Gold for Bonaire
The new members of the Central Government will be sworn in on Sunday, March 26, at 11 am. Members of Parliament will take their oaths one hour earlier, at 10 am. All 15 candidates for minister or state secretary were approved by the Netherlands Antilles security service, VNA, after a vigorous screening process. The cabinet is officially named “Cabinet De Jongh-Elhage.” Bonaire’s representatives in the Cabinet are State Secretary Alex Rosaria; State Secretary Hubert Maris and Minister of Economic Affairs Burney Elhage.

On March 15 a delegation consisting of Regional (Jonchi) Dortalina, Hubert (Bii) Maris, Robert (Robby) de Jongh, Anthony Nicolaas (all of the UPB, green party) and Reynold (Nolly) Okema (of the PDB, red party) participated in the Island Summit in St. Maarten to prepare for the upcoming Round Table Conference. A government press release reported that the delegation was satisfied with the results.

The Dutch Government was informed by letter that bilateral talks with the individual islands of the Netherlands Antilles should not replace a political summit originally set for later this month.

Bonaire’s Commissioner Regional Dortalina said his delegation had come to the summit with the island’s position, to assume direct relations with the Netherlands, in mind. He said: “nothing” would stand in the way of arranging a new relationship for Bonaire (with Holland) but expressed the hope that all islands would come to a consensus where it concerned new relations in the Kingdom.

Prior to the Summit, Commissioner Dortalina and Senator Ramonsito Booo met with government officials in The Hague to discuss Bonaire’s quest for direct ties with the Netherlands. Dortalina said Bonaire had already “worked out most of the points” in meetings with Dutch Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende, Finance Minister Gerrit Zalm, Minister of Kingdom Relations Alexander Pechtold and other government officials.

However, the Netherlands isn’t making any final agreements and keeps sending Bonaire back to the Netherlands Antilles, explained Dortalina. “We don’t want to be pinned down on which island we will cooperate with. They (The Netherlands) want to force us to work with Curacao. We say no. We voted for direct relations with the Netherlands, not Curacao or the Kingdom (territories),” he said.

“It was an historical mistake to see the Netherlands Antilles as one country. They are six different entities,” Minister of Kingdom Affairs Alexander Pechtold said last Thursday. His remarks were made when he received a document entitled “Government in Balance,” which suggested a number of ideas for governmental reforms.

Pechtold rejected the document’s suggestion to make the Netherlands Antilles a Dutch province. He said, “The islands’ citizens expressed their preferences via a referendum. I believe that their will must be respected.” Pechtold continued, “A forced situation would be created if the Netherlands Antilles would be brought under Dutch government. Should the social benefits be equivalent to those in the Netherlands this would create mass immigration from the other Caribbean islands to the Netherlands Antilles.”

Bonaire residents having savings in 24 EU countries will have to pay a tax on those savings if a bill currently under review by the Antilles parliament is passed. It is a consequence of the Guidelines on Savings Balances of the European Union (EU) with which, as part of the Netherlands, the Antilles has to observe. All EU countries, with the exception of Bel...

(Continued on page 4)
Jan van der Straaten, the former head of the police in Aruba, has officially started as the new Police Chief in Bonaire. See here between Antillean Justice Minister David Dick (L) and Bonaire’s Lt. Governor Herbert Domacasse, he said the structure must change, because at the moment “six officers are needed for every officer on the street.” It was reported that one of his plans is to assign a specific police officer to each of Bonaire’s barrios. The officer will have good connections with the residents and build an awareness of the neighborhood’s problems. If there’s a crime situation in the area the officer will call on other members of the force to assist. A similar approach is in use in Aruba.

Dutch Antilles Express (DAE) is indicating that they will soon expand regional operations using a 107-passenger Fokker 100 aircraft. They are running ads for personnel trained to fly those aircraft. Beside the flights between the ABC islands and St. Maarten, flown with ATR 42s, DAE will use them to fly to Valencia and Caracas. The Fokker, a plush aircraft compared to ATRs, will be used to fly to Bogotá, Colombia; Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic; Port of Spain, Trinidad; and Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

DAE’s terms of employment are not as favorable as compared to what the now defunct Antilles-owned airlines offered. According to a published report in the Amigoe newspaper from a former DCA pilot, DCA paid about NAƒ14,000 per month. DAE offers a monthly salary of NAƒ7,700. Monthly salaries of US$10,000 per month for pilots are usual in the Middle East and other countries.

The trial of former directors of Air Holland, Cees van Dormael and Paul Griethuysen, has begun in Rotterdam, Holland. They are suspected of laundering more than 10 million guilders in drug money through their support for Air Holland. Air Holland offered budget flights between the Antilles for around NAƒ250. The Prosecution alleges that the drug money that was put into the company came from a Surinamese cartel that dealt in XTC tablets and cocaine. Millions were invested, but Air Holland went bankrupt in 2004. Edward Heerenven, who worked for Air Holland Travel and is now trying to set up Insul Air to compete with DAE on inter-island routes, is not and never has been suspected of involvement in Air Holland’s illegal activities.

MCB (Bonaire) issued a sunny financial report for the last year. The MCB Group consists of 18 companies operating onshore and international businesses based in Curacao, Aruba, St. Maarten, Bonaire, St. Eustatius and the Netherlands. During 2005, after transfer to the Reserve for General Banking Risks, the MCB Group made a profit of NAƒ76 million after taxes in the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba, which represents an increase of 14.1% over 2004. Bonaire was up 16%. At the end of this year the bank will celebrate its 90th anniversary.

