



“BROADCAST”

Newsletter of the Toronto Unit

Naparima Alumni Association of Canada

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

Vol. XXXV No. 1

Fall 2011

Celebrating “La Pique 100”



*Dr. Patricia Mohammed (above) delivers feature address
Presenters (left to right below) Dr. Ramabai Espinet, Ms. Karma Naike,
Mrs. Pearl Seunarine and Dr. Rita Cox*





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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.

2011-12 NAAC Executive

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CREDITS

"Broadcast" is the newsletter of the Naparima Alumni Association of Canada, Toronto Unit and is published twice a year. The views expressed in articles published are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Executive or of the Association unless specifically stated as such.

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President's Message

The news from Trinidad on September 30, 2011 about the CAPE Examination results should make us all proud. Congratulations to all the scholarship winners and to their schools and teachers!

Naparima College students received the highest number of scholarships (33), with Naparima Girls at 29, which was the second highest number awarded. St. Augustine Girls received 28, Hillview College 21 and Iere High School 5.

Back in Toronto, at our NAAC Annual General Meeting in May 2011, we welcomed two new volunteers to the Executive. If you take a quick look at the Listing on page 1 of the **2011-2012 Executive**, you'll note the names of Wendy Rostant and Portia Gordon. Also on the roster this year is Ras Shreeram, who is not a first-timer, as he has served in earlier years and has now returned this year as 1st VP.

I look forward to working with the team to continue fundraising for the La Pique 100 Project.

Sign on an Irish gate:

*The farmer allows walkers across the field for free,
but the bull charges.*

Merle Ramdial

From the Editor's Desk...

This issue of *Broadcast* is filled with all things relating to the NGHS Centenary.

We've included an address delivered to the media in Trinidad by the Chairman of the NGHS Centenary Committee, Dr. Jennifer Yamin-Ali, as well as special greetings from Her Excellency, Jean Ramjohn-Richards at the same media event (pages 18 to 21).

The centrefold gives pictorial coverage of our own NAAC celebratory event launching the La Pique 100 Fund together with a description of the proceedings by Karma Naike (p.8). Thanks to Dr. Patricia Mohammed for giving her permission for us to reproduce her feature address, *A world on a little hill* (p.11-14).

On page 15, Ramabai Espinet shares one of Vince Foster's "Exit Poems". I don't know how many of the others are ready for publication, but it is my hope that we will be able to read them in the future.

Although we were all saddened by the death of Albert Baldeo, he wrote in an article a week before he died that "Death is not the end, it is just a bend in the road of life" (p. 25). Albert wrote to this editor on a regular basis. He will be missed.

Let's hear from you.

Merle Ramdial



NOTICE NAAC GENERAL MEETING

Saturday, November 5, 2011 • 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Knox Presbyterian Church

4156 Sheppard Avenue East , Scarborough, ON

Refreshments will be served at noon

Finance Report

This report reflects the Association's financial information as at August 31, 2011. Annual Financial Statements for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2012 will be presented at the Annual General Meeting.

Bingo Account

Bank of Nova Scotia	\$15,800.00
---------------------	-------------

General Account

Bank of Nova Scotia	\$35,014.00
---------------------	-------------

TOTAL BANK ACCOUNTS	\$50,814.00
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NAAC INVESTMENTS

Bank of Nova Scotia - Term Deposit

- Balance @ June 30, 2011	\$ 1,206.00
---------------------------	-------------

Edward Jones - GIC @ 2.0%	\$11,726.00
---------------------------	-------------

Investment Planning Counsel - Inter Pipeline Fund:

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

**Dividends earned - Apr/11 - Aug/11	\$640.00
--------------------------------------	----------

Riocan Real Estate Inv T/U	\$14,654.00
----------------------------	-------------

TOTAL INVESTMENTS	<u>\$44,226.00</u>
--------------------------	---------------------------

**Market value of the Inter Pipeline Fund as at June, 2011 was \$15.86 per unit. This reflects an increase of 58% over book value. The fund continues to earn dividends at an increased rate of \$128 per month which translates to a return of 9.6% per annum on that investment.

The Association will be financing its commitments to the schools in Trinidad in the amount of \$6,260.00 this September, 2011. 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.

The stand out event for the current fiscal year to date was the La Pique 100 Dinner & Dance fundraiser which raised a net income of \$2,206. The money raised at this event will be contributed to NGHS in Trinidad to assist in the cost of constructing a landmark building on La Pique Rd for the purpose of housing programs in the Arts and Sciences, including a Music Room and Steel-Pan Theatre. The diligent La Pique 100 Committee was also instrumental in raising donations in the amount of \$5,920 to date for the same purpose. The Association's revenue pool was supplemented by revenue from bingo sessions with a net return of \$7,150 as at the end of August 2011.

Respectfully submitted

Norma Ramsahai, Treasurer

The Naparima Alumni Association of Canada



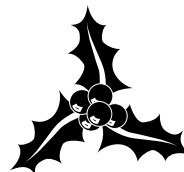
Christmas Dinner & Dance



— Saturday November 26th, 2011 —



at Elite Banquet Hall
1850 Albion Road, Rexdale

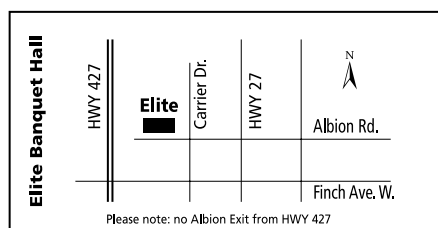


Time: 6:00 p.m. • Dinner: 7:00 p.m.

Dress: Formal Cash Bar

Music by: DJ Packnin & Panache Steelband

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



Membership Report

MEMBERS • SEPTEMBER 2011

HONORARY	26
LIFE - REGULAR	154
LIFE- ASSOCIATE	40
REGULAR – ANNUAL	58
ASSOCIATE- ANNUAL	31
FAMILY - ANNUAL	3
STUDENT- ANNUAL	8
TOTAL	320

The above total shows that NAAC maintains a very healthy membership.

Life members total approx. 60% - Annual members total approx. 30%

What an accomplishment it would be to have an attendance of a meager 10% or 'wishful thinking' to have 20 % at our General meeting on November 05, 2011. Members who live in the GTA please note the date of the General Meeting. Your presence will mean a lot to the Association! Some members expressed their regrets that they live so far away that they cannot attend our meetings, so those of you who live within commuting distance, please do your best to attend.

There were a few graduates of NGHS who renewed their acquaintances with us at The La Pique 100 Dinner and Dance. A few renewed their membership and others expressed their enthusiasm in joining us at future events.

It is always encouraging to see many of our members, their friends and families at the Annual Christmas Dinner and Dance. We look forward to seeing you at this year's Christmas Dance on November 26.

Cynthia Ramdeen

Chair, Membership Committee

Ann Dabideen, *Committee Member*

Everal Seupaul, *Committee Member*

Bingo Report

Bingo sessions are run at Ultimate Bingo Charity Association, 2355 Keele St., Toronto, Ontario.

For the current fiscal period April 1st 2011 to August 31st 2011, NAAC was responsible for 14 bingo sessions. Revenue earned for that period with an estimated projection for July & August 2011 amounts to approximately \$7,150. This averages out to about \$510 per session, and reflects a decrease of about 15% per session over the same period last year.

This decrease in revenue reflects to a certain extent bigger payout prizes and a slight decrease in attendance. Hopefully this is only temporary and our revenue would increase to around the \$600 per session mark. We need revenue from bingo funds of approximately \$12K annually to financially manage our steelband and bursary programs at West Humber Collegiate Institute and Cedarbrae Collegiate to maintain the status quo. For this fiscal year, bingo revenue was used to pay honoraria to steelband instructors at West Humber Collegiate and Cedarbrae Collegiate plus covering 50% of the cost of steelpan tuning at WHCI.

Special thanks to all our volunteers especially our team leaders, Vitra Mungal, Ian Ramdial, and Norma Ramsahai for their help and commitment in running the bingo sessions. We look forward to your continued contribution and support.

Norma Ramsahai

Bingo Manager

— REMINDER —

NAAC MEMBERSHIP

*Please remember to renew your
NAAC Membership.*

*The membership year runs from
January to December.*

Social Report

Fall 2011

Since the last copy of Broadcast was printed in Spring 2011, we have seen The La Pique 100 Committee successfully plan and execute the Launch of Fundraisers for the 100 year celebration of the Naparima Girls' High School in Trinidad. This event was a Dinner and Dance held at the Elite Banquet Hall. A good time was had by all. Please look out for other fund raisers in the future. All proceeds will be sent to assist in the school's building project. There is more on this event in an article written by Karma Naike elsewhere in this issue.

The date for the Annual Christmas Dinner and Dance is set for the last Saturday in November and this year it falls on Saturday 26th November. The venue is the same as last year, Elite Banquet Hall @ 1850 Albion Road, Rexdale. Tickets are already printed and available from any member of the Executive. The cost has been kept at \$50.00 for members and \$55.00 for non members.

