

Orlando & Eva Flye and the Santa Marta Coffee Company

This story is written primarily for Hatch family members who are descendants of Orlando and Eva Flye. I have attempted to tell the story of how Orlando came to Colombia as a young man, what he accomplished there, and what kind of life he and his family lived in a relatively undeveloped foreign country at the turn of the 20th century. One of their children was my grandmother, Alva Maria Flye. I, too, grew up in Colombia and remember many of the places and people in this story, but never knew Orlando or Eva, since they passed away a few years before I was born. It is a remarkable story and might be of interest to the casual reader as well.

Nearly a century ago, Orlando himself recognized the importance of preserving family history. In a letter to his children dated May 20, 1930, he wrote that he believed he would be “conferring a great favor on my family” by recording something about their ancestors. This story is, in a sense, a continuation of what Orlando began. I have attached a transcribed verbatim copy of this letter at the end of this story. It is a fascinating bit of family history.

Much of the research for this story had already been done by Mel Carriker, one of Orlando and Eva’s descendants, and is contained in his excellent book, *Vista Nieve*. Mel delved into the detail of the Flye story, and if you really want to get the complete feel for what it was like to live in Colombia at the turn of the 20th century, you should really read his book. Mel focused much of his book on the Carriker branch of the family and especially the works of his ornithologist father, Melbourne Carriker, Sr., also known as “Meb.” I have attempted to condense the Flye history to what relates primarily to the Hatch family. I leave the telling of the amazing story of the Carrikers to Mel.

Our story begins in Winslow, Maine, in 1880. Orlando was born there in 1861, right about the time of the start of the Civil War, but now he was 19 years old, had completed his education in Winslow and had been hired by the New England Telephone Company of Lewiston, Maine. He was the third child of a family of three boys and one girl. One wonders exactly how he subsequently acquired the title of “electrical engineer” without having attended a university. Trade school, perhaps? Nevertheless, there is no doubt that he acquired a considerable body of knowledge and electrical design skills along the way because he later had remarkable success in building telephone systems and hydroelectric plants.

Orlando tells his children in the letter written in 1930 that his forefathers were English and Irish, his mother being English and descended from John Alden and Priscilla Mullins, the legendary Puritan couple who came over on the Mayflower in 1620. His ancestors eventually drifted to Maine, settling in the town of Winslow, Maine, where they took up farming. This provided him with intensive, practical farming experience and incidentally a strong physical body, both of which would contribute importantly to his future success. Orlando's maternal great-great-grandfather, Josiah Hayden, Sr., served as an officer during the American Revolution and later became a colonel in the militia.

In 1881, at the age of 20, he married Carrie B. McEgan in Lewiston, Maine, who bore him two children, Alice May Flye (1882), and Ralph Henry Flye (1883). Tragically Carrie died in April, 1884, from complications arising from Ralph's birth, leaving Orlando a widower. Orlando continued with the New England Telephone Company until 1887 when he left to accept a position with the Procter & Gamble Company in Cincinnati, Ohio, as a general electrician, leaving his two children in the care of relatives. What became of these children is the subject of another story. According to family accounts, in those times, when a father was left with a toddler and an infant, it would be customary for him to look to his wife's family for support while he made his way in the world seeking his livelihood. Family records indicate that the children assimilated into the family of Carrie's brother and sister-in-law, John McEgan Jr. and Aunt Mary McEgan, who raised them alongside their own children. Part of their story is told in the epilogue attached hereto.

The story goes that Orlando was performing electrical work for the Blanot family in Cincinnati where, by chance, he met one of the daughters, Eva Blanot. After a brief courtship they married in 1889. Orlando was 28 and Eva was 17; she was eleven years younger than him.

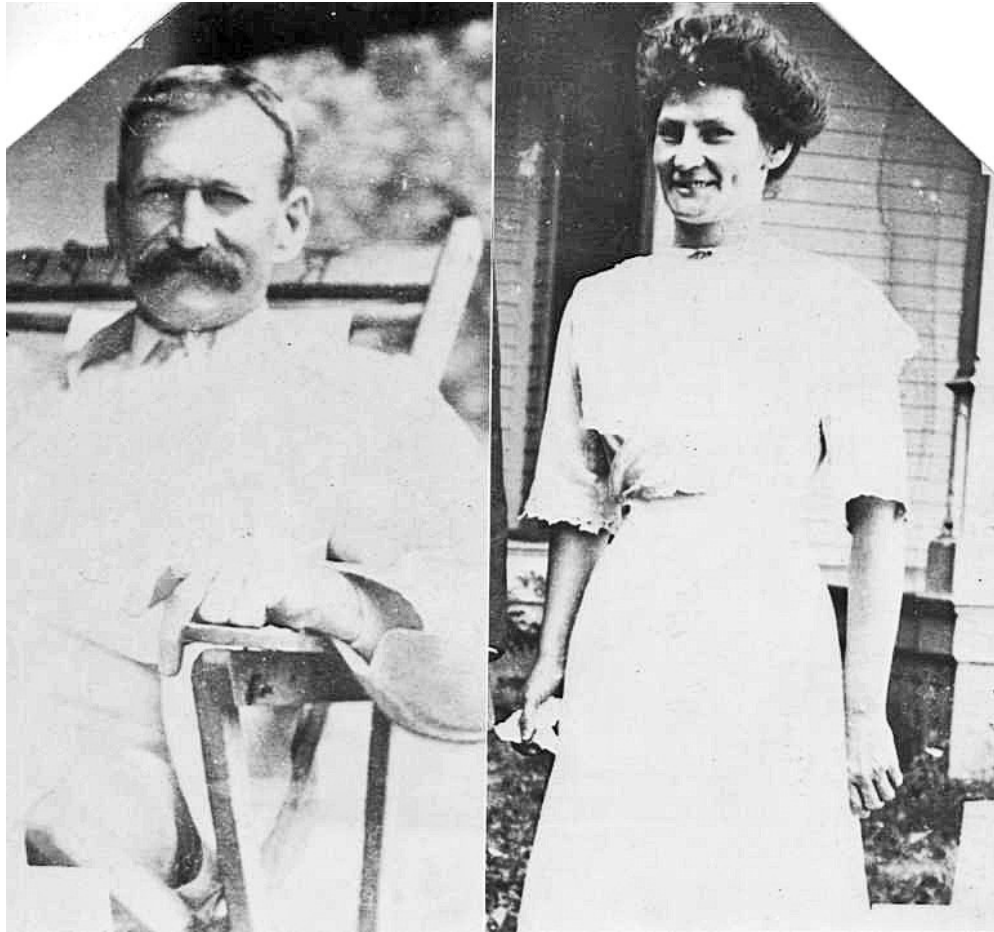


Figure 1. Orlando and Eva in Cincinnati, Ohio

Eva was born in Elmwood, Ohio, a small town in the suburbs of Cincinnati. Eva was the seventh child in a family of seven girls and one boy. Her paternal ancestors emigrated from France around 1789, landing first in New York, then moving to Connecticut and finally settling in Elmwood, Ohio. Her father, Ilisha York Wells Blanot, farmed the land around Elmwood.