On Tuesday, last week, the US government warned Venezuela that it would suspend Venezuelan flights to the US if Caracas carries out a threat to ban or restrict US carriers flying to Venezuela. Ties are already strained between Washington and left-wing President Hugo Chavez over his alliance with Cuba and his opposition to US free-market proposals in South America. The Venezuelan restrictions would trim flights by American airlines and completely halt operations by Continental Airlines and Delta Air Lines, should they take effect.

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Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez announced additional changes to his nation’s flag last week, a reform critics rejected as a personal whim of the leftist leader. The new flag features an eighth star and a white horse on the coat of arms galloping to the left instead of the right.

Researchers at the Georgia Institute of Technology have released a study linking an increase in the strength of hurricanes around the world to a global increase in sea surface temperature. The new study strengthens the connection between the increase in hurricane intensity and the increase in tropical sea surface temperature. It found that while factors such as wind shear do affect the intensity of individual storms or storm seas, they don't account for the global 35-year increase in the number of the most intense hurricanes. More details available at www.sciencexpress.org.

According to the Antillean Weather Service the dry season usually starts in February. But this year the rain is hanging on into March. The Weather Service blames this on the arrival of “La Niña” that causes the sea to be cooler. Many locations on the island have experienced brief heavy rains with wind this month.

Want to look your best and learn about the latest in nail artistry? Then take part in the Nails Workshop coming up on Sunday, April 2, in the Meeting Room of Divi Flamingo Hotel. During the day you will learn about innovative systems for the application of gel and acrylic coatings. The cost of NAƒ250 includes lunch and a “kit.” For more information call Alda Dirks at 785-6378 or email pontemedical@carib-online.net.

Mix Bluegrass music and authentic French cuisine and what do you get? A big crowd. Locals and visitors alike crammed the porch of Bistro di Paris last Wednesday to watch a visiting family, with our own Sign Studio owner, Rhonda Kossman, as lead singer, and listen to lots of our favorite songs. The band, informally named Continued on page 9

A big congratulations to Bonaire’s high school culinary team which won the Gold Medal for “Best Overall” and “Best Dessert” in the second annual Student Culinary Competition for the ABC islands (St. Maarten International Culinary Students Competition 2006). The VSBO level students, led by teacher Vernon Martĳs, got top prize two years in a row! Team Captain Miguel Saragosta described his team’s winning menu: Appetizer—Snapper on the Rocks; Main Course—Heavenly Pork; Dessert—Bonaire Light-house. “It was tough,” he continued, “because we not only had to bring ingredients like funchi, sea salt, cocoslisi and fresh basil from Bonaire, but we had to search out other ingredients on St. Martin like rice, red cabbage and vanilla beans!”

Other team members are Minosa Mercera, Denny Calcaño, Channethon Jansen. Team coach was Vladimir Gjesbertha.

The “Best Appetizer” was won by St. Martin; “Best Appetizer” won by the Saba Team 1. Silver medals were won by the St. Martin Team. Saba Teams 1 and 2 won Bronze. Next year’s competition is set for March 2007 in Aruba. Bonaire will be sending three teams: two from VSBO and one from SBO (a higher level). L.D.

Continued on page 9
RESPONSE TO LARAINE ABBY-KATZEV’S LETTER ON TOURIST TAXES

(BONAIRE REPORTER MARCH 17-24)

Dear Editor:

I read your letter to the editor regarding tourist taxes and found it very interesting and a little disturbing. I doubt very much that any tourist can claim to be “traumatized” by tourist taxes, but if they are then they likely to require psychiatric care and not a break in taxes (ironically which taxes often fund). Taxes are an important source of income for any society, and the fact is that if you can afford to travel then you can afford to pay the taxes requested by the country you are traveling to. As a Canadian citizen and resident who falls into a high tax bracket and forever owes and pays taxes, I am extremely familiar with paying high taxes. In my province there is a 15% tax on almost everything you buy and a 7% tax on professional services. You cannot even die without paying taxes. However, I am also very grateful for the services which our tax dollars fund, such as universal health care, many other social services and infrastructure development and maintenance. In my opinion taxes serve to at least attempt to level the playing field and allow everyone to enjoy a minimum standard of quality of life. After all, isn’t quality of life a cornerstone in the foundation of our very existence? Bonaire offers tourists more than just heat, grumpy old Dutch folks and coral. Stepping off the plane in Bonaire is like stepping into another universe, so why shouldn’t Bonaire request tourists to pay for the privilege of enjoying paradise?

It is obvious that making a decent living in Bonaire is difficult for many residents. The roads are potholed, there are signs everywhere for business space to rent and it is quite obvious that many of the people with money are not from Bonaire (including yourself). I apologize if my words are insulting, but only selfish people with financial resources whine and moan about taxes, because they are the ones who have the money to spend and be taxed in the first place.

I agree that the government should not gouge tourists or the wealthier residents and part-time residents, but there is nothing wrong with levying taxes on those who can afford it. If tourists do not want to pay the taxes then let them go and sponge off some other version of paradise, because they are the ones who have the money to spend and be taxed in the first place.

I would say this to the Government. If you don’t want foreign workers or investors, then tell us straight. Don’t take our money and effort just to turn us away at the end. There are thousands and thousands of guilders to be had if the Government would let those who want to work, work.

Firdaus Chinoy

Kaya van Pothole

A BETTER WAY TO RAISE MONEY

Dear Editor:

There has been much talk and correspondence on the Bonairean Governments attempts to “extort” money from tourists in an attempt to balance the books. Rather than killing the goose that lays the golden eggs, the solution to generate more money lies on our own doorstep.

