

Dear Jessie,

I have sent some pictures to [photos@royalgazette.bm](mailto:photos@royalgazette.bm) following this letter.

It was very pleasant to meet with you recently to discuss my Grandfather and his activities with the Training School. I am writing to you to ask for the assistance of your readers.

Arthur St. George Tucker MBE was the founder and superintendent of the Nonsuch Training School for Boys.

He was born on March 15, 1896 at Sackville, Nova Scotia; the third child of the Reverend (later Canon) Tucker and Elizabeth Christiana (Mathurs) Tucker, one of three sons. Notably all three received MBE – Edmund Richard Harvey Tucker and Leonard Nigel “Dickie” Tucker. The family relocated to Bermuda. At the age of 15 he became an apprentice on a ship plying trade between London and the West Indies. Upon the outbreak of World War I he attempted to join the London-Scottish Regiment, but was turned down due to age. Undaunted he jumped ship in Demerara and after hiding for three weeks in the jungle, worked his way to England and joining the Royal Navy as a gunner. He served first upon H.M.S. Victory and later upon H.M.S. Lurcher where he was seriously wounded at the Battle of Jutland. He was later transferred to the Canadian Navy and invalided out in 1918. In between the Great War and going to Nonsuch he served in the Merchant Marine and was involved in the transportation offshore of the must Bermudian of products made by the Gosling family during the United States of America prohibition era.

Arthur Tucker married Elsie Green of London who had cared for him following the battle. The couple moved to Nonsuch Island where they were put in charge of the quarantine station under the Health Department. Later two boys who were deemed too young to be sent to prison were placed in their care, and Mr Tucker conceived the idea of a training school for young delinquents run along such lines as would turn out good citizens.

The Quarantine Station at Nonsuch became the headquarters of Dr Bebe and his bathysphere team about 1928 and Mr Tucker was skipper of the deep-sea tugboat *Gladisfen* that transported and lowered the doctor and the sphere to the mysterious world beneath the water.

Mr Tucker petitioned for the creation of the reform school (Nonsuch Training School) with the support of the Department of Health (in particular Dr Henry Wilkinson) and Executive Council on Prisons.

Mr & Mrs Tucker were at this famous and unique training school since they founded it on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1934 on Nonsuch Island at the Southern entrance to Castle Harbour, later relocating to Fort Cunningham on Paget Island in 1948. The Tucker's remained at the school until his retirement in 1958, aged 62 for health reasons. The school was then taken over by Mr John Packer.

During the this time, some 276 boys had passed through the school with over 80% not re-offending – a record that clearly has lessons to teach us in the current day. Other “residents” included a Miss Ruth Bulcher, a Nazi spy transferred from the St. George Prisoner of War Camp in 1941 by special request of the Government.

The boys attending the school were trained on the principles of naval routine and discipline. In addition to formal education, training was provided on cooking, bakery, seamanship, knots, sail making & repair and engine repair.

The following quotations are from Mr Tucker's note on the running of such an institution, which has great poignancy and relevance to today.

On the Officer in Charge

“It should be borne in minds that every single boy needs individual attention. He has his own problems, sometimes bordering on the tragic. If you get to know him, then you may help him over a difficult period.

There is a tendency to get rid of a very difficult boy, by transferring him to the Senior Training School, for the convenience of the staff. This is wrong; it would be hard but rewarding work if he can be retained. Some of the most resistant boys have turned out the best.

The officer (sic: in charge) who is not really fond of children and cannot find pleasure in their company is not a suitable person to train and teach them.

If a boy is misjudged or blamed unjustly, no time should be lost in putting right, even by humble apology on the part of the officer. Thereby he gains the boys’ respect. A boy should never be misinformed, if the officer does not know the answer to a question, he should tell him so, and then find out for him. The boy will appreciate it.

Boys as a rule are mimics and will be taught more by examples. The officer’s home life is keenly watched and compared with their own.”

On Juvenile Delinquency, and some of its causes

“Much has been written on this subject, but there’s no definite rule to define its cause or causes; however, I have a few opinions during the time I have run the school:

1. Unsatisfactory homes, overcrowding, leading to bickering between parents and other adults, may send minors away from home for lengthening periods.
2. Really bad homes, which speaks for itself.
3. Movies and comic books influence children to a great extent. I have boys ask me if the most fantastic things, in comics, are real in some other country.
4. Not many years ago families went out together, on picnics, often rowing miles in a small boat. One these days seldom sees the older minor with his parents. Why? Because the latter are too busy having a good time themselves, leaving the former to their own devices, probably some mad cycle ride through the parishes, there meeting other. And then what? The smaller children being left with, Grandmother.
5. The mentally weak child is an easy prey, and is often used to advantage by older people, who actually send them out to steal.
6. Disregard to the law, whether on the part of the parents to on the part of the child, tends to establish in the mind of the child a contempt of the law and is therefore likely to lead to delinquency.
7. I have heard boys say, “*popa can’t lick me, I’ll take him to court if he does*”, and the father in many cases are not fit to punish his child, the boy may have something on him”

On the Cure

“This is the problem and while humans are what we are, it will never be 100% effective. It goes in cycles, as shown in the figures from the school.