Eva's maternal ancestors, the Shepherds, were English immigrants who landed first in Massachusetts and then later made their way to Ohio where they also farmed the land. By then, the Shepherds had been in America for three generations.

To the family's intense grief, Eva's father, Ilisha, died unexpectedly when Eva was only eleven years old. She then devoted herself to helping her mother, Maria Jane Shepherd Blanot, to care for and support the family. During these trying years, she also received training in nursing. Her upbringing on the farm, her early

years of heavy family responsibilities, and training in healthcare prepared her, far more than she realized, for the arduous and challenging adventures coming in her future married life.

In 1890, after son Harry's birth and while Orlando was still working for Procter & Gamble, Orlando received an offer to serve as manager of the Colombian Telephone and Telegraph Company at their headquarters in Barranquilla, Colombia, on the Caribbean coast. He no doubt was recommended by his previous employer in Maine, but the offer appeared to be probationary as no arrangements were made to transport Eva and Harry with him.

Upon his arrival in Colombia in 1890 and not being pleased with conditions and the absence of his family, he sent in his resignation, which was not accepted. Instead, the company promised to send him his family and gave him a very good increase in salary with orders to extend their enterprise. He stayed on and in 1892 he entered into a contract with the Colombian government to establish an electric plant in Santa Marta, Colombia, a small town also on the northern Caribbean coast.

Concurrently, beginning in the early 1890s, banana cultivation began to dramatically change the economy of the Santa Marta region as local and foreign interests promoted the production and exportation of bananas on a large scale. A banana boom was in the making. These early banana enterprises would eventually become associated with the United Fruit Company after its formation in 1899. Banana exports grew rapidly during the following years, profoundly changing the economy of the Santa Marta region. By 1905 the population of Santa Marta, now a city, had exploded to about 10,000 people.

Thus, when Orlando arrived in Santa Marta in 1892, he came at a most propitious period in the rapidly evolving economic and social history of the region. The deep Santa Marta seaport was being increasingly utilized by the expanding export trade. No doubt these economic activities explain why Orlando was successful in contracting to electrify the city of Santa Marta for the Colombian Telephone and Telegraph Company. After a long, sometimes arduous but always interesting search, he came upon the desirable waterfalls near the small town of Bonda in the foothills of the San Lorenzo mountains on the river Manzanares, about six miles east of Santa Marta.

Orlando rented a house in the village of Bonda and set up shop to begin construction of his hydroelectric plant. He also rebuilt and improved the road from Santa Marta to Bonda to allow passage of ox-drawn carts, which would transport the machinery that arrived by ship in Santa Marta.

Early in the summer of 1893 an excited Eva, accompanied by her children Harry and Myrtle Carmelita “Carme,” who had been born the previous March in Ohio, joined Orlando at Bonda. She had waited a long time to be reunited with her husband and finally to set foot on Colombian soil to set up her new homestead. Eva was kept busy with her children and maid adjusting to her new home and to the hot, lowland tropics.

During this period, with materials imported from abroad, Orlando established a telephone system for Santa Marta, installed an aqueduct to supply the city with potable water from the River Bonda (the Manzanares River as it passes through Bonda), and erected an ice plant—all of which served the city for many years. These innovations materially enhanced the lives of the better educated, wealthier inhabitants of the Santa Marta community who could afford them, and understandably greatly endeared Orlando to them.

On December 7, 1893, the hydroelectric plant went into service, and electric lights came on in the city of Santa Marta for the first time. While exploring sources of waterpower in the foothills southeast of Santa Marta, Orlando had come across small trees in berry that he thought he recognized as coffee trees. He cleaned a sizeable sample of ripe beans and shipped them to a friend in New York City familiar with coffee products. The friend excitedly telegraphed Orlando that the coffee “was of the very best quality, and they wanted some thousands of bags each year.” (A bag of coffee weighs about 132 pounds!) This unexpected, pleasant news fired Orlando’s imagination. Perhaps nostalgic for his earlier farming years in Maine, he began to consider the possibility of farming coffee.

Orlando began doing his research by investigating in detail the distribution and condition of coffee trees and the kinds of habitats and soil types in which they were growing in the foothills southeast of the city. Simultaneously, he studied literature on the cultivation, preparation, marketing, and world economics of coffee production. Significant expansion of the export of coffee from the slopes of the Sierra Nevada mountains took place between 1885 and 1898 as prices for coffee took off and coffee became one of Colombia’s most important exports. Orlando, with Eva’s strong support, finally made the important decision to

remain in Colombia and become a coffee planter. In August of 1894, after getting the light plant well established, he resigned from the Telephone and Telegraph Company and began his career as a coffee planter in the Sierra Nevada mountains near Santa Marta. His first venture was started with some friends from Bogota in the lower foothills of the San Lorenzo mountains that apparently did not go as well as he had hoped, and he soon sold out. After two more failed attempts in lands higher up the mountain, he began a period of apprenticeship to gain more experience farming coffee and to support his family.

In 1896 he began to work for an Englishman named Marshall at a coffee farm called El Recuerdo which was at about 3,000 feet elevation. Here coffee trees grew well and produced abundantly. Orlando began a project to grow tree seedlings, amassing 50,000 seedlings that he planned to use on his own plantation once he found suitable land.

Orlando began a second apprenticeship in 1897 at La Victoria plantation owned by the Bowden family and located at approximately the same elevation as El Recuerdo. Again, coffee trees grew luxuriantly and produced heavy crops of coffee berries.

During this period, Eva busied herself with domestic chores and maternal activities. Orlando had arranged for temporary living quarters at the plantations where he was working. Daughter Alva was born in 1895 and Clara in 1897, probably in a home in Santa Marta. Transportation between the plantations and Santa Marta was via muleback until reaching the lowlands and then by horse-drawn carriage.

