



NEWSLETTER

DEC 2011

The Queen's College of Guyana Association (UK)
(Registered Charity No. 801250)

No. 44



Season's Greetings



SUBSCRIPTIONS REMINDER

Members are reminded that subscriptions (£12; £5 for full-time students) fell due on 1st October last.



UK taxpayers are kindly requested to pay their subscriptions by Gift Aid as this increases the payment to the Association by just over 28%. Life membership can be had for a single payment of £100, or four annual payments of £30 by Gift Aid. (Contact Ian Wishart for details - see last page)

QC DOES IT AGAIN!

TOP CARIBBEAN STUDENT AT CSEC FOR THE FIFTH TIME IN SIX YEARS

Congratulations to **Anuradha Devi** who has been declared the region's most outstanding candidate overall at this year's Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate examinations (equivalent to GCSE). Anuradha, who secured 15 grade 1 passes, was also top overall in Science, the sixth successive QC student to win that award. Other QC top regional awardees were **Mariesa Jagnanan**, best business student, and **Nathan Benjamin Indarsingh** for the best short story in the English A exam.

Overall, Guyana won 16 of the 28 regional awards, but we have not been able to ascertain whether there were other QC awardees.

Past top overall students were: Kia Persaud (2009), Yana-Marisa Edwards (2008), Wainella Isaacs (2007), Shirvanie Persaud (2006), Daniel Ram (a boy at last!) (2003) and Amlata Persaud (1999). Amlata later graduated in PPE at Oxford and was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship in 2003.

Despite QC's performances at CSEC, the school has not, so far, topped the region in the CAPE (A-level) examinations. In this year's CAPE results the three top performers in Guyana – all from QC – were **Youni Abdul** (5 grade 1s and 1 grade 2), **Kelly Ann Persaud** (5 grade 1s) and **Deondrine Halford** (4 grade 1s and 1 grade 2).

We congratulate all these high achievers.

1930's PHOTOGRAPHS BY FREDERICK T WESTON, MASTER AT QC

Frederick T Weston served as a Pilot Officer in the RAF, and was killed in 1943 in a crash. His son Fred, 'friend' life member, provided these photos to us, and Eliot Fraser has kindly taken on the task of uploading them onto our website <http://qcoga.org.uk> under [archives/valete](#). They are all from the late 1930s, and of variable quality depending on the quality of the originals and the scanning.

AGM HIGHLIGHTS

Our attempt to increase attendance at the AGM by holding it on a Saturday afternoon was not entirely successful. Only 17 members and three guests attended: certainly up on last year's all-time low, but still below the attendance in the years before. So much so, that we were only able to fill the six of the seven committee positions.

OFFICERS FOR 2011–12

Neville Linton was once again returned unopposed as President, and existing Vice-Presidents **John Rafferty, Lloyd Bascom, David Man, Sir Shridath ('Sonny') Ramphal, Trevor Phillips, Henry Edwards, Derek Hugh, Ivor Ying** and **Gary Ramprashad** reappointed.

The six members of the Management Committee are: **Praveen Hanoman, Rod Westmaas, Bruce Nóbrega, Christopher Chunnillall, Mark Adamson** and **Claire Carballo**. (Mark Dalgety and Ian Wishart stood down under the three-year rule.) At the first Committee meeting on 8th December, Christopher Chunnillall, Claire Carballo and Praveen Hanoman were respectively elected Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer, whilst **Mark Dalgety, Peter Fraser** and **Ian Wishart** were co-opted. See last page for contact details.

FUND-RAISING

Profits from the Sunday Brunch, held on 10th April at The Bedford pub in Balham, and the Summer Reunion, held on 10th July at the usual venue, raised £891 and £646 respectively. The re-established Carnival Fête (a joint venture with the Bishops' Association) raised a disappointing £101, principally because we did not have the bar. The second annual Celebration of Guyanese Art, Music and Literature, held at Kensington Library on 8th October, made a profit of £315. In the past, the Association had relied on two main events to generate income: the Annual Dinner and the Summer Reunion. Revenue from those events has decreased substantially, but this has been compensated for, at least in part, by profits from the Brunch, and the cultural evening at Kensington Library. Special thanks are due to **Rod Westmaas** for organising the Brunch, and to both Rod and **Leila Persaud** for the cultural evening.

