



“BROADCAST”

Newsletter of the Toronto Unit

*Naparima Teachers' Training
St. Andrew's Theological
St. Augustine Girls'
Naparima Girls'
Naparima
Hillview
Iere*

Naparima Alumni Association of Canada

Vol. XXXIII No. 1

Fall 2009



NAAQ's 30th Anniversary Celebrations in Montréal, Québec.





Barristers and Solicitors

OUMARALLY, BABOOLAL



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The Naparima Alumni Association of Canada (NAAC) was founded in Toronto in 1978 and includes graduates of Naparima College, Naparima Girls' High School, St. Augustine Girls' High School, Hillview College, Iere High School, Naparima Teachers' Training College and St. Andrew's Theological College. Among other things, it supports programmes at alma mater schools as well as a steelband programme in schools in the Toronto area.

All graduates coming to Ontario are invited to join the Association.

2009-10 NAAC Executive

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President's Message

I said my farewell as President in the Spring issue of Broadcast, but here I am again, along with the other members of your Executive, ready to serve for another term. We welcomed two new members to the team, Somey Basdeo and Riaz Oumarally, who represent the "youth factor".

NAAC cannot ask for better reasons to continue our efforts to support our alma mater schools than the recent T & T examination results. Of the 270 scholarships awarded, our schools won 98 of them. We congratulate all the winners and wish them well in their chosen fields of study.

By the time you receive this newsletter, we would have attended Kaleidoscope II, NAAC's Literary Luncheon on September 27th, where I anticipate

meeting many of you and your friends. However, if you missed this event, don't miss the next one; our annual Christmas Dinner and Dance which is set for November 28th.

Participation in one form or another is a requisite for a vibrant organization, so please make a special effort to attend and participate in your Association's business. Our General meeting takes place on November 7, 2009. If you cannot attend, but wish to put forward an item for discussion, feel free to send a note to our Secretary with your proposal.

On a sad note, I received the news that Vince Foster passed away suddenly. Our Executive has expressed our deepest sympathy to his family.

Merle Ramdial

From the Editor's Desk

The grapevine, as a means of news sharing, is good up to a point, but I encourage you to contact the editor directly with pertinent information for inclusion in Broadcast.

We welcome first time contributor, Shirley Lobin, who shares an interesting perspective on India (p.26). Shirley, we hope that you will continue to write on other topics for *Broadcast*. From the Far North comes news that also makes us very proud of our Naps old boys. (p.7)

Shani Mootoo's third novel, *Valmiki's Daughter* was reviewed in the June 25, 2009th issue of *Indo-Caribbean World* by Frank Birbalsingh. (p.12). She is one of many NGHS alumnae who continue to work at her craft in a very competitive field.

One just can't hold back on good news... as soon as the T & T government released the names and the schools of the scholarship winners, the wires were buzzing. (see p. 23). Our schools excelled!

The sad and bad news is not so welcome, but we must pay tribute to two Naps old boys who passed away recently. Roy Jagroopsingh's life was celebrated in May when Allen Sammy delivered the eulogy

(p.24) and just recently in August, the life of Vince Foster ended quite suddenly. Thanks to Ramabai Espinet for sharing her tribute with us, so soon after Vince's death. (p 16).

Merle R.

mjramdial@hotmail.com

NOTICE of NAAC'S GENERAL MEETING



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7th, 2009

1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

at

**The Montessori
Teacher Training Centre
1050 McNicoll Avenue
Scarborough, ON**

Finance Report

This report reflects the Association's financial affairs as at August 31, 2009

Bingo Account

(BNS) \$11,053.96

General Account

(BNS) \$35,800.00

TOTAL BANK ACCOUNTS \$46,853.96

NAAC INVESTMENTS

Bank of Nova Scotia - Term Deposit

- Balance @ August 31, 2009 \$ 1,66500

Edward Jones - GIC @ 1.4%

- Maturing Aug, 6, 2010 \$11,375.00

Scotia McLeod - Inter Pipeline Fund:

1600 Units - B.V. per unit \$10.00 \$16,000.00

**Dividends earned - Jun/08-July/09 \$1,553.23

TOTAL INVESTMENTS **\$30,593.23**

*Market value of the Inter Pipeline Funds at August 31, 2009 was \$15,152. **The Fund continues to earn dividends at a rate of \$112 per month plus a premium of \$2.24 effective June/09 which gives us a return of 8.6 % per annum on that investment.

The Association will be financing its commitments to the schools in Trinidad in the amount of \$6,260 in September, 2009. This is the sum of the following amounts to each of the five schools : NGHS, Iere, & SAGHS in the amount of \$1320 each, Naparima College in the amount of \$1120 and Hillview College in the amount of \$1180.

For the current fiscal year to date the main events that contributed to the Association's revenue pool was the Fallsview Casino trip with a net profit of \$505, NAAC Golf Tournament with a gross profit of \$4,655 of which \$1,160 remains uncollected and from bingo sessions a net return of \$5,700. The proceeds from the NAAC Spring Fling, which was organized by the Panache members went towards the cost of the Panache Steelband's trip to play at the NAAQ's 30th Anniversary Dinner & Dance in Montreal, P.Q.

Respectfully submitted

Norma Ramsahai,
Treasurer

Communications Report

September 12, 2009

Members, we need to hear from you. Do you read and then discard your copy of Broadcast?

If you do, would you prefer to read it online? Send me an email message and together we will do our best to save some money and some trees. Be assured that, you will receive an e-mail notification when the latest e-issue is posted to the website.

Over the summer the NAAC Constitution was updated to reflect changes made over the past three years. A small number of the updated version will be printed. If anyone wishes to receive a copy, please contact me. An e-copy will be posted to the website at the end of September. Note the section "Standing Rules: Membership Fees" that sets out the new membership fee schedule which will be in effect on January 1st, 2010.

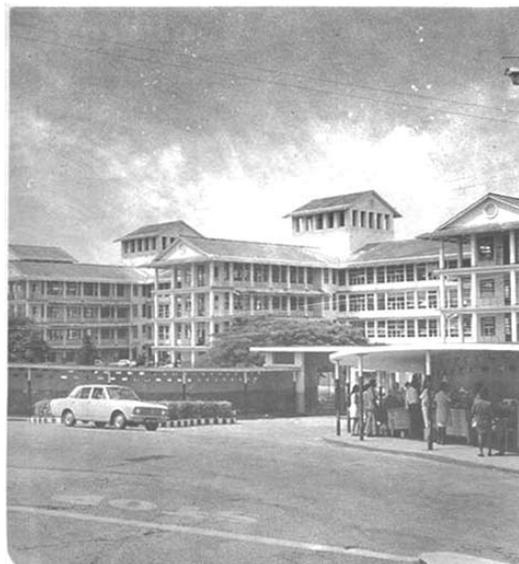
NAAC acknowledges a donation made by Life member Ruby Samlalsingh specifically for Broadcast. In her note accompanying her cheque, she told us how much she looked forward to the news from NAAC.

I am pleased that Ras Shreeram is on this committee as the procurer of advertisements. He did a great job last year and so far, so good.

Submitted by Merle Ramdial

Chair, Communications Committee

FROM THE ARCHIVES



IN 1955 IT WAS THE MOST EXPENSIVE GOV'T PROJECT AND WAS A CARIBBEAN SHOWPIECE

The San Fernando General Hospital was opened by Princess Margaret in 1955. Built at a cost of \$7 million, it was then the most expensive project undertaken by the then Government and was considered a Caribbean showpiece. This is a 1971 photo. With the improvement of Independence Avenue and Chancery Lane the area looks different today.

Bingo Report

Bingo sessions are run at Ultimate Bingo Charity Association, 2355 Keele St, Toronto, Ontario which started in January 2008. Effective July 2009, there were some changes in pricing and organization of the games played. These changes will be handled in a hands-on approach under the direction of the team leaders.

For the current fiscal period, April 1st 2009 to August 31, 2009, NAAC was responsible for 11 bingo sessions. Revenue earned for that period with an estimated projection for July & August/09 amounts to approximately \$5.7K. This averaged out to about \$520.00 per session, pretty much the same per session over the same time period last year.

