

“I Kept House in the Jungle”: Gender and the Senior Staff Camps in Venezuela ¹

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As oil operations in Venezuela stabilized, and the required tour of duty for U.S employees involved prolonged stays, the companies pursued new cultural and gendered strategies in its dealing with their foreign employees. Several factors were at play in their decision. A predominately single male labor force occasioned complaints about boredom, excessive drinking and other social behavior that the companies considered inappropriate. Likewise, married men without their families produced discontent, estrangement, and pressure to return home. Both conditions were viewed as disruptive to the stable conduct of operations. Concerned about dissatisfaction in its ranks and about retaining its foreign employees, company officials had often debated the merits of an all-male labor force and concluded that they would get better results if their white U.S. employees were permitted to bring their families to Venezuela and have them in the field with them.¹ They surmised that providing housing for them would eventually pay for itself by producing a stable labor force. Although it may have alleviated some of the immediate problems for the foreign staff, the construction of separate living facilities for the foreigners served to accentuate social differences between this group and the Venezuelan labor force.

The companies also considered other factors; their employee’s public conduct directly influenced relations with the local community and, by extension, with Venezuelan authorities. On multiple occasions, the actions of its male employees had

¹ (Work in progress, do not cite without author’s permission)

lead to negative incidents and even outright clashes with Venezuelans. To ensure smooth operations, and buttress relations with the Venezuelan community, the company opted to recruit increasing numbers of married employees and relocate the entire family to the oil fields. This new cultural strategy would have far reaching consequences not only on oil company operations, but also on social and cultural norms of the residential camps and the outlying communities. Besides social practices, the foreign presence also promoted new patterns of consumption, introducing a diverse array of U.S. and creating markets for Venezuelan products that permanently altered what people consumed. For middle class Venezuelans employed in the industry, the cultural norms and social practices of the married U.S. couple, served as a constant reminder of model they were expected to emulate in order to advance in the industry.

As they began to recruit foreign employees with families, the oil companies had to attend to the needs of their residential compounds for married couples. Although bachelors' quarters and the traditional mess hall continued to be a feature of the staff camps, they increasingly shared space with the formal residences for employees and their spouses and children. To accommodate their needs, schools had to be built, teachers hired, hospitals and medical staff expanded, and recreation centers enlarged. This expansion had the net effect of recreating important features of a U.S. lifestyle in the residential enclaves of rural and urban Venezuela. Bounded by protective fences and guarded by a detachment of guachimanes, the foreign camp housed the foreign community and isolated it from unwanted contact with Venezuelans. While the predominant male labor force left the camp to work every day, its fences circumscribed

the activities of unemployed married women. Not all conditions for foreigners were equal, and camp life reflected social distinctions based on rank and status in the company.

Increasing Foreign Presence

By the mid-1950s the numbers of foreigners in Venezuela had increased; according to one estimate, U.S. citizens numbered about thirty-five thousand and the British approximately ten thousand.ⁱⁱ Though not all of the foreigners worked in oil, the industry remained the principal reason foreigners came to Venezuela.ⁱⁱⁱ The camps in which most of them lived represented islands of U.S. culture and society in the broader Venezuelan landscape. In the words of one resident, the camp resembled “a self sustaining colony born of the quest for oil and strangely at odds with the surrounding primitive country.”^{iv} Since the camps evolved as the exclusive domain of largely white U.S. or European employees, they embodied the racial mores and social prejudices prevalent in the United States. Oil camps with names such as La Rosa, Tía Juana, La Salina, Concordia, Miraflores, and Bachaquero dotted the eastern shore of Lake Maracaibo and the foreign areas within them soon acquired English names such as Hollywood, Sunset, Star Hill, Victory, and Tortilla Flats.^v At many levels, the camps were self sustaining enclaves in which U.S. employees and their families sought to recreate the norms and customs of their previous homes. Where possible this meant also the reproduction of culinary traditions, social practices, and national and religious observances. In the larger camps, celebrations for 4th of July, Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas became extravagant expressions of U.S. culture in which all camp residents were expected to participate. Engulfed by a Venezuelan society and culture that

remained foreign to most U.S. residents heightened the importance of these celebrations as a way to retain their identity.

The senior staff camp also housed Venezuelan professionals known as the “junior staff” composed largely of doctors, lawyers and lower level administrators. Though these two groups coexisted within the residential enclave, power relations clearly favored the foreigners, and cultural exchanges occurred within the context of a dominant U.S. social and cultural environment. The experiences of the camp, exercised a powerful influence on the emerging Venezuelan middle class that shared this unique space. To advance in this environment they found it necessary to incorporate elements of a U.S. lifestyle including language, diet, fashion, sports, and holidays. Framed by the dominant role of oil industry, U.S. culture and practices acquired a new cache and served to define modernity for many in the Venezuelan middle class. Invariably, the U.S. residents underwent a limited adaptation, incorporating elements of the Spanish language into their vocabulary and adopting some Venezuelan culinary practices. In the end, the senior staff camps represented a distinct social and cultural space, in which U.S. citizens lived apart from the Venezuelans who inhabited the area outside the fences.

Recruitment of Married Men

Company policies initially favored hiring single men, in the belief that married employees would be more costly and that family needs would place greater demands on the all-male workforce. During the early period of the industry, the difficult conditions in the Venezuelan countryside in fact favored the hiring of single employees, since few if any services existed and housing remained primitive. As early as 1915, Caribbean had begun to grapple with this issue, but it remained largely unresolved during the first phase

of the oil industry.^{vi} As the initial boom subsided and the need to retain able and well-trained employees acquired importance, particularly after the Depression, the idea of hiring married workers became more attractive. Throughout the 1920s protests by Venezuelans alerted the companies to the nature of the problems they faced with single men.^{vii} In the 1930s increased pressure from labor, the middle classes, and the government resulted in limits on the number of foreigners employed by the firm. These changes and the shifting political climate placed a premium on the quality of the foreign employees and forced the companies to become more selective in the acquisition of personnel.

The companies also had their own reasons for hiring married men. Single employees often proved unreliable, and turn-over rates were high. Standard found that many applicants were “seeking foreign service to escape from some undesirable local situation, such as excessive indebtedness, domestic difficulties, failure to advance or to get along with their supervisor.”^{viii} In 1936 its directors took up the issue at their annual board meeting. The minutes of the gathering summarized the shift in policy: “For many years we felt that foreign-service was acceptable to single men and concentrated our efforts to secure such. This of course, put a serious limitation on our selection, and with improved housing and living facilities in the field we now lean toward married men as we find in the long run they are more satisfied to grow with the local organization.”^{ix} The move toward the employment of married men parallels the shift in the industry toward a greater degree of professionalization and away from reliance on traditional roustabouts who would work without preference for any company.

After World War II, with a significant number of professionals returning to the labor force, companies actively recruited university graduates or highly experienced specialists. Creole and Shell offered liberal benefits packages to entice families and paid for their relocation to the oil fields and, by the mid-1950s, yearly vacations back to the United States. For its part, Creole touted the salary it paid to its foreign employees in dollars deposited in a U.S. bank, adding that in most cases it was exempt from U.S. income tax. Many camp residents tried to live on their monthly living allowances and have their entire salaries deposited to U.S. accounts.^x

The company also lauded its “longer vacations with travel at Company expense.” After a year of service employees and their families received “29 days of vacation each year during the first four years of service and 30 days per year thereafter.”^{xi} This package also included travel time, not counted as part of the actual vacation. Return trips to the United States often meant a voyage on a company tanker, a Grace Cruise liner or, for those willing to spend more, a rather circuitous flight on Pan American Airways with multiple stops en route.^{xii} By 1940 Pan American offered 6 weekly flights between Miami and Venezuela.^{xiii} After World War II, direct flights between Caracas and destinations in Texas facilitated travel between the two countries.^{xiv} Vacation time could also be accumulated so that the employee after two years could take sixty days in one year. To attract candidates, Creole published brochures with titles such as *An Oil Well with an Interest in You*, and sent recruiters to Oklahoma, Texas, and Louisiana.^{xv} Advertisements in major newspapers announced visits by Creole recruiters operating from local hotels. According to one individual recruited during this time, “If you wanted to be in the oil industry, Venezuela was to the place to be.”^{xvi} The chances of promotion

seemed better in the overseas than in the home divisions of the oil companies and gradually skilled specialists replaced the early roughnecks.^{xvii} The companies expected that hiring university or professionally trained individuals would also yield other non-monetary dividends; these individuals would prove more tolerant of cultural differences and would adapt to work in a foreign country with greater ease.