FINANCES

Donations to QC (all reported in the last *Newsletter*) have reduced our bank balance from £5606 at the beginning of the Association's financial year, to £4330 at the end.

ICQC WEEKEND – SOCIAL & ABM

The UK Association hosted the ICQC Annual Business Meeting (ABM) in October. A reception for the visiting overseas delegates was held at the Guyana High Commission on Friday 7th October. Fifty were in attendance, including His Excellency the High Commissioner, the visiting delegates from the overseas Chapters, and members and friends of QCOGA(UK) and BHSA. A most enjoyable evening was had by all, old friendships were rejoined, and new ones made.

On Sunday 9 October, the ABM was held at Eversheds in the City, courtesy of Rod Westmaas. The library project initiated by the Toronto Chapter was reported to be almost complete. The alumni associations agreed to focus on the welfare programme for needy students, and improving the provision for sport. The ICQC Officers for 2011-2012 are: President–Christopher Chunnillall; Executive Secretary–Lloyd Houston; Deputy Executive Secretary and Information Officer–Gordon Wilson; Recording Secretary–Amegah Blackman; Fund Raising and Project Coordinator–Alfred Granger. Rod Westmaas will assist Alfred Granger. Peter Fraser and Neville Linton remain our representatives.

SALVETE

We welcome new member **Derek A McWatt** (QC 51–60). Additionally, ‘friend’ member **Claire Carballo** has converted to life membership, and member **J F (Jimmy) Parker** is in the process of doing the same (by the instalment route).

VALETE

We regret to announce the deaths of: member **Karl A L Brown** (QC 36–43, master 46–52 & 57–63), *b.* 9.6.24, *d.* 5.7.11 (see obituary, page 4); **Edward Gibson** (QC 67–72), *d.* 24.7.11 in Brooklyn; **Leslie Grant** (QC 59–61), *d.* 10.5.11 in Maryland; **Sheikh Nazeer Hassan**, *d.* 12.9.11 in Florida; **Lennox Michael Leila** (QC 48–c.57), *d.* 21.11.11 in Guyana; **Lennox Massay** (QC 1950s), *d.* 29.7.11 in Atlanta; **George Robinson** (QC c. 1960s), *d.* 9.10.11 en route to New York; **A M B (Mel) Sankies** (QC c. 46–57), former Deputy Vice-Chancellor University of Guyana, *d.* 25.8.11 age 73; **Leonard ("Bill") Westmaas** (QC 34–40), one of eight brothers who attended QC, he served in the RAF during WW2 and represented British Guiana 1945–1948 at cricket (top score 111), *d.* 25.8 2011 in USA; **John W Whittingham** (QC 40–49), Head Prefect 47–49, senior athletics champion 48 & 49, *b.* 14.10.29, *d.* 13.7.11 in Barbados.

To the bereaved relatives the Association extends its sincerest condolences.

CONGRATULATIONS TO

Justice **Kenneth A C Benjamin** (QC 65–72, Guyana Scholar 1972), Supreme Court Judge in St Lucia, on being appointed Chief Justice of Belize;

Dr **Hughley Hanoman** (QC 1950s), Consultant Cardiologist, Open Heart Surgery Programme, Mount Hope, Trinidad & Tobago, on being elected a Fellow of the European Society of Cardiology;

Peter July (QC 1950s), senior banking executive, on being inducted into the Hall of Fame of the Chamber of Commerce of Trinidad & Tobago;

Dr **Aubrey R Morrison** (QC 54–63, Deputy Head Prefect 62–63), of the Washington University in St Louis School of Medicine, on being named a Master of the American College of Physicians and on receiving their Award for Outstanding Work in Science as Related to Medicine.

THE KINDEST CUT

by Karl Brown

(Re-printed from *Newsletter* No 22, September 2000)

I missed the 1999 dinner because I had an operation for a hernia. This was a unique experience because it was carried out under local anaesthetic. This meant I was fully awake throughout. As I lay on the operating table I looked up to see three big discs like inverted bowls. Each disc had eight octagonal shaped lights all reminiscent of scenes in the TV soap ER.