Please purchase your tickets early so as not to be disappointed. We are hoping that this event will be as successful as the past ones. Panache Steel Band will again be playing for your enjoyment.

See you all then ...

Since this is my first time as a member of the Executive and Social Committee, I would like to get your suggestions and ideas for future social events. You may contact me at: 905- 542-3548 or email: rostant@idirect.com

Wendy Rostant

Chair, Social Committee

Communications Report

Fall 2011

Website:

At last! At last! We have a volunteer to assist with our website. From St Augustine Girls' High School (2003) and UWI B.Sc Math and Computer Science (2006), comes Kimberlei Jaggernath. Kimberlei is new to NAAC and we welcome her to the Association along with her knowledge of HTML. She will be looking at revamping our site in the next few weeks, so if you would like to assist Kimberlei, she may be reached at kimberleij@hotmail.com

Broadcast:

You have the Fall issue in hand and as you can see we heeded your feedback and kept the larger font that was used in the Spring issue. We also received many favourable comments on the vibrant colours and clarity of the pictures in the Spring issue. Thanks to Rajiv Persaud at Bluetree Publishing & Design.

Speical thanks to G. Desmond Teelucksingh for volunteering and giving of his time and expertise as our La Pique 100 Event photographer.

Remember to call Ras Shreeram

416-743-1331 if you wish to place an advertisement in Broadcast.

Merle Ramdial

Chair,

Communications Committee

Quotes to Ponder

By all means marry. If you get a good wife, you'll be happy. If you get a bad one, you'll become a philosopher.

- Socrates

Be nice to your kids. They'll choose your nursing home.

- Anonymous

Middle age is when broadness of the mind, and narrowness of the waist, change places

- Anonymous

Steelband Report

After-School Community Teaching Program:

Steelpan classes resumed at both the West Humber C.I. and Cedarbrae C.I. venues in early September. The turnout for the Beginner class has been overwhelming at West Humber and some decisions will have to be made soon to deal with this situation.

Randolph Karamath will be teaching the classes at Cedarbrae and Al Foster will do the same at WHCI. In the Beginner class at WHCI some basic music theory will be included in every session in an attempt to better prepare the graduates who strive to join the Panache steelband.

School Partnership Program:

NAAC intends to give its support to the day school steelband program at both Cedarbrae C.I. and West Humber C.I. by providing bursaries and awards to students and sharing in the cost of tuning pans. We continue to hope that the partnership program will be gradually extended to include North Albion C.I.

Panache: Since the end of May, Panache has performed at a number of private gigs and also at Wild Water Kingdom over the summer. The band is in the process of preparing for a major concert and news about this project will soon be shared.

Ian Ramdial, Acting Steelband Liaison



*Panache steelband
at "La Pique 100"
event*

NOTICE

Steelband Classes • 2011/2012 Season

West Humber Collegiate Institute

Start Date: Sept. 14, 2011

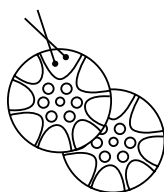
Time: 6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Instructor:

Al Foster

Steelband Liaison: 905-844-1254

email: iramdial@cogeco.ca



Cedarbrae Collegiate Institute

Start Date: Sept. 19, 2011

Time: 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Instructor:

Randolph Karamath

Tel: 416-283-4152

email: ramachez@hotmail.com

Music Notes from West Humber Collegiate

Unbelievable! The 2011-2012 year has started already! This is sure to be an exciting year, with our bi-annual music trip coming up in May 2012! First, though, we will acknowledge the steel band award recipients from our June 2011 Commencement ceremony.

The winner of the WHCI Naparima Alumni Steel Band Award was B.J. Bent, a solid 6-bass player who has played on numerous events for the past four years, always with a smile and great musicianship. The recipient of the NAAC Millennium Scholarship was lead pannist Nadia Sookhoo, who volunteered for many, many gigs, and always went the extra mile to ensure the truck was packed, the pans were set up properly, and that everyone had what they needed to play well. Kiraneet Bains was the recipient of the NAAC Steel Band Bursary, and her thank you letter to the NAAC is included in this issue. She was a top-notch guitar pannist who learned a lot from her time in the program but also gave a lot as well. I will let her letter speak for her. All three were some of our finest musicians for the past four years.

The performance by the beginners from the NAAC-sponsored community steel band classes as well as the Panache performance ensemble was fantastic at our Music Night in April! We look forward to another performance in April 2012, possibly a combined WHCI-Panache arrangement and performance, if rehearsal time permits! The partnership is stronger than ever, and we look forward to continued events shared by both programs. Thanks very much to the NAAC for their generous and appreciated support through this wonderful partnership.

This year is already getting very busy, with the steel band being asked back to play at Roy Thompson Hall for the *seventh year in a row*! It's a real honour to be chosen for this high-profile event, often playing alongside Juno award winners and nominees like Kardinal Offishall, Jully Black and



*NAAC Bursary Winners
at WHCI Commencement, June 2011
(L to R) Joe Cullen, Kiraneet Bains, B.J. Bent
and Nadia Sookhoo.*

Deborah Cox! We are also going on our big Music Trip in May, likely back to Ohio, where a new batch of WHCI musicians can check out the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, tour Panyard Incorporated, play with Ravenna High School's steel band, and much more! We have been to Ohio in 2002 and 2010, and it just gets better and better each time!

We are also booked to play some events downtown, some private VIP events, some schools, and many church services for Black History month. WHCI will be playing as many gigs as possible to help raise money for this trip. Anyone with any leads on gigs or anyone who would like to support our trip through the purchase of our two excellent CDs, please contact Joe Cullen at whcimusic@bell.net. More information about our program, including pics and video of our performances (including Panache at Music Night 2011) can be found at www.whcimusic.com.

Joe Cullen,
Head of Arts

Celebrating the Launch of 'La Pique 100'- The Event

On a golden summer evening **June 18, 2011**, over 200 folks – alumni and friends assembled in an elegantly decorated hall accented with yellow floral centerpieces holding pennants emblazoned with the NGHS centennial logo, at the centre of each table. This ambience was embraced within the sweet sounds of the NAAC Panache Steelband, so that smiles marked the welcoming of guests arriving for the soon-to-be historic event - the establishment of the second high school for girls in Trinidad and Tobago - Naparima Girls' High School on its 100th anniversary – a glorious picture!

After greetings and re-acquaintances during the cocktail hour, the program emceed by the charming and witty Selwyn Baboolal, commenced. A warm welcome by NAAC President Merle Ramdial was followed by the pronouncement of the blessing by Rev. Timothy Dayfoot after which the program continued.

"You could stay home and wash pot". This was the mother's response to a Cedros youth, Pearl Sankerali, when she was reluctant to return to NGHS that meant also having to stay in Dormitory with its bad food, canvas cots and boring routines. What hardships! This was the evocative line that Pearl Seunarine, a senior alumna used to begin her greeting. She immediately took many of us down memory lane, framing many personal journeys from where we began to where we are –our personal, social, educational and professional paths, and the pivotal roles that our mothers' words subtle or otherwise impacted on our becoming. She then guided us through her high school years 1942 to 1947 where worship was under the tamarind tree, and the domain of the building, L- shaped, with one end starting near the trunk of the tree and terminating at the top of the stairs down which we all have marched for assembly. But changes happened. There were piano lessons and folk dancing in dorm, and a happier person resulted.

The second greeting was extended by Dr. Rita Cox, celebrated storyteller, librarian, Citizenship Court Judge and auspicious person of the wider

Trinidad-Canadian community. Rita has been a friend to NAAC and has contributed to and supported various events. She remarked that she has witnessed the strength of the Naparima Alumni in the services we render through our outreach in promoting Steelband education in Canada and in our support for our mother schools. She said, *"You continue to contribute to the Land of our Birth and the Land of your Choice"*. But she also acknowledged the roles that the Canadian missionaries have played in the development of schools and education, and what fine institutions and contributing citizens have resulted. Also, that the establishment of different educational institutions for women were particularly important in the subsequent roles that women have defined for themselves in the family, the workplace and the local and world community at large.

A change of pace happened. Dr. Ramabai Espinet, lecturer and author presented an excerpt from her poem *"Shay's Robbertalk"*. A woman doing a 'robber talk' is a role emancipation in itself because the robber character in 'ole- time- mas' was always a man who got your attention by blowing his whistle, and reciting tales of his adventures. Following are quotes:

*"I was born in the desert of Arabia
Snow from Kashmir wet my lips
My mother is a warrior woman
Lash me and you go see
My father a scholar, a gentleman
A drinker of fine whisky
And finer bush rum"* (p.176, 7-13).

*"If I wage war
I, warrior woman,
Academic, guerilla
Front-line worker
Nurturer, mother, lover, friend"* (p. 178, 26-30).

