



The St. Vincent and the Grenadines Association of Toronto (SVGAT) — How it all Began

Leadership Expediency of the 60's

On December 1, 2008, the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Association of Toronto embraced its 40th year since the first meeting of the Association was convened following a letter from the Secretary of the Arnos Vale Playing Field Board to Dr. S. Allan Liverpool dated 10th October, 1968. This sparked the basics for the beginning of the "Vincentian Association of Toronto". Upon receipt of the letter ([see Pg2](#)) Dr. Liverpool invited all interested Vincentians to a meeting on Sunday, November 24, 1968 to discuss raising funds for the Playing Field Project, and also for the possibility of formulating a Vincentian association in Toronto.

Following dialogue at that gathering, an initial meeting of the Association was convened on Sunday, December 1, 1968 at 2 PM at 12 Queen Street East, Toronto, which was the location of what was then "Club Tropics". Stilly Fraser and Rufus Jarvis, two natives of SVG, owned the club.

The mementos of the meeting reveal a sense of "fierce urgency of now". What has to be done? How will it be done? It was a crossroad to the beginning of something for their homeland. The following officers were appointed: President- Dr. S. Allan Liverpool, Vice President- Mr. Fred Isaacs, Secretary- Ms. Shirley Sutherland, Treasurer- Ms. Edna Hunte, PRO- Mr. Caley Bonadie. They set the course and never lost sight of the objective, giving priority to the Playing Field Project. By the second meeting on December 14, 1968, a collection of \$800.00 (CAD) was raised and forwarded to St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The third meeting was held in January 1969, and the fourth on the third Sunday in February. The draft Constitution was discussed, with clauses ratified and passed. Before the meeting ended, the President (Dr. Allan Liverpool) expressed his appreciation to the team for their accomplishments made in record time. He also offered his regrets that due to commitments to his medical profession, he had to tender his resignation. The next meeting was scheduled for the third Sunday in March 1969. Mr. Hermus Liverpool, because of his past involvement in a similar organization in Montreal, was asked to take over as President.

The first Statehood Ball was held on October 24, 1969. Ms. Pamella Venner was selected as Statehood Queen to represent the Association at the celebrations in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The airfare was provided by BWIA. Ms. Joan Hewitt was the first runner-up, and she received a

passage to New York or Montreal donated by Air-Sea-Land Travel. ([See pictures Pg3](#))

Lawyer M. A. Zuker represented the Association at The Department of Finance & Commercial Affairs in Toronto and filed an application for Letters Patent on November 23, 1970. On February 26, 1971 a Letters Patent was rendered by the Province of Ontario in the name "The St. Vincent Association of Toronto" with the Chartered objectives:

- (a) To provide a forum for the non-political discussion of matters, social, cultural, recreational and any other topics of interest to members.
- (b) To provide any form of assistance, wherever such is possible, to groups or institutions in St. Vincent and/or, where the association sees fit.

The first and original Directors of the Corporation were Edmund DeFreitas, Alfred Issac, Shirley Margaret Sutherland and Edna Hunte.

The Corporation is ordained and declared to carry on with the purpose of gain for its members, and any profits or other accretions to the corporation should be used in promoting its objectives.

Our founding fathers and mothers have championed the formulation of an organization fit for generations beyond our time. Therefore, in appreciation of their well intended efforts, we are obliged to be transformational thinkers, patriots and community builders, carrying the Association's torch with pride while focusing on the passing of a well maintained union; staying on the message despite all odds.

This is a time for us to be more pragmatic and less confrontational. We are all at a crossroad, and it is a time for each of us at the beginning of this early stage of our organization's 40th year to take an intense grasp at our chartered objectives, embracing the very mementos of the December 1, 1968 meeting; revealing the same sense of "a fierce urgency of now".

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SVGAT - How it all began! Cont...

Arnos Vale Playing Field - Letter sparks the implementation of SVGAT

The Arnos Vale Playing Field Board

Chairman : His Honour Mr. H. George, C.M.G., O.B.E. KINGSTOWN

Vice-Chairman: Dr. G.J. Cordice

ST. VINCENT

Secretary : F.G. Thomas, Esq.

10th October, 1968

Dear Mr. George,

You will no doubt have heard, with much delight, of the efforts being made here in St. Vincent to provide a National playing Field at Arnos Vale, which will cater for all branches of sport, and allow St. Vincent to be hosts to international and intercolonial cricket, football, netball, etc. teams. So far we have not been able to have important games here, due to lack of a first class ground and of proper pavilion facilities.