The surgeon invited me to choose a piece of music. I left the choice to him. At that moment there flashed through my mind that old pop tune ‘The first cut is the deepest’. He however selected a piece of soothing radio FM music above which I could hear the clatter of scalpels as he placed them on the tray at the side of the table.

Apart from the initial needle prick for the anaesthetic, I felt nothing. The surgeon however asked a petite blonde nurse to stand by my head. She held my hand as a sort of comforter. Every cut he made she winced, because she squeezed my hand which I quite appreciated. The pressure of her well-manicured hands was all I felt. The operation was over in 40 minutes which was all too soon. In fact I began to doze off, but was brought back to reality by the surgeon saying ‘I am now putting in my last suture.’ The theatre assistants then wheeled me back to the ward – without my blonde comforter.

OBITUARY

KARL AUBREY LEWIS BROWN

Karl was born in Georgetown in humble circumstances, but showed academic promise at his primary school, and, guided by his head teacher, won a government scholarship to QC in 1936 – and never looked back. He left school in 1943, and became an assistant master three years later, holding that post until 1952 when he was awarded a British Council scholarship to Aberdeen University.

After graduating in 1956 – MA Honours in Geography with Economics as his subsidiary subject – Karl did a year at Edinburgh, securing his Dip. Ed. in 1957. He then returned to Guyana to teach Geography at Queen's. In Aberdeen Karl had become engaged to fellow student Moira McRobb and she followed him to Guyana where they were married, at St Andrew's church, Georgetown, on 23rd December 1957. Their three children, Alison, Andrew and Kaye were all born in Georgetown.

With the expansion of secondary education in Guyana, Karl was promoted to headmaster of Anna Regina Secondary School. There he taught Geography, and some Art and Biology, whilst Moira, who also had an MA from Aberdeen, taught a variety of subjects. Moira writes: "As teachers with degrees were pretty thin on the ground in the 50s/60s, we were expected to teach in the new secondary school at Anna Regina pretty much any subject – whether we were qualified for it or not!"

They were in Anna Regina at the time of the inter-racial riots, and Karl was one of those in official or responsible posts who had toured the area trying to calm the situation. Worried about the future, they returned to Aberdeen in August 1965, where Karl resumed his teaching career this time as a lecturer at Aberdeen College, an adult education establishment. There he taught general studies, English and management studies (having taken a further qualification in the last).

Karl retired in 1989 and joined the Association in 1993. He often made the long journey to London to attend the Association's annual dinners at the New Loon Fung restaurant, invariably equipped with his camera.

Karl's funeral on 15th July was held in Cove Bay, south-east of Aberdeen, where he and Moira lived, at the little church he had attended for many years. The church was filled with family, friends, neighbours and ex-colleagues of Karl. A good send-off, as we say in Guyana.

Ian Wishart

Judge A B Majeed, a former student of the Browns wrote to Moira:

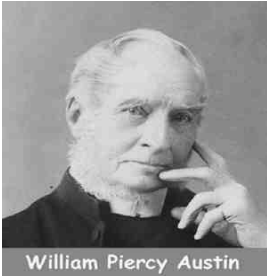
"Very saddened by the loss of this stalwart of a man. His contribution to our intellectual awakening cannot be measured. He was the light and the way for our rebirth. Before your joint arrival as Husband and Wife / Principal and Teacher we aspired only to an elementary school education. High school allowed us to dream dreams beyond our wildest imagination. Karl's discipline, love and care accompanied by your attention and warmth all led us to our present professions. Without you both we [would] all be rice farmers in Essequibo today. God bless you both. May our Principal, mentor and friend Karl Brown rest in peace.

"To let you know we have not forgotten the poetry you taught us, I dedicate these words on behalf of all the old students of The Anna Regina Secondary School:

*What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now forever taken from my sight
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendour in the grass
Of glory in the flower."*

JUST A STONE THROW AWAY!

