

Women in the Sun

Mrs. Elsie Tucker

Seven Years' Silence, Then A Whirlwind Marriage

"There is not enough space in a paper to tell about Nonsuch Island as we knew it, I'm forever telling myself I will one day write a book about it."

The lady with the memories is Mrs. Elsie Tucker, wife of the late Arthur St. George Tucker, and she was recalling the exciting, difficult years she and her husband spent on Nonsuch Island, where they started Bermuda's first training scheme for delinquents.

Mrs. Tucker was born in 1900 five miles from Windsor Castle in Berkshire, England. She was the youngest of a family of twelve, and was educated in Berkshire and London.

She was still only a school-girl, during the first World War, when she met her husband who was serving with the Royal Navy.

"I was nineteen years old when we became engaged," she recalled. "Arthur was the second son of Canon Tucker of St. George's. Shortly after our engagement we had a quarrel, the engagement was broken off and Arthur returned to Bermuda."

Seven years went by, and not a single letter was exchanged between the estranged couple. Mrs. Tucker was still single.

TOLD

"It was in 1927, after all those years," said Mrs. Tucker, "that I received a letter from Arthur. He did not ask me to come to Bermuda. He stated that I would be sailing!"

There were no second thoughts on Mrs. Tucker's part. She arrived in Bermuda on January 17, 1927 at eleven o'clock. They were married two hours later by Arthur's father.

In April, 1927, the newly-weds set foot on Nonsuch Island, and looked after the Quarantine Station.

"In the four years we were there, we didn't have a single patient," said Mrs. Tucker, "but we did have a daughter, who was known for years as 'Ann of Nonsuch'. She is now Mrs. John Swan and lives in New York."

In 1932 the Tuckers moved to Coney Island, again looking after a Quarantine Station and they stayed there twenty years.

DELINQUENTS

"It was then that Mr. Ivor Stourton, at that time the Commissioner of Police, asked my husband to come to the Secretariat, where it was suggested that we open the Nonsuch Training School for delinquents," said Mrs. Tucker.

"It was an exciting venture, and the rules and regulations my husband made in 1934 are still in use today, on Paget Island, where the Training School is now situated. A year later, my son, Arthur Tudor Tucker, was born.

"It was hard work, believe you me," said Mrs. Tucker. "We fed the boys on ninepence each per day then, and all through the war years I made the boys shirts - that was no joyride I can assure you!"

In 1958 Mr. Tucker was forced to retire because of ill health. Mrs. Tucker retired three months later, after training another matron. It was a bitter blow for the Tuckers and after the many years of frenzied activity, retirement did not come easily.

MANAGEMENT

"We just didn't know what to do with ourselves," commented Mrs. Tucker. "We bought a house in Warwick

and then went to stay with our daughter in the States for three months. That gave us a chance to collect ourselves, so to speak. We returned to Bermuda in 1959 when we were invited to take over management of the English Speaking Union."

The Bermuda branch of the English Speaking Union, an international organisation aimed at promoting better relations between the peoples of the English-speaking world, ran under their joint management until 1961, when Mr. Tucker died.

"By this time he had been awarded the M.B.E.," said Mrs. Tucker, "and it is interesting to note that all three of Canon Tucker's sons received this award."