Concerned about the rising tide of nationalism evident after World War II, Creole forewarned its employees that they would be seen as de facto "ambassadors" of the company and the "American way of life" that their "ability to get along with nationals, both employees and outsiders, and efforts to promote a social and economic development of Venezuela" were key factors in the company's industrial and public relations.^{xviii} Sensitive to changing political conditions the company required their new or returning expatriate employees to acquire a working knowledge of Spanish, the laws and customs of the country and the policies and operations of the company.^{xix} By the mid 1940s foreign employees faced an eight-week course with five hours daily of Spanish instruction under the direction of a "drillmaster" and two hours of history and "customs." Before establishing these mandatory courses, companies such as Standard Oil (later Creole), hired Berlitz language instructors and assigned them to its camps. In Maracaibo, classes held at Bella Vista camp promised to teach foreigners about the "mentality of the Venezuelan" and promote "camaraderie between the native and the foreign worker."^{xx} In the words of a former Creole industrial relations official, at best the classes sought to keep the expatriate from "put [ting] his foot in it all the time."^{xxi} In Caracas, classes were held at the Creole headquarters and included the participation of the Centro Venezolano Americano, an English-language cultural center founded during the war with support

from the oil companies, the U.S. government, and Caracas elites.^{xxii} Perturbed by the prospect of long classes in some cases over 200 hours, many U.S. expatriates typically referred to these programs as company “indoctrination sessions.”^{xxiii} Though the employees received a basic formal introduction to Venezuela, their families never underwent a similar process. In 1956 Creole Petroleum produced a color film entitled *Assignment Venezuela* for prospective employees that stressed the proper role for U.S. citizens and their families in the country. In the long run, however, little could be accomplished in a required training session that lasted only a few weeks, and those who arrived in Venezuela continued to reflect the prevailing U.S. views of race and culture.

Gendered Strategies: Incorporating women and families

Undoubtedly, from the point of view of the company the very idea of incorporating women into the camp life was linked to the perceived role they played in the social reproduction of society. The assumption was that women, by their presence, would exercise a regulatory influence upon the unruly male labor force. Embedded in this assumption was also the notion that women and the family would serve to ensure U.S. cultural continuity abroad. Women, were not, however, the only source of U.S. culture and norms. The expatriate population had many methods at its disposal for maintaining contact with the United States. The company commissaries sold an assortment of imported mostly canned U.S. food products. In the evenings, countless shortwave radios tuned in to U.S. and nearby British stations relayed throughout the Caribbean and kept abreast of news and other developments. Newspapers such as the *Diario de Occidente* in Maracaibo, (which published an English) section listed the shortwave radio bands and the programming for the week.^{xxiv} At times the entire family would gather to listen to the

radio. Some women in eastern Venezuela religiously followed British radio soaps emanating from Trinidad.^{xxv} Departures and arrivals of staff to and from the United States served as cultural conduits, introducing the latest fashions and musical releases.^{xxvi} U.S. magazines and novels made the rounds from one home to another. The publication of English language newspapers such as the *Maracaibo Herald* and the *Caracas Journal* (later *Daily Journal*) as well as the English-language section of *Panorama* also served to disseminate news and cultural and sports information from the United States. By the 1950s, enterprising families in eastern Venezuela erected towering television antennas in order to receive English programming from nearby Trinidad. Increasingly, the U.S. population in eastern Venezuela also looked upon the British colony of Trinidad as a vacation destination.

A series of unspoken patriarchal assumptions informed the expectations that accompanied women's presence in the camps. Although they had participated in social functions associated with their husbands' employment in the United States, they had lived in separate neighborhoods there. The enclosed camp dramatically constricted women's freedom of movement. The constant interaction imposed by camp life now added a new subjective factor to the evaluation of employees: the extent to which family members appeared to be team players fully participating in camp life. According to one spouse, women were expected to be a "social assets" to their husbands.^{xxvii} This practice reflected the assumption that a non integrated person might prove corrosive to the social solidarity needed to ensure camp cohesion. This was an extra burden for the wife, since now her actions reflected directly on the evaluation that her husband received from the company.

From the point of view of the company, women also had other roles to play, in particular providing the company with a human face and the appearance of a settled community integrated in some way with Venezuelan society. The company hoped that these women would become involved in local community work and that their actions would reflect positively on it. Participants in a 1939 Standard (New Jersey) board meeting discussed their expectations of the spouses of U.S. executives in Venezuela: “Wives of executives in foreign countries especially play a big part in forming public opinion. Many are marvelous missionaries, but some are hell raisers.” In an effort to promote a model of behavior, the chairman of the board praised supervisor Jim Clark’s wife in Maracaibo who “has attracted attention by the intelligent way in which she has carried on community work” and asked that Mr. Clark convey to her the “boards appreciation and thanks.”^{xxviii}

Executives and other officials’ wives typically used their “authority” to help sponsor charities and other community work in which other camp women participated. Most women quickly understood that acceptance in camp social circles and opportunities for promotion for their husbands were tied to their participation in these “service” activities. Company publications actively promoted the work of “wives’ committees” on behalf of orphans, fundraising during Christmas, and other charity work. Standard expected that all its employees and family members would participate in the task of “selling the company.”

Invariably, the company’s male employment hierarchy replicated itself among the spouses; a woman’s social standing in the camp reflected her husband’s position in the company. By their very positions, the wives of executives were sought after as friends

and allies, since they wielded a certain degree of authority within the social circle of the camp. Moreover, invitations to morning coffee gatherings, bridge games, or formal parties became command performances for anyone whose husband was interested in a promotion. This ever-present hierarchy evoked animosity and fueled tensions. Most remained muted, but occasionally they would erupt when a person at a gathering had consumed too much liquor, and invariably the outburst would be blamed on the excessive drinking.^{xxix}

To facilitate the transition of new families, by the 1950s, many camps had orientation manuals with instructions on everything from the appropriate manner to display of the Venezuelan flag, church services, mail, local shopping facilities, the best way to pick and eat tropical fruit and local commissary rules.^{xxx} Previously, this information had circulated largely through word of mouth and by ad-hoc welcoming committees that greeted new arrivals. In addition, more formal booklets such as Mary George's *A is for Abrazo* served as primers for newly arriving U.S. women.^{xxxi} "Dear Abby-style" columnists such as Anne Sutton, Mona Caldwell, Panchita Mack, and Dorothy Kaymen Kaye retold their experiences in the camps and dispensed advice to newcomers.^{xxxii} The *Caracas Journal* maintained a network of female correspondents in the camps who reported in tremendous detail on their daily activity.^{xxxiii} With names such as "Lagunillas Lowdown," "La Salina Letter," "News N' Views," "Quriquire Quips," "Caripito Chatter," and "Maracaibo Report" these columns shared news and gossip throughout the English-speaking population of Venezuela.

At the same time, the paper ran a regular woman's column that was eventually entitled "The Woman's Angle." The column, written by the Dorothy Kaymen Kaye,

proved to be equally popular among men. Eventually, the newspaper compiled a number of these articles and published them as two books, *Speaking of Venezuela* and *Caracas Everyday*. These publications were well received among foreigners, especially women, as they made the transition to life in Venezuela.^{xxxiv} Women in the camps also published weekly and monthly newsletters such as the *La Salina News*, the *Caripito Courier*, and the *Judibana Pelican* that detailed the social life of the camps. The camp bulletins reported on arrivals and departures, (especially of unmarried men and women), births, travel plans, recipes, garage sales, and upcoming events. These pamphlets, books, and articles ran the gamut from teaching foreigners how to eat their first mango and how to get along with their housekeepers, to providing comfort for the homesick and scolding those who refused to adapt. Several of them addressed the reluctance of foreigners to learn Spanish: “Americans and Englishmen, cast off your shame, you have nothing to lose but your accent.”^{xxxv}

Musiúes and Venezuelans

The social world of men was framed largely by their careers in the company and the social and professional obligations of their employment. By the 1950s the majority of the workforce consisted of Venezuelans, with most expatriates holding skilled, supervisory or administrative positions. U.S. men became the primary interface with the Venezuelan labor force and the local population outside the camp, but friendships between them and their Venezuelan counterparts were the exception not the rule. According to Edwin J. Drechsel who lived in Caripito, “Few if any of the foreign employees had off the job contacts with Venezuelans.”^{xxxvi} Harold Lieberman, employed by Creole as a Labor Relations officer, recalls being told he was “going native” because

he frequently interacted with Venezuelans.^{xxxvii} Camp life for men, as for women depended largely on their marital status. Married men became drawn into the social life of the camp and the club activities, the regular games of golf, baseball, and, for the more adventuresome, occasional fishing and hunting outside the camp.