An outing took place on Saturday, 8th October 2011 to Stone, Staffordshire to visit the birthplace of the founder of Queen's College, Bishop Dr. William Piercy Austin D.D. The local story is that the town was named after the pile of stones taken from the River Trent raised on the graves of the two princes, Ruffin and Wulfad, killed in AD 665 by their father, King Wulfhere of Mercia, because of their conversion to Christianity.



Austin was born on 7th November 1807 at the Crown Inn (now the Crown Hotel). William's pregnant mother was taken ill while travelling by stagecoach on their return to Bath from a visit to Scotland, so his parents decided to stop over at the Crown Inn. While there, William was born, and the family stayed in Stone until William's mother was able to continue the journey to Bath.

The inn was a stop for stage coaches from London, Manchester and Birmingham. There was also a post room where mail bags were stored while awaiting the next coach, and it was the third most important post house of the 17th century with up to 40 coaches stopping there each day.

Today Stone has seen the decline of the old industries but new industrial estates have been created. The Trent and Mersey Canal has played an important part in the holiday trade. It is a thriving market town with an expanding population of around 15,000.

In 1831, aged 24, William married his cousin Eliza Piercy Henderson. On his way to the wedding he stopped at Stone to visit the scene of his birth. It is believed that being born in an inn caused him extra delight, a little point of union with his Lord and Master. The Crown Inn was damaged by fire in 1778. The new building was designed by Henry Holland in 1780.

Four alumni – Amegah Blackman, Neville Burke, Christopher Chunnillall, and Rod Westmaas – made the train journey to Stone. Stone resident Dennis Abbott was their guide. The first stop was a visit to St Michael's Church, where Dennis is a warden. We were then joined by Phillip Leason, town councillor and Chairman of Stone Historical and Civic Society. Phillip and Rod Westmaas are responsible for researching Austin's connection with Stone. A visit to the Council Chambers followed, where we were greeted by Mayor June Price. Copies of Cameron's History were presented to the Mayor and Phillip (a further copy was later provided to Dennis). After a short walkabout and tour of the town centre, Dennis, Phillip and the four alumni retired to the Crown Hotel for lunch. A painting of a stagecoach, similar to that probably used by William's parents, was a talking point. The hotel was used by the U.S. military during World War II, and Phillip showed us the ballroom which was decorated with paintings by one of the U.S. officers. The trip made the front page of the October 13th edition of 'The Stone Post' under the headline '*Caribbean trek to Bishop birthplace*', and was also reported in the 'The Stone and Eccleshall Gazette'.





Photo courtesy Phillip Leason

Rod Westmaas, Amegah Blackman and Mayor June Price holding a copy of Cameron's History of Queen's College, Christopher Chunnillall, Neville Burke and Dennis Abbott at the Council Chambers.

CULTURAL EVENING

Our second, now annual, celebration of Guyanese Art, Music and Literature was put together by Rod Westmaas and Leila Persaud, and held at the Kensington Library on Saturday 8th October. Our special thanks to Leila, who had to take on most of the preparatory work when Rod unexpectedly had to go overseas. Film excerpts from 'Not Till I Find A Place' and 'The Sea Wall' began proceedings. Poetry readings were performed by Maggie Harris (her own work), and Burt Caesar (Martin Carter). Alan Cooper sang a selection of well-known Guyanese and non-Guyanese songs, and Leila Persaud led two rousing sing-alongs of folk songs. Peter Fraser presented an overview of Guyana's border conflicts, and Leila Persaud ran a quiz which tested the audience's knowledge of Guyanese geography. Marc Matthews performed a bonus poetry reading, and Carmen Monroe reflected on her acting career. The evening was rounded off with a photographic exhibition of work by Guyanese artists (put together by Leila), and a trip to 'Bourda Market' (see p11) – stalls with food, drink, and books and artefacts for display and sale. Our thanks to Carmen Monroe, and all of the above who gave freely of their time and talent. We also thank Eric Huntley, Rod Westmaas and Juanita Cox who brought the books from Bogle L'Ouverture, Hansib Publications and Peepal Tree Press respectively, Linda Persaud who set up 'Bourda Market', and Elliot Fraser who provided the audio-visuals.