"And I wage war to win" (p.178, 31).

Her poem was well-received because of its

(continued on next page)

Celebrating the Launch of 'La Pique 100'

(Continued)

imagery, humour, relevant cultural, social and personal references for us, embedded in those short lines.

Our gracious honoured guest, Dr. Patricia Mohammed, Dean of Graduate Studies, Professor of History and Gender Studies, UWI took us back to her school days at NGHS. In lyrical prose she recounted tales how she would hurry from the taxi-stand on Coffee Street, but would usually be late and would have to go to late –room downstairs where she would do her homework. But on the way she happened to see the same guy standing on the same corner every morning, eyes met, mind wandered but never a word was said, nor identity known. Sounds familiar? Another episode has to do with a needlework assignment which her mother helped her to do. It was a beautiful piece of work, the teacher remarked, but asked her to do another one in class for practice. She did it, not perfect, but was pleased with herself.

The above and many other episodes she related, created a picture about a time where we learned or figured out rules of acceptable behaviour by exposure to soft embarrassment, compensatory action, and re-routing our habits, without harsh punitive measures. Dr. Mohammed noted that Pearl Seunarine's message had a similar framework to hers as they told of life-long lessons learned from our youth at school and at home.

"Each of us takes from a place we have dwelt in for a while, something that we carry with us for the rest of our lives"

Dr. Mohammed's message and her charming personality augmented her appeal.

The formalities completed, there was dance, raffle with big prizes and more dance!

In conclusion, I wish to express much appreciation to all the guests, guest-speakers, donors, supporters of NAAC and contributors to our various events. Our Committee would like to thank President Merle Ramdial and the NAAC Executive for all their support. I especially appreciate the work

and enthusiasm of the La Pique 100 Committee members. This event was a labour of love which was evident, and when non-NGHS alumnae give their full mettle to the cause it is heart-warming. The generosity of Dr. Patricia Mohammed in giving up her time and coming to Canada to honour our celebration was extra-ordinary. Finally I wish to acknowledge Mrs. Patricia Ramgoolam, Principal of NGHS. Her message of congratulations and support for the event was thoughtful and loving. She said that NAAC coming together as a community to celebrate NGHS centenary was even more important than the gift of money. I thought, what love! And I shared her heartfelt message in my introductory remarks. This celebration was observed by many to be one of the best of NAAC's events.

Thanks again. May the occasion of the Centenary of NGHS, January 12, 2012 be a splendid and blessed time and may we remember to donate to the NAAC La Pique 100 Fund in order to help to "put another brick in the wall" with more ease. We hope that the Centennial Block Building Project will be a symbol of NGHS – our Past, our Present and our Future. Thanks.

Karma Naike

June 18, 2011



La Pique 100 Committee:

Ramabai Espinet,

Myrtle Gopeesingh,

Brenda Holman,

Cynthia Ramdeen,

Wendy Rostant,

Ian Ramdial (Supporting member)

Karma Naike (Chair)

La Pique 100 Fund Donors (as of September 30, 2011)

Mrs Juanita Baboolal-Ali	\$ 50
Rev & Mrs Albert Baldeo	\$ 100
Mr Ralph Baney	\$ 100
Mrs Jacqueline Bell	\$ 100
Mrs Vidya Mungal-Bissessar	\$ 100
Mr Anthony Boodhoo	\$ 100
Mrs Gloria Boos	\$ 100
Mrs Marlene Cassim	\$ 150
Mrs Polly Clarke	\$ 100
Ms Marjorie David	\$ 50
Mrs Joyce Douglas	\$ 100
Mrs Raabaya Goodman	\$ 20
Mrs Myrtle Gopeesingh	\$ 200
Mrs Nancy Gordon	\$ 600
Mrs Shanti Inman	\$ 100
Ms Brenda Jaleel	\$1000
Mrs Angela Jutlah	\$ 100
Mrs June Khan	\$ 100
Ms Joyce L. King	\$ 50
Mrs Barbara Kumar	\$ 25
Mr & Mrs George Lalsingh	\$ 100
Dr Mamin Lee-Sing	\$ 200

Dr Clarence Madhosingh	\$ 100
Mrs Sonia Mallick	\$ 50
Ms Vitra Mungal	\$ 100
Ms Karma Naike	\$ 500
Mr Elsworth Poliah	\$ 100
Mrs Jennifer Ragoonanan	\$ 100
Mrs Vilma Ramcharan	\$ 100
Mrs Phyllis Ramjattansingh	\$ 100
Ms Shirley Rodrigues	\$ 50
Mrs Wendy Rostant	\$ 100
Mrs Kathy Sammy	\$ 100
Mrs Cynthia Seunarine	\$ 100
Mrs Pearl Seunarine	\$ 100
Mrs Angela Simon	\$ 25
Mrs Margaret Sitaram	\$ 100
Mrs Bess Maharaj-Smith	\$ 100
Mr Clive Teelucksingh	\$ 100
Mrs Angela Thomas	\$ 150
Mrs Marilyn White	\$ 200
Mrs Letitia Yerex	\$ 100
Total	\$5920

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Feature address delivered at “La Pique 100” in Toronto, June 18, 2011

A world on a little hill

by Patricia Mohammed

It's five minutes to eight. A sunny Monday morning in San Fernando, Trinidad. Krishna, the driver of the sluggish capacious black Vauxhall drops me in front of the Susamachar Church, on Carib Street. This is convenient for him - he had rounds to make still to St. Joseph's Girls Convent on the Harris Promenade and to Naparima Boys College in Paradise Pasture, a further half mile away, to drop off the others he chauffeured from the quaint little suburb of Princes Town each school day. But this was not at all convenient for me! To arrive in time for morning assembly at Naparima Girls' High School which was summoned by the first bell at eight a.m. sharp, I had to make my way from Carib Street, across Coffee Street (images of beer and coffee as distant then as it is resident now in delivering this piece) to the bottom of La Pique Road, and climb the steep hill to reach the school yard. The school buildings lay snugly burrowed into the side of the hill, as if some female animal had made a safe and warm nest for her young. If by chance I managed to get there before the bell, I would still need to unceremoniously fling my bag down, grab bible and hymn book from my desk and join the punctual ones. Chattering scores of girls under the spreading tamarind tree, who, on the sound of the whistle, would order themselves by class and march, depending on the mood of the pianist of the day, in army like lines of two to Beethoven's *Fur Elise* or *Onward Christian Soldiers*, into the auditorium for morning assembly and worship.

Needless to say, I did not make that procession many a morning. Half way up the hill, pearls of sweat already beading my upper lip and neck, the too heavy book bag and the weighty navy blue pleated serge skirt, regulation length two inches under the knee, presented a major handicap in this race against time. I would make an informed, some might say pragmatic decision, and head for the 'late room', conveniently located on the ground floor of the most easterly wing of the school. It was a dark cheerless room, full of silent guilt and repentant female souls, monitored by a different schoolmistress on duty each week. This hour of Presbyterian assembly when the rest of the

early birds were communing with their maker, was, however, the perfect time to catch up with unfinished homework, or better yet, to plunge back into the compelling novel or steamy romance in which I would then be buried. I can admit only now, many years later, long past the lingering fear of penalties, that any novel I was then reading was papered over with a brown cover that was prominently labeled *My First Latin Reader* in bold ink lettering, in case of prying eyes. I have often wondered how neither my parents nor my teachers ever cottoned on to the fact that I was always reading Latin. But I have to admit that I did win the school prize for Latin in my 'O'Level year - as if by some process of osmosis, this bounteous dead language had seeped its way into my consciousness. If it were not for the black marks that were struck against my name and school house for late coming, spending an hour in the late room was not at all an unpleasant way to begin the day. In fact, I would recommend it highly to others if the practice still obtains - I think it was crucial to the fine tuning of a mind, that very early on understood the pleasure and danger of resisting authority and convention.

While I didn't support Krishna's nonchalant attitude to my terror of the school bell, there were other benefits to late coming. At about three minutes to eight, when I was dashing around the Esso petrol station that was about midway to my finish line, a young school boy would bend the corner of High Street, heading for Presentation College - the Catholic boys school that literally rubbed shoulders with Naps Girls. The young man was also wending his late way to school. I admired his careless gait in the face of clock ticking second hands, his finely chiseled features and curly hair, and, possibly, the seams of his well fitted grey trousers. This made my day. I gathered that he played on the Presentation college football team but I never ventured near a match, preserving for the benefit of my friends a pro-bookish stance that was my trademark - in reality my father would not have allowed me to go un-chaperoned to an inter-college football match anyway. Nonetheless,

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A world on a little hill (Continued)

investing him with qualities I am pretty sure he could not have possessed, the male heroes in the novels I was reading moved from the realm of the abstract and took on more concrete features. I found out his name from the Presentation College magazine but I never spoke to him nor made any attempt to do so. Well brought up girls, particularly of the Naps Girls variety, were to be circumspect, dignified and always beyond reproach, keep it cool, keep it covered and keep it clean.

