

Walter

in landscaping

Carl: I am going to talk with / Rose who has had a great deal experience/both in Nassau and Freeport, and he is going to tell us about some of his experiences. Tell us about Nassau, first.

W. R.: Well, I was superintendent for Mrs. I. W. Killam, and I actually lived on Paradise Island - Hog Island as it was called then, and I also looked after Radcliffe, which was Mrs. Killam's town residence, and I used to pass backwards and forwards from Hog Island to Nassau on a . I ran the boat for ten years there.

When Mr. Groves made the agreement with the/Bahamas Government he asked me to come to Grand Bahama and I had breakfast with him at the Prince George Hotel in Nassau.

Carl: That seemed to be his favorite hangout spot in those days.

W. R.: A few days or a few weeks after I came to Grand Bahama and I have been here ever since.

Carl: Where did you come from in England, Mr. Rose?

W. R.: The Midlands - Birmingham.

Carl: And what year did you come to the Bahamas?

W. R.: In 1947. About 34 years I have been in the Bahamas.

Carl: Tell us - after you met Mr. Groves - what you did for Freeport, in the way of landscaping, including the cuttings you brought from Little Wale Cay, etc.

W. R.: We had to fight our way through the bush, to find a site for the first nursery here, and with Mr. Silvera I remember riding the bulldozer to clear the first nursery which we had - the nursery - the Lucayan Nursery here. It is located near the present fire station. They are supplying the hotels with quite a lot of plants for the decorations, but at that time everything was very primitive, and I built a shade plant there and raised about 100,000 plants which the Port Authority was not ready for at that time, and I imagine I stayed with the Port Authority about three years.

Carl: Well, during those three years you had a good start in turning Freeport into a tropical paradise.

W. R.: We made a start - that's about all I can say about it.

Carl: You made more than a start, for it is quite obvious to everyone that I have talked with says that W. R. is the father of all of our beauty here.

W. R.: Well, I was the first landscaping man, of course, with the Port Authority, and I don't know of anything else I have done, really. I remember going to the West End Club, the Jack Tar Hotel as it is now, and stealing all the cuttings I could find and bringing carloads back again and raising thousands and thousands, and as people came along and built their houses, so they came to me for cuttings and plants to beautify all the houses.

Carl: Well, many of the plants here came from Little Wale Cay - is that correct?

W. R.: I put one load on the Little Wale express and actually, much of the stuff I brought on the L. W. express, I found I could find it ~~through~~ here due to the indigenous to Grand Bahama.

Carl: I am interested in the difference between a Casuarina and a Cunningham Pine. I am told that the drive leading to Queens Cove is planted with Cunningham Pines. Is that true?

W. R.: Well, it is a Casuarina. They are both natives of Australia, of course, but the one - equisati fowlair, ~~is~~ grows all over the Orient, and floats all around the world - grows in all the small cays

~~XXXX~~ W. R.: but the one that grows on the road to Queens Cove is a much thicker ~~thicker~~ tree and is used extensively in Florida as wind breaks in areas of cultivation over in Florida, where the first plants came from.

Carl: In all the horticulture books I have read said that very few plants are indigenous to the Bahamas, going back in time, but that they came by the birds, the wind, etc. over a period of great many years after the Bahamas rose from the sea.

W. R.: At one time there were pines all the way to West End. Now the whole area has been taken over by the hard woods and you rarely see a pine.

Carl: Are you talking about the pine which puts down a tap root - not the Australian pine but the regular yellow pine.

W. R.: It is not the yellow pine - this pine is the Caribia (Sp?) Hias Floseris (sp?) you are thinking of course - the long leaf yellow pine of Florida. From the same family, of course, but these attach themselves to the rock, and if you disturb the roots, they promptly die.

Carl: Is it not true that wherever you see a pine - there is fresh water? in the Bahamas.