ANNUAL DINNER AT THE BUNGA RAYA RESTAURANT

The 23rd Annual Fundraising Dinner was held on Sunday 27th November at The Bunga Raya Restaurant, Thornton Heath, the third occasion on which we have used this venue. Although a little out of the way for those who do not live in the southern suburbs of the capital, this Malaysian restaurant provides a spacious setting and a varied cuisine that appeals to the Caribbean palate. The turnout this year was somewhat disappointing – only 57 persons – but that may have been due to the Association of Guyanese Nurses and Allied Professionals (AGNAP) holding a lunch in Croydon on the same day. Nevertheless everyone seemed to have enjoyed a convivial evening. A profit of £400 was realised (£550 last year).

SAVING LIVES FROM JIM JONES'S KILLERS

(A slightly abridged, edited version of an article by Michael Jordan published in the 20th November 2011 issue of *Kaieteur News*, and printed here with their kind permission.)

It may seem strange that the anniversary marking the most terrifying day of Rodwell Astil Paul's life went by last week without him giving it a thought. After all, he was right there when the killing began: hiding in the bushes with bullets whistling over his head, and later cleaning the wounds of the injured with rum and strips of cloth from a torn undershirt.

But Astil was never one to seek the limelight. It is only now, 33 years after the Jonestown massacre, that this 65-year-old former athlete, old QC boy (1956–65) and respected pilot, has finally decided to divulge exactly what happened on that fateful day at Port Kaituma.

Astil was born at Suddie, Essequibo, where his father was postmaster and his mother a teacher at the local primary school (there were only primary schools in rural British Guiana in those days).

The family came to live in Georgetown in 1955, and Astil was admitted to Queen's College. Not only did he excel academically, but he was also one of the school's outstanding athletes: joint under 13 champion 1959 and under 17 champion 1963, the year he won the 100, 220, and 880 yards, and the mile. Little did he realise that his athletics skills would one day mean the difference between life and death.

At a young age, his parents took him on holidays to Barbados and Trinidad, and he believes that those journeys by plane fuelled in him the urge to become a pilot.

After leaving Queen's he worked at Guyana Airways Corporation (GAC), and, yearning to fulfil his dream of becoming a pilot, travelled to New York to study aviation. To pay for his studies, Astil had to find work. "It was quite a challenge to work and study, but I got a lot of family support." He subsequently gained a government scholarship to complete his studies at the Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Florida, and returned to Guyana as a qualified pilot, in 1971, to fly with GAC.

It was Saturday November 17, 1978. Astil was undergoing command training under Chief Pilot Captain Guy Spence. It appeared to be a routine flight to Port Kaituma to pick up US Congressman Leo Ryan and his team, who had visited Jonestown, a commune [the People's Temple] in the Port Kaituma jungle headed by the 'Reverend' Jim Jones.

"We knew of Jonestown because Jonestown was alive and kicking. They had a basketball team and they travelled a lot with GAC. On that day I was in the left hand seat, but under training. On arrival I flew over the airstrip and saw a truck parked in the middle of the strip. Because of the landing and take-off capabilities of the Twin Otter, I had enough room to land and stop before getting to the truck. On landing, one of the guys from Jonestown came up and said that Congressman Ryan and party would be there shortly. It was around ten minutes to six and it was getting late: we had to take off before sunset.

"The congressman and his party started arriving by tractor-trailer, and as they got to the aircraft I went outside to get the names of the passengers, to estimate the bodyweight before take-off, and [to] try to get them on board quickly because we were running out of time."

It was while he was doing this that Astil heard an unusual sound. His first thought was that someone was throwing stones at the aircraft.



“But then I saw people falling in front of me, and I realised that we were getting some problems.”

The ‘problem’ unfolding before the pilot’s eyes was that Jim Jones’s men were shooting at the plane to prevent it from taking off with Congressman Ryan’s team and some defectors from Jonestown. They realised that once Ryan left, the sordid stories about the jungle commune would reach the entire world.

