Back" door which was on the west side of the building.

I asked for a transfer out of the laboratory to light oils, but it was refused by A. T. Rynalski, who at that time was the superintendent in charge of technical services which included the laboratory. I wanted a transfer because by that time I came to realize that unless you were an American you weren't going anyplace in the laboratory. I had already trained an American, Bob Ballard, who I later found out was going to be my boss.

Mr. Coy C. Cross, the general foreman of the Light Oils Department, had told me to get a transfer and he would put me in the Acid Treating Plant, or the Rerun Stills, or the Caustic Treating Plant, whichever one I selected.

## WORKING AT EAGLE REFINERY

I made the acquaintance of the Manager of the Eagle Refinery, a Scotsman by the name of Jock Davidson. This is the same Davidson who married the Lago School teacher, Margarite Fassler. He offered me employment at the Eagle Refinery, which of course was a subsidiary of the Shell Company. He offered me a job in the Laboratory as a Supervisor. This would be a day job. At Lago I was working shift. I was on an hourly basis at Lago and at the Eagle I was offered a contract with monthly base pay; living quarters; and eating in the company mess hall. There was medical attention; social security; and a provident fund (in those days they didn't have a pension fund).

A fellow by the name of Newton was the first manager of the Eagle Refinery. He was a New Zealander and transferred from Shell in Mexico. The Eagle Refinery started up in 1928. The first Unit was a Trumble Unit. This was a "topping unit" that had been enroute to Mexico, from England, but was diverted to Aruba. (A topping unit produced fuel oil, but unlike a "distillation unit" it did not produce other grades of hydrocarbons such as gasoline.)

When I went to the Eagle Refinery in 1935 they had begun construction on a Dubbs cracking and reforming unit. The company was officially called "The N.V. Arend Petroleum Maatschappij". Translated this came out as "The Eagle Petroleum Company". It was a branch of Shell that was operated through London and registered in Canada. It was later amalgamated with Shell in Curacao and just before the war it came under the directors in the Curacao Refinery. The operations were conducted in coordination with the Curacao refinery.

At the Eagle refinery we operated three lake tankers. They were called *San Gasper*, *San Claudia*, and I can't remember the name of the third one. Subsequently these lake tankers became a part of the Curacao Shipping Company which already operated the lake tanker fleet for Shell, Curacao Ltd.

We had a commissary in the Eagle camp where all personnel could buy dry good groceries, liquors, etc., and in the colony we had cold storage where the staff members could buy their meats, vegetables, fruits, etc.

After the lake tankers were no longer needed in the Maracaibo run they were dispatched by the Company for use elsewhere. One was sent to the Falkland Islands to provide bunkering service for the navy. One went to Gibraltar and one to England. They were 3,400 ton ships. This would be a ship that would carry approximately 21,000 barrels. They were in the same class as the S/S *Tia Juana* in the Lago Fleet. The S/S *Andino* of the Lago laker fleet carried 4,500 tons.

## MARRIAGE

In 1938, I married Carmen Paulina Herms and we moved into a house in the Eagle Camp in Oranjestad. Herms was originally a Dutch name, but there are very few Dutchmen here in Aruba. My wife is related to the largest and oldest family in Oranjestad, the Arends family.

## WORLD WAR II

I worked in the Eagle Refinery until the refinery was closed down in 1942 following the submarine attack on the Lago and Eagle refineries on

the night of February 19, 1942.

After the sub attacked the Lago lake tankers, its captain sailed to the Eagle Pier in Oranjestad and sent a torpedo into the S/S *Arkansas*. This ocean going tanker, which had just arrived from dry-dock in the States, was waiting to be loaded with gasoline. Her tanks were still dry when the torpedo hit aft of the bridge and the officers quarters. Luckily the Inspector, Pete Heeswijk, who had been ordered to go below to inspect the tanks, was still on his way from the colony at the time the ship was hit. The torpedo destroyed one tank, blew a hole where it entered, and blasted the plates on the opposite side outward. The deck was buckled, but the adjoining tanks were secure and remained sealed. The officer of the watch on the bridge, the only casualty, was bounced around but not seriously injured, and there was no fire.