Though bachelors also participated in some of these social activities they tended to socialize largely among themselves. Their life was punctuated by visits to the club, incessant games of poker as well as drinking and sports. One bachelor described the daily routine that confronted some single men at La Salina: He awoke every workday at five am, had breakfast at five thirty in the mess hall, and literally ran to the nearby boat dock by six to board a launch that took him to the drilling site on the lake. The mess hall staff regularly prepared bachelors sack lunches to eat during the day. The launch returned with the men at six in the evening and they hurried to the mess hall for dinner before it closed at seven. Those who arrived early usually played a few hands of poker before dinner. After their meals, they played poker or a poker dice game called *chingona*.^{xxxviii} Some visited the nearby red light district and venereal disease was common among some. Bachelors euphemistically referred to the disease as the “snakebite.”^{xxxix}

Relations between Venezuelan and foreign women in the senior staff oil camps proved complex and difficult to generalize. Although elites made efforts to bridge differences, fomenting cultural exchanges and social networks their efforts proved limited.^{xl} Undoubtedly, some U.S. and Venezuelan families developed strong bonds of friendship; largely between educated white middle class Venezuelans and foreigners with whom they shared similar social and even political values. Matters of culture, however, proved to be a common source of friction. The negative reaction of the Venezuelan

middle class women to their U.S. neighbors originated from conflicting perspectives concerning fashion, etiquette, and social behavior.

Despite living in the same social milieu and interacting on a regular basis, the two groups functioned largely in different worlds. At social functions or at the camp club it was not uncommon to find Venezuelans and expatriates socializing with members of their own nationality. There even existed two different rumor mills in the residential camps, one that detailed the purported social proclivities of U.S. residents and the other informed by the affairs related to Venezuelans. Even as late as the 1950 when their numbers in the enterprise had increased, Venezuelan professionals resented the privileges afforded to U.S. expatriates ranging from disparities in the application of justice, inequality in salary and as well as housing. Middle class Venezuelans resented having “bosses” that they considered lacking in “proper manners” and a “formal education.” Social attire was highly valued by Venezuela middle class, for whom these characteristics served to distinguish them from lower class sectors. Therefore it is not surprising that the behavior of U.S. women and men at various social functions became fodder for the rumor mill among Venezuelans. Most of the criticism centered on the casual behavior of some foreigners, their table manners, poor social skills and above all their wardrobe selection. In remarking on the attire of an U.S. woman at a formal reception, a Venezuelan woman commented “the gringa wore the same simple dress that she uses to go to CADA (commissary) every day.”^{xli} On these matters, Venezuelan women believed they “set the standard in fashion” insisting that “nobody liked how the gringas dressed . . . wearing short skirts, shorts or dressed in western fashion (vaquero).”^{xlii} They attributed this distinction to the fact that many of the Venezuelan women in the camps were from

Caracas and reflected the fashion trends current in cosmopolitan urban center. In contrast they tended to stereotype their U.S. counterparts as provincial. Ironically, these perceptions seldom surfaced in the public sphere and most U.S. expatriates were largely unaware of the opinions of the Venezuelan women coexisted in the camps. For Venezuela's middle class, highlighting distinctions between themselves and the U.S. expatriates was one way to assuage the asymmetrical power relations that pervaded social life at the camp and in urban settings.

Cases of expatriate males' contracting marriage with Venezuelan women occurred with some frequency. Frederick (Freddie) Hill Evans, a native of Long Beach, California, arrived in Venezuela in 1926 to work as a tool pusher for Gulf. He eventually settled in Cabimas where he met and married Ramona Edilia Mora González a native of Coro. Hill Evans even wrote a poem that portrayed his sentiments:

I am a gringo, my brothers,
But not by choice,
I was born that way,

All I know is that I am a brother,
Of that valiant and dignified race,
Those that are my Venezuelan brothers.

When he wrote this poem, Hill had already been in the country for 43 years and married to Ramona for over 35 years.^{xliii} By denigrating his so called "gringo" roots Evans seeks social acceptance by his "Venezuelan brothers." Moreover, his poem underscores shifting loyalties and his effort to identify with his new adopted country. Of the dozens of U.S. oilmen who arrived with him in 1926, Evans recalls two others who married Venezuelans and, permanently settled in the country. With a significant number of single expatriates

employed in the industry, in almost every oil camp there were examples of U.S. men married to Venezuelan women.

Cases of U.S. women's marrying Venezuelan men occurred with less frequency, often depending on contacts established as students at U.S. universities. Carlos Rojas Davila, for example, obtained employment with Creole after receiving his doctorate in mathematics from the Central University of Venezuela and met and eventually married Calibee Feaster, a fellow student while pursuing graduate studies at the University of Oklahoma.^{xliv} Life in the camps for these binational and intercultural couples was complicate at best. In addition to cultural and social differences they had to negotiate resistance and in some cases open hostility from both the U.S. and the Venezuelan community.

Camp Life

Men like Harold Lieberman, hired in the 1930s, viewed the opportunity to work in Venezuela as a way out of the U.S. depression era unemployment. He wrote all the oil companies operating in Venezuela and eventually was employed by Creole. Like most U.S. employees hired by the oil companies he had "no idea what [he] was getting into."^{xlv} Like the men before them, U.S. women and their children were also unaware of what awaited them in Venezuela.^{xlvi} Some families actually brought their pets from the United States, mainly dogs or cats, to help facilitate the transition for the children. In preparation for the assignment to Venezuela, Morse Travers paid a visit to the local library and read books by Erna Fergusson, *Venezuela* (1939) and Y. T. Ybarra, *Young Man of Caracas* (1941).^{xlvii} Travers, however, proved to be the exception, since few people bothered to prepare for their assignment. One woman hired as a teacher, thought that she was going

to “live in a tree house.”^{xlviii} The theme of expatriates living in the jungle proved quite common in the travel literature. Navy Lieutenant William Burchfiel, a native of Tennessee, described the Caripito camp, as an “American Tropical Outpost deep in the Venezuelan jungle.” Anne Rainey Langley, who lived for several years in the Quiriquire oil camp, wrote an article for the *National Geographic* in 1939 entitled “I Kept House in a Jungle.”^{xlix} Henry Allen, invited to visit the Creole oil camp in Caripito, expected to find people living in tents and sleeping in hammocks and wondered how canvas tents would afford protection from the tropical snakes he had heard so much about. Rather than serving as descriptions of the camps these accounts tell us more about the stereotypes held by their writers. When he actually arrived at Caripito Allen reported that to his utter surprise, the staff camp looked like a country-club suburb in the United States:

An attractive golf course, modern houses many of which had new, streamlined finish to them, green undulating lawns, glorious flowery shrubbery, tropical fruit trees, well laid-out drives and sidewalk, a new church, a large hospital on a neighboring hill, a big commissary building, a group of modern offices set in the midst of tropical landscaping, a club house with wide-open doors, windows and a verandah made an amazing picture.¹

Though not all camps resembled Caripito, referred to in company publications as one of “the most attractive oil communities of Venezuela,” many had similar amenities.^{li}

Not all the facilities in the camp were equally available to all residents. New employees, whether married or not invariably arrived as bachelors. The probationary period allowed the company to determine if the employee could adapt to camp life before incurring the expense of bringing his family to Venezuela. Once in the camp, an employee’s ranking in the company hierarchy determined his assignment of a residence. The upper echelon of the company lived in the largest houses, in some parts of the country, these homes rested on ten-foot stilts to afford greater ventilation in the humid tropical climate. Seniority and

family size also played a significant role; newer employees some times had to wait for residences to become available. The interiors of the houses, however, did possess a certain sameness, since the company provided most furnishings (usually some kind of rattan furniture).