“People had started to rush on board the aircraft. They had a problem, but I was not aware of it, so I was trying to put boarding arrangements in place. There were about 50 persons trying to get on board, but we could only take about 17 passengers. So after the shooting started and I realised that people were falling, I ran to the other side of the aircraft. We had already started one engine, which we sometimes do to get people’s attention that we are in a hurry. There were some photographers on the right side of the aircraft taking pictures. I was trying to get them to stop. They were walking backwards to the right propeller, which was spinning. As I was trying to get them to move, two of them fell. They had been shot. I remember someone saying to me: ‘lie down, lie down!’ And that is what I did. But as I was lying down, I heard bullets passing over me. I felt that was too close for comfort, so I decided to get up and run for my life.”

Astil recalled the advice he’d often received from his athletics coach at Queen’s College: *run and let your knees touch your chest*. He sprinted for his life.

“I ran [away from] the runway and lay down in some tall bushes. But while there I heard the bullets hitting the bushes and [saw] the tops of the bushes being cut.” He decided to run again, this time towards the truck in the middle of the airstrip. “I ran past the truck and I saw a GDF [Guyana Defence Force] aircraft that had broken down on the [other] side of the airstrip [so] I ran there for cover and jumped into a ditch.”

He remained there until he saw the tractor and trailer with the shooters driving off. “There was one guy with a red bandana who was carrying small arms and shooting to ensure everyone stayed down.” When he was sure that the shooting had stopped, Astil headed back to the GAC aircraft. One bullet had struck an engine damaging the fuel control unit.

“I went into the cockpit and sent a radio message to Georgetown. We were trying to get the wounded on board, but couldn’t get the engine started. When I went into the cabin, the American Chargé d’Affaires (Dick Doyer) showed me where he was shot three times in the buttocks. After recognising that we couldn’t get the engine started, we decided to get everybody off the aircraft. I tried to assist the persons that were wounded, since I realised that we couldn’t bring them to Georgetown. I got two bottles of XM rum. I always wore an undershirt, and what I did was tear it into pieces and clean the bullet wounds with the alcohol.”

But for some of the passengers it was already too late. “There was a woman in the aircraft who was shot in the head, but I didn’t know because she was sitting there with her hands folded. I said to her, ‘Madam, you have to come off the aircraft’ and she didn’t answer. I touched her shoulder but she didn’t move – but I didn’t see any blood. We lifted her off the chair, and as we were taking her down the steps her whole scalp came off and her brains fell on the steps.”

The woman was later identified as Temple defector Nancy Parks. Congressman Ryan was also dead. He had been riddled with bullets before being shot in the face. NBC reporter Don Harris, NBC cameraman Bob Brown and *San Francisco Examiner* photographer Greg Robinson were also among the dead. Nine others, including Ryan’s aide Jackie Speier, were wounded.

“I was faced with this (horrifying) situation,” Astil recalled. “I have had to deliver babies on board, I have had people come aboard and die on aircraft, but this was a new dimension to my whole career. There was another small aircraft that a pilot, Tommy Fernandes, had. His aircraft had a bullet in the engine, but it hadn’t hit any of the vital parts. We were told by the company (GAC) that we had to come out on Mr Fernandes’ aircraft. We had space for only one person, and we brought out a woman who was shot in the back. I poured some rum in another container to rub on her back during the flight, because her back was swelling up.”

Eventually they arrived at Timehri Airport and were taken to Georgetown to President Burnham's residence for debriefing in the presence of the US ambassador and several top Government officials. They were then taken to CID headquarters to give further statements.

A few days later he was sent to fly over Jonestown. "Many years ago we had the Public Works Department, and they would have a dump where they would put all the (old) trucks and tractors, and I thought that it was a dump for vehicles. It was only when we went very low that I realised they were bodies. I couldn't believe that humans could do that to humans. At the time, everyone was telling me to leave Guyana, but my Chief Pilot said to me: 'If you want to continue in your aviation career, the thing to do is to continue flying.' At first I said that these guys don't have a heart, after what I went through on Saturday, putting me to fly on Monday; but that was the best thing that happened, or I could have gone into the whole realm of disbelief."

Indeed, Astil continued flying for 21 more years, eventually retiring in 1999 when GAC folded.