I started high school in 1964, the final year in which Ms. Margaret Scrimgeour held the post of Principal. She was the last of the expatriate Canadian female principals. Physically, she presented the archetypal missionary woman, tall and angular, pale white skin, by then a bun tightly pulling back her silvering hair. In this year of leadership she was still full of energy and drive, an ageless woman. She was succeeded by Ms Beulah Meghu, our first local female principal of Indian origin, who continued the school's traditions of a liberal and inclusive education. Only in retrospect did I understand what an interesting period we experienced at Naparima Girls in these transitional years, or for that matter how knowledge was being conveyed in the most non-traditional ways, providing valuable lessons that have resonated in my life and work since, in unquantifiable ways.

The school was then, perhaps still, Indian female dominated - after all it was set up by the Canadian Presbyterian missionaries in the first decade of the twentieth century to encourage Indian parents to send their girls for further education where they would be protected from the too open gaze of a multicultural society. The long wooden colonial style Dormitory building was an ever present visual reminder of the days when girls who lived far away were housed on site. As were the two still resident Canadian teachers Constance Wagar and Joy Vickery who lived in an apartment at the end of the dormitory building. Tossing this memory around now, I realized that the idea of the expatriate missionaries as caretakers and colonial mistresses of our education, blended imperceptibly and perhaps without conflict or confrontation with the homegrown and homespun familiarity of Trinidadian female teachers. My presence here in 2011 as your dinner speaker and



Patricia Mohammed with husband Rex Dixon

the existence of chapters of alumni in Canada, are poignant, yet defiant testimonies to a Canadian missionary experiment in the small outpost of Trinidad in 1868.

Naparima Girls' High School curriculum was a marriage of different worlds - the domestic and public, the foreign and local, the Christian and non-Christian, the formal academic with the extra-curricular.

One interesting example comes from the emphasis on the domestic arts, needle work and cookery (definitely not given the misnomer of domestic science then). It's become fashionable for women to say things like "I can't cook to save my life", or "I don't know how to boil water" and let's face it, most of us don't really ever have to sew a button on again. Perhaps an understandable sentiment in this day and age when women have rebelled against the tyranny of the kitchen stove or the drudgery of the assembly line. But I honestly enjoyed these subjects and have wonderful memories of the tutorship of the women who led us gently through this phase where we were being groomed for occupations beyond that of "being barefoot and pregnant".

I forgot who taught us sewing in form one, I think it was a Miss Greaves, One day the homework assignment was to do a buttonhole by hand. I took it home and my mother, who was superb at needlework, took the white piece of folded cotton and stitched a perfectly symmetrical magenta pink buttonhole of about half inch in length. I brought it back to school

(continued on next page)

A world on a little hill (Continued)

the next day and handed it up very confidently in my specimen book. Shortly after examining the books, the teacher called me up to the front desk.

“You didn’t do this homework on your own did you?” she asked.

“No miss, my mother helped me” I said, very proudly. I don’t think at this age of barely eleven it entered my head that there was an ethical issue here – as far as I understood it, my mother was simply making sure like any good parent she was helping me do my homework.

“It is very lovely,” Miss said gently, with a wry smile playing around her lips, “your mother is a good seamstress, but you have to do it by yourself this time”.

I have never forgotten that lesson, the kindness with which Ms Greaves conveyed in an understated way that while my overprotective mother had pastoral care over me as a child, I now needed to do things on my own and to learn how to make my own way in the world. My buttonhole was a seriously more jiggled one, not completely clean around the edges, a postmodern abstraction compared to my mother’s neatly ordered stitches. I still have in my possession this notebook with both specimens attached which my mother also dutifully kept for me all these decades long.

Like sewing, cookery classes at Naparima Girls was a pleasure rather than penance as it is popularly perceived now. While instructing us in methods of preparing food, Mrs. Bissessar taught a lot of other wholesome values. She transmitted the artistry of cooking rather than its functionality. Little pats of butter were dotted evenly into the creamy dough in the making of oh so flaky, flaky pastry, the slab of beef was gently rubbed with a dampened towel and cubed into even pieces, glowing healthily red in the bowl while waiting to be seasoned with fresh green basil, thyme and cloves of redolent garlic before being tender stewed creole style. The local fruits like mangos, pommeracs and mammy apple were diced evenly and matched for colour and texture before they were mixed with syrup and just the barest hint of Trinidad rum to produce the desserts. Nationalism and economy were taught in the kitchen as much as in the classroom. If you were lucky enough to be selected on the roster to shop for the ingredients for that day’s lesson, you would be sent

with carrier bag and some funds to go to the market on Mucurapo Street (and legitimately miss that morning’s worship assembly). Kamala Vasanti (Vas) Boochoon, a lifelong friend who started Naps Girls the same day I did and left the same time, agreed, that cookery classes and thrifty market expeditions were prominent and enjoyable in her memory. We learnt to look dead fish in the eyes, to be firm yet gentle when pressing flesh, to examine the texture and colour of the vegetables to judge their crispness, to buy what was in season and freshly grown by our gardeners, lessons which have served me, needless to say outside of the kitchen as well. There is more to cookery than meets the eye.

Rhoda Reddock, a colleague of mine who is a Bishop Anstey girl, has commented on many an occasion that she has not met a Naps girls, well certainly none of our generation, who was not a good cook. It was no surprise that the Naparima Girls’ High School Cookbook became a best seller and a favorite local cookbook and a gift to visitors and Trinis abroad for the home-baked slice of Trinidad culture that it truly represents.

While formal lessons and examinations have all slipped into an amnesiac whole, the bell of memory clangs more vibrantly around incidents or events that broke the routine of the everyday. One year around Carnival someone had invited Slinger Francisco – The Mighty Sparrow to the school as a special treat and he was so thoroughly charming and wickedly entertaining, we were hooked for life by this art form. A red letter day was the visit of the handsome Derek Walcott to a literature class in the sixth form, invited to speak to us informally about writing and poetry. Through art classes we visited the sculpture studios of Ralph and Vera Baney and through the annual presentation of dramatic plays, the classics like Longfellow’s *Hiawatha* and Oscar Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest*, moved from the printed page into our everyday vocabulary, shaping literary and artistic sensibilities that were vital to the expanding mind.

One day, in sixth form, Ms Meghu our Principal and then General Paper teacher, was followed into the classroom by the office attendant armed with two large cardboard boxes full of books. She had combed her own library and selected a wide range of

(continued on next page)

A world on a little hill (Continued)

authors to whom she thought we should be exposed, in addition to the traditional literary fare of the then accepted classics. By this time, I had exhausted all the fiction that the school library could render up, had selectively read all the romances on the shelves of the Harris Promenade Carnegie library, and had been systematically working through authors in alphabetical order at the public library in Princes Town and was fast exceeding the Ws. It was a major revelation and relief that there were other authors whom we had not encountered, whose books were not yet part of the local curriculum, like V.S. Naipaul and Samuel Selvon. As good teachers always are, Ms Meghu was prescient about our futures, understanding that already from our classrooms would come the new generation of writers like Shani Mootoo, Dionne Brand, Ramabai Espinet - all past students of Naparima Girls' High School. She had generously offered up her private stack to young imaginations, waiting to fly away and be free but needing to be nurtured before being released.

Naparima Girls chauffeured many born in my age and time from adolescence into young womanhood, in an extraordinary fashion. We learnt the art of

becoming women, comprehending as one invariably does in an all girls' school the wiles known to womanhood, but never focused on these arts as a means to an end. The no-nonsense attitude of our teachers, the competitiveness for excellence fostered among students, the challenges for us to be creative and original, seeped into our bloodstream, in an atmosphere that was natural, surrounded as we were with nature in its finest forms, our chiseled out portion of a hillside, squirrels scampering up the slope, lush tropical trees and vines vying to enter the classrooms closest to the forest. We were set above the little town of San Fernando, of it but apart, reaching for stardom while perched on a plateau on this hill.

Each of us takes from a place we have dwelt in for a while, something that we carry with us for the rest of our lives. I still cannot arrive in good time for anything that is ordered or rigid - preferring the meandering pathway of individuality and thought to the straight line of conformity. But somehow, between the insistent bells and the exploratory classroom, I was given the best of both worlds - a sense discipline yet unconstrained freedom, in this remarkable place we were privileged to occupy for a brief but adventurous time on this little world on a hill.