The increase in revenue per bingo session since the last fiscal year is good news and we hope that this profitability will continue and that NAAC would be granted more bingo sessions later on. The Ultimate Bingo Charity Association has a membership of about 50 charities with NAAC being one of them. For this fiscal year, bingo revenue was used for

paying honoraria to steelband instructors at West Humber Collegiate and Cedarbrae Collegiate plus covering 50% of the cost of steelpan tuning at these two schools. Hopefully in the near future we would be able to resume making a contribution to the two schools for the purchase of pans.

Again special thanks to all our volunteers and team leaders for their help and commitment in running bingo sessions. We look forward to your continued contribution and support.

Norma Ramsahai

Bingo Coordinator

NOTICE

NAAC Bursary Applications
Must be received no later than
Friday November 13, 2009
Application forms and guidelines
may be downloaded
from the NAAC website:
www.naactoronto.ca

The Naparima Alumni Association of Canada

Christmas Dinner & Dance

— *Saturday November 28th, 2009* —



at Elite Banquet Hall
1850 Albion Road, Rexdale

Time: 6:00 p.m. • Dinner: 7:00 p.m.

Dress: Formal Cash Bar

Music by: DJ Packnin & Panache Steelband

Tickets: \$50 • Members / \$55 • Non Members

Membership Report

September 14, 2009

Our numbers have not changed significantly since we last reported.

This current year's paid up membership is as follows:

Honorary Members	28
Annual	97
Life	192
Total	318

Although we published the new fee schedule in the Spring issue, we've included it here so that those wishing to renew for multiple years may benefit from early renewal. The increase takes effect on January 1, 2010. You may also consider upgrading to Life membership at this time at the lower fee rate.

Member/Type	Single	Life
Reg	\$15	\$150
Associate	\$20	\$200
Student	\$10	NA
Family (Reg-Reg)	\$25 (15+15-5)	\$200
Family (Reg-Assoc)	\$30 (15+20-5)	\$250
Family (Assoc-Assoc)	\$35 (20+20-5)	\$300

Submitted by Somey Basdeo
Chair, Membership Committee

Social Committee Report

September 12, 2009

NAAC held two events this spring, with the first of the season being the Spring Fling in April. This was a Panache steelband initiative that was planned and executed by Panache at very short notice. The food was excellent, the price was right and everyone had a good time. Panache is already planning a repeat of this event in April 2010.

The other Spring event was the Jerry Ramlochan Golf Tournament which was held in June. An ad hoc committee headed by Aneesa Oumarally ran with this, a first-time venture for NAAC. We could not have asked for better golfing weather.

Next up is Kaleidoscope II, to be held on September 27th at Elite Banquet Hall. Lunch will be followed by an afternoon of entertainment – readings, music, kaiso and comedy. This NAAC Literary Awards event is an initiative of a committee chaired by Karma Naike.

All plans for our annual Christmas Dinner & Dance are completed. The venue, menu and music are booked and tickets are available for purchase. Mark this date, it is Saturday November 28th, 2009. (see notice on Pg.4).

Looking ahead to 2010 ... many of you enjoyed the casino trip this past year, but if you have suggestions for other activities, please contact me or any member of the executive.

Submitted by Pam Rambharack,
Chair, Social Committee



— REMINDER — NAAC MEMBERSHIP

Please remember to renew your NAAC Membership.

The membership year runs from January to December.

Contact: Somey Basdeo

Steelband Report

September 15, 2009

Community Steelband Teaching Program

The after school Community Classes at West Humber Collegiate and Cedarbrae Collegiate sponsored by NAAC will resume this September for the 2009-2010. The Cedarbrae program will resume on Monday September 28, 2009 from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm under the guidance of Randolph Karamath.

The West Humber program will resume on Wednesday September 23, 2009 from 6:30 to 7:30 pm. The program, while undergoing some changes, will be under the guidance of the senior members of Panache until further notice.

Throughout the summer, players from last year's teaching program were delighted when provided with the opportunity to practice and perform at Wild Water Kingdom with the Panache Steelband. This gave them some added play time to improve their skills and learn new songs from the Panache repertoire.

Panache Steelband

So far, this calendar year Panache has played at 13 gigs of which six were for various charity events.

In June of this year, the band had the opportunity to perform at the NAAQ 30th anniversary dinner

and dance in Montreal. Guests were quite delighted with the performance and the band received many compliments on its performance. Members of Panache had a fantastic trip and enjoyed performing for the NAAQ.

During July and August, Panache held practices weekly at Wild Water Kingdom and performed every Sunday except when rained out. The band has four scheduled upcoming gigs as follows:

- Sept 20th –Country Lime, Mulmur
- Sept 27th –NAAC Literary Event
- Oct 3rd – Breakfast gig – Toronto
- Nov 28th – NAAC Christmas Dinner & Dance

New CD

Panache is in the planning stage of recording their second CD. We will have it ready in time for the Spring Fling on April 24th, 2010 at the same location. Please mark your calendar and we look forward to your continued support.

Late Breaking News

Panache will be performing at *Snowflakes on Steel* on January 30th, 2010. This concert is an annual event that showcases pannists from the U.S., T&T and Canada as well as Ontario steel bands. When tickets are available, a notice will be posted to NAAC's website www.naactoronto.ca.

Sheila Satram

Steelband Liaison

NOTICE - Steelband Classes

2009/2010 Season

West Humber Collegiate Institute

Start Date: Wed. Sept. 23, 2009

Time: 6:30 – 9:30 pm

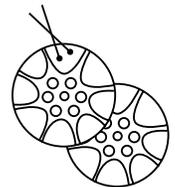
Instructor: TBA

Cedarbrae Collegiate Institute

Start Date: Mon. Sept. 28, 2009

Time: 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.

Instructor: Randolph Karamath



WHO'S WHERE?

NAPS 'ole boys' make good!!!

Many of you would remember a friend and colleague, Earle Baddaloo, from our Naparima days in the mid-sixties ! Well, it is actually quite true, as the old saying goes, “ anywhere you go you will see a Trini, and a ‘Naps’ boy too, eh...”



Earle Baddaloo

This is just to let you know that Earle was recently appointed as the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Department of the Environment, with the Government of Nunavut. Reporting through his Deputy Minister, Earle is responsible for the Divisions of Parks and Recreation, Fisheries and Sealing, Environmental Protection, Wildlife and Environmental Policy Development, for the entire Territory of Nunavut, Canada's newest autonomous Arctic Region, of

well over two million square kilometers in area, at the top of the world.

A second Trini and ‘Naps’ presence in Nunavut as well, is Ambrose Ojah, who is the Territorial Child Welfare Specialist and Acting Director of the Mental Health and Addictions Divisions of the Health and Social Services Ministry. Ambrose, as you recall, was Naps goalie in the 1962 Intercol series.



Ambrose Ojah

Imagine this, ‘Naps boys’ in Canada's Arctic regions, helping to forge and shape the destiny of their Inuit brethren....Wow...!! Keep up the good work, gentlemen...!!

Submitted by Ian Ramdial.

NAAC sponsored Golf Tournament

With lush, sparkling greens and the sun putting its best foot forward yet, the Naparima Alumni Association of Canada hosted the ‘Jerry Ramlochan Memorial Golf Tournament’ on Saturday June 6th 2009.

Jerry Ramlochan was a much loved and influential member of NAAC and was planning a tournament as a fundraiser for NAAC before he passed away. Players, both young and old, came out to celebrate and honor his life.

Graced with the melodious sounds of Panache Steelband, golfers had the opportunity to participate in several games boasting outstanding prizes, tee off to an 18-hole round of golf and then sit down to dinner to bask in the aftermath of what was deemed a most spectacular day at the Royal Ontario Golf Course.

As one of the volunteers for this tournament, I had

the privilege of being the judge of the ‘Hole-in-one’ competition where golfers tried their hand at putting the ball in the hole in one swing for the chance to win \$10,000.00. Although there was no winner, everyone had fun in the spirit of trying.