LITERARY CORNER

THREE BOOKS AND A FILM: THE ORDEAL OF BRITISH GUIANA AND GUYANA

A review by Peter Fraser of:

Cheddi Jagan and the Politics of Power: British Guiana's Struggle for Independence – Colin A Palmer [University of North Carolina Press, 2010]; *The Legacy of Walter Rodney in Guyana and the Caribbean* – Arnold Gibbons [University Press of America, 2011]; *Walter Rodney: His Last Days and Campaigns* – Eusi Kwayana [R Ferdinand-Lalljee Publishers, Birmingham, 2011]*; *W.A.R. Stories* directed by Clairmont Chung [2010].

These three books and the film chronicle and analyse the destruction of the two contemporary periods of great political hope in Guyana: the early 1950s and then the late 1970s and very early 1980s. In neither period did the party of change properly assess the strength, and deviousness (call it Machiavellianism if you prefer), of their opposition.

Colin Palmer's book tells a familiar story: the rise of the People's Progressive Party, its landslide victory in the first elections with universal adult suffrage, the virulent opposition to it in power, the mistakes of its ministers and the suspension of the constitution. Then came the split between Burnham and Jagan and the racialization of Guyanese politics. Local and US anti-communism stoked the flames and the two, once united, QC old boys became enemies. Palmer is especially good on the psychological effects of colonialism and the hypocrisy and racist disdain of the USA (as if the anti-communism was not enough); he lays to rest the cherished belief (much cherished by Cheddi Jagan) that the Americans had been responsible for the 1953 suspension of the constitution – that was a British affair. By 1960 the Americans were taking the lead, financing local opposition to Jagan and his party. He fails to point out that in backing Burnham they had absolutely no idea of his politics. It is a book for specialists or the very knowledgeable. It is chronological but partly thematic: so a later chapter will explain more fully the political stances or racist politics alluded to in a previous one, not always without perplexing the unwary reader. It is also light on the local political situation so that the narrative often simply becomes an account of British or American opposition to a nationalist movement and the local reaction to those actions. It also exaggerates the eclecticism of Jagan's ideology: he was too orthodox a follower of the debased orthodoxy of Soviet Union Marxism, too little a pragmatist and definitely not the founder of anything that can be called, on the model of Maoism or Titoism, Jaganism.

In 1964 the man whom the Americans and British underestimated took over. By 1968 Forbes Burnham and his party were solely in command, and the policies that Jagan would have implemented (chiefly nationalization, friendship with Cuba and ideological education) were about

to be launched. By 1969 Jagan declared the PPP a Marxist-Leninist party and the Americans had no alternative to the increasingly *Marxisant* Burnham – support for Cuba and, distancing his line from Jagan's, the Non-aligned Movement followed soon after. Later Jagan gave critical support to Burnham and in 1985, when Guyana's game with the IMF had run its course, just before Burnham's death there was the beginning of talks about re-uniting the divided political movement. But in the years before that, the Burnham government had become increasingly repressive and a third QC old boy had entered the political arena. Arnold Gibbons's and Eusi Kwayana's books and Clairmont Chung's film provide partial (in both senses of the word: not complete and with a distinct bias) accounts of Rodney's challenge to the Burnham regime and the situation created by US vehement opposition to Jagan's return to power.

Gibbons tries to give the most rounded view of Rodney: dealing with the historical background, the effects of education, Rodney's scholarship, his ideology, his charisma (which the other QC old boys also had in abundance). It is worth reading but is marred by some oddities of book production and editing. It is the only book I know that has its bibliography before its last chapter and do not, I repeat do not, try to follow the end notes to the first chapter. Eusi Kwayana's book consists of two accounts of Rodney's significance – he makes the telling comment that Rodney failed to understand how deeply the communal violence (ethnic cleansing?) of 1962 to 1964 had affected the country. Kwayana is always worth reading and Robert Lalljee's Foreword is a useful personal account, and the Introduction by a QC old boy (who refuses to join the Association) is, like the rest of Clem Secharan's work, edifying. Robert Lalljee is to be commended for publishing this book but he might add a table of contents and give us Kwayana's chapters in their correct chronological order in a second edition. This is not to bow to the tyranny of chronology: the earlier piece is a more immediate reaction, the second later one a more considered view.

