

Seychelles Islands Foundation

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Aldabra's Old Timers' Corner

Antonio Constance ("Mazarin")

by Dr. Jeanne A. Mortimer

Aldabra "Old Timers" corner

This issues' Old Timers corner features Antonio Constance, (commonly known as Mazarin), one of Aldabras best known "old timers." Mazarin worked seasonally on Aldabra for Harry Savy between 1956 and 1967, and full time for the Royal Society from 1968 to 1980. Since 1981 he worked for the Islands Development Company (IDC) in the outer islands as a manager and fisherman.

Mazarin, having had much experience assisting scientists on Aldabra, was very helpful to sea turtle biologist Jeanne Mortimer while she conducted her outer island turtle surveys during 1981 to 1984. Twelve years later, Mr. Glenn Savy (Executive Chairman of IDC) kindly gave Mazarin a temporary leave of absence from his regular duties to enable him to work with her again as research assistant for the *Turtle & Tortoise Conservation Project* during 1996 and 1997 (see cover page). The following account by Jeanne provides a few anecdotes and some news about Mazarin:



Those who have been fortunate to work with Mazarin for any length of time will probably recall his enthusiasm for

drinking alcohol to be nearly as great as that for hard work. Work always took priority, however, and Mazarin never let drinking alcohol interfere with the job. But, his drinking prowess is legendary. Dr. Steve Blackmore (better known to his Seychellois friends as "Rupert") recalls an occasion on Aldabra when he went off to camp with Mazarin. Upon arrival Steve happily announced to Mazarin that he had brought along a bottle of whisky. Mazarin's reply was "Only one? Oh, well, that's OK, Rupert, you go ahead and drink it." On more than one occasion on Cosmoledo atoll in the early 1980s I watched Mazarin single-handedly drink a full bucket (7-8 litres) of home-brewed "baka lantir" (an alcoholic beverage made from sugar cane and lentils). On Farquhar I saw him polish-off two crates of beer (48 bottles) during a single week-end. Thus his old friends may be surprised to learn that more than two years ago, Mazarin decided to simply quit drinking alcohol altogether. (Mazarin never has been one to do things half-heartedly.) When asked if he misses alcohol. He replies emphatically: "No! My body feels stronger, and my mind is so clear! And now it is so much easier to save money!" Mazarin is indeed doing well. Last year he reached retirement age and left his 20-year post with the Islands Development Company (IDC). He built a second story onto his home in Belvedere, purchased and refit a 38 foot, two-tonne, single masted wooden fishing boat, and now works independently as a fisherman while maintaining interests in several small businesses. He lives with his wife Alda (so-named by her parents when she was born on Aldabra in the 1940s). Mazarin and Alda have five children and three grandchildren.