A special thank you goes out to all those who sponsored a hole and to the organizing committee headed by Aneesa Oumarally, with assistance from Selwyn Baboolal and Ras Shreeram. Thanks also to Panache for playing during the registration process in the morning and again in the evening with a pre-dinner performance.

All in all, the tournament was without a doubt a success and I for one am looking forward to this being an annual event. *(Photos on Back Cover & Centre Spread)*

By Somey Basdeo

Iere First Grads Celebrate Their 50th Anniversary

The first graduates, the class of 1958, of Iere High School (IHS) celebrated their 50th anniversary in Siparia over a three day period from June 26 to June 28. The celebration included the class visit and welcome at the school, a variety show, a church service in the Presbyterian Church, a dinner and dance and a picnic. All Iere graduates were invited to the Church service and the dinner and dance.

The class meeting was well-attended. It included graduates currently living in the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland, Canada and the USA, as well as graduates living in Trinidad. Two former teachers, Clifford Ramcharan and Neil Kowlessar also attended. Other teachers who could not attend because of health or family reasons sent their regrets and best wishes for the celebration.

The Class of 1958 received a very warm welcome from the Principal (Roy Ramlogan) and the staff and students of IHS. The students, under the direction of Mrs. Ramlogan, entertained the “old timers” with a program of song, dance and music that displayed the extensive talent of the performers and impressed the visitors.

Ben Seebaran, an alumnus of the class of 1958 and a former teacher at IHS, served as the MC of the three day event. Clifford Ramcharan provided an insider’s view of the early history of the school. He reminded the audience of the pioneering role of IHS. It was the first government assisted co-educational high school in Trinidad. It was also multi-denominational and multi-racial. Clifford Ramcharan, since retirement, has been pursuing his interest in pottery and ceramics. He presented one of his beautiful creations, a vase with the inscription IHS, to the school for the enjoyment of both staff and students.

Dr. Deo Poonwassie, Linda Hewitt, and Dr. Ralph

Paragg, who were in the first graduating class, spoke to the student body. They reminisced about the early days of the school, paid tribute to the excellent teachers of the day: Rev. Weldon Grant, the Principal, Clifford Ramcharan, Phyllis Ramcharan, Pearl Sankerali, Ermine Kanhai, Glenna Hamid, Louella



Ramcharan, Lionel Amichand and Neil Kowlessar. Although Mrs. Grant was not on staff, she was an integral part of the school directing the choir, helping to organize various school activities and serving as a second mother to the girls of the school.

The speakers also commented on the lessons they took away from Iere such as setting priorities, taking responsibility, respecting others, self-discipline, and being community minded. They were impressed with the standing of IHS as a centre of learning and teaching excellence, and wished the principal, staff and students continued success in maintaining its high standards. Ralph presented a plaque to the school on behalf of the class of 1958. Patty Sookermany, the song-bird of the class of 1958, delighted the audience with a solo performance.

A Variety Show was held at the residence of Sooroojdaye Sankersingh, Quarry Road. Ben regaled the audience with his imitation of Rev. Grant reciting “Johnny Couteau”. He also sang a duet with Molly Jaipaulsingh. Harry Ramdath followed with a “golden oldie”, Indian film song. Peter Berkeley brought out

(Continued from previous page)

Iere 50th Anniversary

(Continued from previous page)

his guitar and led a sing-song. Gladwyn Williams regaled the audience with both his reminiscences of Iere and bits of Hindi songs he learnt from Iere chums. Deo and Ralph recalled some of their humorous and not-so-humorous incidents of their IHS days. Ralph presented a plaque on behalf of the class of 1958 to Clifford Ramcharan in appreciation of his teaching excellence and professionalism.

Both members of the 1958 graduating and class of other years attended the church service. The remnants of the School Choir of 1958 led the singing of the hymns. Rev. Kenneth Kalloo delivered a special message. His address included early recollections of his association with Rev. Grant at Naparima, and later his association with Iere as a Board Member. The service was followed by a luncheon in the annex and socializing among schoolmates, some of whom had not seen one another since graduation.

The Dinner and Dance was held at the China Garden Restaurant at Railway Street in Siparia. The buffet featured "home food" with local produce and fish, shrimp and chicken. The bar was well-patronised. Ben Seebaran welcomed the guests on behalf of the Anniversary Committee. There were a few short speeches and reminiscences of IHS days. The rest of the evening was spent socializing, catching up and dancing to a variety of sentimental music from the past.

The picnic was the final event, held at the Hajarysingh Ranch on the Penal-Quinam Road. The picnic was preceded by a short meeting of the graduates. The decision was taken to establish a committee to revive the Alumni Association, and to encourage the 50th anniversaries of graduates of the years after 1959. With business done, the group continued with socializing, visiting and making merry.



The class of 1958 extends a big thank you to Ben Seebaran and committee members Evangeline Nathansingh, Ayrton Lalgee, Allan Jaikaran, Harry Boodhoo, Unus Ramatally, and Molly Niamath for organizing the anniversary and making it a success. We thank Estella Lalgee who cheerfully served as the photographer of the anniversary. Attendees are awaiting with excitement the completion of the album of the events. Thanks also to the Hajarysingh family and Sooroojdaye Sankersingh for the use of their property. Most of all we say thanks to all the graduates who attended the celebration.

Dr. Ralph Paragg

Wayne Brown

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BETTY B'S



PEPPER SAUCE ORIGINAL TRINIDADIAN RECIPE



WWW.BETTYBSPEPPER.COM

**MY NAME IS BETTY B,
LET ME TELL YOU A STORY.**

Over forty years ago I started making Hot Pepper sauce.

Over the years when I'd make Hot Pepper sauce people would ask for a little to take home, I am always willing to share. Now forty years later my husband and daughter want to share my Hot Pepper sauce with you. Betty B's is a small family business. We import all our raw products, which have been grown in the rich dark soils of Trinidad & Tobago. Peppers and seasoning are imported within 24hrs of harvesting, and that allows us to provide you with an amazingly fresh quality Hot Pepper sauce.

TOP **11** DISTRIBUTING STORES

East

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Toronto, Ont.
M1B 3M4

Auntie Anita West Indian Super Market
1196 Birchmount Rd.
Scarborough, Ont.

Nicey's
107 Kennedy Rd. South
Brampton, Ont.

Crys-Lee West Indian Market
145 Kingston Rd.
Ajax, Ont.

West

Pete's Pepper palace
399 Elizabeth St. unit 12
Burlington Ont.
L7R 0A4
49-454-03043L

Fantasy Fruit Market
427 spears Rd.
Oakville, Ont.

Festival Food mart

456 Southdale Rd.
London, Ont.
N6E 1E3

Nicey's

107 Kennedy Rd. South
Brampton, Ont.

Starsky

3115 Dundas St West
Mississauga Ont.
L5L 3R8

Central

St. Michael's Hospital Gift Shop
30 Bond St.
Toronto, Ont.

St. Andrew Poultry
17 St. Andrews St.
Toronto, Ont.

The Mercantile
297 Roncesvalles Ave.
Toronto, Ont.

Taste, The Forth Sense
375 Danforth Ave.
Toronto, Ont.

Friendly Magnolia
548 College St.
Toronto, Ont.
M6G 1B1

Cabbagetown Organics
499 Parliament St.
Toronto, Ont.
M4X 1P3

Caribbean foods
2188 Queen Street East
Toronto, ON
M4E 1E5

Fresh and Wild
69 Spadina Ave.
Toronto, Ont.

Distributor
Betty B's
Head Office
Toronto, Ont.
417-438-6472

NAAQ Celebrates 30th Anniversary in Grand Style

By Bryan Bishop

The Naparima Alumni Association of Quebec (NAAQ) celebrated their 30th anniversary in grand style on Saturday, May 23, at the Holiday Inn in Dorval.

The mix of ingredients was just right for the occasion; folks dressed up, old and new friends catching up, good food, prizes, and nice music provided by Naparima Alumni Association of Canada's Panache steelband (from Toronto), and DJ Touch of Class.

Keynote speaker was Dr. Allan McKenzie, past Principal of Naparima College, who came from Trinidad for the event. His presentation was powerful and, as he promised, provocative.