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For the “Old Man”

by Ruthven C. Foster

From *Exit Poems*, an unfinished manuscript by Ruthven C. (Vince) Foster 1945-2009

In the time before he died

Smiling

He must have dreamed

of days in sunlit fields

cutlass blades slicing sugar canes

with cuts so clean

that just for a second

the stalks stood erect

disbelieving, then fell

of the dogged pull of a bull

going for a fresh load in the heavy mud

slipping sliding grunting

answering the lash

clawing uphill

against its will

tractors snorting and goring

the warm moist earth

wind and work and dust

sweat pouring down

strong arms burnt brown

and muscle corded

his tales of women horses

cards drinking losses

friends foes fights

killer days and wasted nights

made others feel

that they were standing still

to foil the sickness

gnawing at his flesh

doctors cut and threw away

his pale and wasted legs

which in the old days

always brought him home

after strange and wild detours

the surgeon who had saved his life

with precise cuts well made

could not begin to comprehend

the fallout from his blade

the tool of science learning skill and art

in hacking off the shrunken legs

had also pierced the heart

the old man

who once had sparred with life

had won and lost

and fought again

on a plain of endless strife

now sat unmoving

bested by the knife

he little cared

what loved ones said

or what they had to give

he dreaded living

more than death

and so refused to live

Launch of 'La Pique 100'



(Photos courtesy of G.D. Teelucksingh)

Launch of 'La Pique 100'



(Photos courtesy of G.D. Teelucksingh)

Address by Chairman – Dr. Jennifer Yamin-Ali

Naparima Girls' High School Centenary Committee

at NGHS Centenary Media Launch Chamber of Commerce, Westmoorings, Wednesday May, 18, 2011

Madame Chairman, Her Excellency, Dr. Jean Ramjohn-Richards, Excellency Karen McDonald, Canadian High Commissioner to Trinidad and Tobago, Mrs. Patricia Ramgoolam, Principal of Naparima Girls' High School, Miss Fairy Lalla, Vice-Principal, Past administrators of Naparima Girls' High School, Distinguished past students, Members of the teaching staff, Members of the centenary committee, Students, Members of the Media.

Thank you for accepting our invitation to this significant strategic occasion which aims to harness the support of the dynamic and creative media to apprise the general public of what the centenary accomplishment means not only for our school, but indeed for the nation, for education and for the future of our young people.

Naparima Girls' High School was founded in 1912 by the Presbyterian Missionary, Reverend Dr. Fulton Coffin of Canada, in collaboration with the East Indian National Congress to provide the recognised need for secondary education for girls in south Trinidad. The school opened in a makeshift classroom with twenty-two students and one teacher. Today, with a teaching staff of fifty-six, the school provides 772 coveted places for young ladies who have gained access through diligence, careful preparation, personal sacrifice and parental or family support. It is interesting to note that historically Protestants have been attracted to hard work and frugality as their route to salvation. Undoubtedly, a school founded on the Protestant work ethic and vision would be a place where any individual with those values would gain entry and thrive. And so, Naparima Girls' High School became the opportunity for young ladies of all sectors of society to soar to new heights. According to the late Rev. Idris Hamid, a past Presbyterian minister, "the opening of this school was a daring and progressive move. It was indicative of the determination to create a new people, with new values, life-styles, faith and equipment..."

The school's motto provides the basis on which the school provides for a multi-dimensional intake in terms of social, cultural and economic standing. The motto '*Non nobis solum sed omnibus*' means '*not for ourselves only but for all*' – not for Presbyterians only but for all our nation's young women. This motto also extends

to the meaning of the education offered by the institution. Perhaps it is best explained by the well-known adage: 'to whom much is given much is expected'. The Naparima holistic learning insists on a culture of service in the crafting of its students. A Naparima graduate therefore is a gift to whichever society she chooses to live in.

"Daring" and

"progressive" – the words used by Rev. Hamid to describe the opening of the school could not have been more apt since the school hymn is entitled 'Youth Undaunted'. 'Youth Undaunted' has become the official theme of the Centenary Celebrations. We are celebrating 100 years of women of faith, courage, hope and inspiration; women of brilliance, grace and charity; women who stand alongside their male counterparts, no longer daring to merely stand out but indeed, expecting to lead.

Let me at this point highlight some of the reasons this institution stands at the helm of secondary education nationally and even regionally.

To begin with, it has been the good fortune of this school to have had school administrators, since its inception, who have used both their intuition and their skills to hone the identity that the school now enjoys. Along with intuition and skills, it must be emphasised that these women were also women of great faith and who viewed their responsibility as principal and vice-principal as service to God. Let us recognise all those women who are present here today (Mrs. Mavis Lee Wah, Mrs. Mona Jamadar, Mrs. Jean Bahadur).

We owe a debt of gratitude to the first indigenous principal, the late Miss Beulah Meghu who put in place a formidable set of systems which, to a large extent, still determine the successful administration



*Dr. Jennifer Yamin-Ali
at Media Launch*

(continued on next page)

Address Dr. Jennifer Yamin-Ali (Continued)

and policies of much of the school's life. My synopsis of her philosophy is that a thing perceived as small may not in actuality be a small thing in the life of an organisation. So attention to minute details was very important to her and still is in every area of school life. Thus, the new generation of teachers at this school have a great challenge ahead of them – get with the programme!

Indeed, it is a philosophy of quality that drives the institution of Naparima Girls' High School. The modern day watchwords of 'quality assurance' have been a way of life for this institution since 1912. In fact, this is the secret to its success. Quality is what drives all its endeavours and what determines its assessment of itself. Quality includes that 'je ne sais quoi' that our society yearns for when they choose the school as 1st choice for their daughters who sit the SEA examination. This quality may not be easily defined by the average person, but I can spell it out for you.

This quality is defined by the breadth of the curriculum offered at the school – with the compulsory national academic offerings, in addition to a wide range of extra curricular and co-curricular activities which are the real shapers of character and personality. Quality is also defined by a school culture and school climate which have made the school somewhat of an enigma to both 'outsiders' and 'insiders'. The school environment reflects a purposefulness, a commonality of understanding, an appreciation of things both tangible and ethereal. Within this environment you will find that unbreakable bonds of sisterhood have been formed, lasting decades after girls have left school. Small things have great meaning for us (the 'old girls'): the school ring, the tamarind tree, the school badge, the House we belonged to, the 'look' from the Principal, how to sit, how to stand, how to, how to...

In essence, this institution can be said to be a pioneer in the development and maintenance of standards. The challenge for the new school administrators is to translate those worthwhile and precious standards into documents which would ensure their endurance.

We have invited the media here today to share with our nation what we determine to be the worth of an institution that has been lovingly nurtured by generations of leaders: all women of strength and great vision. Their leadership has

enabled the empowerment of many generations of accomplished women, some of whom are present here today. They all exude the grace, charm, composure and dignity of a Naps Girl!

The centenary committee is more than delighted to work with teams of Naps girls and associates to celebrate the school's centenary. Our centenary commemoration has already begun and will continue until July 2012. Our celebrations are marked by what is valued by the institution, including a book on Naparima Girls' High School to be launched on the 100th anniversary of the school January 12, 2012 – a must have; a book of writings by past pupils, to be launched in October 2011; a super new cookbook to be launched in June 2012; a musical 'Thirteen Daughters' at the Naparima Bowl on December 1,2,3, 2011; a Grand Alumnae Reunion on December 18, 2011...not to mention the 2 cruises that have already taken place and the Dinner/Dances that have led up to the Gala Ball at the Hyatt on July 7, 2012. All our upcoming centenary activities are listed on our calendar. They can also be viewed on the school's website – just google Naparima Girls' High School for access.

Our 'youth undaunted' are represented by the unforgettable tamarind tree featured in our centenary logo – this tree has special significance to generations of Naps girls – the seeds from the tree have continued to sprout new seedlings, new generations of Naps girls who owe a lifetime of gratitude to an institution born from the womb of the Canadian Presbyterian Church through the Canadian missionary work in Trinidad.

As such I am very pleased to acknowledge the support of the Canadian High Commissioner to Trinidad and Tobago, Excellency Karen McDonald who has joined us on this occasion. We would like to express our appreciation to her office for the significant ties which her support represents.

In closing, I wish to thank all of you for the profound statement you have made by being present at this media launch, and most especially, to thank Her Excellency, as patron of our centenary celebrations, for her gracious participation in and support of our celebrations. May I add that Her Excellency epitomises the quintessential Naps Girl of whom I spoke earlier.

To the members of the media, we look forward to sharing with you further details of who we are, what we do and where we are going.

I Thank you.

Greetings from Her Excellency Dr. Jean Ramjohn-Richards,
First Lady of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, on the Occasion
of the Media Launch of the Centenary Celebrations of the Naparima Girls High School,
on Wednesday, 18th May, 2011, at the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of
Industry and Commerce, Columbus Circle, Westmoorings, at 3.00 p.m.