As planned, employment at El Recuerdo and La Victoria gave Orlando the opportunity to explore the surrounding areas for land suitable for a coffee plantation. By now, he realized that he needed to be above 3,000 feet in elevation to ensure a cool climate and plenty of shade trees for the coffee plants. Also needed was a suitable stream both to power an electric generator and for potable water. After some months of meticulous reconnaissance, Orlando at last found his "ideal territory." This tract was called Valparaiso, at an altitude of between 4,000 and 5,000 feet, and about a 10-hour muleback ride over 20 miles of mule trails from Santa Marta. There he began with a delighted Eva and his family in earnest to build his coffee estate. He named the first land purchase, some 1,800 acres that he bought from the Bowden family, Hacienda Cincinnati after Eva's

hometown in Ohio. As Orlando developed the estate, he continued acquiring adjacent property and eventually owned 6,385 acres.

Work began during the dry season of 1898. It was a gargantuan effort that included building the Flye home, cottages for the workers, the store for supplies, the indispensable mill, and the first plantings of young coffee trees. Thankfully the climate was relatively cool due to the elevation, which partially accounts for how fast everything progressed. One wonders how in the world Orlando accomplished all of this with virtually no seed capital. Normally, it takes about five years from first clearing the land to production of the first commercial crop of coffee berries. However, since Orlando already had some 50,000 seedlings ready to transplant in the new plantation, he was ready to start shipping coffee shortly after the turn of the century. It is truly remarkable what he was able to accomplish in just two years considering the remote location and lack of roads and machinery.

Orlando and Eva's second son, William Davis Flye, was born in June of 1900; they now had five children. How in the world did they keep it all together? In my opinion what kept it together was their strength of character and the amazingly strong bond that drew them together and equipped them with the fierce determination and tenacity that allowed them to prevail in building a life in this unforgiving and isolated jungle. In addition, Orlando possessed the many skills and much of the knowledge that he had acquired along the way. As one acquaintance of the Cincinnati plantation life later noted, Orlando manipulated, guided, conducted, and regulated with firmness some 100 workers on the plantation in the early days. Because Orlando was familiar with virtually all aspects of the work, from planting coffee seedlings to shoeing mules, his workers respected his knowledge and willingly followed his orders and guidance.

By this time, the first Flye dwelling was completed; however, it was considered a temporary residence pending construction of a permanent home when time allowed. It was appropriately called Linda Vista because of its majestic view reaching the city of Santa Marta and the Caribbean Sea. Completing this dwelling allowed the Flye family to move from its quarters in El Recuerdo to Hacienda Cincinnati and get settled into life on the new estate.

By 1902, the Flye family had become quite comfortable in Linda Vista. The first planting of coffee trees on the plantation was now in berry, the mill had been expanded, and the hydroelectric generator was operating fully. Cattle were

grazing in the pastures, and mule teams were going weekly to Santa Marta for supplies and mail. Mail was arriving with some regularity on United Fruit Company ships. Not everything was coming up roses, however, as the Colombian civil war was raging, and government soldiers would occasionally raid the farms in the area for “recruits” and mules. On more than one occasion, Orlando had to allow the workers to flee up the mountain at night and hide the mules to avoid the soldiers.

In 1902, Mary Boardman Sheldon, the first of a succession of tutors, was invited by the Flyes to join them in Cincinnati for one year to instruct three of their children: Carmelita, Alva, and Clara. Willie was still a baby, and Harry was in school in Barranquilla. Mary was personable, outgoing, energetic, creative, and liked children. She turned out to be a very good teacher and was much admired by Eva and Orlando. Upon her return to the States, she wrote a very readable novel recounting in vivid detail her experiences on Hacienda Cincinnati. There are a few copies of this book circulating among family members, and many of you have read it and recognize the names of our ancestors.



Figure 2. This remarkable photo taken around 1902 shows Orlando and Eva Flye with Mary Boardman Sheldon, the Flye tutor from the States, between them. It is not clear to me who the children were (by

extrapolation). Orlando would have been about age 41 and Eva about 30. Orlando is seen smoking his ever-present cigar.

Construction of the new Flye home began in 1902, some 400 feet below the Linda Vista cottage. The family moved into “La Casa Grande,” as it became known, in August of that year. At last, they had ample living quarters, running water and electricity! The toilets actually flushed; however, there was no hot water. They were even connected to the telephone line to Santa Marta. Now, at last, ten years after Orlando had arrived in Santa Marta, the Flyes presided over a first-class plantation with a total acreage of about 4,780 acres; the land under cultivation would soon reach 2,560 acres supporting a total of some 700,000 coffee trees. Thus would begin the golden era of Hacienda Cincinnati as it went into full coffee production and became totally self-sufficient.

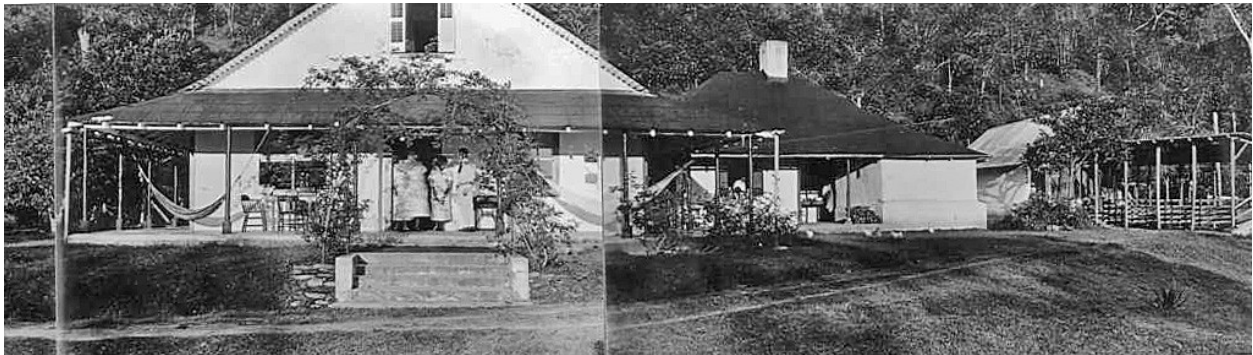


Figure 3. Panoramic view of the new Cincinnati home, La Casa Grande. Outdoor kitchen on the right side with chimney and animal shelters to the far right.