A staff camp usually included a club that served as the center of all public social activity. In the words of one early Caripito camp resident, every afternoon “many of the employees, expatriates and Venezuelans, married and single, went there to sit, talk and drink or play billiards. The bar did a constant business until closing time and beyond.”^{lii} The advent of the clubs appeared to reinvigorate the expatriate community. The inauguration of the Caribbean Club at the Cabimas camp in 1928, for example, led to celebration that drew over five hundred expatriate men and women from throughout the lake region. *The Tropical Sun*, reported that “Home Sweet home” played until 4:00 am the next morning.^{liii}

Clubs tended to acquire amenities gradually. The first experience with a swimming pool at the Caribbean Club was a fiasco. The camp relied on Maracaibo lake water to fill the pool, and because of the silt in the water it became unusable. Eventually a pump had to be used to remove the silt and impurities in the water.^{liv} Either at the club or dispersed throughout the camp the company also maintained baseball fields for those who enjoyed the game. In 1955 camps residents were able to cast ballots for U.S. Major League All Star baseball players.^{lv} By the 1950s most clubs included a bar, a soda fountain and grill, billiard tables, tennis courts, a swimming pool, and a nine-hole golf course, usually carved out of the rain forest.^{lvi} They also included a small library consisting of well-worn books, and magazines.^{lvii}

Most public celebrations, took place at the clubs. Musical performances, dances, and a weekly selection of U.S. films provided entertainment for the expatriate community. As one expatriate recalled, the latest movies arrived by plane twice a week.^{lviii} Once a movie arrived, neighboring camps, even from competing companies, shared it until it had made the rounds of all the local facilities. In the stifling heat of western Venezuela, films became open-air affairs; moviegoers sat in folding chairs and viewed the latest Hollywood productions on a large outdoor screen. At the soda fountain they could order Coca Cola, ginger ale, root beer floats, hamburgers, French fries, and hot dogs. Parties at the club usually included the typical American “steaks, beer, beans, potato salad, and pies.”^{lix} Beer, in most cases the Venezuelan brand Polar, and local brands of rum, especially Santa Teresa, became the most popular. Imported Scotch whiskey was the drinks of choice for visiting dignitaries or company officials. Repeated exposure to these consumer patterns, either in the clubs, at mixed social gatherings or through offerings at the company commissary gradually influenced Venezuelan habits and customs. Venezuelans remain among the most prolific consumers of Scotch whisky in the world, drinking more eighteen year old scotch than any other country in Latin America. One national publication actually concluded that drinking whisky mixed with ice and water was akin to a “criollo ritual.”^{lx}

The camps had ample and well-kept park like areas, shade trees, flowers, and lush green lawns seeded with grasses imported from the United States.^{lxi} Maintenance of the camps also included controlling tropical diseases. After World War II, the U.S. army sent specialist to Caripito to address the problem of malaria and other tropical maladies.^{lxii} The lessons learned during the war in the Pacific were applied in the Venezuelan

countryside. As a result Creole began to spray DDT throughout the camps and adjacent neighborhoods. Outside the camps, the DDT crews stenciled numbers on the houses they sprayed; the designation became the homes defacto address. The sight of company trucks spewing hazy chemical clouds, with children unwittingly running behind, became a common sight throughout some camps.

The camps also included an elementary school that offered classes through eight-grade, after which the children would normally be sent to boarding school in the United States or to live with relatives while they attended high school. Teachers, recruited in the United States taught classes in English that incorporated both the Venezuelan and the U.S. mandated curriculum preparing students to attend U.S. high schools. For the youth of the camp, life also revolved around activities at the club, including sporting events, swimming or other games took up their time. During the summer, the return of the older high school students enlivened camp life. Besides attending school, children were encouraged to belong to the Boy Scout and Girls Scout troops that formed in most camps. Religious services tended to be nondenominational. Although Catholics could easily attend services in nearby Venezuelan churches, few if any ever ventured out of the camp to worship. The presence of Catholic nuns as nurses in some company hospitals allowed for worship at these facilities.

Hospitals, initially staffed by U.S. medical personnel and subsequently by Venezuelan doctors and nurses, operated in all the camps. Shopping took place at a company-subsidized commissary that included basic products as well as an assortment of U.S. brands, mostly a regular variety canned goods. In addition, there was a mess hall where single employees took their meals. To maintain their facilities in pristine condition

the companies employed an army of Venezuelan cooks, gardeners, and maintenance personnel.

Lago's monthly reports provide insights into the complex tasks performed by the camp staff which catered to the needs of what amounted to a small town. In the vicinity of Cabimas, Lago maintained staff camps at Ambrosio, La Salina, La Rosa, Punta Gorda, and a location named Lot 66. A camp foreman directed a Venezuelan and West Indian staff that included, according to company documents, "house boys," mail carriers, a sanitation gang, yard laborers, peones, office-building janitors, security, laundresses, watchmen and school teacher.^{lxiii} The camp staff cleaned the bachelors' quarters and the club facilities, prepared meals, collected trash to be burnt in an incinerator, sprayed crude oil on nearby vegetation and standing pools of water to control mosquitoes, maintained the yards, and delivered ice and water to the camp residences. During the month of May 1930 the kitchen staff prepared 16,099 meals at La Salina.^{lxiv}

The company attempted to provide its foreign employees and their families with all their basic physical needs. As part of the compensation package, the staff employee received housing, furniture, electricity, and in some cases natural gas. The company gardeners kept the lawns perfectly manicured. Common in the United States, the idea of homes with lawns remained foreign to most Venezuelans. The staff also attended to most home repairs, including, according to one ex-Creole spouse, changing their light bulbs. When a woman who did not know how to drive needed to go to the commissary, a company driver picked her up at the door.^{lxv} Besides camp staff, many expatriate families employed maids, in many cases West Indians or Venezuelans, to perform household tasks. As one U.S. woman who had lived in eastern Venezuela candidly

admitted the “lazy Americans went to Trinidad to get help so they would not have to speak or learn Spanish.”^{lxvi} Although this may not have always been the case, this practice did mirror experiences observed in foreign enclaves in Central America and the Caribbean.^{lxvii}

Urban Petroleum Districts

The oil companies not only operated in the rural countryside, their undertakings also included Maracaibo, their original base of operations, and the national capital, Caracas. Initially, the largest companies including Caribbean, VOC, Lago, and Gulf, established their operational headquarters at Maracaibo and maintained hospitals there for their staff. Lago, first located its facilities at Los Haticos, near the wharf, and subsequently moved to the newly formed section of Bella Vista. Standard Oil Company was based at La Arriaga and the Shell group occupied a site at Los Haticos.^{lxviii} Employing an ever-growing army of managers, administrators and support staff, the companies gradually created the equivalent of urban oil camps within the city limits. By 1935 the Lago camp in Maracaibo included besides the main company offices,

three bachelor quarters buildings housing some forty employees, about twenty houses for married employees and their families, a mess hall for the singles and official visitors, a club with full bar, music room, with piano, billiard room, library that doubled as a part time barber shop, outdoor tile dance floor, swimming pool and open air movies twice a week.^{lxix}

As it had in the countryside, the presence of the oil companies in the urban setting transformed the use of space. As it expanded operations in Maracaibo, Creole Petroleum, for example, viewed the construction of its offices as the precursor of new urban development that would include the nearby Hotel del Lago frequented by oil personnel, the Coromoto Hospital, and the “beautiful residential zone known as Bella Vista.”^{lxx} The

presence of corporate headquarters and adjacent support and residential facilities in major population centers such as Maracaibo and Caracas, led to the formation of what Henry Vicente labeled urban “petroleum districts.”^{lxxi} The new petroleum district in Caracas, according to Vicente, took place south of the river Guaire, bounded by Creole Building at Los Chaguaramos (now Bolivarian University), to the former Shell Offices at Chuao. This construction inaugurated a new phase of urban development in the capital city that also included the Valle Arriba Golf Club, the Hotel Tamanaco, the Sears store, the CADA supermarket, and the Las Mercedes residential area; businesses and localities that catered to professionals and the middle class employed by the industry. The river Guaire, which previously marked the southern limits of the city, now served as an important marker separating this new “modern” petroleum district from the older traditional neighborhoods of Caracas.^{lxxii} These districts, with their contemporary architectural style, became endowed with the same notions of modernity that defined the oil camps in the rural areas.