Dr. McKenzie espoused the work of NAAQ over the years and their sense of social responsibility. He attributed the good deeds largely to the influence and the values instilled in alumni by the Canadian Presbyterian Mission in Trinidad and Tobago. It was a history lesson for some, while for others it was a reminder.

In a more provocative mode, Dr. McKenzie acknowledged that, after much contemplation, he has come to believe that it is indeed a fair exchange for those who received a Canadian Mission School education to back to Canada. He, however, had some soul searching questions: What really is the success you achieved in Canada? What are its ingredients? For those who stayed at home – have they not also achieved success? How different is their success from yours? Or is it the same?

In closing, Dr. McKenzie assured us that the Trinidad that we left behind is not the same. There are good paying jobs in the oil, gas and related industries which allow people to live comfortable middle and upper class lives. Also that Trinidad is one of the few countries in the Western world with universities offering almost every field of study, where undergraduate education is free and there is a reduction of half of the cost of tuition fees at the post-graduate level for any program.



Guest speaker Dr. Allan McKenzie

The guest speaker, Dr. Ramabai Espinet, was equally passionate and powerful in her presentation. She is a poet, critic, author of several books and currently a professor of English at Seneca College in Toronto.

Dr. Espinet lauded NAAQ's spirit and attributed this to what she called "the Naparima system." As a graduate of the system herself and a past student of Dr. McKenzie, she felt thankful for having had the Naparima experience.

She also shared with the audience, a poem, dedicated to her father, from her forthcoming collection *Travel Documents*.

Plaques were presented to both Dr. McKenzie and Dr. Espinet. In return, an award was presented by Dr. McKenzie to the President of NAAQ, Mr. Keith Eccles, on behalf of Naparima College.

In the audience were some of the founding members of NAAQ, including Mr. Ronald Mahabir, the first president of NAAQ, and many of the past-Presidents and Executives who have served the association over the years. There were also several people who came from as far away as Florida and different parts of Ontario.

(Excerpted from the Montreal Community Contact, June 5, 2009)

Book Review: Fresh attitude, new preferences in 'Valmiki's Daughter' A Review by Frank Birbalsingh

Shani Mootoo, *Valmiki's Daughter*, Toronto, House of Anansi Press Inc., 2008, pp.398. ISBN 978- 0-88784-220-7

Shani Mootoo's third novel *Valmiki's Daughter* confirms both her growing confidence as a novelist and her projection of a distinct voice that we recognise in writing by other Indo-Trinidadian women such as Lakshmi Persaud, Ramabai Espinet, Lelawattee Manoo-Rahming, Rajandaye Ramkissoon-Chen and Madeline Coopsammy. The writing of these women incorporates fresh attitudes and actions, new preferences and preoccupations, never before so candidly or forcefully expressed in West Indian literature. Preoccupation with sexual ambiguity, for example, especially among women, runs through much of Mootoo's work, mainly in the form of suggestive or sinister hints which appear with greater frequency, although still suppressed, in several characters in *Valmiki's Daughter*. The principal character in the novel Valmiki Krishnu is an Indo-Trinidadian medical doctor who lives in San Fernando, South Trinidad, with his wife Devika, daughter Vashti and Vashti's older sister Viveka who is a student at the local university. Valmiki who is bisexual had a torrid affair with a man in his own university student days, but submitted to the prevailing convention of heterosexual marriage and started a family. Now, many years later, he neglects sexual relations with his wife in favour of an affair with an Afro-Trinidadian man Saul Joseph who also serves as his partner on hunting expeditions. As if all this is not scandalous enough, Valmiki seems to revel in his added reputation of sleeping with (white) female patients in his surgery. Not surprisingly, though, much of this hectic hedonism is concealed behind a false and fragile front either of ignorance from Valmiki's daughters, cooperative silence from his wife and partners, or blatant connivance by his receptionist. In contrast to her father's flagrant indulgence, Viveka's equally transgressive sexuality emerges more naturally as the surprising self-discovery of an



Shani Mootoo author of Valmiki's Daughter

adolescent girl. Hers is an altogether more sensitive and subtle portrait made all the more plausible by Viveka's anxious awareness of signs of physical manliness in herself, for instance, her: "well known affinity for sports and things mannish", growing hesitation and doubt over her relationships with young men, her special feeling of being somehow inhabited by the spirit of her dead brother Anand, and her strange attraction to women, in particular to Anick the French wife of Nayan Prakash, a family friend who has just returned from studies in Canada. Viveka's ensuing affair with Anick is the centre piece of the action which, after explicit sexual encounters between them, comes to a somewhat gloomy end when Anick's pregnancy by her husband drives Viveka, like her father before her, to succumb to convention and get married - to Trevor, a male Trinidadian acquaintance. If they appear excessive or indulgent the effect of these sexual high jinks, of both father and daughter, is neutralised by their tragic outcome: not only does Valmiki resolve to end his affair with Saul, but Viveka and Trevor are scarcely married before they admit that their union stands little chance of lasting for long. Also, almost from start to finish, the novel's action is haunted by the baleful, brooding presence of Merle Bedi, Viveka's erstwhile school friend, who drops out of high school for a life of vagrancy, begging

Book Review: *Valmiki's Daughter*'

(Continued from previous page)

and social ostracisation partly because of: "the same craziness that had her loving within her own sex." But the sexual shenanigans in *Valmiki's Daughter* should not be read simply as a sensational display of spoilt sophistication, liberation or modernity in contemporary Indo-Trinidadian society: they reveal troubling insight into the historic role of race and class in contemporary Trinidad and Tobago. In one of the most moving scenes in the novel, Devika meets Saul Joseph's wife by chance in Mucurapo Street market, and is mortified by the sheer effrontery of Mrs. Joseph's speaking to someone of her wealthy, high class Hindu background. Guilelessly adding insult to injury, Mrs. Joseph even dares to mention Valmiki's affair with Saul: "Just look at our crosses, na. You and me, we in this thing together. You know what I'm talking about, eh?" Mrs. Joseph's disarmingly innocent question exposes an historic confrontation on grounds both of race and class. No wonder: "Devika's skin burned with embarrassment. How dare she [Mrs. Joseph] ask how I am managing? Devika had thought. She was livid." Thus, for all their illusory sexual delights, the well heeled Indo-Trinidadian professionals and business entrepreneurs of *Valmiki's Daughter* are still as trapped by their history as the poverty-stricken Indo-Trinidadian peasants who eked out a bare existence fifty years earlier in Samuel Selvon's ground-breaking novel *A Brighter Sun* (1952). For it seems that sexual high jinks are a symptom of social or spiritual unease. In a discussion with Viveka, Nayan dismisses not only Indo-Trinidadians, but all overseas Indians: "the sugar-cane and cacao Indians, those of us from Trinidad, Guyana, Fiji – we don't exist... We are not properly Indian, and we don't know how to be Trinidadian. We are nothing." Nayan's thoughts could have come from the 1950s when West Indian authors like Selvon and Naipaul were concerned about issues of identity. That Mootoo who was born in 1958 writes about similar issues in contemporary Trinidad concentrates our minds. Yet all is not gloom and doom in *Valmiki's Daughter*

which contains paragraph upon paragraph of gloriously lyrical evocation of Trinidad's natural beauty, rich passages of salty local speech, and raw details of everyday life that cannot have been written by someone who does not "know how to be Trinidadian." This means that Nayan's view of Indo-Trinidadian nationality is not the author's. When Mootoo writes, for instance, of "swollen carcasses of animals" drowned in a flood, or of a "bent, bodi-thin woman sweeping the step of her one-room shack", or again of "the roti-flat, silvery Gulf of Paria," we hear an unmistakable Trinidadian voice, one like Ramabai Espinet's in her novel *The Swinging Bridge*, that encloses the issue of Indo-Trinidadian alienation firmly within unswerving commitment to a single, broadly-based, multicultural Trinbagonian nationality. *Valmiki's Daughter* triumphantly reinforces that commitment.