The S/S "Arkansas" later had the holes in both sides trimmed up at Curacao's Shell dry-dock, and she later sailed to Mobile, Alabama, where she was repaired and returned to duty with the tanker fleet.

The submarine had fired two torpedoes. The other one missed and grounded on the beach near the suction inlet of Eagle's salt water pump house--close to the present-day location of the Tamarind Hotel. John Arlington Sloterdijk, a first cousin of mine who was a member of the local Volunteer Militia, was on patrol early that morning and discovered this torpedo.

Members of the Royal Dutch Marines were sent over from Curacao. The next day a sergeant and four marines were in the process of defusing the torpedo when it exploded. An Aruban militiaman under the command of a sergeant was attempting to remove the torpedo's warhead. They had hooked a truck to it with a set of cables, and he was standing by the truck's door awaiting instructions when the explosion took place. He got off with broken ear drums, but was otherwise unhurt.

I was in charge of the refinery's Wartime First Aid Squad the day of the explosion. A Dutchman by the name of Case Catanus and I were sitting in the laboratory having a cup of coffee when it went off. We commandeered a flat bed truck, went to the first aid station for a first aid kit and stretchers, then drove to the beach. When we got there, all we could do was pick up pieces and put them on the stretchers and take them to the San Pedro Hospital. It was horrible. At the time I didn't have any reaction, but I was later unbalanced by it. My wife went into hysterics when she heard the explosion, and ran out of her house to see what had happened.

Despite the nets across the approach, Shell authorities had always felt that the pier of the Eagle Refinery was too exposed. The torpedoing of the *Arkansas* while it was tied to the pier left no doubt.

High octane aviation gasoline was needed in great quantities by the Allied Forces, and since there were no facilities for upgrading the gasoline being produced in the refinery, it was decided to close it down. The majority of the staff was transferred to England, Curacao, and Trinidad. The manager at the time was an Englishman by the name of Griffin.

In addition to my job as head of the Wartime First Aid Squad, I had also been doing shipping inspection work and I was now appointed to take care of the storage capacity, trans-shipment, refueling and loading as well as supervising the oil inspection laboratory.

We had about 50 staff members in the Eagle refinery, including pilots and the labor force of about 200. When we closed down, we were left with a skeleton staff of one marine man, one pilot, a marine clerk, an accountant, and a timekeeper-cashier. (the marine designation was given to those dealing with shipping) Our manager was Samuel W. Merryweather. He was married to Scotty Barber's wife's sister. After the war, Merryweather retired and Scotty became manager.

Immediately after the attack, we conducted all of our night business under strict black-out conditions. Mr. Merryweather, and Joe Hassell, the Chief Accountant of the Arend Petroleum Maatschappij served as black-out wardens for the refinery and the colony.

## EAGLE REFINERY SHUTS DOWN

In 1945 we restarted the refinery, and it operated until 1953, when the Venezuelan Government forced the companies to build in Venezuela. Esso built the Amuay Bay Refinery, and Shell Curacao Limited built the Punto Cardon Refinery. These two refineries are only a few miles apart in Amuay Bay.

After the 1953 close down I was again appointed to take care of the storage and shipping and the lab, and I worked in that capacity until 1960 when the final close down of the Eagle refinery took place. Tanks that were built in 1938 were dismantled and sent over to the Punto Cardon refinery.

Before the war the capacity of the Refinery was 36,000 barrels. We had a reformer for making gasoline, a rerun unit, and a topping plant for the heavy Venezuelan crude from Lagunillas and Tia Juana. Some of the residue was shipped to England to be processed into Bitumen (Asphalt).

The residue was also blended into different grades of fuel oil, such as bunker "C", and admiralty fuel. We imported gas oil and during the war we stored for Lago and Shell Curacao. Our fuel oil, gas oil, and diesel oil storage capacity was over three million barrels. Eagle stored only enough gasoline for local use.

