

FREEPORT

E. KEEL—CROUPIER AND FAMILY MAN

A few weeks ago a large chartered aircraft winged its way from sunny Bahamas to a summer-time U.K.

Travelling aboard the craft were a party of youthful Englishmen and women now residents in the Bahamas, taking advantage of an opportunity to see home "at a bargain price."

Unfortunately for the organizers, last-minute hitches came up and the airplane, originally scheduled to land at London, had to stop at Shannon

where, because of formalities, another plane would make the last leg of the trip.

Beset with many of the headaches and bruised feelings that come with the organization of a trip like this was a young, dark-haired former airline steward turned croupier.

Errol Keel, whose work consists of dealing at the Lucayan Beach Hotel's plush Monte Carlo Casino, in many ways reflects the permanence and sta-

bility which is coming to Grand Bahama's new city.

One of the original group to arrive and generally popular with fellow employees, employers and neighbours alike, he recalls that his first sight of Grand Bahama and the fabled city-to-be was the military landing field at Gold Rock Creek, an American base handy to Freeport.

That was around Christmas-time of '63 when, says Errol, he came with ten dollars in his pocket.

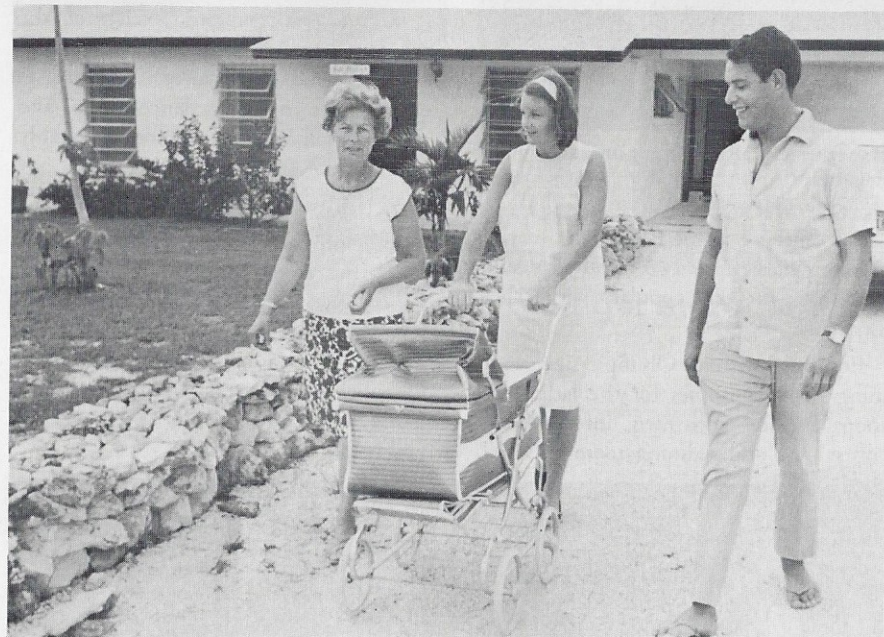
"In January I bought a piece of land," he points out now proving that from the outset he had confidence in the future of this new community.

And now, when he speaks of the past, only two years ago, he does it in the comfort of his own home furnished tastefully by himself and his charming wife Jill and occupied as well by a baby son, Simon David.

"We're thinking about being permanent," observed the croupier, "so we're making our home permanent."

At home with him and his family recently was his mother, a convivial parent who first regretted her son wanting to go to this new casino resort but who now concedes that her first impressions back home in Manchester were wrong.

A graduate of the London School of Turf Accountancy, a training place for would-be croupiers, Errol in fact has nothing but praise for his new life and for his working conditions. "Frank Ritter and Max Courtney have been



—Roy Newbold, Jr.

Mother, wife and baby join croupier Errol Keel for a walk.



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good bosses," he points out in reference to the two men who run the casino.

Inside the gilt lushness of the oval casino, he, like his colleagues, is a picture of the suave accomplished dealer expected by hotel guests. Polite but detached, he stands aloof as Lady Luck plays her tricks on the people sitting across the handsome tables.

One day as he walked out of the suite set aside for croupiers during their "break," black-tied Errol commented: "You're forever brushing your shoes before you go into the casino."

As he said this the group in the croupier's lounge changed, breaking up a competitive game of chequers where dominos, some face up, the others down, were used instead of chequers.

One dealer reached for a last-moment beverage from the inviting automatic soda dispenser. Another took a last-minute look at the trend of a baseball game on television.

And now instead of the click of improvised chequers moving across a board, the sound of quarters falling into metal trays from a lucky one-armed bandit drifted across the room.

When the time came to call it a night, guests would have one last night-cap or keep up "the soft life." Errol Keel on the other hand would get into his car, possibly giving some colleagues a lift to one of the nearby apartment developments, and go home to his family.

Although he was the first of the croupiers to get married, he is not unique in that respect.

He and Jill had been going out some two years before while they were employed by BOAC—she as a stewardess—and as soon as he was settled at Grand Bahama he brought her over marrying her July 22 last year.

The Commissioner, V. A. Knowles, performed the ceremony.

It was largely thanks to the wedding presents, say the Keels, that they got their new house. They bought most of their furniture right there on the island and when the time came, Mrs. Keel had her baby at Freeport Hospital. Both spoke glowingly about the hospital, its doctors and personnel.

Since that time, at least seven croupiers have been married on Grand Bahama. And five babies have been born to the dealers' wives.

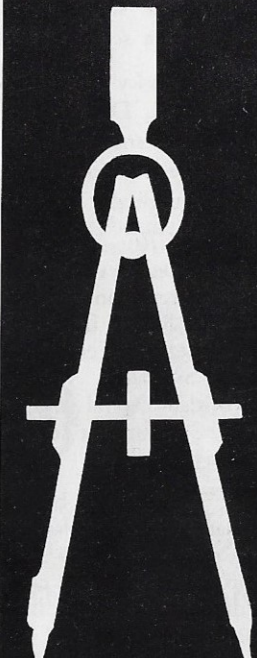
The only facet of his new life that brought adverse comment from Keel involved his home. He said: "The worst part of this house, and you can quote me, is the garden.

"It takes real perseverance!"

And perseverance is what these two young Freeporters and their new neighbours have. So it won't be long before the gardens are in green-thumb condition.



Errol Keel — deft and debonair — the public image of a Monte Carlo, Freeport, casino dealer.



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