(Article reprinted from *Indo-Caribbean World*, June 24, 2009 issue)

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Spring Fling Highlights



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Golf Photos courtesy of Martin Latchana



The 18th Hole at Royal Ontario Golf Club

Eulogy For Ruthven Canova “Vince” Foster

(September 18, 1943 – August 28, 2009) by Ramabai Espinet

Ruthven Canova Foster (Vince) was my soul-mate and life-partner and we were blessed to have had the last 16 years of our lives together, strange though it might appear to others that, divided as we were by our separate careers and residences in different countries, our long-distance relationship could be as strong and intense as it remained. No matter.



I begin with a few lines found at the top of his working files among many other meditations on death and dying:

Home is where one starts from. As we grow older
The world becomes stranger, the pattern more
complicated
Of dead and living. Not the intense moment
Isolated, with no before and after,
But a lifetime burning in every moment...
In my end is my beginning.

T.S. Eliot, “*East Coker*”

That phrase, “a lifetime burning in every moment” aptly captures the essence of the Vince Foster that we knew, that we mourn now even as we celebrate his life, the Vince who lived life in the present, enjoying it, savoring it, being absolutely inside every existential moment that it offered. We are full of sorrow at his passing, yes; our loss, individually and collectively, is great. But we also celebrate the life of a grand human being, a “legend in his time” (a phrase that resounded between him and his early “liming partners,” no doubt culled from the Western movies that they were weaned on) from San Fernando to Brooklyn to Toronto and beyond — all those he touched attest to his generous heart, his trickster’s nature, his comedic flair, his sartorial splashes, his skill in repartee and his incorrigible taste for liming, for enjoying the company of others.

But there is much more to say about this man who was pulled away so quickly by the inevitable forces

that govern existence, yet so mercifully that his illness, his suffering, lasted only for a brief period.

Ruthven “Vince” Foster had an intellect that was keen as honed steel and rapid as quicksilver; and, though compassionate to a fault, would never suffer fools gladly. In his youth, his friends (Joey, Bassant, Kamal, Winston) named him the “Knife,” as much for his sharp-edged personality and self-described “face like a cutlass-handle,” as his skill in cutting his way out of dangerous situations or scrapes that would frequently confront young men looking for adventure in the wilds of San Fernando. Teasing came naturally to him, in the Caribbean, not the American sense, and he was an inveterate heckler, a master of picong and the double-entendre; he could mamaguy, give basket, and verge on an insult, yet be fond and loving even, all in one movement.

How do I begin to describe his many, many talents? An artist of the first magnitude, possessing talents of many dimensions, he also displayed an amazing and sincere modesty. His life was his most profound artistic creation and he was able to create an awesome order and symmetry out of the continuing chaos that surrounded him. For his life was neither simple nor straightforward.

The second hymn chosen for his funeral service, “O Love that wilt not let me go,” was written by George Matheson, whose introspective words about his own life also capture Vince’s eventful journey: “an obstructed life, a circumscribed life...but a life of quenchless hopefulness, a life which has beaten persistently against the cage of circumstance, and which even at the time of abandoned work has said not “Good night” but “Good morning.”

Vince’s childhood in Trinidad was spent in the idyllic countryside setting of MalgreToute Estate in Princes Town, where he and his siblings were surrounded by sugar-cane fields, ponds, and samaan

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Eulogy For Ruthven Canova “Vince” Foster

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trees; they rode horses, had dogs and chased each other tirelessly around the pastures. As their individual lives developed, they were separated by geography as well as circumstance, but in Vince's later years those familial bonds were rekindled and he once more enjoyed the company of his Toronto relatives: his brother Ronald and sister Imogen, both of whom, as well as Imogen's family – Stanley and Brendon – travelled to New York to be with him in his last hours. In Trinidad, his brothers Melville and Robert mourned his loss from a distance, and recalled his many recent telephone conversations with them. Imogen's touching personal letter was her eloquent farewell note to her brother, while Mello's tribute, shot through with the ironic brand of humour that they shared, recalled their phone call on the Sunday before his passing when Vince reminisced joyously about their boyhood days. In fact, on that fateful Sunday, the number of people that he spoke to by telephone from his hospital bed was nothing short of amazing. The hidden farewells would only be discerned in retrospect; such is the nature of things we barely understand.

Vince began his working life as a teacher in Trinidad, and continued this in New York, as a teacher and then a Dean, retiring after 22 years from the New York City Public Education System in 2007. In between these two career landmarks he trod a varied path as librarian, day-care worker, barista in Times Square, garment industry runner, soldier in the U.S. Army, health centre manager, bartender, bookkeeper, blackjack dealer, horse-racing fanatic and student. Always, he remained a student of human life. As he grew older, his naturally sympathetic nature deepened, and he frequently became both counselor and friend to the wide range of students he encountered, at his daily job as well as in the extensive English-as-a-Second-Language teaching he did among new immigrants.

Vince graduated with a BA Honours Degree in English from Pace University and a Masters Degree

in Education from Brooklyn College, City University of New York. His awards are extensive but I will name just two: the Charles S. Dyson Award in 1985 as the graduating Fellow at Pace University who best exemplified the ideals of the Dyson Society of Fellows, and the Alpha Chi National Award and gold medal for First Place in Poetry in 1984. He was a lover of language, literature and the arts but also a contributor to the field as a writer and poet. At the time of his death he was working on a long comic poem about a man with the secret disease of “godi.”

At the Carnegie Free Library in Trinidad in the nineteen-sixties, his painterly book displays were recognized as works of art and were often featured in the daily newspapers, and in his own home several of the collages that appear on his wall, desk and bar, were done by him, notably those involving horse-racing. Yet with so many of his talents he retained a careless nonchalance, a throwaway grace that was part of his contradictory personality – at once modest and self-deprecating but also edgy and biting, always on the spot with the quick retort.

To his children, Vince Jr. and Barney, Pops was a hero. His attention, his love and care never wavered in spite of their early separation when his marriage ended. He was so proud when his son, Vince Jr., achieved his pilot's license, and prouder still when his eldest grandchild, Antoinette, joined the military and graduated with honours. His son Barney labelled him “the world's greatest Dad.” His only grandson, Dave, knew his Grampa as the world's best listener – Vince would spend hours if necessary, deconstructing the youthful problems that always seem insurmountable to a teenage boy. Dave will miss him greatly. His grandkids will also miss the now-famous “Box,” a treasure-trove of small curios, goodies and oddities that he would collect lovingly over the course of the year and send to them at Christmas. Part of their pre-Christmas excitement was guessing about the weird shapes and sounds of the packets inside the “Box.”

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Eulogy For Ruthven Canova “Vince” Foster

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For my daughter, Mandisa, his absence is inconceivable. Mandy grew up with him. Vince became part of our lives when she was only six, and since then he has been her champion, her friend, her step-dad, her instructor in learning old songs like “Danny-Boy” and her first teacher of perspective in drawing. She will miss his warmth and reassurance in her daily round. My own extended family became his, he and my late father reconnected after so many years – our parents knew each other in Princes Town long ago – and he became a regular part of our parties and gatherings on festive occasions. He formed a special bond with my sister Pat and her household, and she has been an incredible source of support to me in the last few unbelievable days. What special times we all had together I am only now beginning to understand, now that they will never happen in the same way again.

Since the early nineties, Vince’s life was lived in two places –New York and Toronto-- and he made many new and valued friends in Canada while also renewing previous Naparima friendships. He savored the ambience of Toronto, its artistic and cultural milieu, and especially, its Caribbean moments such as Caribana. He truly enjoyed writing off-the-wall comic vignettes about his days at Naparima College for the Toronto Naparima Alumni’s *Broadcast* magazine, and had numerous pieces lined up for future publication – a sore loss for all those who laughed out loud on reading those absurd takes on everyday schoolboy life.

On the Sunday evening when folks gathered at Vince’s place in Brooklyn for a wake and a celebration of his life, his close friends, Kelvin and Jean, kept saying that the occasion was like the Labour Day limes that he had held for years. We felt his presence and many libations were poured on the floor for him. What timing, just as Labour Day Weekend was coming up, what timing for his departure, with the air full of the sounds of the kaiso, steelpan and iron that he loved (he was a notable iron-man himself), leaving us at a time of excitement and frenzy, a time

when spirits are high, Carnival fetes breaking out everywhere, the streets full of Trini people converging on Brooklyn from all over North America.