Considering the long, winding road to Santa Marta and civilization, Eva’s nursing background became not only vital but also greatly appreciated by the people on Hacienda Cincinnati and adjacent valleys. She also made all the family’s clothing, raised the vegetables in a nearby garden—not to mention the arduous task of raising five children in a very challenging environment. Being a physically strong, healthy person, Eva gave birth to her children with relative ease and without complications. Her sixth child, Dolly, was born in 1902, three months before the tutor, Mary Sheldon arrived. Each time Eva was to give birth to another child, she rode on muleback to Santa Marta, a journey of some seven hours over a very rough terrain. After the birth, Eva returned to Cincinnati, again on muleback, the new baby strapped to her back in a pack.

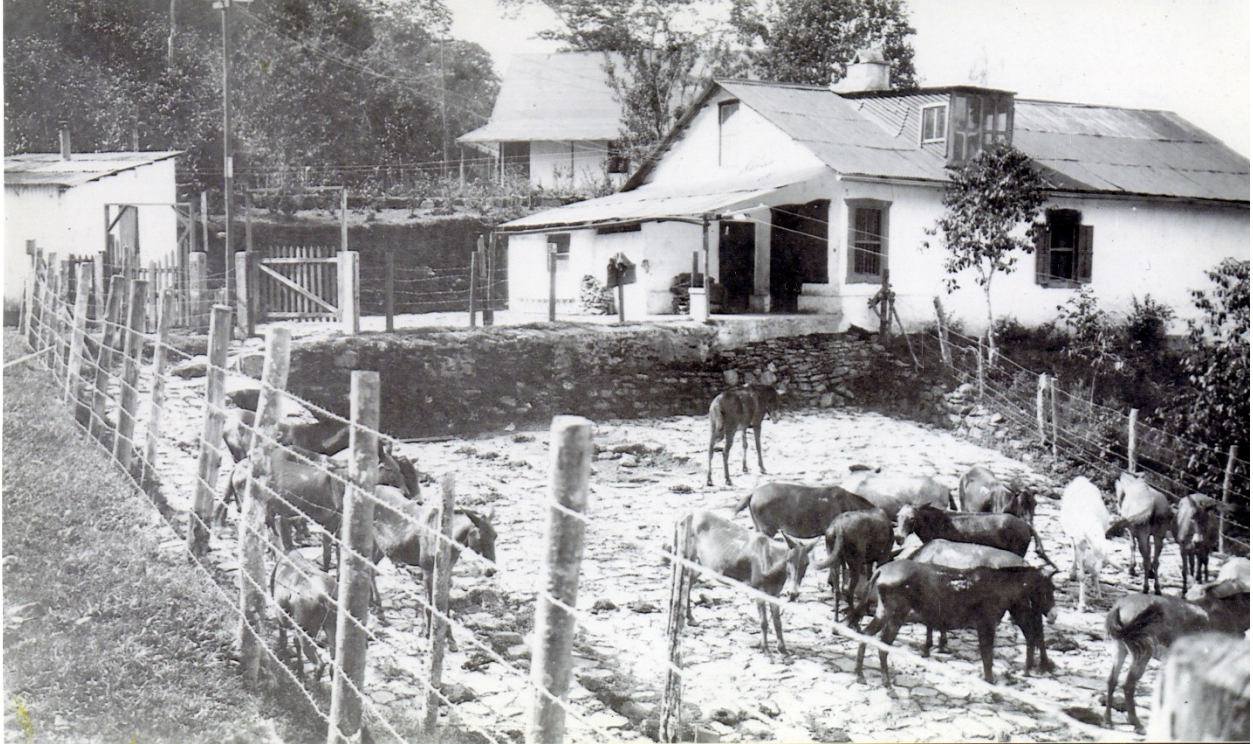


Figure 4. This was the holding pen for the mules. You can see "La Casa Grande" in the background.

Eva was Presbyterian. She read and discussed Bible stories with her children. Although he never verbalized his religious leanings, Orlando believed in God and supported Eva wholeheartedly in her ministerial work with plantation workers. Her religious observances became so popular that Orlando had a small chapel built on the property that later became a place where visiting priests would conduct marriage ceremonies for the workers.

Meanwhile, the United Fruit Company was busy establishing major banana-growing operations near Santa Marta in an area known as Rio Frio. Serious exportation of bananas began around 1900, and by then the Santa Marta docks had been completed along with a railroad that eventually reached the town of Fundacion in 1906. Banana farms began to sprout up all along the railroad. Many of the farms were owned by independent growers who sold their bananas to the Fruit Company. Gradually, the Fruit Company began cultivating their own farms, which also served as a model for independent growers. The Fruit Company had the latest technology in terms of the best seed, fertilizers, and disease control and soon required the independent growers to follow suit. Their fruit eventually became indistinguishable from the company-grown fruit.

My grandfather, Fletcher A. Hatch, Sr., played a significant role in the development of the banana cultivation in Colombia. He graduated from Dartmouth College as a Civil Engineer in 1905. In 1906 he accepted a position with the J.G. White & Company, Inc., as Assistant to Topographer in connection with the surveys of the Philippine Railways. He returned from six grueling years in the Philippines and was promptly hired by the United Fruit Company in Boston as a civil engineer and sent to Santa Marta, Colombia. This was probably around 1912.



Figure 5. On the left is my grandfather, Fletcher A. Hatch with, I believe, Frank Hill; both were working for the United Fruit Company in Santa Marta. They are probably on the way to Hacienda Cincinnati on muleback.

Hacienda Cincinnati continued to grow and prosper. By this time, it was in full coffee production with coffee berries harvested October through January. On the trees the ripe berries were picked, one by one, by men, women and children into baskets that were carried to the nearest receiving station. This was a flat-roofed, open, square, concrete basin built into the side of the mountain. Water from a nearby stream fed by gravity through a pipe washed across the basin floor floating the coffee berries into a galvanized metal pipe about 3 inches in diameter down the mountain to the mill. This system was invented by Orlando as a more efficient method of getting the beans from the trees to the mill. At the mill, ripe coffee berries were de-pulped the same day they were picked. From the pulper, the beans were poured into fermenting tanks where they remained 24 to 48 hours to remove the sweet, gummy substance in the hull. Then the beans were washed in several changes of water and spread out to dry in the sun on broad,

smooth, concrete floors. After drying, they were run through a huller that removed the silvery skin from each bean. Cleaned beans were packed in large burlap sacks that each weighed about 132 pounds. Two of these sacks were loaded on each mule with a pack frame on its back. In time, Hacienda Cincinnati owned 240 mules for carrying coffee beans to the coast and export abroad. Later, Orlando also introduced a drier which eliminated the drying of beans on open concrete platforms and began the sale of roasted coffee. As a result of his innovations and hard work, he was able to develop his estate into one of the largest and wealthiest coffee plantations in Colombia with 700,000 coffee trees.