The present Government is very interested in this project, and work on levelling and drainage of the 22 acres donated by them has already started. They have passed legislation - The Arnos Vale Playing Field Ordinance, a copy of which I enclose - which will ensure that things are done properly, and a Board, the Arnos Vale Playing Field Board, has already been appointed in accordance with the Ordinance. The membership is:-

His Honour Mr. Hywel George, C.M.G., O.B.E. - Chairman
 Dr. G.J. Cordice - St. Vincent Cricket Association - Vice-Chairman
 S. Taylor, Esq. - St. Vincent Football Association
 Mrs. Sylvia DaSilva - St. Vincent Netball Association
 T. Michael Findlay, Esq. - St. Vincent Sports Council
 G.R. Punnett, Esq. - Kingstown Tennis Club
 J.V. Alves, Esq. - St. Vincent Lawn Tennis Club
 The President, St. Vincent Jaycees
 Dr. K. Baksh - St. Vincent Lions Club
 A.R. Connell, Esq. - St. Vincent Chamber of Commerce
 A.W. Dalrymple, Esq. - Chief Technical Officer, Ministry for Communications & Works
 H.S. McConnie, Esq., - Chief Agricultural Officer, Ministry for Trade & Production
 The Public Relations Officer, St. Vincent
 L.W. Sandy, Esq. - Surveyor
 F.G. Thomas, Esq. - Member/Secretary

The target for the project is close to \$500,000, but it is designed to be carried out over a period of five years in three stages. The first stage is for levelling and drainage of the cricket and athletics field, the construction of Turf wickets and athletics facilities and of a players' pavilion and is to cost \$120,000.00 - this is what we are aiming at for the present. I enclose ten (10) copies of a brochure which will give you an idea of what is planned.

As one who is genuinely interested in your homeland, the Board feels that you will wish to associate yourself with the project, and wonder if you would organize a fund among the many Vincentians (and others) in your area who may be interested in contributing to the venture. We ask this favour, well

knowing that your many duties keep you well occupied but we hope, nevertheless, that you will be able to assist us in whatever way you can.

The Board is working hard at home to raise part of the amount required for the first stage, and we have pledges from the Jaycees, Lions and the National Playing Fields Association of the U.K. The target is high, however, and any receipts from whatever source, will be of help.

I hope to hear from you soon. Please accept the best wishes of the Board, and their thanks in advance.

Yours very sincerely,

F. G. Thomas

(F. G. THOMAS)

SVGAT - How it all began! Cont....

Arnos Vale Playing Field project... 2009

With a capacity of 12,000 seats, the stadium at the Arnos Vale Playing Field was built in 1996. Regarded as one of the larger stadiums in the Caribbean, it got its first cricket test match in 1997, when the West Indies played the touring Sri Lankan team. Warm-up matches for the 2007 ICC World Cup were held here. The stadium is located next to the E.T. Joshua Airport on Mainland St. Vincent.



Beauty contestants at the first SVGAT "Statehood Ball" held on October 24, 1969



All Contestants



Judges



Master of Ceremony asking skill question to Ms. Hewitt



Officers of the Association



The origin of The St. Vincent Cultural Group (Toronto)

The St. Vincent Cultural Group was founded in 1979, when UNESCO proclaimed that year as the International **Year of the Child**. The proclamation was signed on January 1, 1979 by United Nations ... Six members of SVGAT, Keith Homer, Hubert Phillips, St Elmo Hunt, Barbara Toney, Edson Huggins, and Elmond Jackson each put together \$100.00, contacted some kids and put on a show in honour of the Children, and to commemorate the "Year of the Child".



Practices for the show took place at Keith Homer's house. After the first show, the children were so energized and motivated that they asked Keith and the others to keep the group going.

The adults discussed the possibilities and solicited the space at the then newly opened Northwood Community Centre. The St. Vincent Cultural Club is recorded in the Municipality as the first group to use the Northwood Community Centre facilities.

To date our SVGAT monthly meetings are still held at that location, and in the main hallway hangs a picture of the late Keith Homer Sr.

To accommodate the group's annual objective, Keith, St. Elmo and Hubert would pick up the children at their homes, take them to practices and then take them back to their respective homes.