The guys on the block in Brooklyn (Fitz, Robbie, Keith), as well as his numerous other liming buddies and celebrants of life, will miss his special brand of “xxxx-talk” - always off to the side, coming from another angle, from an appreciation of the outrageous, the absurd, the unpredictable. I heard many of these wicked stories in our nightly telephone conversations -- such as how he and Fitz ganged up on an innocent Jamaican man and persuaded him to go into the Hot Pot Restaurant on Flatbush and order a special dish, unique to Trinidad. The recommended dish was “Sweat rice!” The proprietors, Christine and Andy, and Pinky in the kitchen, were holding on to the stove and counter and laughing so hard that their would-be customer was simply baffled. To this day, no one has explained the joke to the poor JA guy!

We will miss him. To say that I will miss Vince is to say nothing. The light, the joy, the laughter has simply vanished from my life. In our early days, Vince and I worked together at the Carnegie Free Library in San Fernando and a wonderful, crackling, literary friendship developed between us. Then we left Trinidad, went our separate ways and, years later, met again as old friends. That romance would bloom between us in our middle years was hardly something we could have anticipated, but for the last 16 years we were inseparable. We travelled, we argued about politics, philosophy, art and life, we joined our lives in an unconventional union that was simply the best.

For Vince, life was to be lived completely, and as in the poem that he loved, “*Ulysses*” by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, he excelled in “drinking life to the lees.” Also marked in his working files was another excerpt from that poem:

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Eulogy For Ruthven Canova “Vince” Foster

(continued from previous page)

How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!
As tho' to breathe were life. Life piled on life
Were all too little...

Every time the Potter shapes a special person like Ruthven **Vince** Foster, (whether you believe the Potter's hand comes from God or other forces of the Universe) we cannot help but feel that the Potter rejoices. And we too rejoice and celebrate his life that was one continuing “Grand Z’Affaire,” replete with fun and laughter, but also with compassion for others, an endless pursuit of knowledge, a brimming creative force, and that existential sense of always catching hold of life in the present moment.

His life was gentle
And the elements so mixed in him
That nature might stand up
And say to all the world
This was a man!

(William Shakespeare: Julius Caesar)

He is survived by his life partner Ramabai Espinet; stepdaughter Mandisa; sons Vince Jr. and Barney (Dave); their mother Diane McDavid, nee Achong; grandchildren Antoinette, Dave, Ariel and Victoria; sister Imogen Foster-Algoo (Stanley); brothers Ludwig (Joey-deceased), Melville (Mary), Robert (Marie) and Ronald (Claire); nephews Brendon Foster-Algoo and Sean; nieces Melanie, Marisa and Jacqueline.

Rest in peace dearest Vince, Vincey, Vinnie, Vincenzo and Pops.

by Ramabai Espinet,

Brooklyn, NY, September 1, 2009.

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Sunrise from Dormitory, Naparima College, 1946

Naparima College is situated on a hill on the western side of the town of San Fernando and overlooks the Gulf of Paria. Towards the east stands the San Fernando Hill, a sentimental landmark, partly chewed away by quarrying bulldozers. The low undulating hills in the southeast grow acres of sugarcane. The College is ideally located for witnessing the risings and settlings of the sun and the moon, for those so inclined. For those fortunate students who lived in “dormitory”, these were some of the aesthetic bonuses that, in retrospect, contributed to the nostalgic memories of their dormitory and Naparima College days.

I recall awakening early one morning but had no idea of the time as wristwatches and even clocks were not commonplace then. However, not being able to fall asleep again, I resorted to sitting on the eastern steps of the “new dormitory” to take in the fresh “morning dew”. The steps of the building overlooked the only road across the Naparima hill. It connected the missionary residences, Naparima College, the Teachers’ Training and Theological colleges, and the dormitories. Beyond the road were vegetable gardens and farther down the hill were residential houses and Broadway, then the western-most street in the town. The land rose again to Ciperio Street on an eastern ridge about two miles away.

Darkness prevailed at this time. There were myriads of twinkling stars in the sky. The waning crescent moon, cradled in its own full image and resting somnolently over the western horizon and the Gulf of Paria, added an eerie glow to the orb of heaven. The dark silhouettes of trees and the landscape contrasted with the blue-grey sky. The grey image of the San Fernando Hill loomed in the eastern distance. The stillness of the night was palpable. Nothing moved. To move oneself, even to breathe, was enough to disturb the universal peace and quietude that seemed to encompass everything in this night.

A light mist hovered over the houses in the

hollows beyond Broadway. It appeared as a natural protective blanket covering the rooftops and comforting the inhabitants still asleep. In the moist early morning air a few tethered goats and cows quietly ruminated on their cuds but were otherwise motionless in Paradise Pasture, the College’s playing ground that was located on the lowlands on the north side of the College.

A brown mongrel dog walked slowly and aimlessly along the college road, sometimes stopping to sniff at whatever was on the road. Then he stopped, looked up and sniffed the air above his head before he walked over to the tree beside the road, raised a leg and relieved himself. With his mouth open and his tongue flapping in the cool moist air, he trotted off as aimlessly as before but seemingly a happier, more contented dog. Then there was the raucous twitter of birds as they fluttered, hardly recognisable, among the trees. And now, a hint of light in the eastern sky registered the advent of another dawn.

A middle-aged couple, or so they appeared, walked briskly in the cool morning air following the path of the dog. He was dressed in tattered attire and, with his bare feet, made steady rapid strides on the gravel road. His shirt was tied in a knot around his waist. One hand helped balance a fork and a hoe across his shoulder while the other hand carried a “brushing cutlass”. Ten paces behind him, the woman who appeared to be his wife, was dressed for fieldwork and wore a pair of slippers and a flimsy “orhni”, the traditional Indian scarf worn over her head and shoulders. She balanced on her head a bundle wrapped with cloth, likely some food and, on the fingers of one hand, she carried a large “calabash”, with their day’s supply of water. Their brisk pace this early in the morning suggested that they wanted to get an early start in their vegetable garden before the temperature became uncomfortably hot. Soon they met the waiting dog and the threesome disappeared down the hill.

*Sunrise from Dormitory, Naparima
College, 1946 (Continued from previous page)*

Some light appeared from the windows of a few houses down on Broadway. And, as the eastern sky brightened, the San Fernando Hill appeared darker by contrast. Banners of silvery clouds seemed to intercept the first light that now emerged from below and beyond the eastern horizon. The clouds soon assumed the warmer hues of pink and orange and the shafts of light became bright golden beams. The forlorn San Fernando Hill, the local curtain for the new day's light for the sleeping town, held back the approaching dawn for a few more moments. The mist had now dissipated and the green of the Hill became apparent. As the sun appeared and continued to rise, the recent greyness of the sombre night disappeared completely and gave way to a vibrant panorama of green sugar cane fields in the distant south and east. The sky became ablaze with rapidly changing colours in resting clouds with silver and golden linings and all signs portended a bright, hot and sunny day ahead.

A donkey-drawn cart trundled by unrushed, both mare and master still groggy with sleep. This was the milk delivery for the dormitory kitchen. A distant rumble of vehicular traffic began to emerge from the streets below. The bread van from the Broadway Bakery chugged up the circuitous route on the Naparima hill, passing around the large samaan tree, bringing fresh "hops bread" for breakfast at the dormitory. After breakfast there would be the daily morning worship ministered by Reverend Walls, then a full day of classes ahead. And, so ended the quiet but evocative sunrise on that day in 1946 on the hill at Naparima

College. Though overtly uneventful, such are some of the gems in my Naparima nostalgia.

*Excerpt from
Dr. Clarence Madhosingh's autobiography*

CONDOLENCES TO ...

OUR MEMBERS

WHO HAVE LOST

LOVED ONES RECENTLY...