Figure 6. Family and guests visiting La Casa Grande in Hacienda Cincinnati. Top left: Robert Sargent and Orlando Flye with Meb and Carme on the far right. Bottom row: William and Evita Flye holding children.



Figure 7. Hacienda Cincinnati mill complex. It housed the electric generator, coffee bean processing machinery, and workshops. The coffee bean drying pads can be seen on the right. I remember visiting it as a child in awe of the giant wheels and conveyer belts still in operation.

One of the milestones of the Flye family story was the building of the Quinta Bolivar. By 1908, the productive activities of Hacienda Cincinnati had increased to such an extent that a way station was required to serve as a link between the Hacienda and Santa Marta. Eva had much input into this way station, which soon evolved into a substantial country estate, which would accommodate the business needs of Hacienda Cincinnati and those of the growing Flye family. It was located about five and a half miles inland from Santa Marta just before the ascent up the mountain to the coffee plantation. Of course, here there would be an entirely different climate from the cool mountain air of the Hacienda. Being located at sea level, it presented a semi-arid and windy climate in the dry season and was only moderately wet in the rainy season. Orlando Junior was born in 1908, just before construction began on Bolivar, thus the family had now grown to seven children.

Beyond comfortably accommodating the large family, Quinta Bolivar would provide temporary storage facilities for coffee beans, a place to rest the mules between trips up and down the mountain, and pastures for raising cattle for milk

and beef, and for storing supplies intended for Hacienda Cincinnati. When it was completed, the Quinta Bolivar complex consisted of a large home, a spacious warehouse, garages, houses for servants, a deep well and windmill for pumping clean, cool, ground water for domestic and garden use, and fenced pastures for cattle, horses, and mules. Of course, there was electricity available due to the hydroelectric plant that Orlando had engineered when he first came to Santa Marta. There was even a telephone in Orlando's office that hooked into the line that Orlando had built earlier and provided communication between Santa Marta, Bolivar, and Hacienda Cincinnati. All of this allowed Orlando to spend more time in Bolivar where he could manage his plantation as well as his export affairs in Santa Marta. In 1910 Orlando bought his first automobile, a Ford, soon followed by a truck, both kept in the garage at Quinta Bolivar. Soon Orlando was improving the trail up the mountain toward Hacienda Cincinnati into a one-lane dirt road from Bolivar for about half the distance to the plantation.



Figure 8. Panoramic view of the new house built by the Flyes in Quinta Bolivar.

By 1910, the family was on firm financial ground, and the coffee enterprise was hugely successful, financially solvent, and had officially been established as the Cincinnati Coffee Company. The last of the eight children, Evita (little Eva), was born in 1910; Harry was 20, Carme 17, Alva 15, Clara 13, William 10, Dolly 8, Orlando Jr. 2; their family was now complete. Tutors had come regularly to teach the children, readying them for a high school education in the States. Carme, Alva, Clara, and Evita would attend a high school in New York and return to Santa

Marta periodically to help with the affairs of the family. Obviously, all the children grew up bilingual.

1911 marked the beginning of the marriages of the children. First, the oldest, Harry, was married in the States. Carme, the oldest daughter, married Meb Carriker in Michigan in 1912. The entire Flye family attended. Meb would later purchase an adjacent property to Hacienda Cincinnati and forge his own coffee plantation with the help of his new father-in-law, Orlando Flye. This farm would be named Vista Nieve due to its lookout where the snow-capped peaks of the Sierra Nevada could be seen. Meb and Carme's son Mel, born in 1915 at Quinta Bolivar, would later write a book entitled "*Vista Nieve*" that tells the story of the Carriker adventures in Colombia.

In 1916, my grandmother, Alva, married Fletcher A. Hatch, Sr., and they had three children: Josephine, Buddy (Fletcher A. Hatch Jr.), and Dolita, all born in Santa Marta. Buddy, my father, was born on February 7, 1920.

That same year, their third daughter, Clara, married James Ryan, an accountant for the United Fruit Company. And finally, fourth daughter, Dolly, married Frank Hill, also of the Fruit Company and in charge of wireless communications. These three families lived with their children in the Fruit Company Prado, which was a walled-in oasis that stood out from the rest of Santa Marta due to its modern houses with lushly landscaped yards and paved roads. Due in part to the proximity of Bolivar, these three families became close to Eva and Orlando especially beginning in 1921 when the Flyes took up permanent residence in their valued lowland Quinta. Harry Flye, Orlando's oldest, had assumed control of the operations of Hacienda Cincinnati.

For the next five years, Quinta Bolivar became the centerpiece for Flye family life which became a mix of business and family activities. The coffee business was booming, the Carriker plantation at Vista Nieve had come into production, and the Flyes now had a dozen grandchildren who increasingly took up their time, all centered around Quinta Bolivar and its convenient location near Santa Marta, Hacienda Cincinnati and Vista Nieve.

Trouble was brewing on the horizon, however, as Meb and Orlando came to be at odds over the management of their respective farms. As Meb's own son Mel Carriker later described it in his book, Meb increasingly developed an undercurrent of resentment towards Orlando, and he didn't hold back from

expressing his disdain for Orlando to his wife, Orlando's daughter, Carme. Carme and Eva both tried relentlessly to patch up the differences between the two, but neither had much success.



Figure 9. Visitors to Vista Nieve: left to right, top: Thelma Perry (Carriker tutor), Fletcher and Alva (Flye) Hatch; middle, guest, Carme Carriker; bottom, Meb Carriker, guest.

In 1926, Meb and Carme Carriker decided that they would move back to the States and sell their beloved plantation, Vista Nieve. Orlando soon agreed to acquire Vista Nieve. Meb was not getting along with Orlando, and this was putting pressure on his marriage to Carme. It was obvious that Meb's first love was ornithology, and he later admitted to Carme that he was not really "cut out to be a farmer." Another consideration was that the children were approaching an age when soon they would have to go to the States for school. Although their tutor

from the States, Thelma Perry, was an excellent teacher, she was not expected to teach beyond the eighth grade.