Thank you, Master of Ceremonies, Ms Camille Ramdial, Mrs. Zalayhar Hassanali, Former First Lady, Your Excellency Karen Mc Donald, High Commissioner for Canada, Mrs. Patricia Ramgoolam, Principal, Dr. Jennifer Yamin-Ali, Chairman and other Members of the NGHS Centenary Committee, Former Principals, Distinguished Past Students, Members of the Media, Other Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

1912 was a significant year in the life of the people of Trinidad and Tobago from the point of view of education. It was even more significant for a particular group of persons, that is to say, girls of East Indian origin. In that year, there began a movement away from the accustomed thinking concerning this group, who by tradition, were regarded as not necessarily a good choice in which to invest in so far as education was concerned.

I say this, not because I wish to raise a contentious issue. Our country holds a very respectable place, in the world spectrum, in so far as the advancement of women is concerned. But the fact of our own history must be stated, in order to demonstrate how far we have come, even as the education of girls, in some countries, is of extremely low priority. Indeed, it is reported that, in those countries, no value is placed on girls so much so that they suffer abysmal neglect.

In the early twentieth century, Canadian missionaries made a significant contribution to education in Trinidad and Tobago. I remember their primary school in San Fernando being referred to, fondly, as CM School, a name well known to Southerners. It was inevitable, given the commitment of the Canadians, that secondary schooling would follow and so, in collaboration with the East Indian National Congress, Reverend Dr. Fulton Coffin, a



*Her Excellency Dr. Jean Ramjohn-Richards,
with students from her alma mater.*

Presbyterian, founded Naparima Girls' High School, in 1912. It was not until 1925, though, that official status as a secondary school was attained. That was the year in which it presented its first two students for the Senior Cambridge external exam. Another first was registered in 1970, when the school obtained its first National Scholarship and in 1997, the school won its first President's Gold Medal.

'Naps' began with an intake of twenty-two girls on Coffee Street and with its first Headmistress, Miss Edith Doyle, who was also its sole teacher. It became necessary, two years later, to provide a dormitory, which housed ten girls who came from outside of San Fernando. By 1917, the school moved to La Pique and became known also as La Pique High School.

Fifty-two years after its establishment, Naparima Girls' High School welcomed its first Local Principal. The strong ties with Canada are evident in that from its inception all its Headmistresses were from Canada, some of them being missionaries.

The School's academic achievements, over the years, are ranked among the best in the country, and, while it has done well on the whole, it has done particularly well in the sciences, having

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obtained some one hundred and sixty-two national scholarships in science, between 1970 and 2010.

But all of the above achievements do not stand by themselves. They are the result of the core values of the school which have been inculcated in its students from the very beginning and which have endured, through the diligent and sustained nurturing of the teachers, parents and a caring Alumnae Association, once it was established in 1935.

Naparima Girls' High School has been demonstrating its belief that no one must be left behind. One of its core values is that all individuals can learn. Our sense of community impels us to collaborative effort in order to enable the fulfillment of the goals of others as well as our own. We have been encouraged to appreciate our country's diversity, in so many aspects and consequently, we know how to adapt.

For my part, I have benefitted from the ambience and the vision of NGHS, from the perspective of student and that of teacher whose ranks I had the privilege to join. I did so, when I was not much older than some of the students whom I taught, so I had the advantage of being able to more readily understand their thinking. I would say that this school served to reinforce the values that were instilled in me within my home and helped to prepare me, as I am sure it did countless others for life after Naps, as a professional and in public life.

The new school song, which is different from the one that I knew in former times, exhorts "youth undaunted" to lift up their heads "though a hope and a dream are dead". There was a time when our youth was, to a great extent, sheltered from the onslaught of the world. That is no longer the case, as with progress, we have lost much of our innocence.

Too many of our youth have their dreams severely damaged if not shattered, without hope of recovery. This song makes no room for giving up even as it speaks to the times in which we are living, where competition, sometimes unhealthy and greed are ever present.

But there is another presence. It is the presence of the encouragers, physically or in spirit, near or far, living or dead, helping to build confidence. There is

the recollection of words of wisdom, words which have been spoken, over and over again, by teachers, other staff, classmates and parents, telling us that we must not bow to pressure, nor be deterred from pursuing worthy goals.

Life does not follow a pattern of perfection and we are not promised smooth passage from birth to death. But if our young people can be taught and can learn the lessons of perseverance and keep their focus on the goal, undaunted, they will finish their course with distinction or at least, respectably.

The school has set itself an interesting programme of events to mark our centenary year. The Naparima Girls' High School family is inviting the national community to celebrate with us and we look to the media to make the invitation well known throughout the country. We ask you to help us register the kind of hundredth year celebration that is worthy of so great an institution, which so many women at home and abroad are proud to acknowledge as alma mater.

I take this opportunity to place on record my own gratitude for the benefits that I have gained from my time spent at Naps. I know that I speak for countless others when I say that surely, here I spent some of the best times as I went through the years from childhood to becoming an adult. It is my hope that current students will be ever mindful of our schools history and reputation and will commit to keeping the standards high, as a beacon to others.

Thank you, Ladies and Gentlemen, for the courtesy of your attention.

***Condolences are extended to
the following ...***

- Beryl Baldeo
on the passing of
her husband Albert

and to

- Stanley Algoo, whose mother died
earlier this summer in Trinidad.

Book Launch of “Thomas Christie: Presbyterian Pioneer in a Trinidad Mission Field” by Ronald Mahabir

Over sixty five people attended the book launch organized by the town of Chateauguay on the afternoon of Saturday, October 1st at the Municipal Library.

Among those present were two great grandsons of Thomas Christie, Allan and Andrew Boothroyd and their wives, Sharon and Lynn. The author, Ron Mahabir gave a brief account of what motivated him to write about Thomas Christie's experience as a Pioneer Missionary in Trinidad.

This event ended in a wine and cheese at which there was a pleasant social interaction with all those in attendance.

Rev. Thomas Christie was the third Canadian minister to accept a call to present the Gospel of Jesus to Indentured East Indians in Trinidad W. Indies. The Foreign Mission Board of the Synod of Nova Scotia had already sent Rev. John Morton (1868) and Rev. Kenneth Grant (1870) to that island. Rev. Christie was posted in the third Mission Field in the Couva Ward in the County of Caroni, in 1874. Three estate schools were already built and opened and he served as corresponding Manager to these. As an evangelist he preached to East Indians, white Presbyterians and to emancipated Blacks. At one time he trained teachers in pedagogy. In his second term a Presbyterian church was built. He did ground-breaking work in school management and in evangelism. Although his ministry was short-- a little over nine years, yet his faithful works under challenging circumstances are grounds for numbering him as a pioneer Presbyterian. Excerpts from his many letters are quoted and these give readers an understanding of his expected joys and unexpected sorrows.

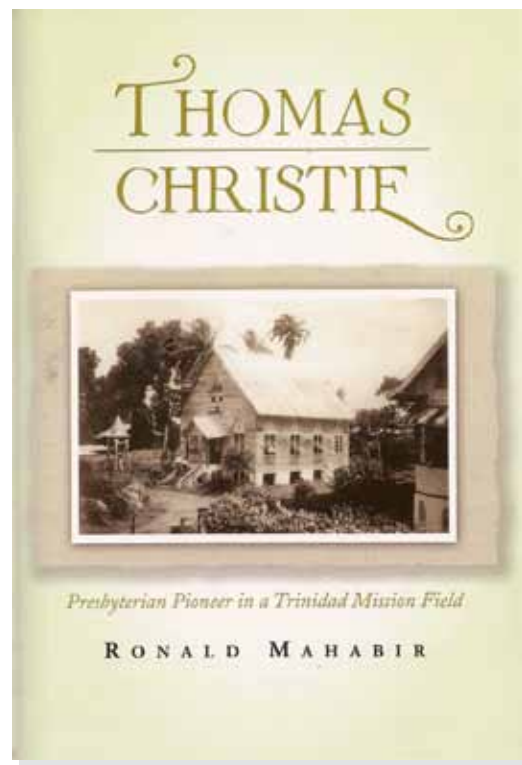
Ronald Mahabir, a native of Trinidad W.I. had his early education in Canadian Mission schools. His first vocation was that of a pupil teacher. While he was in teachers' college he was recruited to be trained for the Christian ministry. In Canada, he graduated from Mt. Allison University (B.A. Hons.) Pine Hill Divinity Hall (B.D., M. Div.) and Mc Gill (M.A., M.Ed.) He served as a minister in the Presbyterian Church in Trinidad. In Canada, he served in United and Presbyterian Churches in and around Montreal. As a teacher in



Ron Mahabir (centre) with Allan and Andrew Boothroyd

a High School and in elementary schools he taught a variety of subjects. He was also involved in several community groups and projects in Chateauguay, Quebec, where he now resides.

(Editor's note: Ronald is a Life member of both NAAQ and NAAC).



