

FREEPORT

A year ago Bahamian Review Magazine asked the question "Will Freeport Succeed?"

Since that time, editorial staffers have been making frequent trips to Grand Bahama to keep tabs on the spectacular growth of this second Bahamian city — growth which leaves no doubt as to the success of its future.

Vast changes have been seen in the past twelve months. More important perhaps than the physical improvements — the move to high-rise, the new hotels and office buildings, the new bank buildings — is the social change that seems to have come about during this period.

A year ago many of the people earning their living at Grand Bahama regarded it as a get-rich-quick place requiring little or no community interest on their part. A high percentage of them lived abroad, "commuting" to Freeport during work weeks to make their money and take it back home on weekends.

Of course there weren't as many amenities even that recently as there are now. Roman Catholic and non-sectarian schools, churches, recreation, good housing, and attractive community social life are all amply accounted for at Grand Bahama today.

Mrs. Wallace Groves is looking forward to starting construction shortly on a cultural centre costing well in excess of half a million dollars and tying in with the planned redevelopment by the Grand Bahama Port Authority of the central commercial centre as a prime pedestrian area.

The two service clubs, Rotary and Kiwanis, have embarked on ambitious programs to make this city a well-rounded one and suitable for bringing up children. Rotary is putting the accent on youth, while Kiwanis is encouraging people to landscape and has undertaken the landscaping of the most-frequently seen areas of Freeport for its own project.

A year ago, Ed Brown of Bellevue Stationers on what is now called Queen's Highway, mentioned that he could always tell who planned on staying and whom he could look to as potential regular customers.

"You just have to look at their lawns," he said, noting that those who intended to live here more or less per-

the fast money it would bring to a tourist economy. Today, the serious far-sighted tone of conversation once heard only in Grand Bahama Port Authority headquarters is becoming the rule amongst the average man.

Talk centres now not on roulette, dice and one-armed bandits, but on the wooing of light and heavy industry to the tax-privileged area. The average man now points out in conversation that his future and that of his family lies in stable, permanent employ such as industrial expansion would bring.

A chamber of commerce is in the planning stages and a panel of ten well-known bankers and licensees headed by Edward J. Davies has been selected to make the Chamber a vital force in Freeport's business life. Mr. Davies is founder at Freeport of Anglo-American Electrical Co. Ltd., a firm of electrical suppliers.

There are those in Freeport who say their city will rival Nassau in the not too distant future as a banking centre for the Western Hemisphere.

POPULAR WITH BANKS: Although the two large American banks represented in Nassau, Chase Manhattan and First National City Bank, have not yet moved into Grand Bahama, four of the capital's principal banking houses have. The Royal Bank of Canada, Canada's largest and the first international bank in the Bahamas, recently opened handsome new Robjohns Melich-designed quarters just a few feet from the new Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce bloc put up this year. Across the street from Port Authority headquarters are their bankers, Barclays D.C.O., in a newly-expanded branch put up only a few short years ago. In the downtown Parker Building, the Bank of Nova Scotia set up shop towards the end of the winter season.

Nassau's Trust Corporation of the Bahamas is represented with a branch in The Royal's new building.

Significant private banks include the Mercantile Group's Mercantile Bank & Trust Co. Ltd. and Mercantile Bank of