Literally thousands of people on the island are working illegally. Why? Because of the ridiculous bureaucracy that is involved for non-Bonaireans to live and work here. A work permit application can take as long as three months. During that time, the Government is missing out on valuable taxes while a willing worker sits at home awaiting the outcome. Even after such a wait, it is not unusual for an application to be denied, not because of the applicant’s unsuitability but because an “I” was not dotted or a “T” went uncrossed. To start your own business is even more of a circus. After putting together a business plan and putting it forward to DEZA, it is not unusual to have to wait between 6 and 12 months. Even then, it is still possible that the application will be rejected. Again, during this time the Government is missing out on taxes. A lot of people do not go beyond the enquiry stage; hence, more potential money slips through Bonaire’s fingers.

On an island desperate for money, with so many companies desperate for reliable, willing and competent staff, and so many potential investors desperate to plough money into Bonaire, why must the Government strangle progress. Rather than going cap in hand every year to the Netherlands like a modern day Oliver Twist, or, scaring away tourists by imposing extortionate taxes, maybe it is time to streamline the immigration and employment system.

I would say this to the Government. If you don’t want foreign workers or investors, then tell us straight. Don’t take our money and effort just to turn us away at the end. There are thousands and thousands of guilders to be had if the Government would let those who want to work, work.

Name Withheld by request

Kaya van Pothole
Government to Switch to Hybrid Vehicles

In line with the coming restriction on motor vehicles the Bonaire Island Government has announced all its newly purchased vehicles will be powered by gas-electric hybrid engines. There are several models to choose from, made by Honda and Toyota, which already have dealerships on Bonaire. To get a glimpse of the new cars check out the parking lot in front of the police station at 10 am on Saturday, April 1.

The benefits of greater operational economy and reduced pollution will serve as a model, as does the Bonaire National Marine Park for ecologically-minded Caribbean islands. The new WEB plant at BOPEC (see last week’s Reporter) has already factored in the extra power needed to charge the car’s batteries. A fast-charging station will be installed in Rincon for drivers who might want to run on battery back to Kralendijk. The station will be open for private drivers as well.

The Commissioner of the Environment has said that while the hybrids are a step forward, he himself will employ a more traditional form of Bonaire transportation, the donkey. G.D.

Practical Night-Diving Advice

Not many divers seem to know that night diving is different from diving during the day. Except for the fact that it is dark (of course!), for which you need a good diving lamp that is not only strong but will provide a good beam for at least 45 minutes, you also need a small diving lamp as a reserve. This is a good safety rule.

And, what this article is really about is, proper weighting! For a night dive you need two or four pounds more lead than you usually dive with.

Why? It is all about the influence of the moon on the ocean. You all know that the tide is influenced by the position of and distance between the moon, the earth and the sun. As the distance between moon and earth is less at night, the gravitational pull under the water will change because of the upward pull of the moon.

Therefore, divers need more lead to get down. We are sure that many divers who read this will say: “Ah, now I understand why those night dives are more difficult than daytime dives!”

Some more tips: before entering the water, talk to your buddy about signals. Some of them are different from those during the day: Making a circle with your lamp means “OK”. Flashing it from the right to left and back in a stripe means “not OK”. If you make hand signals, make them in the beam of the light! A free course in buoyancy control for night diving will be first offered at both Yellow Submarine and Carib Inn beginning on April 1, 2006.

Wishing you a beautiful night dive, and remember, the closer the moon, the more lead you need! Ned W. and Renee

Drastic Environmental Measures on Bonaire

Last month the governments of Aruba and Curacao started negotiations with the US oil company, Valero, and the Venezuelan State oil company, PDVSA, to close the refineries on those islands. On April 1, the Island Board of Bonaire will also take a far reaching decision to protect Bonaire’s environment.

They include:
1. The BOPEC facility, which has been an eyesore for everybody loving Bonaire for its natural beauty, will be demolished after a settlement with PDVSA. The company’s proposal to sell the gasoline to the island at a 40% discount will be unani-
mously rejected by the Island Board. (PDVSA currently, through its US subsidiary, CITGO, is selling oil to families on the east coast of the US at this same discount).
2. The WEB plant in Hato will also be demolished and replaced by a new facility providing water and electricity solely generated by wind and solar energy.
3. Following the example of Bermuda, another prominent tourist island, the number of cars will be drastically reduced by limiting car ownership to one car per family and by the elimination of car rental companies on the island. This will allow the existing fine public transportation system to be further improved by the intro-
duction of rickshaws (small vehicles pulled by one man, successfully used in many countries of the world).
4. After removing environmentally damaging material, oil and fuel, the superfluous cars will be dumped in the sea along the coast in order to form artificial reefs. If one of those large ships transporting new cars approaches the island attempting to land unauthorized cars, it will be sunk by the Royal Dutch Navy if it refuses to turn away. This operation will be executed in the framework of naval exercises to improve the readiness of the navy to destroy any enemy vessel close to our coast.

This is in conformity with the recent pronouncement of Dutch Defense Minister Henk Kamp in this matter. Jiri Lausman
In response to widespread criticism of the proposed new departure tax to be collected at the airport, the government is crafting a different scheme for meeting their two announced objectives: increasing tax revenues, while keeping to a minimum the work load required of the bureaucracy.

The plan, effective on the first of April, will also put to use a well-tested Bonaire institution, the police roadblock. According to the new system, whenever government coffers run low, the police will be instructed to set up random road blocks around the island. All motorists will be taxed on the spot, depending on the age of their vehicle, at the rates of NAƒ50 for older vehicles and NAƒ100 for newer models. The police will collect the money and hand over a preprinted receipt, on which they will write the tax payer’s name and the date. Later, when people file their income tax returns or pay their property taxes, they can submit the receipts they accumulated during that year and get tax credits.