Life behind the Barb Wire Fence

Far from the large major cities, rural camp life appeared tranquil. The general homogeneity of the mostly white U.S. population and the pervasiveness of the camp culture reduced potential sources of conflict. Most people never locked their doors or windows. Parents allowed their children to walk to school unsupervised and play unimpeded throughout the camp in the knowledge that the facilities remained fully enclosed and protected a round the clock. Outside the camps, the National Guard protected camp facilities and looked after the facilities and the well-being of the foreigners. This sense of protection extended even beyond the camp, and there were few

incidents of crimes against foreigners. One woman who lived in Quiriquire described her existence in the camp as life “in a bubble, a fairy way of living.”^{lxxiii}

For others, however, despite the relatively tranquil setting, camp life was stifling and alienating. While men left to work everyday, unemployed women remained behind constrained by the very fences that protected the camp. The fences soon acquired assumed symbolic meaning; “no matter where you looked,” said one woman, “the fences were always there.” A woman whose husband had worked for Gulf wrote that she had lived twenty-five years behind barbed wire.^{lxxiv} Another resident of San Tomé in eastern Venezuela poked fun at camp life and referred to residents as “Santomaniacs.”^{lxxv} In many cases the perceived restrictions were self-imposed, reflecting a preference for the safety of the familiar and trepidation with the Venezuelan world that existed outside the camp fences.

Many women seldom stepped outside alone. Groups of women who lived on the eastern shore of Lake Maracaibo organized monthly trips into Maracaibo by company launch to shop at the large emporiums such as the Curaçao Trading company returning in the late afternoon. To escape the heat, expatriates and Venezuelan employees vacationed in the nearby Andes Mountains where Creole maintained facilities at the Hotel Guadalupe, near La Puerta in the state of Trujillo.^{lxxvi} Despite their distance from any actual production sites, areas such as La Puerta and many others throughout Venezuela increasingly grew dependent on the oil companies and their employees for their economic well being. Travel to this region increased during World War II when it became almost impossible to leave Venezuela. The absence of viable infrastructure in eastern Venezuela, that had previously isolated the local population, also had an impact on foreign

employees of the companies. Expatriate families did not have access to large urban centers such as Maracaibo for shopping or recreation. To break the regular routine, expatriates living in Caripito, Quiriquire, and Jusepín, in some special cases, organized getaways to Trinidad where in addition to shopping they sought out British-trained ophthalmologist and dentist, specialist not usually included in the company's medical staffs.^{lxxvii} Facing the Port of Spain race track and cricket fields, the colonial era Queens Park regarded as "the most noted of the hotels in the British West Indies," became a favorite haunt for visiting expatriates.^{lxxviii} Creole operated an airport at Cachipo and maintained its own fleet of planes with almost daily flights to nearby camps and frequent trips to Port of Spain. Pan American Airways also used the Cachipo field for flights between Caracas and Trinidad. Amelia Earhart made use of these facilities on her final trip around the globe; Creole officials welcomed her at the airport and held a dinner for her at the Caripito Staff country club. Despite the occasional excursions and the visits of dignitaries or celebrities, the reality is that most families seldom ventured out of the security afforded by the camp.

Camp life tended to privilege couples with children, who usually formed support networks and socialized regularly. Not everyone could make the transition. Incidents of separation, divorce and spouses' returning to the United States shortly after arriving were not uncommon. One childless woman wrote to Mona Caldwell, a columnist for the

Caracas Journal complaining about her situation:

In the morning we start out either someone comes to my house or I go to a friends house and then several of us gab and have coffee. Then I have to go home and have lunch alone because most of my friends have husbands who come home for lunch. In the afternoon we start meeting somewhere in someone's house and play cards and have tea. Often in the evenings, there are barbecues and my friends

invite me. I simply hate life here. I simply cannot stand it any longer. I feel like I will burst inside.^{lxxix}

Caldwell had little sympathy for this woman's plight, though she readily admitted that camp life was not for everyone.

For families with children, school established a daily regimen marked by the start and the end of school day. One woman reported that among her acquaintances breakfast represented their first chore, after which they dispatched their children to school. Then, by ten o'clock, different circles of women would gather at predetermined homes or at the camp club and play bridge or canasta, knit, raise funds for some social project or engage in some other activity. Housework, for those who had the resources, was attended to by Venezuelan or West Indian housekeepers.^{lxxx} This was the routine day after day. The simple reason for so much activity, according to another woman was "the fact that there is no place to go outside of the company property for recreation."^{lxxxii} In the evenings, parties or other social activities took place in individual houses or the club. Social gatherings invariably became gendered events, "the men on one side of the room talking shop, the women on the other side comparing maids or talking about their children."^{lxxxii} For most residents, especially women, what was most difficult was, in the words of one woman "the damn monotony of camp life that drives everyone crazy."^{lxxxiii} Movies at the club and parties marked the weekends. Liquor flowed freely at these social events and took its toll on both men and women.^{lxxxiv}

Food preparation was a major area of concern for expatriate women accustomed to the selection of products found in U.S. stores. With tropical heat and the scarcity of refrigeration, offerings at the camp commissary tended to be limited to a predictable assortment of canned foods. Fresh milk simply did not exist, and the powdered variety,

(the most popular of which was the KLIM brand,) could be found in every pantry. The expatriates also had to learn to use Venezuelan cuts of meat such as *lomo* and *lomito* in place of the familiar top sirloin or porterhouse.^{lxxxv} The commissary did, however sell a variety of tropical fruits, including mangos, papayas, and pineapples, that were foreign to most expatriates. Some worried about eating local foods, which they thought might be laced with “amoebas.” The *Caracas Journal* quoted one U.S. doctor as saying that while in Venezuela he would always recite a “silent prayer at a party before eating salad or fruits. Don’t get me this time.”^{lxxxvi} He recommended that in the privacy of their homes, expatriates take a vitamin rather than eat fruits or vegetables. Newcomers would be quickly instructed on how to boil and filter drinking water and how to treat Venezuelan fruits and vegetables by washing them in water containing a Halazone tablet. Though the tablets proved effective, they also left a chemical residue that altered the taste of fruits and vegetables, and they quickly lost their effectiveness in the humid tropical climates. In the end it was peace of mind, rather than amoeba free food that the expatriates actually achieved by using the tablets. Drinking liquor was also suggested as a way of killing “amoebas and preventing dysentery.”^{lxxxvii}

The absence of typical U.S. foods and fruits increased the desire for these products. Anne Rainey Langley, a resident of Quiriquire, describes her excitement over an apple: “I had never lived on canned foods for weeks, counting the days until the next boat would bring us fresh vegetables from the States.”^{lxxxviii} In eastern Venezuela, the arrival of tankers that on occasion brought produce from the United States was cause for celebration among the expatriates.^{lxxxix} The camp grapevine quickly relayed information concerning the arrival of U.S. produce. In the words of Myriane Marret Woolen, who

also lived in the Quiriquire camp, the arrival of U.S. goods meant that for the next two weeks there would be a round of parties.^{xc}

In an effort to adapt to the local food supply, camp women produced a series of cookbooks which they sold, usually donating the proceeds to a local charity. In anticipation of the frequent parties, women “poured over their cookbooks, looking for the one recipe that would be different from what they’d eaten at the last party.”^{xc1} The inspiration for these books was the first English-language cookbook published in Venezuela, *Buen Provecho*, sponsored by the British War Charities in 1943.^{xcii} Both British and U.S. women participated in the production of this publication.^{xciii} With names such as *Amuay Cooking Capers*, *Recipes Along the Venezuela’s B.C.F.* (Bolívar Coastal Fields) and *Pruébalo* (Taste it) *We Cook in Maracaibo*, the women’s groups collected and conveyed the adaptations they had made between U.S. and Venezuelan culinary practices.^{xciv} The appearance of these cookbooks did not mean that the expatriates had developed new bicultural culinary practices, rather they had simply been forced to adapt to the available foods supply. Children exposed to Venezuelan food since birth developed a fondness for certain Venezuelan foods such as the arepas, local soft drinks and sweets.