W. R.: ^{Not} ~~Grand~~ necessarily. That is not true. There is water everywhere on the Bahamas, depending on the depth you dig for it, but the average is about 12 ft. If you dig down 12 ft. you get to the water level. The depth above the salt water is about 18 in. to 2 ft. It is like the cream on top of a milk pile.

Carl: I can remember the first time I ever went to Nassau. I looked out of the aircraft as we were landing at the airport, and I could see literally thousands of windmills, which you don't see there anymore, because they use electric pumps, but they were pumping fresh water from many places on the island, and I doubt if there have ever been any wind mills here on Grand Bahama.

W. R.: There are no wind ~~xxxx~~ mills here on Grand Bahama. The only one I ever remember seeing was Winnergren's place on Hog Island, and that pumped the water there for the estate for many years.

Carl: Did you have fresh water on Hog Island?

W. R.: Very little. We drank water from the cistern which was under the house, but it was supplemented by city water which came in and was very salty at that time, so the amount of plants which we could grow on the island was very limited, because of the salt in the water.

Carl: I once knew a landscaper on Hog Island by the name of Jules Von Brogen (sp?). I knew him for many years.

W. R.: Yes, Jules was a friend of mine. I believe he is dead now. He took the job that I left, with Mrs. Killam. He left about two years before she died, and went back to Europe.

Carl: He was a great fellow. I used to have a lot of fun with him.

W. R.: He also did the job for Mr. Taylor at the east end - no, the west end of New Providence there. He worked for Dr. Winnergren for many years. As long as I can remember, he was the gardener there. It must have been about a year before I went to Hog Island which was in 1947. I think he was there in 1946 and came from Canada, where he had been growing onions commercially.

Carl: Tell me, Mr. Rose, when you left the Port Authority what did you do after that?

W. R.: When I left the P.A. I went with Mr. James Rand at the Colonial Research Institute, and I grew the first hydroponic plants here for Mr. Rand. It was very interesting.

Carl: I once interviewed Mr. Rand. I was told he would not consent to interviews by the press, and I went and sat in his office until he came in, and I said "Mr. Rand, I understand you don't consent to press interviews." He turned around and looked at me, and said "Who in the hell are you?" and I spend all day with him.

~~XXXX~~ W. R.: His operation here was rather a gimmick, you know. He wanted to get a few millions out of the United States, I believe, which he did successfully.

I was with Mr. Rand a number of years, of course, and I was with the Colonial Research at the hospital when it was handed over by Mrs. Rand to the government. I was Supplies Officer down there. ^{for about three years.} That was my profession completely at that time. When Mrs. Rand handed over the hospital to the government, I decided to leave and went as Manager to the Harbour House Towers, and my wife and I stayed there as joint managers until we came to this place. We are here about seven years now.

Carl: This is a very nice place. Tell me, Mr. Rose, do you see any future for hydroponic farming in the Bahamas?

W. R.: It is a very expensive operation. I dont, quite frankly, not at the present time. You see, it is not ~~economic~~ economic at the present time. The soil here is made up of 99% calcium carbonate, the p/h is too high, so you have to use 3,500 ^{lbs.} of super-phosphate per acre to make the area compatible for growth; in other words, reduce the p/h to compatible range, which is about 6.5 of course on the acid side, so that is prohibitive for that stuff; then, of course, you have to use all the rest of the chemicals because there are no nutrients at all; no iron, no magnesenes, no copper, no phosphates, no potash

Carl: I remember when Nixon Smiley was the Farm & Garden Editor of the Miami Herald. He wrote an article about how to grow tomatoes and other plants in poor soil, and a lady from the Bahamas wrote in and said "I tried exactly what you told me to do and it didn't work" and he said "I don't mean soil that poor."