A government spokesperson (who asked not to be named) stated, “This will produce a big benefit for our tax payers. When the time comes to file, they will have already prepaid most of what they owe for the year.” He went on to explain the plan. Although he admitted a few details have yet to be worked out, he said that solutions have been found to most of the anticipated problems.

“We are very concerned,” he said, “about over collecting from some individuals who happen to get stopped too often, especially taxi and bus drivers. We are still determining what the upper limits will be for each category of vehicle, but whenever a motorist has collected receipts that exceed that limit, he will be able to go to the Ontvanger (Tax Collector), show his total receipts for the year, and get a cash refund for any payments over his limit.”

“We have set the charge for tourists and other visitors to the island at NAƒ100 for each week, or partial week, they stay,” he continued. “The government will be able to raise large amounts of ready cash quickly, while the burden placed on our bureaucracy will be minimal. The police will even be able to conduct their regular vehicle inspections while collecting the tax, so the inconveniences experienced by motorists will be minimal.”

D.R.

The new departure tax fee has now been narrowed down to two final ideas, one of which will be selected on April 1, 2016.

1). Anyone who arrives on an even numbered day will pay $75 departure tax unless they were born on an odd numbered day of the year in a month that has an “R” in it. In that case, unless they are under 30 years old they will pay $65 when accompanied by someone older that 47 years and they will then pay $57.85 if the older person is paying the full $75.

Those born on an even numbered day pay only $50, unless pregnant, and they then will have to pay the full $75 plus another $75 unless accompanied by the responsible male. That male will pay 25% of the total $150 plus the regular $75 unless they fit one of the categories above. In that case they will pay $55 plus another $20 plus 5%. Children under 12 will not be allowed on Bonaire. Those over 120 years old can depart for free.

Those who have been to Bonaire already within a calendar year will pay 1/3 of what they had paid before plus another 40% charge for being here.

2). Many have said fewer people will come to Bonaire, so the alternative is to charge $1,500 per person departure tax. Then, if far fewer people do come to Bonaire, it won’t hurt tax income. As always, Cruise Ship tourists do not have to pay anything and will be given $20 upon arrival and $15 upon departure.

Rip M. Off
Sea Turtle Conservation Bonaire, having successfully tracked numerous turtles with GPS transceivers, will now track itself. Beginning April 1, all STCB board members will be fitted with devices that will allow anyone with access to the World Wide Web to know their locations at all times. It is hoped that prospective donors to the sea turtle conservation projects will be encouraged to contribute because they can be assured of wholesome activities on the part of the people who will be disbursing their donations.

In the accompanying photos STCB President Imre Esser models two versions of the device. While both transceivers are waterproof to 33 meters, the first is for land use only (right photo). The second, affixed to a standard water polo cap, as shown (top photo), will have its antenna above the water level during normal swimming activities. As they are affixed to the turtles, the transceivers will be semi-permanently fiberglassed to the wearers. A six-month battery life is anticipated.

If STCB donations increase, STINAPA will consider a similar measure for its board.  
G.D.

Imre Esser from Sea Turtle Conservation Bonaire reports: “This is a picture that I took today at Boca Onima. Because the government allowed sand mining on that beach, the whole ecosystem has changed. STCB is faced with a new threat at that beach. Sea turtles are in serious danger!! Does this explain why some of those turtle satellite tags suddenly stop beeping...?”

As part of a follow-up by The Reporter’s crack team of journalists, additional unusual creatures were discovered in the area, probably because of the same disturbances to the natural environment. Coordinator Mabeline Navidad rescued a two-headed turtle (see photo) which has already been adopted by Bonaire’s new political party as its symbol.

An iguana, also with two heads, was found trying to dig a nest in the same area. The iguana was x-rayed (thank you, von Eggmundo Dental Clinic) to make sure it was not a hoax. As you can see from the x-ray it indeed was double headed  
G.D.
Looking for dining out deals? At the relatively new Cactus Blue restaurant you can get 2 for 1 appetizers (among the best on Bonaire) and if you are a big group in a party of 10, one eats free.

The Bonaire Rotary Club’s popular Rotarally road rally is coming up on Sunday, March 26th. This year will be its 20th Anniversary and everyone on the island is invited to participate. It costs only NA/$25 to enter your car. All proceeds go to charity. Lunch at the destination, Jos’, will be available for NA/$12.50. The Rotarally starts at 10 am at Seru Largu and it’s recommended that the ticket be purchased prior to the event. The tickets can be bought from any member of the Rotary Club or from Arjen Botterop at 786-0251, Edwin Vrieswijk at 786-2005 or Jules van Dongen at 717-5877.

For Earth Day, Chris Martha and Florence Ditlow are developing a program called “What on Earth! For Kids” which is directed at children under 18. The core group is 15 scouts plus the 25-member marching band. They will have a program from SELIBON, focusing on recycling, followed by an outing to collect trash. Then they will construct a costume of recyclable items. More sponsors are needed. Yellow submarine has already pledged a scuba package and The Reporter some movie passes. If you want to participate or can help with sponsorship contact Florence at 717-4593 or email Florence at fhuminbird@yahoo.com.

Bonaire’s winning Aquatics Club team, The Barracudas, have been invited to participate in the 7th Dutch Caribbean International Swim Meet in Curaçao beginning April 28 through May 1. Sponsors for some of the youngsters are needed. If you can help, call Asdrubal Marcano at 567-0576 or directly deposit into MCB account #101 1888-03, Bonaire Aquatics Club.

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More and more new development is happening north of the present hotel row. Following the announcement of the hotel school plan, Bonaire Caribbean Club owner, Ronald Gravestijn, announced an ambitious expansion of his resort. It will begin this year with the construction of a wedding village on the bluff overlooking the coast.