The **Maypole dance** became one of the primary attractions at the shows, adding greater transportation demands due to popular bookings to perform at shows. However, the adult volunteer transport officers were so encouraged by the enthusiasm of the children that they sorted out ways to form a

balance between their family, work, and volunteering for their community kids.



And if that was not enough, the children added to their demand a Caribana band. In addition to preparing the costumes, on Caribana day the kids were dropped off by their parents, as it was the responsibility of the volunteers to care for the kids on that day.

The children of that era are now grown up, while the St. Vincent Cultural Group is currently in a defunct stage, pending the revamping of what was no doubt one of our most vibrant and promising youth cultural initiatives of the 70's.

Youth performing below.....



Research & Manuscript for the above articles by:
Ms. Elma Gabriel (PRO 2008)
 - on behalf of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Association of Toronto

ASSOCIATION BRIEFS

ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES ASSOCIATION OF TORONTO

GENERAL MEETING

Please view our events calendar on page 15 and join us at our General Meetings on the last Sunday of each month from 4:00 p.m. at Northwood Community Centre, 15 Clubhouse Court, North York (Keele & Sheppard).

Please bring along a friend with you.

THE EXECUTIVE

Here is a list of the executive members and their contact information:

President – Francelia George; Tel: 647-244-6642

president@vincytoronto.com;

Vice President – Kuwassi Hutchinson; Tel: 416-652-5207

vicepres@vincytoronto.com

Executive Secretary – Franklyn Ash; Tel: 905-970-1063

execsec@vincytoronto.com

General Secretary – Vacant;

gensecretary@vincytoronto.com

Treasurer – Kenneth Farrell; Tel: 416-822-3601

Treasurer@vincytoronto.com

Assistant Treasurer – Yolande Lewis – 416-809-9820

assisttreas@vincytoronto.com

Public Relations Officer – Elma Gabriel – 416-282-4557

pro@vincytoronto.com

Immediate Past President – Gideon Exeter; 905-831-1814

gexeter@yahoo.com

Nominated members:

Monty Providence –

montyprovidence@rogers.com - 905-416-9625

Emergene Sam –

relief@vincytoronto.com - 416- 456-6563

Association's General Email address –

svgatoronto@vincytoronto.com

MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO THE ASSOCIATION

You can now donate to any of the following: the Relief Fund, the Scholarship Fund, the Children's Christmas Party, the Christmas Hamper to Families In Need, and/or to General Operating Funds by contacting any member of the Executive or the Chair of the Committee you wish to support.

COMMITTEE CHAIRS AND COORDINATORS

Fundraising & Entertainment - Monty Providence

Education Committee - Fred Williams

Building Committee - Kuwassi Hutchinson

Finance Committee - Kenneth Farrell

Public Relations Committee - Elma Gabriel

Relief Committee - Emergene Sam

Scholarship Committee - Franklyn Ash and Gideon Exeter

Past Presidents Committee - Glendon Charmichael

SVG Unity Picnic: Coordinator - Cordel Telfer

Representative - Kenneth Farrell

Mothers Day Dinner Committee - Gracelyn Providence

Independence Dinner Committee - Yolande Lewis and

Shelley John

Children's Christmas: Coordinators - Yvette Cadogan and Lucine Butler

Youth Committee - Jimmy Lewis

CCAC: Representatives - Cordel Telfer & Gideon Exeter

The Association continued its outreach projects throughout 2008

Funds collected at the 2008 Independence Church Service were donated to:

Liberty Lodge Boys Home in Kingstown, SVG - \$500.00

Haiti Disaster Relief Fund - \$500.00

Sickle Cell Association - \$250.00

Diabetes Association - \$250.00

A record number of families and/or individuals, nine in total, were assisted through our Christmas Hamper Outreach Project. Each recipient got one of the food baskets as well as some cash.

Progress reports assured that the two Adopt-A-Child students in St. Vincent, Donlee Sutherland and Kadesha Nicholls are doing well.

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SVGAT Scholarship Program

The Association is pleased to announce that two (2) scholarships in the amount of \$1,000.00 each were presented at the 29th Anniversary Independence Celebration Dance on November 1, 2008.

Western Union Financial Services and St. Vincent and the Grenadines Sports Club sponsored the 2008 scholarships.