Figure 10. Remarkable photograph taken by Frank Hill during the Christmas season of 1926. This was also the going-away celebration for the Carriker family. Top, left to right: Carme Carriker, Fletcher Hatch, Alva Hatch, Clara Ryan, Dolly Hill, Evita Flye with Vita Carriker in front of her; middle, Mary Ryan, Mel Carriker, Thelma Perry (the Carriker children's tutor and Orlando's granddaughter from his first marriage), Eva Flye, Orlando Flye holding Buddy Hill; bottom, Myrtle Carriker, Josephine Hatch, Howard Carriker, Jimmy Ryan, Buddy Hatch, Dick Carriker, and Dolita Hatch. This amazing photograph is nearly 100 years old as of this writing. Probably taken in Quinta Bolivar. Orlando was 65, Eva was 54. My dad, Buddy Hatch, was 6 years old. Missing from the picture are oldest son Harry, second son William, and Orlando Jr. who would have been 18 years old and probably attending school in the States.

The transfer of the ownership of Vista Nieve was completed in 1927, at the height of the success of both coffee plantations. Both farms were in full production and the price of coffee on the world market had never been higher. Orlando had achieved his dream and had become a very wealthy man. The purchase of Vista Nieve was accomplished through an exchange of stock in the newly formed Santa Marta Coffee Company, which now included Hacienda Cincinnati, Vista Nieve, and Quinta Bolivar. Apparently, no cash was transferred to Meb in the deal. So,

he left Colombia a wealthy man, but only on paper. The Carriker family, which included Meb, Carme, five children, and their tutor, Thelma Perry, left for good in October 1927 and took up residence in New Jersey.

The fate of the Santa Marta Coffee Company took a turn for the worse beginning about 1930. The U.S. stock market had crashed the year before and world coffee prices declined dramatically. In addition, oldest son, Harry, had badly mismanaged the Hacienda Cincinnati coffee business as recounted by Mel in his book, *Vista Nieve*. There followed a succession of sad events that in time would lead to the downfall of the Santa Marta Coffee Company.



Figure 11. Orlando at Quinta Bolivar in the later years.

By the mid-1930s, all the Flye children, except William, had emigrated from Colombia. Fletcher and Alva had moved to Massachusetts, along with Frank and Dolly Hill; both men continued to work for the United Fruit Company.

The eighth and last child, Evita, married John Palmer Smith II (Pam) in Barranquilla in 1929. Pam was an American employed by the U.S. government who had travelled to Colombia on assignment. They settled in the Panama Canal Zone in 1935 and had five children. Later, in the 1950s, the Hatch family would transit through the Panama Canal on their yearly vacation to the States travelling

on one of the United Fruit Company banana boats, and we would always stop off and visit with our Smith cousins for a day or two.

In 1933, the Municipal Council of Santa Marta formally honored Orlando and Eva, recognizing them as distinguished citizens and adopted children of the city.

In 1936, to the distress of the family, Orlando suffered a debilitating heart attack. He and Eva travelled to the States to receive medical treatment at the home of Fletcher and Alva in Newton, Mass. In 1937, Orlando was now seriously ill with cancer. To everyone's surprise, Eva died in May of that year. Six months later, Orlando, suffering frightfully from his throat cancer, also passed away in the Hatch home. The couple were buried together in nearby Newton Cemetery. Eva was 64 and Orlando 76 years of age. The decline of the enterprise to which they had devoted so much of their lives must surely have been painful for them to witness.



Figure 12. On the left, Fletcher & Alva Hatch with daughter Josephine and her husband Ed Parkin. This picture was taken in front of the Hatch house in Newton around the time of Orlando & Eva's funeral in 1937. On the right is a current (2026) photo of the same house at 35 Pickwick Road in Newton, MA.



Figure 13. I recently (2026) visited the Flye family headstone in the cemetery in Newton, MA. The cemetery is actually a beautifully tranquil and serene botanical garden that is well worth a trip to visit.

According to Mel Carriker's account in *Vista Nieve*, by 1941 Harry had badly mismanaged Hacienda Cincinnati and was “pocketing funds” from the company. Meb Carriker returned to Colombia and joined William Flye and other Santa Marta Coffee Company stockholders in removing Harry from management. William and Meb then became co-managers of the plantation. Meb, in a desperate attempt to salvage his considerable investment in the company, remained with William for five years. Together, they managed a declining plantation, now down to about 1,000 acres under cultivation from a peak of 2,560 acres. In earlier years it produced an average of 4,000 bags of coffee beans a year, employed as many as 500 workers during the harvest season, and was worth millions of dollars. Sadly, the Santa Marta Coffee Company never regained the prestigious, prosperous standing it had achieved under Orlando and Eva Flye's leadership.

In 1971, some 30 years after he took over management of the Santa Marta Coffee Company, William Flye desperately attempted several times to sell the company.

Failing this, he sporadically sold off some thirty-five parcels of the plantation land. Following a severe illness, William died in 1972 at the age of 71. His son, William Jr., became manager of the plantations. Then Vista Nieve was purchased by William Flye Sr.'s wife, Beatriz, and subsequently given to her son Orlando Flye. In 1984, William Jr. sold what remained of Hacienda Cincinnati to a local Colombian family. As for Vista Nieve, in the late 1970s, Beatriz's son, Orlando, then living in Santa Marta, worked infrequently on the plantation which continued to deteriorate. In poor health, he willed Vista Nieve, or what was left of it, to his wife who promptly sold it to a local Colombian family. The plantation has since been abandoned.

Quinta Bolivar remained in the ownership of our cousin, Beatrice-Martha Mitchell de Flye, daughter of William Flye Sr. According to Mel in his book, she was then managing Bolivar as a cattle farm and mango plantation.

It was a sad ending to the amazing enterprise that Orlando and Eva Flye had built from scratch. In the end, nobody walked away with any of the incredible wealth that the Santa Marta Coffee Company had become in its prime. However, Orlando and Eva must have been immensely proud and fulfilled by the extended and enduring family that they had created—all made possible by the success of the Santa Marta Coffee Company.



Figure 14. Orlando & Eva in their later years.

LETTER WRITTEN BY ORLANDO FLYE TO HIS CHILDREN

(Transcribed verbatim)

May 20th, 1930

My Dear Children,

In looking over some old Papers and records my attention was called to the fact that at the outbreak of the world's war of 1918, many people had trouble in establishing their citizenship, therefore it has occurred to me that I would be conferring a great favor on my family if I were to tell you something about your ancestors.