Welcome to our newest advertiser- Divi Divi Air. “Divi Divi” has the reputation of being the most reliable connection between Bonaire and Curacao. The small planes make you feel like you are being treated as an individual. The view from the plane can’t be beat. Try them, call 09-888-1050 for a reservation and tell them The Reporter sent you. After all it’s Divi Divi who flies The Reporter to Bonaire every week.

Since there will be no issue of The Reporter next week in line with our policy of publishing four issues a month (March has five Fridays, so the last will be skipped) the annual April Fool stories are included in this issue. G.L./D.
Since 1999 vocational training has been given in the high school. Students are trained in administration, as assistants in elementary schools, schools for the disabled or handicapped persons, and to work with the elderly. Among the many different skills the students learn is how to organize activities on the island for others. But before they do that they must learn themselves what there is to do on the island. So Marianne Grutters, director of studies SPW (Social Pedagogic Work) contacted Papi Cicilia and Nouchie Coffie of SKAL. Then the students did the follow up, with much of the telephone contact and organization done by Vilma Hernadez Matos. Other students participating were Zwende- lien, Charlotte, Shermanta, Raidily, Jolanda, Roselle, Lizbeth and Zulay.

Their first activity was visiting the cave at Santa Barbara where they descended a six-meter stairway, then had to walk and later crawl into the depths of this very beautiful cave. Papi took time for them and explained a lot. For some students it was the first time that they’d been in a cave.

Then they visited a stone quarry behind the airport where the girls took a bath in a small pond in an underground cave! Some girls had problems getting out because there was one stalactite that made it very difficult to pass without sucking in their bellies!

The SPW 2.2 (second year) students started working on an “Easter Afternoon Party” for children from four to eight years to be held on the 8 of April in the Centro di Bario in Nikiboko from 3 to 6 pm. The students will entertain a group of 27 children with all kinds of activities like egg painting, an Easter play, a puppet theater play and throwing carrots into a hole in an egg-shaped board. Unfortunately, all the places have been taken.

The students are: Silnanie, Alba, Inshindra, Dannia, Soullivienne, Janice, Edshorlina, Loraine and Patricia. Story & Photos by Wilna Groenenboom
The moon was a little late in coming up last Friday night for Rincon’s “Full Moon Walk,” but it was a huge success nevertheless and a beautiful experience walking under the bright stars with the sounds of the sea in the background. The event was a fundraiser towards the cost of replacing the tower of the parish church which was hit by lightning last year.

One of the organizers, Edith Strauss-Mercera, a former Senator from Bonaire, reports that 55 children and 179 adults signed up. Walkers included groups like the Pia Pia di Kunuku Bieu and the scouts as well as groups of friends, most of whom made the 9.5 kilometer trek from the Catholic Church in Rincon, up the road towards Washington Park, a right turn on to the dirt road following the sea, then another right turn at the Piedra di Boneiru, and up and down on that dirt road following the sea, then another right turn at the Piedra di Boneiru, and up and down on that dirt road to the main Rincon road. Shorter routes to the dam or to the Cactus Club were set up for the 60 plussers and others who were daunted by the 9.5 k distance.

At stops along the way volunteers handed out water, drinks and fruit, and the route was marked by flaming torches, just so you didn’t stray off the path. There were some weary walkers at the end, including Ms. Strauss-Mercera who made it the whole way with her two grandchildren, five and eight years old. Of course the kids were still full of high spirits and energy. Everyone was treated to two kinds of salad, orange juice and rolls.

Very generous sponsors were Rum Runners Restaurant, Den Laman Restaurant, La Portuguesa, Gregorio Gomez and Cultimara.

Ms. Strauss-Mercera says that more funds are needed for the tower rebuilding, so we can look forward to more fundraisers. The Reporter will keep you informed.

L.D.
Kite Contest Coming

Don’t miss Bonaire’s Annual Kite Contest “Kontesti di Fli” – Sunday, April 9 - at the field behind Kooyman’s. This is the 28th consecutive one, sponsored by the Flamingo Book Store. It’s an all-day event, starting around 9 am, and it’s fun for everyone.

Contestants of all ages come from Bonaire, Aruba and Curacao, and you’ll see some of the most amazing kites. Prizes will be given for different categories: Biggest, Smallest, Most Beautiful, Most Strange and Most Original. Sometimes it takes a whole group of people to try and get a kite in the air. It’s exciting, thrilling and often really funny. There will be food and drinks for sale and plenty of music.

The contest has been sponsored all these 28 years by the Flamingo Book Store on Kaya Grandi 19. You’re welcome to enter: children – NA/5.50; adults, -NA/7.50.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Highest Point Party

A popular tradition in Bonaire is to have a party when the construction of a new house reaches its highest point. Last Friday a house being built by the Sanchez Brothers’ Josan Construction Company topped out. The owners hosted a big rooftop party catered by Eddie’s Gourmandise.

Readers are invited to send their photos of their anniversaries, engagements, weddings or other exciting events to The Reporter. The photo and text will be printed free of charge.
Think “crab” – and whatever you picture in your mind isn’t likely to look much like an arrow crab. Yet, when you think about it, the arrow crab has the two main characteristics of crabs: an exoskeleton and 10 legs (eight legs and two claws). The arrow crab’s official common name is Yellowline Arrow Crab, but since there isn’t any other type of arrow crab we drop the “Yellowline” part. Its scientific name is *Stenorhynchus seticornis*, which roughly translates to “narrow snout, bristled horn.”

What the arrow crab doesn’t seem to have are all the defense mechanisms that other crabs have. It doesn’t camouflage itself with sponges or algae like decorator crabs or sponge crabs. It doesn’t hide (well, okay, some arrow crabs hide, but many hang out in plain sight). It doesn’t scurry away when it sees you.