The new schools with the fine play grounds should be a great help, but too much must not be left to the school masters, who are often worn out.

There is not adequate after care for the boys, who have been in trouble. After serving many years here, and suddenly put ashore, he needs a helping hand.

There are too many advisors, and not enough hard workers who are willing to make the necessary sacrifices, to effectively help these youngsters”.

On Defaulters at the school

“Those are generally boys who get one or more days, for any breach of discipline or any other offence. The principal punishment is to, shoulder ones hammock, and double around the building for fifteen minutes – which seems to produce the desired results. A new recruit on seeing this drill, was heard to say “*Man where’s you going to?*”

We seldom have any real trouble, and then mostly by a boy who has been sent down late – say about fourteen to sixteen years, but they knuckle down after awhile.

If a crime is committed, lets say stealing, wilful damage to property, or anything likely to upset the ordinary tranquillity of the ship (Sic: The school) – we have an enquiry on the quarter-deck, and if found out, which is generally the case the guilty party lands in the Captain’s report.”

On the Hon. Chaplain

“Canon Tucker has from the beginning been a source of inspiration to us, and the boys, who look forward eagerly to his frequent visits, and the early service the next morning, he is very much part of “Nonsuch”.

“Old” boys are often, at the Rectory to see him and they are welcome.”

Anecdotes

“When the *Seahorse* (School boat) was launched at St. Davids by the late General Cubitt, and blessed by the Chaplain who used a fountain pen filled with Holy water. A few days afterwards I told the boys to write home giving a description of the launching – one wrote “*The Governor broke champagne on her, and the Chaplain threw ink at her*”

I gave the boys three-penny pieces for the offertory at a service, afterwards one lad was given a tip by the Chaplain, he was heard to say “*Look I got it back!*”

“The boys are often taken to be Sea Cadets by Visitors and when disillusioned are amazed at their conduct and bearing.”

“Hammocks – This is a good mode of sleeping – comfortable, easy to air, and takes up little space. It also prevents lounging and to a great extent other practices!”

“Laundry – For health reasons this is a very important activity and dirty clothing causes a lack of self respect in the individual.”

Mrs Tucker acted as School Matron, which was a very varied job, cooking for so large a family and at the same time training a different boy each month. Hers was the job of barber as well as nurse, usually after breakfast there was a row of boys on the veranda awaiting treatment for minor injuries.

Mr Arthur St. George Tucker passed away on December 21<sup>st</sup>, 1961; survived by his son – Arthur Tudor Tucker and daughter Isobel Ann (Tucker) Swan.

Arthur Tudor Tucker snr was my father who sadly passed away on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1989. For those who knew him, his exploits featured frequently in the Bermudian Press. He was liked by many but made a number of enemies, particularly when he fought against the injustices experienced by Bermudians by outside influences. Such as personally guarding the Bermuda Cenotaph on Front Street in December 1968 following a series of desecrations and thefts of the memorial flags. The incident resulted in a dramatic move by the Canadian Navy to post a guard (Royal Gazette 09-12-1968 front page – **Can I get a copy of this – ours is damaged?**). An eviction incident and demonstration about fair rents for Bermuda culminated in a 1969 court case with Stubbs Real Estate Ltd (Bermuda Gazette 02-10-1969). This case was followed by a malicious (unsuccessful) prosecution under the firearms act for the possession of an antique cane gun (Bermuda Gazette 11-09-1969). On both occasions Arthur Tucker snr defended himself in court. More serious was his involvement in a 1970 protest against United States Plans to dump nerve gas of Cape Kennedy (Bermuda Gazette 05-08-1970 front page). But those stories are for another day.

Isobel Ann (Tucker) Swan passed recently on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2004 and is sadly missed by all.

I would be interested in hearing from anyone who knew my Grandfather or father. I am particularly interested in those who passed through the school or were associated with it and their memories and recollections of their time there. The experiences gained, good and bad to help maintain this record. It is the heartfelt wishes of the Tucker family to commit these experiences to print for the benefit of posterity and for the common interest of all "Onions". Furthermore, we are seeking a local researcher to assist in the compilation of this text.

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