You are descended from pioneer stock on your Mother's and Father's side of the family. Your Mother was of Noble French stock. Her people having fled from France during the revolution or in the year 1815, settling in New York where her father was born, being educated at the Harvard Medical College where he graduated. When he was twenty six years old he payed a visit to Cincinnati, there met her Mother and married in 1841. Her Mother was English noble stock on both sides of her family, the Shepherds side consisted of four brothers settled in and about Cincinnati or what is known as the Miami Valley, having purchased lands from Cincinnati to Dayton, Ohio. Later years three of the brothers left for England, leaving all of their properties to Eva Florence Blanot Flye's great grand father and many of the Shepherds descendants still live there, among them a grandson of Orlando Lincoln Flye and Eva Florence Blanot Flye, Harold Melbourne Flye.

Her grandmother was Sarah Preston, born and raised in Boston, Mass., where she married Thomas Shepherd in 1884, who was educated at Harvard College. They left shortly after their marriage and moved to Cincinnati where his father gave him an estate near Gano, Ohio where they lived during their life time. A grandson still lives there. Preston Shepherd the second, they raised eight children, among them your mother's mother, Maria Jane Shepherd.

My forefathers are English and Irish. My mother being English descended from John Alden and Priscilla Mullins. These families eventually drifted to Maine, settling the Kennebec valley at the town of Winslow, Maine. Said town was incorporated in 1771 and one John Flye and Josiah Hayfen, my mother's maiden name, are among the first settlers.

The record of my life reads as follows. Born at Winslow, Maine, February 28, 1861 where I lived and was educated until I obtained my first position with the New England Telephone Company at Lewiston, Maine. There I married Carrie E. McEgan on August 20, 1881 by the Reverend Israel Luce. By this marriage two children were born.

Alice May Flye, born at Luiston, Maine, May 4, 1882.

Ralph Henry Flye, born at Rockland, Maine, December 22, 1883.

Carrie B. McEgan Flye died at Bath, Maine, April 19, 1884.

I continued with this company until 1887 when I left to accept a position as general electrician with the Proctor and Gamble Company at Ivorydale, Cincinnati, Ohio. There, I met Eva Florence Adeline Blanot and married her at Elmwood, Cincinnati, Ohio, on October 24, 1889, by the reverend Arthur F. Bishop.

By this marriage eight children were born who are all alive today. They are as follows:

Harry Orlando Flye was born at Elmwood, Ohio, August 23rd, 1890 (3 P.M. Saturday).

Myrtle Carmelita Flye was born at Elmwood, Ohio, March 1st, 1893.

Alva Maria Flye was born at Santa Marta, Colombia, South America, April 7, 1895.

Clara Jane Flye was born at Santa Marta, Colombia, South America, April 19, 1897.

William Davis Flye was born at Santa Marta, Colombia, South America, June 29, 1900.

Dolly Mercedes Kathleen Flye was born at Santa Marta, Colombia, South America, March 15, 02.

Orlando Lincoln Flye second was born at Santa Marta, Colombia, September 18, 1908.

Eva Victoria Flye was born at Santa Marta, Colombia, South America, July 16, 1910.

It is well to add here that on both sides of your family your ancestors were of upright, honorable and religious people. On no side have we had criminals or outcasts. This virtue they always tried to hand down to their children, and we tried to uphold this great prestige and hope that in handing it down you, that you will live the same upright and honorable lives. To proceed.

November 1890, I left the employment of the Proctor and Gamble to accept a position with the Colombian Telephone and Telegraph Company as manager of their interests in the tropical America with headquarters at Barranquilla, November 20, 1890. Not being pleased with conditions and the absence of my family I sent in my resignation which was not accepted. This company promised to send me my family and gave me a very good increase in salary with orders to extend their enterprise. I stayed on and in 1892 made a contract with the Colombian Government to establish in Santa Marta, a Colombian Electric Plant.

I had found much coffee in and about the mountains around Santa Marta. On having some gathered and sent to New York I was told that it was of the very best quality and they wanted some thousands of bags each year. After getting the Electric Light Plant well established I resigned from the Company and on August 4, 1894 began my career as a coffee planter in the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta. I first started out on the north slopes together with some Bogota friends. There I sold out and was soon persuaded to start again near some friends who had started in coffee shortly after we had. Five friends went in together. Myself being

one denounced the plot on the south western slopes known at that time as the VALPARAISO lands. There I started in with my wife and family to make a coffee estate. Later on took in two partners, one of which we later on bought out and today the Santa Marta Coffee Company has bought out the other four first owners. This large denouncement has two Estates, one called Hacienda de Cincinnati and the other Isla (Vista?) Nieve. Here I have established our own Electric Light Plant and Telephone Plant and have all of the modern conveniences that one can have in the United States with a most ideal climate as you all know. Mind it has not all been easy, and we have had many a hard year to pull through such as you are going through today, although with the help of a very loving and encouraging wife have an estate that is a credit to any country and I can wish my daughters no better recommendation that they make as good wives as their Mother has been to me. May God be with you all and if at any time I find something worth adding to this, I shall continue.

Bolivar

March 22, 1931

Records of the families of Thomas Shepherd, Sarah Preston and Elisha Yorks Wells Blanot and their descendants.

Elisha Blanot arrived in New York with his family in the year of 1785 where he lived until his death. His only son, Elisha Yorks Wells Blanot was born on February 11, 1822. He lived in Boston and New York until he was twenty six years old, graduating from Harvard Medical College in the year 1845. On paying a visit to Mr. Thomas Shepherd, who had an estate some fifteen miles outside of Cincinnati, Ohio, he like the west and on November 9, 1848 he married Maria Jane Shepherd. The family of Blanots was of noble blood, had many disasters during the last years of their stay in France and were devoted to their King Louis the XVI and their country, were forced to fly (flee?) in order to save what fortune they had left and also their lives. Eva Florence Adelain Flye is one of the children of their marriage who in 1901 came to Colombia with her husband and they have lived here ever since, except a few month out of the year when they have visited their own country. They live and have their home in the mountains and in the low lands. The Estate is called after their old family city, Cincinnati, and the low land place is called Bolivar after the Father of this Country as he has merited the esteem of all. Here we have had six children born, two of the eight being born in the United States, while today we have two sons running the Coffee Estate and

three daughters living near and in Santa Marta, all married to United Fruit Company men. We are all devoted to our adopted country.

The first Sarah Preston, Grandmother of Eva Florence Adelain Blanot Flye was of noble English descent. Her family came to America and settled in Boston where some of the family still remain. After her marriage she went to live on the Shepherd's Estate where she lived until her death. She gave the family name to all her sons except one who had his father's full name.