Sandra Lalla

on the death
of her brother, Hamlin Saney

June Look Foe

whose brother
Gene Soobratee passed away
this past April

Selwyn Baboolal

on the death
of his eldest brother, Kelvin

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Fender Bender

For those amongst us who believe in heavenly portents the day was a veritable plethora of unmistakable signs. We journeyed “in thunder, lightning and in rain” along the Naparima – Mayaro Landslip and Potholed Highway --- where maniacs with amphibious vehicles cleverly disguised as Japanese roll-on roll-off sedans and SUVs shut their eyes and passed similarly attired tortoises around blind corners.

They barely skimmed the surface as they did their civic duty to preserve the hard-to-identify asphalt patches designed to highlight the potholes. In the strange logic that defines the T&T drivers who race to their destination, destiny is a genetic imperative to get off the roads as quickly as possible - and many do!

A black cat must have crossed the road (come to think of it, most of us are) as we approached Glod road (between Tableland and Rio Claro). A sharp downhill corner, defined by pigeon peas growing in a muddy morass on the left, framed a deep depression created by a migrating foundation and an elephantine hump on the right. The resulting configurations reduced the road to one negotiable lane. Local knowledge of this road hazard was not yet available to us. Unexpectedly, through our mud-splattered windscreen, an apparition appeared. At 20km/hr we sought each other’s company. In slow motion we touched, as gently as two lovers tender embrace, his truck and my car. Betrayed by failing brakes which had been assessed two days earlier, the conspiracy of weather, roadway, mechanics and ignorance and the immutable right of oncoming traffic to use my right of way because it was momentarily vacant, we began the blame game dance.

.....“You is a Trini. You should know”, I was judged and juried - GUILTY- by about half of the drivers trapped in the ensuing jam.

...but mamu (uncle) you drunk or what? Look how you shaking....(Parkinsons)

...wha’ yuh mean is your side ah de road? yuh buy it?.....(disgruntled driver)

....all yuh blockin’ de damn road. Move de f-----g

car(a “no no” for police but they don’t have to face this crowd and they often don’t get there).

Discretion being the better part of valour ... a minor fender bender. No damage to the truck. We agreed to report to the police station – he to Tableland and me to Rio Claro. Our “no blame, no claim” approach and the minor damage was attributed to road and environmental conditions.

The pleasant police constable taking the report asked “Name?” “Howard and Kathy Sammy”

said Kathy. Surprised, she looks up at us. “Do you know Jerry? The taxi driver?” -”Yes. He often drives for us. He is a real nice man” - “Well he is my neighbour... like an uncle you know. He told me about you. He said you were the nicest.....” Layers of tension lifted. As we walked to the car a quiet young man who was observing us asks, “Mr. Sammy?” in the way that one inquires if not sure of an identity.....”My name is Randy Hosein. I was in class with David (youngest brother). He asked me to check that everything was OK...”. We converse pleasantly and I thank him. We bid goodbye to the police constable and drive the last mile to our home.

In spite of the circumstances we met some nice people. For those of you who still ask why we go to T&T each year, this is part of the answer. We belong***

CONGRATULATIONS!!

Portia & Robert Gordon

on the birth of their son, Quincy

First-time grandparents,

Lloyd & Madeleine Coopsammy

a grandson Torin Lloyd MacLean

and to third-time grandparents,

Claude & Vilma Ramcharan

a granddaughter, Gabrielle Ramcharan

Presbyterian schools cop lion's share

The Presbyterian fraternity is proud of the success of its schools which copped 32 out of 48 open scholarships awarded to students based on their CAPE and GCE 'A' Level results.

Presbyterian schools also won 98 out of the 270 scholarships which have been awarded by the Government.

"This was our best performance ever. We have hovered around the 32 percent mark for years and we have finally broken that barrier. It is a landmark achievement for our principals, teachers, students and parents and a great cause for celebrations," chairman of the Presbyterian Secondary Schools Board of Education Hatim Gardener said yesterday.

Five schools, Hillview College, Iere High School, Naparima College, Naparima Girls' High School and St Augustine Girls' High School earned 38 percent of all of the scholarships.

Hillview College received nine scholarships, most of them for science, Naparima Girls' earned 30 scholarships for science, mathematics, language and business.

Iere High School was awarded six with five in science and one in business. St Augustine Girls' had 32 with 20 for science and the others for business, language and mathematics. Naparima College walked away with 21 scholarships mainly for science and mathematics. Gardener said the schools represented less than five percent of the number which offer CAPE "and yet we have taken the lion's share."

He credited the success to the holistic approach taken at the schools. "We ensure participation in everything from drama and dance to sport, we don't focus on the scholarships they are just by the way," he

said. He said the board will meet tomorrow to discuss how to celebrate the success of the Presbyterian schools.

(Reprinted from Newsday, Monday, September 7, 2009)

Editor's summary:

*SAGHS – 32 (12 Open);

NGHS – 30 (9 Open);

NC – 21 (9 Open);

Iere HS – 6;

Hillview College – 9

*SAGHS student, Nadimah Mohammed also won the President's Medal, a first for SAGHS since 1991.

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A Tribute to Roy Jagroopsingh

When Roy “Diddle” Jagroopsingh entered Naparima College in 1957, he was like hundreds of other students, starry eyed and in awe at the next seven years of his early life’s journey. Boys at that age in Naparima were expected to carry on a tradition of scholarship and life-building extra-curricular activities which was already 60 years old. Roy, to the teachers, was just another boy who was to be stitched into the historical fabric shaped by the founding fathers and the masters, who were charged with providing the lifelong tools, skills and values for the boys to enhance the quality of their respective lives. Roy excelled! The Naparima legacy has been so richly enhanced by him that he stands among the pantheon of masters equal to Walls, Bissessar, Sammy, Lute, Laltoo, Mc Kenzie, Lennard, Best and Lee Wah, among others.

As a student, he beat all comers at sport in the various age groups, in athletics and table tennis, and excelled at both cricket and football in both of which he captained the school’s junior and senior teams. He was Sportsman of the Year in 1961, 1962 and 1963 including Victor Ludorum in 1963. In that year he represented T&T Colleges Football against Suriname’s National Youth Team. He was selected to the TT Youth Football team tour to England, which unfortunately was cancelled.

In his 1963 Principal’s Speech Day Report, J.F Sieunarine said:

“Our best all round student for 1963 was Roy Jagroopsingh. Apart from his prowess in several sports and games, and his devotion to his studies, he showed the mark of a gentleman. By his quiet leadership and gentleness, he won both the respect and the affection of all who knew him. It is little wonder that Walls House which he captained won the Inter House all-round Proficiency Shield for the third year in a row”. He also participated in social and cultural activities and seized every opportunity, perhaps unknowing even to him at that time, in closing the gap between his dream of excellence with the reality of delivery. In 1963 he graduated with a full A Level certificate.

After graduating in 1963, Roy went on to take two major steps in his life. The first was in 1964 when he joined the staff of Naparima College and stayed there

until his retirement in 2004 except for a stint at the Mausica Teachers Training College between 1967 and 1969 and a one year teaching assignment at Hermitage Presbyterian School. The second was in 1969 when he married his sweetheart Rohini and proceeded to father three loving and devoted children, Renrick, Renee and Rydell. Roy would write in the brochure produced in 2004 for his Valedictory Function:

“My stay at Naps, though extremely fulfilling was also very sacrificial. The ones who suffered mostly because of my sacrifice were the members of my immediate family and I therefore wish to take the opportunity to publicly thank my dear wife and children for their support given to me during my tenure as Sports Master of Naparima College. I thank them further, for never complaining when I was not there, for the weekends and vacations I could not share. I thank them for not trying to change me into becoming someone they perhaps wished me to be but for allowing me to do the things I loved and enjoyed and for becoming such an integral part of my life’s work through their love and support. You see ladies and gentlemen, I attended Naparima College, my wife attended Naparima College and so did my two sons. My daughter attended Naparima Girls’ High School. We are and always will be a happy Naparima Family”.

At work, Roy’s life was centered around the upliftment of sport and youth affairs in Trinidad and Tobago, and was evident by his selfless commitment to national duty as seen by his Membership and Appointments to numerous sporting bodies.