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Book Review:

Breathtaking, informed commentary in ‘Sly Company’

***Rahul Bhattacharya, The Sly Company of People who Care,
New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011, pp.278. ISBN 978-0374-26585-4***

A review by Frank Birbalsingh

The *Sly Company of People who Care* is the first novel of Rahul Bhattacharya, an Indian author who was born in 1979, lives in Delhi, and previously wrote a book on cricket – *Pundits from Pakistan: On Tour with India, 2003-04*. This background scarcely qualifies Bhattacharya as author of a book on Guyana, unless it is for his occasional references to West Indian cricket in *Sly Company*. What we know is that Bhattacharya paid two brief visits to Guyana, once in 2002 and again in 2006. That this brief acquaintance with his subject should generate such informed and zestful commentary is breath taking!

Although described as a novel, *Sly Company* does not tell a connected story which might suggest a work of imagination or invention. The narrative consists entirely of a factual account of the author-narrator's travel through Guyana and neighbouring countries such as Brazil, Venezuela and Trinidad, although Guyana's history, geography, politics, economics, sociology and culture reap the lion's share of his attention. *Sly Company* would lose nothing if considered as an exceptionally brilliant travel book, nor does it gain by being treated as a novel. But fiction has become extremely flexible as a genre nowadays, and there is no reason why Bhattacharya's characters, descriptions and dialogue may not be seen to benefit from fictional techniques.

Sly Company is divided into three parts the first of which recounts hair-raising incidents on the narrator's trip to Kaieteur Falls using an overland route from Georgetown. It is a daring venture that includes character sketches of porknockers with names like Nasty, Dacta Red, Roots, Labba, Baby and Foulis which splendidly capture rough and ready ways of living and bare knuckle escapades



Rahul Bhattacharya, author of The Sly Company of People who Care

necessary for survival in damp, hot house, tropical forest conditions where mortal danger may lurk at every turn. In one incident during “a session of semi-drunken cricket” a firesnake appears and is beaten with a stick and hoisted on a prong before its stomach is torn open with a knife and “a frog fell out with a bloody splatter. If this does not catch an atmosphere on the edge of survival, consider an experiment of the narrator who keeps six yarrau fish in a bucket of water to observe their growth, only to see them cannibalise each other until one supremo survives in water tinged with blood and floating pieces of fish. As the narrator sums it up: “In the bush everything could be wicked, everything left to chance.”

Part Two offers an enlightened and enlightening appraisal, from a sympathetic outsider's point of view, of the history of ethnic relations between Indians and Africans in Guyana. As an Indian himself, the narrator's comments on Indo-Guyanese feelings about India are revealing: “Their [Indo-Guyanese] Indianness felt more intimate than mine. They longed for it; I had no such longing. I was wearied by it, and in fact in flight from it.” More importantly, Bhattacharya

(continued on page 24)

Book Review: The Sly Company of People who Care

(continued on page 24)

perceives reasons for troubled relations between Indos and Afros in Guyana: after Abolition, in an effort to keep freed Africans on the plantation at low wages, plantation owners destroyed African initiative in starting their own villages; but, out of similar economic motives, they later issued land grants to Indians and helped with drainage and irrigation of their farms. The result: "At worst the Africans saw the Indians as illiterate, barefooted, clannish heathens, misers who hoarded coins under their bed, who had strange customs and rituals and wore strange uncivilised costumes... At worst the Indians saw the Africans as the condemned: ugly, black of skin, with wide noses and twisted coir for hair, mimics of the white masters, without a language, culture or religion of their own, frivolous, promiscuous, violent, lazy." Such studied information implies that, in addition to knowledge gained from observations on his brief visits to Guyana, the author of *Sly Company* also relies on vigorous research for his insights and general commentary.

Part Three opens with the tension of police efforts to combat crime and the relief of humorous anecdotes from Lance Banarsee (Uncle Lance.) We then get a salacious snapshot of the seamy side of nightlife on Sheriff Street in Georgetown, followed by an even more salacious, often erotic romp of the narrator and his female companion Jan (Jankey Ramsaywack)

through Venezuela and Trinidad. Throughout all this and the narrative, as a whole, Bhattacharya displays a surprisingly sure grasp of Guyanese speech, for instance, in aphorisms like "Sorry fuh maga dog, maga dog turn around bite you," or "two man rat cyan live in one hole." He also flawlessly reports a woman's reason in court for burning another woman's forearm: "she ah lie like a dog, is she who jook me fust," and is equally impressive in catching a childlike Guyanese impulse for boasting, bluster and baseless bravado that is intended merely to impress, dominate or frighten.

But the puzzling title of the book needs explanation. It stems from the author's discovery of a manuscript of Dutch colonisers who, after all, laid the foundation of Guyana as a nation. The first three words of a section of the pamphlet praising the "civilising mission" of the Dutch West India Company were "struck out" and "replaced by a single word SLY. " Then, in the margin, a sentence "they think like they care" was started and abandoned. Hence the author's ironic title for a Company which enslaved and traumatised people for profit in pursuit of a civilising mission. Irony is also driven home by the epigraph to *Sly Company*: "All this was Dutch. Then, like so much else, it was English," a quotation taken from *Light Years*, a novel by James Salter. In casting a baneful eye on the predatory practice of bartering colonial peoples, this quotation applies equally to the city of New York, which was originally owned by the Dutch, as it does to Guyana

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Kelowna Reverend Albert Baldeo dies at age 81

By Albert Baldeo

Kelowna Capital News

Updated: April 26, 2011

One of Kelowna's most prominent residents, Albert Baldeo, died of heart failure Monday night after a long struggle with Parkinson's disease.

Baldeo was a well known public figure through his work as a reverend at the United Church and for involvement in the community even after he retired from that post. His forthright and thoughtful words won him many fans and his musings were an appreciated staple in the Capital News.

In his regular column last week, he shared what it was like to face his own mortality. So we're sharing it with you again.

Albert Baldeo, April 22, 2011:

On Sunday, March 27, I was feeling very uncomfortable and was having difficulty breathing.

I did not want to stop breathing so I went to the emergency for a check-up.

It was a quiet Sunday afternoon, so I did not have to wait very long. I received prompt attention.

The doctor told me I had to be admitted. I was not ready for this, but the doctor knows best.

After several tests the doctors discovered I have a very weak heart and it could stop beating at any time. This was the reason for my shortness of breath.

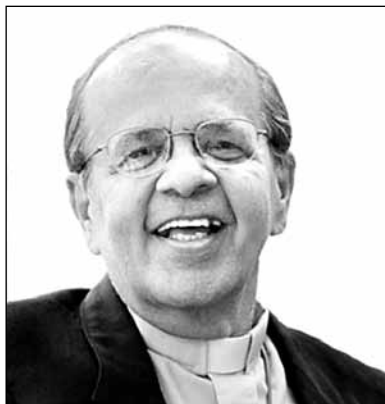
I had the privilege of being treated by two of the most outstanding cardiologists in B.C.

One of those cardiologists informed me that there was a new medication that could help me.

Unfortunately, it did not help. After my eighth day in hospital, the cardiologist informed me that he could not do anything more for me at this time so I was discharged.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the staff at 2 East at KGH for their Kindness, Goodness and Hospitality...that spells KGH.

The cardiologist was very candid in his comments



to me: "Mr. Baldeo, you are a very sick man...and you are dying." Then he said, "we all have to die."

I replied, "Yes doctor, we are all terminally ill and some have longer terms than others."

There was once a man who thought "terminally ill" meant going to the airport to die.

On my second day the doctor asked me a very pointed question.

He said, "Mr. Baldeo, if you become ill at midnight and we have to treat you, would you like to be resuscitated or should we just keep you comfortable and let you go?"

Without hesitation I replied, "Please let me go."

So these three letters were written on my file: DNR.

I am forced to reflect on my own mortality. I officiated at over 1,712 funerals in my 50 years of ministry work, but it seldom crossed my mind that some day I would be the one in the casket.

It happens to everyone else, but not to me. Death was not a reality for me.

I have been overwhelmed with the number of phone calls and prayers on my behalf.

It is comforting and healing. Thank you very much!

My doctor has cautioned me to keep my visiting to a minimum.

I am not able to accept visitors at this time so please forgive me.

I would love to see you but in due time, when I am feeling some better and feel a little stronger.

My three daughters and grandchildren have visited and they sense Grandpa is not feeling well. One of them wrote me a beautiful poem.

My sister called me from Trinidad and said, "Let not your heart be troubled." This is a simple but penetrating truth.

I am not accepting this death sentence at this time.

(continued on next page)

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I trust that our mighty God will take me through the valley of the shadow of death.

However, I am fully aware that my day to be ushered into eternity will come.

But do not weep me for I have gone for my coronation where I will meet with the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

My new destination is heaven, where there is no sickness, there is no Parkinson's Disease, there are no hospitals...and there is no HST.

I am ready to go to my new location. Are you?

I have a room reservation. Jesus said, "I have gone to prepare a place for you."

I will see my Mom and Dad and all my dear friends. I can hardly wait for the great reunion.