The first Thomas Shepherd came to America with three brothers drifted to Cincinnati, Ohio, where (where?) the Miami Valley enchanted them so that here they took up their estates. Three of the brothers went back to England and twenty five years ago, we had lawyers trying to prove that we were the descendants of the Shepherd family, although, during the first days of the open West, people did not bother about families, therefore the proof, and the old Bible that these brothers had left with Thomas Shepherd (as well as all their estates in America) when their heirs of the English Shepherds were no more and some 6 million dollars were to be divided among the American Shepherds, owing to the loss of the Bible we are still without proof that we are the descendants of this Shepherd Family. A part of the Shepherds Estate still belongs to one of the Shepherds, near Ganoe, Ohio, while one of Thomas Shepherds, the second sister, built an orphan asylum and presented to the city of Lockland, Ohio, where it still stands.

Children of Thomas Shepherd and Sarah Preston Shepherd:

Nelly Shepherd born August 1, 1825

Abijah Preston Shepherd born July 13, 1897.

Maria Jane Shepherd born Feb. 2, 1830—mother of Eva Florence Adelain Blanot Flye.-

EPILOGUE

You might wonder what happened to Orlando's children from his first marriage in Maine. As I did, you may also have wondered why Orlando would have seemingly abandoned that part of his family. While researching this story, I later found out that Orlando had not abandoned them, and, indeed, apparently must have stayed in contact with them throughout his life. I know this because in 1924, Orlando suggested to the Carriker family, who were seeking a tutor for their

children, that they hire Thelma Perry, Orlando's granddaughter from Maine. Thelma was the daughter of Alice May Flye (Perry), Orlando's first-born child from his marriage to Carrie McEgan who had died in 1884 after complications from giving birth to their son, Ralph, in 1883. Thelma had just completed her education in Maine and was actively seeking a teaching position.

Orlando arranged for Thelma to travel to Santa Marta in the fall of 1924 via a United Fruit Company Great White Fleet vessel out of Boston, possibly facilitated by his son-in-law, Fletcher Hatch, my grandfather. Upon her arrival, she was accompanied by Carme Carriker on the trip up the mountain to Vista Nieve on muleback, a new experience for Thelma to be sure! She assimilated very quickly to the coffee plantation life and soon became acquainted with the four Carriker children who she soon began teaching in one of the upstairs bedrooms in the Carriker home in Vista Nieve. The fifth child, Vita, was born shortly after Thelma's arrival, in December of 1924. Interestingly, Vita's full name was Alva Marie Carriker, named after her aunt, Alva, my grandmother. She was known as Alvita (little Alva) and then simply, Vita.

Thelma remained with the Carriker family until their departure from Colombia in October, 1927. Thelma can be seen in the photograph taken in late 1926 by Frank Hill at the sendoff festivities for the Carrikers during the Christmas holidays of 1926 and the photo in Figure 9, and again in Figure 10, attached to this story. Thelma was much more than just a tutor. She was Orlando's granddaughter, and a cousin to the Carriker children she taught! She left Colombia on the same Fruit Company ship with the Carrikers and returned to her family in Maine that she had been separated from since 1924.

Another interesting footnote to this story concerns my grandmother Alva Flye's marriage to my grandfather, Fletcher A. Hatch, Sr. Orlando stated in his 1930 letter that he was descended from John Alden and Priscilla Mullins of the *Mayflower*. Remarkably, Mayflower Society family records document my grandfather's descent from John Alden as well. Their marriage therefore united two distinct family lines that trace their ancestry back to the Alden family. Quite a coincidence—and a story for another day.

Of course, this story doesn't end here. Buddy Hatch would return to Colombia employed by the United Fruit Company, like his father, and he and my mother, Faffy, would have five children who all grew up in Colombia as well, and all of us knew Santa Marta, Quinta Bolivar and Hacienda Cincinnati and many of the

characters in this story. But none of us knew Orlando and Eva—they died a few years before we were born. And the story goes on...

CHRONOLOGY

FIRST GENERATION	BORN	DIED	AGE
Orlando Lincoln Flye	Feb 28, 1861	Nov 24, 1937	76
Eva Blanot Flye	Oct 4, 1872	May 25, 1937	64
Children:			
Harry Orlando Flye	Aug 23, 1890	1972	82
Myrtle Carmelita (Carme) Flye	Mar 1, 1893	May 11, 1960	67
Alva Maria Flye	Apr 7, 1895	Jun 30, 1978	83
Clara Jane Flye	Apr 19, 1897	1942	45
William Davis Flye	Jun 29, 1900	Mar 10, 1972	71
Dolly Mercedes (Dolita) Flye	Mar 15, 1902	1967	65
Orlando Lincoln Flye, Jr.	Sep 18, 1908	1964	56
Eva Victoria (Evita) Flye	Jul 16, 1910	May 6, 1970	59
SECOND GENERATION:			
Fletcher Ames Hatch (Pop)	Nov 3, 1883	May 17, 1963	79
Alva Flye Hatch (Nano)	Apr 7, 1895	Jun 30, 1978	83
Children:			
Josephine McRoy Hatch (Jo)	Dec 18, 1918	Mar 6, 1979	60
Fletcher A. Hatch Jr. (Buddy)	Feb 7, 1920	Sep 11, 1977	57
Dolly E. Hatch (Mutt)	Nov 14, 1922	Jul 6, 2009	86

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I am indebted to Melbourne Romaine Carriker, author of the book *Vista Nieve*, for much of the information and research for this story—I have borrowed many of the passages and photographs from his book. Mel donated all his research and papers to the Smithsonian Institution, and I was able to acquire the high-resolution photographs found in his book from them. Mel was an accomplished scientist, researcher, and author. He was a full professor at the University of Delaware. He lived in Falmouth, MA, in a home overlooking spectacular Vineyard Sound on the Cape.

He was Meb's son and grew up on the Vista Nieve coffee plantation until the age of 12, when the family left Colombia to start life anew in the U.S. His mother was Carme Flye, oldest daughter of Orlando and Eva Flye and sister to my grandmother, Alva Flye Hatch.

I never met Mel but spoke to him several times on the phone about our common ancestry. He mentioned to me several times that he had an enduring crush on my Aunt Jo, my dad's sister. Of course, they were cousins, so nothing ever came of it.

Mel died in 2007 at the age of 92.