Despite these adaptations, U.S. culture continued to pervade social practices in the camp. The predominance of Texans and other South westerners meant that their customs exercised more influence over camp life than other U.S. traditions. Many of the expatriates hired by Creole Petroleum had been previously employed by Carter Oil in Oklahoma and Humble Oil in Texas.^{xcv} Ironically, some expatriates assumed that Texans and Oklahomans had been hired because they had had experience with hot weather.^{xcvi} Others, especially those from the Northeast, found themselves obliged to adopt the

Texan's drawl and learn to cook differently in order to become socially acceptable. Outdoor affairs, especially the traditional barbecue, became quite common, and invariably guests would have to listen to some variation of "Deep in the heart of Texas."^{xcvii} One woman from New England reported that she had learned to cook U.S. Southern-style food in Venezuela preparing okra, grits and gumbo for the first time.^{xcviii}

An assortment of formal and informal social gatherings tended to dominate the life of women. At San Tomé, a Gulf Oil camp, Ann and Paul Hogan hosted a party for sixteen guests "for no good reason except they felt like having a party."^{xcix} In Maracaibo the "ladies of Creole Maracaibo held a get-together tea at the home of Mrs. Allen Owen in honor of the ladies of Richmond Exploration now living in the Creole camp."^c For U.S. staff employees, constantly subject to transfers, social life included an interminable series of welcoming and farewell parties as well as receptions for company or political dignitaries. Many women dreaded these parties. The *Maracaibo Herald* actually described them as a voluntary racket: "Every one in Venezuela has been here for 44 years except you and is now retiring. You should shell out \$20 to buy a gift. Doesn't matter that he works on the other side of the country, has never heard of you and has been earning \$100,000 yearly for the past 18 years."^{ci} According to another commentator, "conspicuous celebrations" seemed to have several purposes, one of which was "to welcome what the invaders refer to as visiting firemen or jefes that is, individuals from the homeland tribe (U.S.) whose presence is somehow considered advantageous to the group." The sarcasm here expressed irritation with constantly having to attend parties for visiting company officials and about the social hierarchy that existed in the camps. In the

words of one woman, camp social class distinctions were “not founded on intrinsic worth but on position in the economic order.”^{cii}

U.S. Celebrations in Venezuela

In addition to attending a never-ending succession of social functions, women were expected to assume responsibility for ensuring the traditional celebrations associated with the U.S. political and liturgical calendar. The presence of women and children provided the context for greater public exhibitions of U.S. culture. It is doubtful, that without the presence of women and children, these holidays would have been celebrated with the same level of exuberance. National holidays and religious festivities often became campwide celebrations. Observances of Valentines Day, St. Patrick’s Day, Easter, the Fourth of July, Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas involved weeks of long preparation by women’s groups, and participation, although voluntary, was expected. Separated from homes and families, expatriates assigned special significance to these festivities and celebrated them with an exuberance not usually witnessed in the United States.

Since the Venezuelan Independence Day falls on the July 5, expatriates normally staged long celebrations that included both holidays. The practices of celebrating both holidays served to mute overt manifestations of U.S. patriotism and provoke a nationalist reaction from the Venezuelan population. Holidays without explicit political content, were of less concern. Halloween, a celebration that Venezuelans knew nothing about took on a festive air for both adults and children. The *Maracaibo Herald* reported that at the Creole camp in Lagunillas the witches rode broom sticks, the jack o’ lanterns had been carved, and children attended elaborate costume parties. There was no fear of letting

children run free throughout the camp since guards afforded constant protection. In the evening, adults staged costume dances at all the camp clubs. The Creole camp at La Salina sponsored a so-called “Indian affair” for which the mostly white participants painted their faces and dressed as local indigenous Guajiros.^{ciii} Likewise, Thanksgiving in some camps became a community celebration. At San Tomé in 1946, for example, all eight hundred residents ate together.^{civ} Some expatriates took advantage of these customs and set up turkey farms outside the camps in the hope of earning extra cash during these holidays.

Christmas, complete with pine trees imported from Washington and Oregon and the figure of Santa Claus took on a tropical flair. Creole employees strung multi-colored lights in the shape of Christmas trees on the oil derricks that surrounded the camps.^{cv} The communications department at La Salina attached speakers to the oil derricks and serenaded the camp every night with Christmas music from Helen Traubel, Bing Crosby, and Fred Waring.^{cvi} To supply the needs of the camp residents, local businesses began to carry an array of U.S.-made products. One paper reported that local businesses had sold their entire supply of Christmas trees and assorted ornaments, but few people had bought or displayed the traditional Venezuelan *pesebre* or nativity scenes.^{cvii} During Christmas the camp, decorated with brightly colored lights, resembled a middle-class neighborhood in the United States. Anne Sutton, who lived in Maracaibo, explained that the “festive lights and colorful fountains made the grounds of the Lago or Caribbean club look like a fairyland.”^{cviii} In addition to Christmas trees, the camp commissaries and even some local businesses carried an assortment of holiday seasonal items. U.S. customs and traditions, not only played a role among the Venezuelan junior staff that inhabited the

camps but also began to influence consumer patterns and celebrations among middle class elements in the surrounding communities.

Sports, Recreation and Camp Folklore

To entertain themselves, men and women in the camps played softball, baseball, golf, and bowled, forming teams that competed with each other and with squads from other camps. Women's leagues played at the regional and the national level.^{cxix} Sports also became an opportunity for various expatriate communities to interact. The Caripito Golf Club organized a tournament with the Saint Andrews Gold Club on Trinidad; departing from the Creole airstrip at Cachipo, the Pan American DC-3 plane took twenty-one players across the Gulf of Paria to play golf in Port of Spain.^{cx} The British returned the favor, every other year, traveling to Caripito to play the Creole expatriates.^{cxii} A series of parties, teas, and banquets marked the end of the tournament. Boy Scout troops in eastern Venezuela also interacted with their white counterparts on Trinidad. In May 1940, for example, a scout troop from Trinidad visited Caripito and enjoyed a barbecue in its honor attended by the nearby camps of Quiriquire and Jusepin.^{cxii}

To break the boredom they often felt, expatriates also engaged in some rather unorthodox sporting activities. Un-conventional variants of sports included something commonly referred to as screwball golf, in which the players placed obstacles in the way of the game. On one hole they teed off on a mattress, at another tee they put a foot in a bucket, or they would play an entire hole with only one club or be forced to hit the ball through the center of a tire. Besides traditional baseball and softball, the U.S. residents staged games of what they called "burro baseball." Players mounted the four-legged animal, and batted, fielded, and ran bases on burro-back.^{cxiii} At Tía Juana the game

between the married and the single men attracted large crowds. As one U.S. resident put it, these were “silly things, but there was nothing else to do”^{cxiv}

Inevitably, the enclosed nature of the camp and the close proximity in which people lived meant that gossip became a popular pastime, rivaling any organized sport. Accounts of what people had done, real or not, would accompany them from camp to camp. This process gave life to folklore about sexual matters, extramarital affairs, single residents, and drinking. One former resident candidly described the camps as a “marriage market” for singles mostly teachers, nurses or engineers. The *Caracas Journal*, reported in September 1945 that U.S. men at San Tome were eagerly awaiting the arrival of Catherine Reed, Lucille, Zuendt, Mary Ardein, and Ruth Curtis, teachers newly assigned to the camp school.^{cxv} Single women, either teachers or nurses, who after a few months had not found a partner, came under suspicion. The suspicion usually involved not the woman’s sexual orientation, however, but the possibility that she might be having an affair with a married man. The same sort of suspicion followed bachelors, though promiscuity among single men, did not always lead to the same sort of reproach. Accounts of U.S. employees marrying a former Venezuelan sex worker appear regularly in descriptions of camp life.^{cxvi} Beyond these more typical encounters, the camp rumor mill always included tales of extramarital affairs and sex parties. The most common and most widely repeated tale involved swapping partners under the pretext of various sexual games, including “Spin the Bottle.”^{cxvii} Yet despite these apparent indiscretions, marriage remained a necessary precondition for full participation in camp activities and social life.