Clairmont Chung's film adds much that is visually interesting and several interviews from Guyanese, including family, and foreigners who knew Rodney (it also has Kwayana's most recent thoughts). Its most interesting revelation (long rumoured) was that the WPA was preparing for armed insurrection. In a country as small and tightly-knit as Guyana, where people know your business before you yourself do, this was always a highly dangerous enterprise. It would have been dangerous anywhere: governments of any stripe do not take kindly to people who try to overthrow them. A friend of mine, an early comrade of Jagan and Burnham, met the latter in late 1979 when Burnham remarked that those young boys did not understand how rough politics was but he would teach them. The challenge to the racialized politics of Guyana ebbed away after the death of Rodney.

(It is understood that the Rodney family and Foundation dissociated themselves from the film because of certain statements made in it.)

These are not works to read or a film to view on holiday.

Trinidad-born **Colin A Palmer** is a specialist in Latin American history, a former Dodge Professor of History at Princeton, and author of a book on Eric Williams.

R Arnold Gibbons (QC 44–52, former editor of *The Lictor* and captain of cricket) is Emeritus Professor, Film & Media Studies Dept, Hunter College, City University of New York.

Eusi Kwayana, a former politician, now lives in the US.

Guyana-born **Clairmont Chung** is a lawyer in the US. He also writes and works in the media.

*Also available from roblalljie@yahoo.com

AN EXTRACT FROM *THE POWER OF BABEL: A Natural History of Language*

by John H McWhorter [Wm Heinemann, London, 2002]

“... there are no perceptible ‘milestones’ along the continuum where ‘creole’ becomes ‘semicreole’ becomes Standard English, to a Guyanese all of these places along the cline are ‘English’. Where outsiders see people speaking ‘two languages’, the speakers themselves simply see there can be many different ways one can speak English according to class and social situation.

“I will never forget when I boarded an elevator with a Guyanese man (my dissertation adviser*) at a conference and another Guyanese man jumped in at the last minute. They started out speaking Standard English, largely in deference to me, but as the elevator went up and their conversation became gradually warmer and more spontaneous, they started gliding into increasingly more creole layers of their speech repertoire. The higher we went, the less of their conversation I could grasp. I lost the first sentence above the fifth floor; by the tenth, all I knew was who[m] they were talking about; by the eighteenth, all I knew was something was really funny and that it probably wasn’t me. By the twenty-fifth floor when we got out, they might as well have been speaking Turkish. Yet to them, they had never stopped speaking ‘English’ – they had simply traveled along a continuum of creolized varieties of it leading away from the lone vanilla variety I grew up in.”

* The dissertation adviser was none other than Professor John Rickford (QC 60–68, Head Prefect and winner of the W deW Wishart Memorial Prize for A-level English in his final year), currently J E Wallace Sterling Professor of Linguistics and the Humanities at Stanford University, California. John has written several papers and books on language, including (jointly with his son Russell) *Spoken Soul: The Story of Black English*, reviewed in *Newsletter* No 22, September 2000.

‘BOURDA MARKET’



DIARY DATES

Sun APR 15	Sunday Brunch – The Bedford Pub, Balham
Sun JUL 15	Summer Reunion/Garden Party – St. John's Nature Garden, Clapham
Sun AUG 26	Carnival Fete (with BHSA)
Sat OCT 6	An Evening of Cultural Entertainment – Kensington Library
Sat NOV 10	Annual General Meeting – Guyana High Commission
Sun NOV 25	Annual Dinner

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END-OF-TERM REPORTS

Below are actual comments made on students' report cards by teachers in the New York City public school system. All teachers were reprimanded.

- I would not allow this student to breed.
- Your child has delusions of adequacy.
- Your son sets low personal standards and then consistently fails to achieve them.
- If this student were any more stupid, he'd have to be watered twice a week.
- It's impossible to believe that the sperm that created this child beat 1,000,000 others.
- When your daughter's IQ reaches 50, she should sell.
- Your son is depriving a village somewhere of an idiot.

Thanks once again to old boy Allan Lee, in Toronto.



Happy New Year!