**Why not?**

One answer is that the arrow crab must not be a very rewarding prey animal. After all, it’s so skinny there’s not much room for muscles inside its shell!

Equally important is the arrow crab’s choice of abode. For the past decade or so, arrow crabs on Bonaire have been living in the company of anemones, primarily ringed anemones. The sting- ing defense of the anemones themselves may discourage some potential arrow crab predators. In addition, on Bonaire the ringed anemones are almost always the residence of one or more ghost cleaner shrimp. The anemones are visited frequently by fishes – sometimes predator fishes – for cleaning. These clients have a strong instinct against eating when at a cleaner station, and that may work out very nicely for arrow crabs.

The arrow crabs have even used this inhibition for their own benefit – by becoming cleaner animals themselves! Yes, friends and neighbors, arrow crabs have, within the last 25 years or less, been experimenting with cleaning activities. I’ve been a beneficiary of this myself, but it was still a bit of a surprise: as I held my hand in position for the ghost cleaners, an arrow crab reached over with one of its long claws, scraped some skin from my finger and ate it!

Imagine the first time this happened: the arrow crab would have been hanging out near the anemone for protection. A client pulled into the cleaner station – with a lovely, succulent parasite right there on the arrow crab’s side of its body. The arrow crab plucked off the parasite, and – a new career was born.

Shrimp who have evolved to clean have white antennae, which they wave and wriggle in order to advertise their services. Arrow crabs haven’t evolved to clean, so they don’t have white whiskers – but that doesn’t matter since they have cleaner shrimp doing their advertising for them. The ghost shrimp advertise, the anemone protects and the arrow crab is available to take advantage.

**Arrow crab cleaning behavior isn’t just occurring on Bonaire, though; it has been reported throughout the Caribbean area.**

**Why now?**

One very obvious reason is that it’s only since 1983 or so that arrow crabs have been hanging around in anemones. Before that time, their favorite hangouts were the longspined sea urchins, but in 1983 a fatal disease attacked longspined urchins from as far north as Georgia, all across the Caribbean, to as far south as Brazil. The disease swept through Bonaire in less than a week, killing more than 90% of our longspined urchins, and probably struck in other places just as quickly. Suddenly, arrow crabs were looking for new places to hang out – and those busy anemones were obviously alluring.

Only in the last couple of years have longspined urchin populations grown to anything near their former numbers. We’ll see arrow crabs hanging around urchins again soon, but I suspect they’ll be young ones for whom the urchin is a first home; the crabs with anemones will probably stay there.

But as the urchins come back and the arrow crabs spread out, and you’re seeing more and more of them, spend a little time watching what they’re doing. Like yellowtail snappers, arrow crabs are the opportunists of their type. What else will they be learning to do? **Story & Photo by Dee Scarr**

*Dee Scarr conducts “Touch the Sea” dives. They will enhance your diving forever. Call 717-8529. See her slide show “Touch the Sea” at Capt. Don’s Habitat, Mondays, 8:30 pm.*
This great dog, called “Wayabuza,” was found in the playground of an elementary school. She was in heat and was being pursued by a mob of male dogs. Some men working at the school took pity on her, captured her and brought her into the Bonaire Animal Shelter. What a relief for her! She got her name, “Wayabuza,” from her saviors who said she was running so fast to escape the male dogs that it reminded them of “the Wayabuza, the fastest motorcycle in the world!” This lovely young dog will be sterilized this week and will be ready for adoption. She’s been examined by the vet, has had her tests, been wormed and has had her shots. The adoption fee of NA#105 includes all that as well as her sterilization.

Sad to say, if this wonderful dog had been neutered in the first place she wouldn’t have had to run from gangs of male dogs.

The animal population continues to explode. Each year all over the world millions of unwanted pets are born and most are treated like “living garbage” and disposed of. The obvious reason why spaying and neutering is so critical is to prevent unwanted, accidental pregnancies. And it’s good for the community too because homeless pets often create serious problems. They destroy property, spread disease and cost a lot of money to control. It’s an agonizing job to have to euthanize animals because of irresponsible breeding.

The Shelter has a “Sterilization Fund,” and they can help. If you know someone who has a dog that is running free and it isn’t sterilized, tell them about the Shelter program. The Fund is sponsored by donations and has done a monumental job already of sterilizing dogs on the island. If you’d like to contribute, you may, via MCB Account #10616410, “Sterilization Fund,” or via Support Bonaire. Website: www.supportbonaire.org. Those funds will go only towards sterilization.

So far this year there have been 35 adoptions from the Shelter. People know it’s the island’s best place to find healthy and sociable pets. L.D.
Bella Vista Restaurant
Sea Side Restaurant at Buddy Dive Resort
717-5080, ext. 558

Moderate. Breakfast and Lunch
Dinner during Theme nights only.
Open every day

Magnificent Theme Nights: Saturday; Beach Grill; Monday; Caribbean Night; Friday; Manager’s Rum Punch Party and All-You-Can-Eat BBQ

Real French Cooking in an informal setting
Superb dishes prepared with care and love by a French chef
Owner-operated
Eat in or Take away

Bistro de Paris
Kaya Gob. N. Detroit 46
(half-way between hotel row and town) 717-7070

Moderate Lunch and Dinner
Closed Sunday

Trend setting décor and menu
Bonaire’s newest hot-spot to eat and drink. Margaritas a specialty
Owner-operated for top service

Cactus Blue
Bldv. J. A. Abraham 16
(half-way between town and Divi Flamingo) 717-4546

Moderate Dinner
Closed Sunday

Get a view of the beach and turquoise sea while enjoying a breakfast buffet or a la carte lunch and dinner at the Cactus Blue restaurant and bar
Inspiring vistas and the highest standard of cuisine

Calabas Restaurant & Chihi Chihi Restaurant and Bar
At the Divi Flamingo Beach Resort. Waterfront 717-8285

Moderate-Expensive
Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner
Open 7 days

Bonaire’s Most Romantic Restaurant where dining is a delight! Tuscan chef prepares exquisitely dishes with authentic ingredients. Be served in a garden setting under floating umbrellas or in air-conditioned comfort.
Take out too.