After the war we had a staff of 30 men a labor force of about 150. The staff never rose to the numbers we had before the war. For staff with families, we had 31 homes. We had our own hospital, doctors and nurses, and a nine hole golf course. Our golf club used to play with Lago, and some of the Lago old timers used to form teams with Eagle and then went to Curacao for team competition. Al Clark was one guy who participated in these competitions. I recall playing with Al many times.

## STRIKE AT LAGO

In 1952 they had a general strike at Lago. The Minister of Justice, Win Lampe, was related to the Eman family by marriage. He enforced a law that called for the Dutch Marines outside of Lago's fence to use bayonets if necessary. Those inside were under the jurisdiction of the Lago Police Department.

We never had a strike at the Eagle Refinery. Eagle's employees were a small group and our pay scale was comparable to Lago's, but our social programs were well ahead of theirs.

## EAGLE REFINERY PROPERTIES

After the Eagle Refinery was finally closed down in 1961, ten of us ex-employees bought out the 31 houses and the land on which they stood, ten bachelor quarters, empty lots between the quarters, and the Eagle Club.

Incidentally, this housing had been built before that of Lago Colony. The contractor was the same person who built Lago's houses--Charlie Ross. For the most part, Eagle's were clapboard, wooden walls, similar to the Lago Marine housing on the cliff above Rodger’s Beach.

People from Aruba bought most of these houses, and one was a man from Curacao. We paid 320,000 NAfls. We rented out the houses we don't live in to teachers, nurses and government people. This rent allowed us to pay off our mortgage in five years. In 1967 we decided that we could buy the houses we lived in. By 1974, as conditions became better and the value of the housing increased, we decided we could make more money by selling houses, and the open lots. In 1979 the last house, the old manager's house, was sold. Most of these houses

were two- and three-bedroom. Mine was the only four bedroom and two bath house. As my family grew, I had added a fourth bedroom and a second bathroom.

When we rented our houses from the company we had paid 65 guilders a month. Electricity and water were provided free of charge while we were with Eagle, and when they closed down, we got water and electricity from the government. Presently, we pay something like 150 guilders a month for electricity, so I have air conditioning in only one bedroom. My water bill ranges from 80 to 120 guilders a month. There are two pits in my septic system. The second pit, where most of the water is held, has a baffle and I have a pump in it. Twice a week, I use that water on my lawn and garden, and twice a week I use regular drinking water. My laundry water also goes into my septic system. Many people in Oranjestad use this method of irrigation. Normally we do our watering at night so the neighbors don't complain.

## CURACAO, RETIREMENT

In 1960 when they closed the Eagle refinery for the last time, I transferred to Shell Curacao and moved there with my family. We weren't happy in our new quarters and I wasn't too pleased in my new job. After three months, I finally decided to put in for my retirement. I wound up taking an early pension when I was 49 years old, and I moved back to Aruba. The company bought five years (in other words gave me credit five more years) and I had to pay 4% from my providence fund into the pension scheme. According to our pension scheme, I was required to work until I had 57 years with the company. I lacked three years although the five years the company bought moved me to 54, and I only received 91% of the full pension. As matter of record, the Shell pension fund started in September 1947.

## BUILDING CONSTRUCTION IN ARUBA

I worked a year and a half with "Bal Maatschappij", a construction company, then I joined "Petrona And Croes." My first job was helping build the government administration building where the post office and the radio and telephone company are located. That job fell under the central government of the Dutch colony of the six Netherlands Antilles islands. On the completion of that assignment, I worked on the construction of an addition to the 80 room, and six floor "Aruba-Caribbean Hotel." When that was topped out, I went to work for Al Clark as supervisor of all concrete work on the 201 room, seven floor Sheraton Hotel. I supervised all concrete and masonry work from the foundation to the roof. That hotel, now called "The Aruba-Palm Beach Hotel," has adjoining apartments similar to cabanas, with an East Indian

roof style. The split-level six-plexes were mostly for families with children. Balashi was next, and here we built foundations for government water tanks, and diesel auxiliary units.