A SPECIAL REPORT

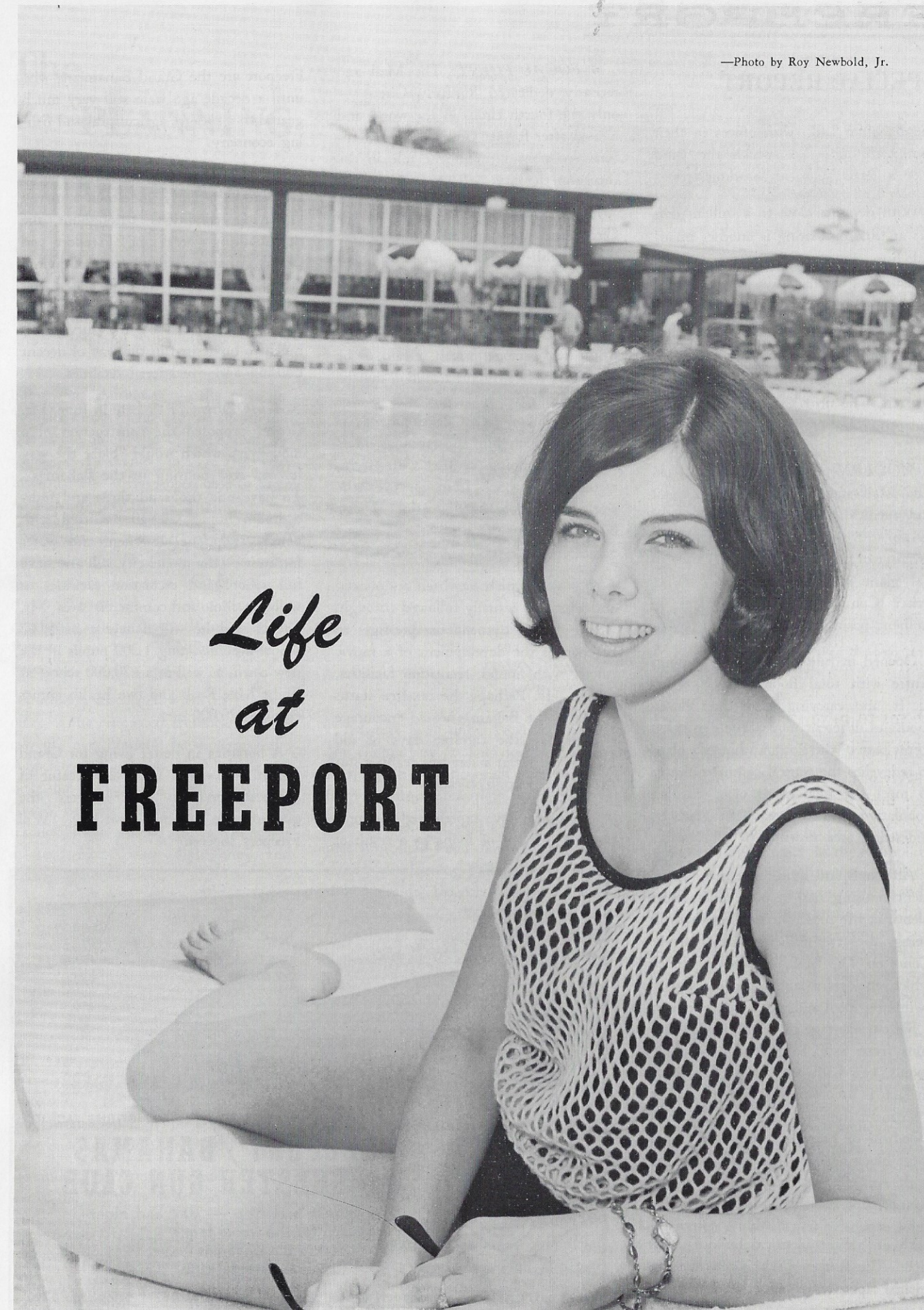
By Terry McLaughlin
Managing Editor

manently were making their homes as attractive as possible, while the confirmed transients paid little attention to their surroundings. Mr. Brown said at that time that the number of those keeping up their properties already was becoming significant.

Today there exists little doubt about "esprit de corps" of the Freeporters. People are moving in with their families, young adults are getting married and settling down to family life in new homes, and small businessmen are asking for more say in the life of the city.

THE PAST: A year ago talk centered largely on gambling and on

—Photo by Roy Newbold, Jr.



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the Bahamas Ltd., with offices in their own building — of which the third floor is Port Authority headquarters.

With deposits close to a million dollars at time of writing is another financial firm, Freeport Savings and Loan Association, headed by genial South-erner William Mizelle. Freeport Savings and Loan has just built what is probably the most attractive new building on The Mall as its headquarters. The firm accepts both sterling and American Dollar accounts.

MODERN FACILITIES: Across The Mall stands the modern hospital and medical research complex created by philanthropist James Rand, American inventor of the dial telephone and financial giant who led Remington Type-writer Company to its present pre-eminent position.

Opened in July was a new shopping-centre with total floor area of 34,000 sq. ft. and carrying more than eleven thousand different items. The expansion forms part of the Port Authority's plans to redevelop the central commercial area to meet the new needs of a growing population and to create an aesthetic pedestrian area downtown.

Although still quite expensive, apartment housing has become much more plentiful, the most outstanding example being the two-million-dollar Bellevue Court on The Mall, a four-wing block which encloses a landscaped court with swimming pool and which offers tenants a high percentage of leisure space. Rent runs from \$250 to \$275 for two bedrooms, two bathroom units. The Mall, in fact, is becoming quite popular as an apartment house area, with "Buddy" Goodwin of Freeport Inn putting up a large block next to Bellevue Court along with American associates; the Sea Sun Manor, for a while the biggest and most expensive unit doubling its tenants with an almost identical building next door. The Racket Club is another furnished apartment block on the main street.

A FOCAL POINT: The Mall and recently dedicated Ranfurly Circus — only the fourth circus in the world and named after former Governor Lord Ranfurly — play a prominent role in the future of the city.

Fronting on the beautifully-landscaped Circus and its illuminated fountain are the English-style Pub on The Mall and Daniel K. Ludwig's King's Inn Hotel.

Multi-millionaire ship owner Ludwig, whose net personal worth is said to be in excess of five hundred million dollars, is planning the major features of his hundred-million-dollar development on the circus, including the fabulous international shopping centre, with architecture and goods from all over the world. A moorish-style casino is also being put up there by the Freeport gambling interests.

A project which has been announced and which, if actually followed through, would bring tremendous prestige to Freeport is the development of a movie colony with homes, recreation facilities, studios, etc. Perhaps the tax-free status of life in the Bahamas would encourage a return to the carefree days of old Hollywood when a star was really a star and money was no object.


Those who have experienced the most change in mode of living as a result of

Freeport are the Grand Bahamians who until a decade ago were still very much geared to a meagre agricultural and fishing economy.

Father of the Freeport Miracle, Wallace Groves recently undertook a survey of living conditions throughout the neighbouring areas of Freeport on Grand Bahama. Though cost of living, tastes, and salaries have increased tremendously amongst the local people, conditions reported by the survey left much to be desired in the way of decent housing and educational facilities.

A MODEL CITY: Late in June, Mr. Groves proposed the construction of a model city which would "blaze the way for low-cost housing in the Bahamas". To have one thousand three and four-bedroom homes, — all outfitted with power, telephone, sewerage and water facilities — the model city will also have full school and recreation facilities as well as a clinic and commercial area. Mr. Groves said he will donate a £100,000 school accomodating 1,200 pupils in the new town, as well as a £20,000 school at Eight Mile Rock and two health clinics costing £20,000 each.

A bonanza in better living for Grand Bahama, this gift from the creator of Freeport perhaps best answers the question we asked a year ago "Will Freeport succeed?"



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