Crocantes Italian Restaurant
Downtown at Kaya Grandi 48
717-5025

Moderate-Expensive
Dinner
Closed Monday

Bonaire’s best, The Real Thing! Freshly prepared pizzas made with the finest ingredients. Salads, desserts. Eat in or take away. Nice bar too.
Call ahead to eat-in or take out 790-1111

The Great Escape
Eag Blvd 997—across from Belnem
717-7488

Moderate Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Breakfast every day; Lunch, Dinner Tues-Sun.

Enjoy a delicious dessert or savory baked meal in the comfort of your home or resort. This unique bakery offers gourmet class items - always from scratch. For take out or delivery only.

The Last Bite Bakery
Home delivery or Take Out
717-3293

Low-Moderate
Orders taken 7 am-4 pm. Deliveries 6-7:30 pm, Closed Sunday.

Visit the bustling of downtown from this street side Caribbean-style bistro owned and run by a European educated Master Chef and his wife.

The Lost Penguin
Across from MCB Bank in downtown Krabendijk
Call: 717-8003.

Low-Moderate
Breakfast, Lunch, Early Dinner until 6 pm Closed Tuesdays & Wednesdays

Bonaire’s best. The Real Thing! Freshly prepared pizzas made with the finest ingredients. Salads, desserts. Eat in or take away. Nice bar too.
Call ahead to eat-in or take out 790-1111

Pasa Bon Pizza
On Kaya Gob. Detroit
½ mile north of town center. 780-1111

Low-Moderate
Open from 5-11 pm Wednesday-Sunday

Above: Enjoy a delicious dessert or savory baked meal in the comfort of your home or resort. This unique bakery offers gourmet class items - always from scratch. For take out or delivery only.

GARDEN SUPPLIES AND SERVICES
Green Label has everything you need to start or maintain your garden. Supplies can design, install and maintain it and offer plants, irrigation supplies and garden chemicals. Incredible selection of pots.

GIFTS, SOUVENIRS AND LIQUOR
The Bonaire Gift Shop offers a wide selection of gifts, souvenirs, liquor, dive watches, digital cameras, things for the home, T-shirts all at low prices.

HOTELS
The Great Escape Under new management. Quiet and tranquil setting with pool and luxuriant garden in Belnem. Cyber Café, DVD rentals, restaurant and bar.

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b c b-Botterop Construction Bonaire N.V., offers outstanding fabrication of all metal products, including stainless. Complete machine shop too.

Nature Exploration
Outdoor Bonaire for individually guided kayaking, hiking, biking, caving, scuba diving and more. They offer expert instruction, superb equipment on a fine beach. Lunch and drinks too. BBQ and windsurf videos Wednesday nights.

RETAIL
Benetto, world famous designer clothes available now in Bonaire at prices less than those in US. For men, women and children.

SECURITY
Special Security Services will provide that extra measure of protection when you need it. Always reliable.

SHOPPING

SILKSCREEN, EMBROIDERY
CesMar—Local company offers top quality, fast service for monogramming, silk screening, embroidery.

SUPERMARKETS
Visit Warehouse Bonaire to shop in a large, spotless supermarket. You’ll find American and European brand products. THL market for provisioning.

WATER TAXI
Get to Klein Bonaire by Ferry. Ride the Kantinka di Amor o Skij. Hotel pickup.

WINDSURFING
The Bonaire Windsurfing Place can fulfill all your windsurfing dreams and more. They offer expert instruction, superb equipment on a fine beach. Lunch and drinks too. BBQ and windsurf videos Wednesday nights.

WINES
Antillean Wine Company. You’ve tried the rest; now try the best: best prices, highest quality wines from around the world, kept in a cooled warehouse. Free delivery.

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Yoga For You. Join certified instructors Desirée and Don for a workout that will refresh mind and body. Private lessons too.

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Put your ad in The Bonaire Reporter. Phone/Fax 717-8988, Cell 786-6518
Ryan Englehardt

“I always wanted to work in an office, sitting inside the aircon; that seemed really attractive to me! I went to SGB high school to study ETAO, where they prepare you to work in hotels and restaurants. After that I did MAVO. My first job was at Harbour Village where I worked at the front desk for only a month to replace someone and after that they asked me if I wanted to work behind the bar. From that moment on I’ve worked in the restaurant business and I’ve been doing that for 18 years now.

I like it a lot. I like to prepare the drinks, talk to people. There’s always time to chat and I speak four languages so I can talk to nearly everyone. You get to know so many people from all different cultures and you learn about the way they live in other countries, and I tell them about how we live here, about our beaches and the dive sites. I used to dive too. I got my certificate at Bon Bini Divers with Susan Davis 15 years ago, but I haven’t been diving for a long time because I don’t like it anymore and also my ear has been bothering me.

I was born here in Bonaire at the hospital. My father was Frank Englehardt from Playa Pabou and my mother was Maria Beaconst Boezem from Nort di Salinja. I have a sister, Justra, who’s living in Holland, working at a school where she’s doing the administration. She has a 15-year-old daughter called Maria. My brother Steven died here on Bonaire three years ago of a heart attack, at the age of 33, after he’d been living in Holland for 10 years.