W. R.: Nixon Smiley was here many years ago and I know him quite well, and he had ideas then, and was talking about soil in north Florida - not here. As I said, it is 99% calcium carbonate, and you've got to beat it up and put it in the heat, and it won't grow a weed for ten years. Well, you have probable seen what is happening in the bush right down by the canal there - the waterway, where there was one mistake we made - letting bulldozers loose here and instead of using the natural growth as a background to beautifying the area, so wherever the bulldozer has been, it is a disaster area. You expose that calcium and it is like the Bahama Sahara ~~desert~~ dessert, so in the end we found that the best thing to do was not to cut down the bush; cut the roads through, get the sand off the beach and cover the edge of the roads all along with about 2 or 3 in. of sand, and the natural growth will come back, and that's how

we made the ~~dredges~~ ~~all along~~ verges all around the roads everywhere to make them look good. Solid rock all the way through there.

Carl:

Well, these islands, according to geological history, only rose from the sea about twenty thousand years ago.

W.R.:

We have found stalactite types, ^{caves} but now under 30 ft. of water, and we must have known the caves must have been full of air to have developed the stalactite and stalagmites, but now they are full of water - so, either the island came up or went down - we don't know. I would assume it has gone down. And that happened, according to our measurements, about 14,000 years ago. When the Continent Atlantis disappeared, I imagine. I am just surmising, that's all.

Carl:

During the Ice Epic the ocean rose and fell at least four times, and the last time was about fourteen thousand years ago.

W.R.:

It's like another source of life over there; particularly Abaco Cay you suddenly see a little bit of rock come up out of the sea as you go towards it - and it develops into a little island.

Carl:

I was over there talking with the old German doctor who used to be here at Pine Ridge years ago - Dr. Gottlieb - and had a little chat with him and his wife, and they have a very nice little place on Marsh Harbour. They live on a hill, nice and cool.

W.G.:

Roughly, Dr. Gottlieb was a land owner down at Smith Point at one time, and the house he built is still there.

Carl:

W.R.:

Yes, he told me he owned about 10 or 12 acres, ^{just before I went with} ~~for~~ the Port Authority. That was one of the houses I landscaped ~~for~~ the Port Authority. You know, with just myself and two or three men, it was very difficult to make much of a splash in a big area like this, the original 50-acres I looked over and decided I would not be able to do very much while I was here. ~~ix~~ I introduced many plants here, of course; one of the weeds I introduced is now running all over the island. That is the wood ^{rose} ~~rose~~. Someone sent me 5-Cs from the Philippines, and I planted it 20 years ago in the first shade house we built. ^{at the Lucayan Nursery.} The shade house fell down and we bulldozed altogether and took it out to Pine Ridge.

Carl:

All the women ran to Pine Ridge to pick wood rose. So you started them.

W.R.:

You see, I am a curate. In other words, I am a graduate of the Royal Botanical Garden, and we correspond with each other all over the world and send each other plants which we find interesting, and in turn they send us their plants which they find interesting. I got the Royal Poinciana plants from Egypt. Many of the small ones that you see flowering now are from the seeds that I got and you will find a variation in color all over the island, too. There was only the very big ones when I came - mostly in Pine Ridge. We dug many plants up and planted them all around the place and most of them we have cut down as they have become a menace. I believe they had a problem at The Garden of the Groves. They cut a lot of them down as they became overwhelming. It was grossly overplanted from the start. They wanted an immediate effect and they got it, but now you have a problem thinning all that stuff out, and I don't think there is anyone on the island who has vision enough to do a job like that. They cut the big trees

W.R.: but it has left gaps around. I have not been to the Garden of the Groves in about a year now, but they were just cutting the trees down then. Well, that was something I knew would eventually happen, of course.

Carl: Somebody told me that Horace Gay was back on the ~~s~~ island here.

W.R.: I saw Horace two days ago. He came to the office looking for someone, but he doesn't look very fit. He is over-big, fat and we did not talk professionally at all, so what he is doing I don't know. I understand he is looking after the Princess property.

Carl: Somebody told me that

W.R.: -----I am not too impressed. As a matter of fact, I sat ~~sunk~~ out on the hump by the pool on the top there, and there were big rats running around, this big.