The new bridge over the Spanish Lagoon that replaced the existing bridge on the San Nicholas - Oranjestad roadway was next. This bridge is constructed with a curb that extends to the bottom of the Spanish Lagoon, and the center of it is filled with caliche and sand. The finished structure was topped with asphalt.

There was a construction work slump after that, and I went to work for Edmund Ambrose "Chicken" Johnson. He raised chickens at one time; in fact he was into all kinds of businesses. This time he set up a heavy equipment business. I helped him on that endeavor, and we did concrete work on the area where they built the new Hydro-desulphurization plant in Lago. My son, John Rowland, who worked for Lago was later in charge of this complex.

I also worked on the construction of the new 650,000 barrel tanks they built in the west end of the refinery area. These tanks are the same size as those that replaced the spheroids. These were the one that used to be facing the colony. I worked six years with Johnson. We did work for the Parsons Company, who built the hydrolizers, and we also did some work on the addition to the Number One power house of the refinery.

Then I left Johnson and went to work for the McGee Company for a couple of years while they built the Desulphurization Plants. That was when I cut down the old Eagle Pier. This pier was constructed with heavy steel, and we had to use Florida divers to place the special explosive charges used. My boss was the well- known Captain Zee, who is now 86 years old and still an avid tennis player. Zee, a retired Shell Lake Tanker captain, is also a billiard player of considerable repute.

## DEMISE OF LAKE TANKERS

After the war, the Venezuelan Government decided to dredge the bar in Maracaibo. Ocean-going tankers were then able to enter Lake Maracaibo and carry out crude. The larger tankers could carry more cargo and trans-shipment was not required for ships not bound for Aruba or Curacao. Lake tankers became obsolete, and they were discontinued.

## COMPLETELY RETIRED AT LAST

I finally retired in 1974, and I haven't worked since. I have been pensioned for twenty-five years!

Bernadina Elizabeth, whom we call Bernie, was born April 24, 1939. She studied teaching in Holland, come back to work for four years

as a teacher, returning again to Holland where she studied at the Amsterdam Academy for Dramatic Arts and Expression for four years. For seven years, she worked in Holland with a group called "Torneao," that performs live on stage. She backtracked to Aruba and is now teaching Dramatic Arts and Expression in high school, the teachers college, in the hospital for the nurses, and other groups. Presently, she presides over the Teachers Labor Union, an organization which gives the Aruban government a big headache.

John Rowland Every was born May 30th, 1940. He finished his high school in Holland, and attended Higher Technical College in Eindhoven, Netherlands, graduating with a BSC in Chemistry. In the Netherlands' colleges, seniors work in the industry for a year. Interestingly, John worked at van Gelder, Chemische Fabvriek Naarden, Koninklijke Shell Laboratorium, Koninklijke Hoogovens N.V.

After graduation he worked for Esso in capacities with progressively more responsibility, from Senior Engineer/Operations Supervisor, as manager for operations programming, shipping and marketing Lago Refinery, Aruba into 1985. He is now in a consultant for the Caribbean area with S. S. M., a Dutch concern which deals with energy in various forms. He speaks Spanish, English, Dutch and some German, is married and has three children.

Carmine Louise was born January 22, 1942. She studied in Holland for four years in secretarial work, and returned to Aruba where she worked in the Nederland Bank. She later married Tone Gadella, assistant manager of the Dewitt Brothers. When Dewitts sold out to another company, she left for Holland. She is now teaching Spanish at a university there.

Dedric Andre was born June 13, 1943. After Dedric completed high school, he went to work for Phillips. He then joined the army where he studied computer science. When he completed his tour he went to work for the Xerox Company, where he works today as purchasing and sales comptroller.

Eorrol Anthony was born March 24th 1945. He studied construction engineering in Rotterdam, returned to Aruba and started his own construction equipment business.

Dennis was born the December 23, 1946. He went to trade school in Aruba after completing his regular schooling, and he worked for Lago. He now works with his brother Eorrol.

Ida Lee who was born September 11, 1948. She is married to Jim