Roy’s excellence as a national sporting administrator was equalled by the exceptional job he did for decades as an Educator and Sports Master at Naparima College. At Naps, he was not only a teacher but also the Dean of Discipline and a mentor and father to hundreds of individuals, whose lives he has moulded and influenced. Under his guidance, Naps won a record six National Intercols and two National League trophies. In his drive for excellence, Roy obtained coaching certificates in football, cricket and volleyball and a Special Teachers Certificate in Physical Education in 1976. He also was

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the immediate past President of the Naparima College Old Boys' Association for two terms and when he died on Sunday May 3rd, he was a Trustee. I am sure that Roy's former cricket and football protégées would feel hurt if I didn't spend a moment to illustrate the impact which he made on their sporting careers. David Williams and Daren Ganga, both West Indies cricketers were coached by him as well as a number of national players such as Mahabir, Ganga, Mohammed and Badree.

Two years ago, there were no fewer than five Naps Old Boys who played for Trinidad and Tobago on the national senior cricket team led by our own Daren Ganga. I believe, however, that it is the footballers who are shedding tears today for the impact which Diddle made on their lives. He put policies, programmes and structures in place to develop their potential to the max. As President of the Secondary School Football League this programme was extended nationally. The school was able to offer financial assistance to needy footballers and he aggressively pursued funding and scholarships with coaches and scouts from the USA for training at universities there. Dozens of young men today are graduates of US universities because of Roy's golden touch.

Dear colleagues and friends, I said at the beginning that Roy's place in the pantheon of great past masters of Naparima College is assured. What then, is his legacy?

I can summarize his legacy at three levels which some people call life domains – Being, Belonging and Becoming (ibid).

Roy's Being domain started with the discovery of himself as a person. His physical, psychological and spiritual being which were shaped in his primary and secondary school years – his nutrition, discovery of his physical and school environment, the early development of his personality, his hopes for the future and his own idea of right and wrong. He was programmed, without knowing it, in a loving and caring home environment to become the loving, caring person that he was as an adult.

At the Belonging domain level his vision expanded to include a place to call home and neighbourhood, his social belonging where friendships were cultivated at

Naparima with his peers, his students and his family and his community belonging which gave him the comfort to be a noble and productive teacher, coach and mentor.

It is in this the Becoming domain of his life that "Diddle" formed an important triumvirate with Allan McKenzie and James Lee Wah to achieve the Tipping Point that made Naparima great.

This transformation or McKenzie model, was carefully crafted to achieve greatness for Naps. Some schools are still searching for that Tipping Point. Mac led the charge for academic excellence, James for the cultural glue and Diddle the sporting phase. To this day, for the past 15 years, Naparima is acknowledged as the premier boys school in the nation (with Pres a close second). The transformation model was built on the collective wisdom of these three men.

Young boys seeking to enter Naps will tell you that it is because "Naps always winning inter col". Roy created that portal for thousands of boys.

The final or Becoming domain of Roy's life were in the later years of his life when he was able to mix practical routines of life with leisure and family activities and the final stages as a senior teacher and retiree where there was an added focus on health, fitness, spirituality and coping with changes like grandchildren and family pleasures. For us older folk, we reminisce more and more on life's experiences. We talk fondly of family and friends, of escapades, the goal we scored or catches taken, of the prettiest girls we wished to date, of the friends we helped or who helped us.

Roy lived life to the fullest. He bonded warmly with his siblings, wife, children and grandchildren, he probably had more escapades than we did, scored more goals, took more catches and won more matches than we did. He touched the lives of all whom he came into contact with both young and old, students and teachers.

He left his mark. A rich legacy of achievement. Yes Roy "Diddle" Jagroopsingh, you are right there in the pantheon of Naparima greats. You were a noble man. We will all miss you.

Excerpted from a eulogy delivered by Dr. Allen Sammy at the First Open Bible Church on Wednesday, May 6th, 2009.

India – a perspective

Incredible India ! That's the India Tourism slogan nowadays. And sometimes that is quite literal. For example, in the city of Bikaner, Rajasthan, there is a Hindu temple Karni Mata, popularly known as Rat Temple, a sanctuary to hundreds, perhaps thousands, of rats. Devotees believe that these creatures are reincarnated souls. Their blessings will descend on you if you let them scamper over your feet, or if you eat the prasad taste-tested by them. The rats

have free run of the temple and are fed daily in a huge basin set up in one section of the courtyard. But even though I know this beforehand it does little to lessen my shock when, upon entering the beautifully-tiled courtyard, I am suddenly accosted by scurrying hordes of these intrepid little beasts, many covered in sores. Most tourists seem to take it all in stride – but not this one. I shoot my photographs and escape quick-sharp. This is too much “incredible” for me.

To fully experience India in its many aspects, from magnificent to mundane, would doubtless take years. Nevertheless my short ten months during this past year allowed me a captivating glimpse into the heart and soul of this truly fascinating, aggravating, beguiling and, above all, complex country. Many Indian acquaintances and new-found friends told me point-blank that I would never quite understand India – they themselves do not, and they live there. The longer I stayed the more I understood how much I would never truly understand, for example, the



profound attachment to tradition and karma and Bollywood. (Though, shockingly, I did finally succumb to cricket-mania).

Understanding helps, but even without it one can enjoy India's wealth of attractions. In the far south, Tamil Nadu's ancient Hindu stone temples are architectural gems; Kerala's watered greenness is a welcome respite from Tamil Nadu's dusty aridity; and Goa's beaches are beautiful enough, though, to me (unbiased, of course), outshone by many in the Caribbean. In the north, India's well-publicized historical monuments – palaces, forts, mausoleums – are what attract most tourists. The archeological treasures of Delhi, Agra and Fatepur Sikri (stomping grounds of the Moghul emperors), and especially the Taj Mahal, are surely among the world's most outstanding historical monuments. In Khajuraho, what grabs my heart is not its famous erotic temple carvings but, rather, its outlying villages with their picturesque and spotless mud houses. Varanasi (Benares) seems depressing with its narrow, grubby, crowded alleyways and

dusty, exhaust-choked main streets, yet its pre-eminence as the holiest Hindu city makes it an unmissable stop on any Indian itinerary. Kolkata (Calcutta) is huge, chaotic, polluted, with a shortage of outstanding tourist attractions, but charming in its sophistication, friendliness and colourful history. But for sheer sensual delight, Rajasthan tops my list. The tranquility of its desert, the vivaciousness of its cities and villages, the drama of its peoples' clothes and jewellery – these will surely entice me back.

India arouses many emotions in visitors: enchantment, shock, despondency, disgust, but never indifference. Many foreign tourists are so captivated they return to India again and again. Others are distracted by the poverty, the chaos, the inconveniences, and may not fully appreciate the beauties. Foreigners often assume that Indians would jump at the chance to live in North America. When I asked Sami, a 35-year old hotel-waiter in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, if he has such dreams, he responded,



“You know, despite all the economic difficulties I face in my city, despite the poverty around me, the over-population, the traffic and noise and pollution, I would miss this city if I ever left. No, I don't want to live anywhere else.” That was an eye-opener for me.

I learned that keeping an open mind is the key to travelling in India. Not that that is always easy - there is very little you can do to escape the ubiquitous chaos of too many people travelling on too-crowded roads in too many exhaust-spewing vehicles generating too much noise from incessant horn-honking. But then there are the rewards: adorable rambunctious children; friendly young people who think age (mine) is no barrier to friendship; people who generously welcome me into their homes and hearts. How can one resist such a country?



Submitted by Shirley Lobin, Alumna of Naparima Girls' High School and Naparima College

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Golfers at the Jerry Ramlochan Memorial Tournament



Golf Photos courtesy of Martin Latchana



(L to R) Winston Healey, Louis Saldenah, Roy Zuuring and Francis Yipchuck

(L to R) Aneesa Oumarally, Selwyn Baboolal, Fred Sookram, Harry Ramlochan and Rufus Rambharack



Standing (L to R) Larry Sudama, Selwyn Baboolal, Merle Ramdial, Bas Balkissoon, Dewan Gocool and Sitting (L to R) Ayoub Khan, Rose Wong, Camilla Thompson, Janet Sanayhie



Sandra Viteri and Dave Rahaman