This is only a temporary parting. I look forward to you coming to join me some day. I will have a ball in heaven.

Death is not the end, it is just a bend in the road of life.

Rabindranath Maharaj Wins 2011 Trillium Book Award

Ajax-based novelist Rabindranath Maharaj won the English-Language Trillium Book Award for his novel *The Amazing Absorbing Boy* (Knopf Canada), which follows the adventures of a 17-year-old immigrant from Trinidad as he struggles to adapt to a new life in Toronto and the "big mall of a country" that is Canada.

The 24th Annual Trillium Award ceremony took place June 17, 2011 at the Bram and Bluma Appel Salon (Toronto Reference Library). The Trillium Book Award recognized excellence and fosters increased public awareness of the quality and diversity of Ontario's writers and their publishers.

(Editor's Note: Congratulations Robin. We keep tabs on your work and projects, and look forward with special interest to seeing the results of the trip to Torngat Mountains National Park).



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News from NGHS

What a wonderful way to usher in the Centenary Celebrations! We were thrilled to be the recipients of 29 National Scholarships, across most subject areas, the highest number awarded this year, to any girls' school and were only edged into second place overall by our brother school, Naparima College. In addition, six of our girls were awarded University of the West Indies Open scholarships, based on the UWI's scholarship examinations. The Principal, Mrs Patricia Ramgoolam, Acting Vice principal, Mrs Carolyn Bally- Gosine, outgoing Vice principal, Miss Fairy Lalla and the entire staff are extremely proud of our girls!

Our school continues to make strides, not only in the academics, but in all spheres, and we are delighted

to showcase the creativity of our past students in the book of writings, "The Tamarind Tree Blossoms" which will be launched at the school on Saturday 8th October. The talent of our young students will be highlighted in our musical production of '13 Daughters' in early December. In addition, the artwork of our students, past and present will be displayed at the Grand Reunion on December 18th, 2011 and we are asking all alumnae to submit original works of art that can be displayed. Many of our past pupils, resident overseas, have registered for this 'Reunion of Reunions' and have already booked their flights home!

On that day, our girls will view with pride, the construction in progress at the top of La Pique Road



Naparima Girls' High School

Scholarship Winners 2011



							
<small>ALICIA RAMRATTAN Bus. St. - Add</small>	<small>AMBA MAHABIR Hum. / Med. St. - Open</small>	<small>KAYLOR MOHAMMED Lang. - Add</small>	<small>NARMALA GOVINDJI AL SINGH Lang. - Add</small>	<small>CHARMAINE BENNETT Math. - Add</small>	<small>DANIELLE LOW FOON Math. - Add</small>	<small>FARAH HYATALI Math. - Add</small>	<small>MELISSA MATHURA Math. - Add</small>
							
<small>NALINI GAYAPERSAD Math. - Add</small>	<small>RIANA JAGESSAR Math. - Open</small>	<small>RIANE TROTMAN Math. - Open</small>	<small>MALENEE SINGH Math. - Open</small>	<small>VENESSA BHAGWAT Math. - Open</small>	<small>ANSARA BAIG Sci. - Add</small>	<small>CARINA SIEUSANKAR Sci. - Add</small>	<small>KRESSHALA SINANAN Sci. - Add</small>
							
<small>LORENA JAGESSAR Sci. - Add</small>	<small>NADIA NIDHAN Sci. - Add</small>	<small>REANNA GOBIN Sci. - Add</small>	<small>RIA MAHABIR Sci. - Add</small>	<small>SHANICE ALI Sci. - Add</small>	<small>SINAED HOSEIN Sci. - Add</small>	<small>JAMEKA PRAGASAMLINGAM Sci. - Add</small>	<small>ARIANE RAMDASS Sci. - Open</small>
							
<small>CAMILLE JAGDEERNAITH Sci. - Open</small>	<small>MEGHAN LALLA Sci. - Open</small>	<small>SHANELLA BARKESSOON Vis. Arts - Open</small>	<small>SOPHIA MITCHELL Vis. Arts - Open</small>	<small>GENEVEVE RAMRATTAN Vis. Arts - Add</small>			

on the site of yesteryear's music room. The beloved cedar tree and one of the tallest palms on the hill had to give way to a Centennial Block which will house a state - of- the art music room, a pan theatre and several specialist rooms. The sod turning on August 26th is chronicled in the last chapter of "Youth Undaunted" - a beautiful, hard cover, coffee -table publication which traces in script and photographs, the wonderful one-hundred year history of our school . Copies will be available at the reunion and at the school office, in time for Christmas gifts and at the signature items table at the Gala Ball at the Hyatt in July.

January 12th , 2012 will be a red letter day in the history of our school. We are confident that the progress which the school has made over the one hundred years has fulfilled the vision and maintained the lofty standards of our Canadian Missionary founders. We know that all our past students will want to be apprised of all centenary activities so we invite you to visit our website www.naparima.girls.edu.tt



Sod-Turning ceremony at NGHS, August 26, 2011. Principal Mrs. Patricia Ramgoolam (right) and Vice Principal Miss Fairy Lalla



Rev. Sammah leads the gathering in prayer

News from Naparima College ...

School Infrastructure:

- All the sixth form classrooms have been air-conditioned, to the delight of our senior students.
- A new car park was constructed adjacent to the gym/auditorium which can accommodate up to 40 cars. There is handicapped parking in this car park as well as a ramp leading into the gym. This improvement will facilitate movement of patrons to functions in the gym as well as heavy equipment and props for concerts and other entertainment.
- The entire school was re-painted in the July-August vacation
- The Library Extension is progressing steadily. When this is finished there will be a Noor Hassanali Section which will display all of his writings. These writings were donated to Naparima College by his wife, former First Lady Mrs. Zelayhar Hassanali.



Elron Elahie, one of NC's Open Scholarship winners, as he addresses the student body.

School Business:

- The College has attained 15 Open and 18 Additional National Scholarships. Even though we did not win the gold medals, these results are the best in all the schools of Trinidad and Tobago.
- Naparima College is the top ranking school in the south zone of the BGTT/First Citizens Secondary Schools Football League.
- Our Graduation Ceremony for 2011 will take place on October 15. The theme is 'Future Leaders as Communicators' and the feature speaker is Dr. Allan McKenzie, past principal of the College.



A fun assembly - students celebrate with Scholarship winners.



School band plays College Hymn.



Dedication of the new car park.

Submitted by **Rowena Wattley**
Vice Principal

Congratulations!
Risel Maharaj & Andrew Athanassiades
exchanged wedding vows July 2011.



Rio plays pan at her reception.

Naparima Girls' High School GRAND REUNION



Naparima Girls' High School Centenary Committee
in association with Naparima Girls' High School
Alumnae Association presents

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Sunday, December 18, 2011

8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

NGHS Compound, La Pique Road, San Fernando



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or www.nghsalumnae.com



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Letter from WHCI Steel Band Bursary Recipient

Dear Mrs. Ramdial and the NAAC,

I would like to thank you for choosing me to receive the NAAC Steel Band Bursary valued at \$250. I am very honoured to have been chosen and to have been able to accept this award at my Grade 12 Commencement. It meant a lot to have received recognition for my four years of commitment to the West Humber music program. It was the perfect culmination to the amazing experience that being a part of the music program has been.

Being in music has given me a greater appreciation for music programs and made me realize how important they are. It has made me a better person and taught me important values, like punctuality, responsibility, teamwork, and commitment, just to name a few. It has also given me experiences and memories that will stay with me forever, especially the many performances and the 2010 Ohio Music Trip.

I had a feeling of nervousness and excitement before a performance and a feeling of accomplishment and pride after a performance. Being in music gave me a sense of belonging and nothing can describe the feeling of finally playing a song together after spending so much time working on it. It meant a lot to me and I am already missing being a part of it. As a shy, reserved person, people were always surprised when I told them that I was in steel band. It was hard to explain why I continued to take it, because it is something they have to experience themselves in order to understand.

I am three weeks into my studies at York University and have now been able to fully appreciate how valuable winning this \$250 bursary really is. There are so many costs involved in going to university and the bursary has helped significantly in paying for my textbooks.

I would once again like to thank you for choosing me to be the recipient of this award, as well as for all of the support that you give to the West Humber C.I. music program. I wish you and the NAAC nothing but the best!

Sincerely,

Kiraneet Bains

WHCI Steel Band Bursary Recipient

June 2011

Wishing you well!

Editor's note:

Kathy Sammy sent a message dated September 25, 2011
to her email list of family and friends.

I was most heartened by this particular update.

In it she says that her surgery on September 13th went well and she is now at home.

In the coming weeks there will be more scans and more chemotherapy.

She also says that she feels encouraged after being through this hard part of the journey.

She thanked everyone for their love and support over the last few weeks.



NGHS Alumnae Association
in conjunction with
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presents

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Blossoms*

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More celebrants at “La Pique 100”