The expatriate community and the media

The expatriate community in Venezuela inevitably attracted the attention of the media and the entertainment industry in the United States. James Tuck, a columnist for *Cosmopolitan* magazine, wrote a mocking account of camp life to which residents reacted bitterly. He called the expatriates who worked for the oil companies some of the highest- paid employees in the world and described their routine as follows: “Bright and early Monday morning, they stroll out of their luxurious house or apartments, wearing oil-splattered clothes and are picked up by their white coated chauffeur who drives them in their limousines to the airport where they catch a plane to the fields.”^{cxviii} U.S. women were reported to live in swanky country club districts with two servants, and pay fifteen dollars for nylons. Venezuelans fared no better in the article being stereotyped in the worst possible way. The Tuck article hit a nerve among the expatriate community. The *Caracas Journal* defended camp residents, and to curry favor with locals, attacked the *Cosmopolitan* article for its negative portrayal of Venezuelans.^{cxix}

By the 1950s, influenced by the Latin explosion in the United States a host of entertainers began to incorporate Venezuela into their repertoires. Musicians, novelists and filmmakers portrayed the experiences, real or invented of the foreign “petroleros.”^{cxx} The singer Burl Ives recorded “Venezuela” a generic account of an expatriate and a Venezuelan whose lyrics typified the stereotypes prevalent of the time:

I met her in Venezuela with a basket on her head,
And if she loved others, she would not say,
but I knew she's do to pass away the time in Venezuela,
to pass away the time in Venezuela.^{cxxi}

Venezuelans and women did not fare any better when represented by Caribbean singers such as Harry Belafonte, who recorded a calypso song called “Sweetheart from

Venezuela” that also described an encounter with a local woman named, typically enough, Juanita. To a calypso beat, Belafonte sang:

Juanita my Darling, you sure you love me, Si si Señor,
You feel in your heart you will marry to me, Si si Señor,
You promise to love me the rest of your life, Si si Señor
I love Juanita, my sweetheart from Venezuela, Si Si Señor
I will teach you to habla in English like me, Si Si Señor
I will take you to padre and marry you now, Si Si señor ^{cxxii}

Other musicians, such as Guy Lombardo in 1958 also recorded tracks on Venezuela. ^{cxxiii}

Writers such as Sterling Silliphant penned mythical accounts that drew inspiration from the oil industry in Venezuela. In 1955 Silliphant published his novel *Maracaibo*, which was subsequently made into a movie starring Cornel Wilde, Jean Wallace, Abbe Lane and Michael Landon. The movie’s steamy poster had Wilde kissing Wallace while an oil derrick burned on Lake Maracaibo in the background. In typical Hollywood flair, if Wilde, the main character, did not put out the fire, the city of Maracaibo would be lost. ^{cxxiv}

Conclusion

At many levels expatriates shared a deep sense of alienation, a feeling of not belonging either to the life in Venezuela, or to that in the United States. Having been away, in some cases for a decade, they had missed the important events that help mark a generation in the United States and were reduced to the position of outside observers of developments both in Venezuela and the United States. Upon returning home many felt a deep sense of estrangement and longed to re capture the lifestyle they left behind, reflecting upon their experience in Venezuela as the “best days of their lives.” In the United States others experienced a significant change in their social status. The

privileges, security, and status that characterized the senior staff camps in Venezuela informed this nostalgic portrayal of the past.

In the end, the senior staff camps had an impact well beyond the U.S. lifestyle that its residents sought to re-create. Their presence dramatically altered the panorama of the Venezuelan countryside and even major urban areas; inaugurating new residential prototypes, consumption patterns, and forms of social organization, influencing fashion, leisure, sports and diet. Initially introduced to alleviate problems within the all male labor force, the presence of spouses and families became part of the oil company's cultural strategy aimed at both its expatriate and Venezuelan employees. For companies like Creole (Standard Oil), whose board of directors privately discussed the matter, women were seen as important cultural agents, serving to regularize expatriate camp life and also establishing a social model of behavior that Venezuelans, hoping to advance in the industry, were expected to incorporate. The emerging Venezuelan middle class was soon adapting these practices in and outside of the camps. Paradoxically, most U.S. expatriates in the camps remained oblivious to the role that they played in this broader social and cultural process.

ⁱ *Second Annual Report of the Caribbean Petroleum Company*, 1915, p. 106.

ⁱⁱ *Caracas Journal* January 6, 1955.

ⁱⁱⁱ Interview, March 3, 2000, Morse and Govea Travers. He worked for the Otis Elevator Company and regularly socialized with those in the oil industry.

^{iv} Anne Rainey Langley, "I Kept House in a Jungle," *National Geographic*, January, 1939, p. 97.

^v *Maracaibo Herald*, November 8, 1947, p. 9.

^{vi} *Second Annual Report of the Caribbean Petroleum Company*, 1915, p. 106.

^{vii} National Archives and Record Administration (hereafter NARA), RG 59, M366, Roll 18, September 9, 1926, Frank B. Kellogg response from Department of State.

^{viii} Standard Oil Company of New Jersey, Agenda for Spring 1936 Conference, Seaview Golf Club, Absecon, N. J., April 20, 1936.

^{ix} *Ibid.*

^x Edwin J. Drechsel, *From Venezuela with Love*, Berkeley: Creative Arts Book Company, 2002, p. 15. Drechsel lived in the Caripito camp during the 1940s. p. 16. And Joan Schuster, *Petroleros: A Novel*, Lake Park: GoodeNough Press, 1992, p. 77.