I had a very good childhood. My parents weren’t very strict; they were quiet people. My dad was a fisherman and he took me out to sea many times. My mother worked in the kitchen of Divi Flamingo doing the dishes. My father passed away 10 years ago, and my mother died five years ago. Ever since then my sister has been asking me to come to live with her in Holland, but I don’t want to; I like it here.

After Harbour Village I worked at Coral Regency (later called Lion’s Dive, now Buddy Dive) and then at Capt. Don’s Habitat, and for the last three years I’ve been working at City Café; the last year only in the daytime. I don’t like to work at night anymore; I prefer to have the evenings off.

I like Bonaire because it’s quiet; I don’t need any more than this. I’ve been on vacations to Venezuela, Curacao, Santo Domingo and Aruba, and it’s great to be there for a while, but to live I like a tranquil place. Many of my friends left for Holland years ago, but lately quite a few have come back because life with the euro has become too expensive. They like being back, but they get bored too as they say, ‘There’s nothing to do on the island.’

When I’m free I go to visit my aunts, my mother’s sisters, who are living close to me in Nort di Salinja. It’s a very quiet and cozy area, different from Playa because if I need anything or I have a problem, people are always there to help me and they also look after my house when I am not there. In Playa they don’t do these things. In Nort di Salinja it’s more like family.

My grandmother, ‘Chepa’ Boezem, lived here too. She was of Indian descent and she had very long black hair. She passed away when she was 96; that was three years ago. It was a big blow to me because I loved her a lot. She liked the kitchen very much and knew how to prepare different krioyo dishes like kuduchi - a soup made from cactus - yambo, kubu gura – a dish made from the head and liver of a goat - and iguana soup and stew. I always cook for myself too - easy food - like chicken in red wine, shrimp in garlic sauce, and I can make a very good rice dish like nasi goreng.” He smiles: “Maybe I’ll open my own restaurant some day – but – not yet!”

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For me the most important thing in life is family, and also I am always trying to help people and people help me too. You see, to me that’s the real beauty of Bonaire: Its people….”

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Aruba Day Celebration

Last Saturday Aruba Day was celebrated on Bonaire. The close ties between the islands was confirmed by a big turnout. The Aruba Club on Bonaire extended their annual activities to the parking lot at the Stadium and included other nationalities which showed up to offer the foods of their country. Above is the Surinamese contingent which dished up great culinary treats like bami and curry. A fire dance was performed... to the beat of American country music! Bonairean resident Buchi Kan Anthony was honored for valued contributions to Aruba. L.D.

David van der Walde writes, “Here are some of your subscribers enjoying The Bonaire Reporter at Bark Lake, Quebec, Canada. That’s me and Jan Van der Walde in the boat with Vincent van der Walde in the kayak. Ayo.

Win great prizes! Take a copy of The Bonaire Reporter with you on your next trip or when you return to your home. Then take a photo of yourself with the newspaper in hand. Best photos of the year will win prizes. Mail photos to Bonaire Reporter, Kaya Gob. Debrot 200-6, Bonaire, Netherlands Antilles (AN). E-mail to: picture@bonairereporter.com. (All 2006 photos are eligible.)

Picture Yourself In The Reporter

Bark Lake, Quebec, Canada

Fire dancer Edward Santaris

Surinamese stand: Rosita Paiman, Amina Karto, Amina Kromodimedjo

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Leo the Lion Chases Orion Out of Springtime Skies

It's that time of year again when the Sky Park night skies almost shout, "Spring is here," because Leo the Lion is chasing Orion and replacing him as the major constellation of the new season.

Now most of you know that Orion the Hunter is winter's most famous star pattern. Indeed if you go outside in early evening in December Orion is climbing up the southeastern skies as a celestial announcement of the imminent arrival of winter. And in January and February when winter is coldest Orion reaches his highest point in the heavens in early evening, almost bragging that he is master of the season. But then things begin to change because all through March Orion slowly relinquishes his high flying position in early evening, and by the beginning of April he's tipped over on his side in the southwest, almost hanging on to the sky for dear life. And it is this position of Orion in the southwest heavens in early evening that always tells us that winter is soon coming to an end.

And although I am always sad to see Orion's bright stars go, nevertheless a much bigger, although less bright, constellation takes his place almost overhead in early evening. Leo the Lion, roaring that he is master now and that he and he alone dominates spring's skies. In fact if you go out any night in late March or April in early evening you will see Leo casually reclining almost overhead, very self assured that winter and Orion will soon be completely gone. Now Leo is usually depicted as reclining in a kind of sphinx position like the ancient Egyptians depicted him. His head and forequarters are indicated by a backward question mark with the bright, blue-white star Regulus marking his heart. His rear is marked by a triangle of stars with Leo's second brightest star, Denebola. In ancient times lions were often associated with royalty; in fact Leo's brightest star Regulus means "The Little King."

But little it is not. Some latest measurements indicate that it is more than one and a half times the diameter of our almost-one-million-mile-wide Sun. But because it is a much hotter star it is 140 times brighter. And because it is a whopping 80 light years away, when we look up at Regulus this spring we see the light that left it 80 years ago. But Regulus' second brightest star also outdoes our Sun. Even though it is closer, 40 light years away, it is almost twice as wide as our Sun, and also being hotter makes it 20 times brighter! Which means that if we moved either Denebola or Regulus as close to Earth as our Sun we'd all be crispy critters. So, welcome in springtime the cosmic way. Simply go outside any night in late March and April, look toward the south-west where you'll see Orion on his way out, and then look almost overhead where you'll see Leo the Lion, king of springtime skies. —Jack Hokheimeyer

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