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- ^{xi} Creole Petroleum Corporation, *Working with Creole in Venezuela*, Caracas: Cromotip, 1956, pp. 20-31.
- ^{xii} Drechsel, *From Venezuela with Love*, p. 15.
- ^{xiii} NARA RG 238, Roll 137, March 15, 1941, American Embassy, General Commercial Information
- ^{xiv} *Caracas Journal*, August 13, 1948; Also *El Nacional*, January 1, 1954.
- ^{xv} Creole Public Relations, *An Oil Well With an Interest in You*, Caracas: Cromotip, 1955.
- ^{xvi} Interview, Art and Mickey Shero, Creole annuitants meeting Little Rock Arkansas, 1999.
- ^{xvii} Interview, Jim Barnett, Creole annuitants meeting Las Vegas, 2000.
- ^{xviii} "Creole, *Working with Creole in Venezuela* p. 15; Standard Oil Company of New Jersey, Agenda of the Coordination Committee Group Meeting, Miami, February 8-13, 1946.
- ^{xix} *Ibid.*
- ^{xx} *El Farol*, Abril, 1946.
- ^{xxi} Interview Harold Lieberman, Creole annuitants meeting, Las Vegas 2000. Also Creole Petroleum Corporation, "Supplementary Data Regarding Employment in Venezuela," November, 1948, p. 3.
- ^{xxii} NARA, RG 238, Roll 352, December 4, 1943, Frank Corrigan to Secretary of State.
- ^{xxiii} Interview Harold Lieberman, Creole annuitants meeting, Little Rock, 1999.
- ^{xxiv} *Diario de Occidente*, Enero 27, 1958.
- ^{xxv} Interview Smackie Jureka, Creole annuitants reunion, Little Rock, May 1999
- ^{xxvi} *Caracas Journal*. September 10, 1948.
- ^{xxvii} Schuster, *Petroleros*, p. 95.
- ^{xxviii} Standard Oil Company of New Jersey, "Minutes of the Seaview Conference," Seaview Golf Club, May 15 to May 19, 1939, p. 103.
- ^{xxix} Schuster, *Petroleros*, p. 120.
- ^{xxx} "Creole in Cabimas," Orientation Manual, Creole: Cabimas, 1951.
- ^{xxxi} Mary George, *A Is for Abrazo*, Caracas: Venezuelan American Association of University Women, 1961.
- ^{xxxii} Judith Ewell, *Venezuela and the United States, From Monroe's Hemisphere to Petroleum Empire*, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996, p. 186.
- ^{xxxiii} *Caracas Journal*, January 18, 1946.
- ^{xxxiv} Dorothy Kamen-Kayes *Caracas Everyday*, Caracas: Caracas Journal, 1947; *Speaking of Venezuela*, Caracas: Caracas Journal, 1947.
- ^{xxxv} *Caracas Journal*, February 23, 1945. .
- ^{xxxvi} Drechsel, *From Venezuela with Love*, pp. 47 and 71.
- ^{xxxvii} Interview, Harold Lieberman, Creole annuitants meeting, Las Vegas 2000.
- ^{xxxviii} Schuster, *Petroleros*, pp. 94-95.
- ^{xxxix} Schuster, *Petroleros*, pp. 16 and p. 81; Interview, Bill Dahm, Creole annuitants reunion, Little Rock, May 1999; Interview, Al Thomas, Creole annuitants reunion, Las Vegas, May 2000.
- ^{xl} Judith Ewell, *Venezuela and the United States*, p. 186.
- ^{xli} Interview Isabel Storey, Caracas November, 1997.
- ^{xlii} Several interviews, Isabel, Luisa and Carmen, November 1997
- ^{xliii} Jesús Prieto Soto, *Huellas históricas*, Bogota: García, 1980, p. 522.
- ^{xliv} *El Farol*, #CXXXIV, 1951 p. 26. (During this period the *Farol* ceased indicating the month of publication)
- ^{xlv} Interview Harold Lieberman, Creole annuitants meeting, Las Vegas 2000.
- ^{xlvi} Interview, Jim Barnett, Creole annuitants Meeting, Las Vegas 2000.
- ^{xlvii} Interview, March 3, 2000, Morse Travers; Erna Fergusson, *Venezuela*, New York: Knopf, 1939; Y.T. Ybarra, *Young Man of Caracas*, New York: Ives Washburn, 1941.
- ^{xlviii} Anonymous, Interview, Creole annuitant meeting, Little Rock Arkansas, May, 1999.
- ^{xlix} Anne Rainey Langley, "I Kept House in a Jungle," p. 97.
- ^l Henry J. Allen, *Venezuela A Democracy*, New York: Doubleday, 1941, p. 245.
- ^{li} Creole en acción, Creole in Action, Caracas: Cromotip, 1957, np.
- ^{lii} Drechsel, *From Venezuela with Love*, p. 61.
- ^{liii} *Tropical Sun*, April 21, 1928.
- ^{liv} *Tropical Sun*, April 28, 1928.
- ^{lv} *Caracas Journal*, June 4, 1955.
- ^{lvi} *Diario de Occidente*, January 17, 1952.
- ^{lvii} Drechsel, *From Venezuela with Love*, p. 15.

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- lviii Anne Rainey Langley, "I Kept House in the Jungle," p. 97.
- lix *Caracas Journal*, January 3, 1949.
- lx "Todo en Domingo," *El Nacional*, May 1, 2007 p. 31.
- lxi Report from Bella Vista Camp, *Tropical Sun* March 10, 1928.
- lxii *El Farol*. Junio, 1946, #85 Año VIII.
- lxiii Frank G. Laurie, Lago Petroleum Corporation, *Report of Operations*, Month of May 1930, p. 8.
- lxiv *Ibid.*
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- lxvi *Ibid.*
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- lxix Harold Lieberman "Early Impressions of Maracaibo, With some attention to the local mores." Newsletter, A continuing Series of Anecdotes, September, 1996, p. 2.
- lxx *Edificio Creole*, Caracas: Cromotip, 1955, n.p.
- lxxi Henry Vicente, "La arquitectura urbana de las corporaciones petroleras: Conformación de Distritos petroleros en Caracas durante las décadas de 1940 y 1950," *Espacio Abierto*, 12, (July –September 2003), p. 395.
- lxxii *Ibid.* p. 395. Vicente and others point out to the existence of an earlier district in central Caracas.
- lxxiii Interview, Myriane Marret Woolen Creole annuitants meeting , Little Rock, Ark., May 28, 1999.
- lxxiv *Caracas Journal*, January 7, 1952.
- lxxv *Caracas Journal*, March 16, 1945.
- lxxvi *Caracas Journal*, July 25, 1949.
- lxxvii Drechsel, *From Venezuela with Love*, p. 16.
- lxxviii Ralph Arnold, *The First Big Oil Hunt, Venezuela 1911-1916*, New York: Vantage Press, 1960, p. 24.
- lxxix *Caracas Journal* October 12, 1955.
- lxxx Interview, Myriane Marret Woolen Creole Annuitants meeting, Little Rock, Ark., May 28, 1999.
- lxxxi *Caracas Journal*, August 27, 1948.
- lxxxii Schuster, *Petroleros*, pp. 94-5.
- lxxxiii *Ibid.*, p. 33.
- lxxxiv *Ibid.* p. 33; Among women, salty dogs, a drink prepared from vodka, gin, and canned grapefruit juice or bloody Mary's proved to be the drink of choice.
- lxxxv *Ibid.*, p. 79.
- lxxxvi *Caracas Journal*, May 3, 1946.
- lxxxvii Schuster, *Petroleros*, p. 95.
- lxxxviii Rainey Langley, "I Kept House in a Jungle," p. 98.
- lxxxix *Ibid.* p. 99.
- xc Interview Myriane Marret Woolen, Creole Annuitants meeting, Little Rock, Ark., May, 28, 1999.
- xcii Schuster, *Petroleros*, p. 95.
- xciii Judith Ewell, *Venezuela and the United States*, p. 186.
- xciv *Buen Provecho*, Caracas: British War Charities, 1943.
- xcv Among these books were, *Amuay Cooking Capers*, Amuay: Women's Auxialiary of the Amuay Bay Square and Compass Club, 1952; *Recipes along Venezuela's B.C.F.* Tía Juana: Women's Guild, Lago United Church, 1965; Pamela Singletary Soligo, *Prueballo*, Maracaibo: Maracaibo Ladies Club 1982,
- xcvi Drechsel, *From Venezuela with Love*, p. 19-20
- xcvii *Caracas Journal*, June 28, 1946.
- xcviii Schuster, *Petroleros*, p. 173.
- xcix Interview, Creole Annuitants Reunion, Myriane Marret Woolen , Little Rock Ark., May 28, 1999.
- c *Caracas Journal*, February 23, 1945.
- ci *Maracaibo Herald*, February 25, 1950.
- cii *Caracas Journal*, May 9, 1947.
- ciii *Maracaibo Herald*, November 8, 1947.
- civ *Caracas Journal*, December 5, 1946.
- cv *Maracaibo Herald*, December 30, 1950.
- cvi *Caracas Journal*, January 7, 1952.

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- cvi *Caracas Journal*, January 10, 1949.
- cviii *Caracas Journal*, June 28, 1946.
- cix *Nosotros*, May, 1956.
- cx *El Farol*, August, 1941; Drechsel, *From Venezuela with Love*, p. 40.
- cxii *Caracas Journal*, October 13, 1952.
- cxiii *El Farol*, May, 1940.
- cxiv *Nosotros*, October, 1955.
- cxv *Caracas Journal*, March 24, 1954.
- cxvi *Caracas Journal*, September 7, 1945.
- cxvii Miguel Otero Silva, *Oficina N.1*, Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1961; and Schusters, *Petroleros*.
- cxviii Schuster, *Petroleros*, p. 194.
- cxviii "Everybody is crazy in Caracas," *Cosmopolitan* April, 1948, p. 21.
- cxix *Caracas Journal*, May 7, 1948.
- cxix The Cuban singer Beny More also recorded a composition entitled "Maracaibo" that many have assumed, mistakenly to refer to the Venezuelan city. In fact, in the Cuban context, maracaibo is a musical genre also known as *chanquí* and has nothing to do with Venezuela.
- cxixi Burl Ives, *Poor Wayfaring Stranger*, "Venezuela." Decca Records, 1950.
- cxixii Harry Belafonte, "Venezuela," Colinet Records, 1950.
- cxixiii Lombardo Goes Latin, "Venezuela" Capitol Records, 1958.
- cxixiv Sterling Silliphant, *Maracaibo*, New York: Farrar Straus, 1955.