The History and Culture of SVG

(By Allison Sandy, 2008 Scholarship Recipient)

St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a chain of over thirty beautiful islands located in the Caribbean Sea. It is situated west of Barbados and southwest of St. Lucia, with a total area of about one hundred fifty square miles. It also has a population of approximately 121, 000 people (Govt. of SVG Fact Sheet). With green lush vegetation and beautiful black and white sand beaches, St. Vincent and the Grenadines has a rich cultural heritage and celebrates a history that is unique as well as intriguing.

Many historical accounts of St. Vincent state that it was discovered on January 22nd, 1498 by Christopher Columbus, who named the island to honor a Spanish saint, called Vincent of Sargossa. However, other sources state that when Columbus discovered St. Vincent, it was inhabited by the Caribs and Arawaks. They called St. Vincent, Hairoun, meaning "Home of the blessed".

The Caribs loved St. Vincent and they put up a stiff resistance against the invasion of European settlers. This lead to many conflicts and eventually wars, which caused the island to change hands several times between the English and French. The stiff resistance put up by the Caribs is said to be the reason why St. Vincent was the last Caribbean island to be colonized by Europeans.

When the Treaty of Versailles handed over St. Vincent to the British in 1783 many Caribs were said to be deported to Honduras (Garifuna people). Some died on the popular Grenadines island of Balliceaux from yellow fever and the few that were allowed to remain on the island were pushed to the northern parts of the island such as Sandy Bay where many descendants of the Caribs can still be found today.

A Carib Chief called Joseph Chatoyer was very instrumental in helping the Caribs to fight against European domination but he was killed at Dorsetshire Hill on March 14th, 1675. For many years January 22nd was celebrated as a holiday in St. Vincent and the Grenadines but on March 14th, 2002, the St. Vincent and the Grenadines government introduced the National Heroes Day to honor Vincentians heroes like Chief Joseph Chatoyer. It is also the day when the descendants of Caribs who were deported to Honduras, return to St. Vincent, to pay tribute to St. Vincent and the Grenadines as the home of their ancestors.

St. Vincent passed through many stages of Government during its history - From a representative assembly in 1776 and to an

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independent country on October 27th, 1979. Vincentians were given the right to vote in 1951 (Adult Suffrage) and as an independent state control their own affairs. It is now a parliamentary democracy and Sir Frederick Ballantyne is the current Governor General.

There are two major political parties namely, the Unity Labour Party headed by the Hon. Dr. Ralph Gonsalves who is the current Prime Minister and the New Democratic Party (the opposition) headed by Hon. Arnheim Eustace. Three other important leaders that must be mentioned are Hon. Ebenezer Theodore Joshua who was the first Chief Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines after whom the main airport in Airport is named, former Prime Minister Hon. James F. Mitchell who served as Prime Minister for over 15 consecutive years, and Hon. Robert Milton Cato who was the first Premier and Prime Minister, after whom, the main hospital in St. Vincent and the Grenadines is named.

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St. Vincent has a rich and thriving culture. Many groups of people occupied St. Vincent and the Grenadines in the sixteenth century. They were the Ciboney people or the Yellow Caribs, the Arawaks, the black Africans, the black Caribs, the European settlers (French, British and Portuguese) and the East Indians. The flavor of all these groups gives St. Vincent and the Grenadines a rich cultural heritage which is expressed in the language, the food, festivals and religion. For example, English is the main Language spoken but the Vincentian dialect (mixture of broken English and Creole) is a very popular mood of communication among Vincentians at home as well as abroad. Today, Vincentians still enjoy many of the kinds of foods introduced by these groups. The

Vincentians national dish includes roasted breadfruit and fried jackfish. The breadfruit plant was brought to the island by Captain Blight in the sixteenth century. Other cultural foods are fried plantain, rice and peas, ducouna, farine and zabuca (avocado), curry chicken, fried bakes, rice and pigeon peas, corn dumplings and tri-cake, and cassava bread.

Carnival is one of the major festivals in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and plays a big role in the economic life of the people. This ten day festival is filled with color, revelry, and attracts tourists from around the world. During these festivals, calypso, soca and steel pan music reflect the mood of the island people. Calypsonians provide social commentary on topics such as politics, religion, love and lust. Carnival is a very fun time for Vincentians as well as tourists.

The next major festival is Nine Mornings which is unique to St. Vincent and the Grenadines. This nine day festival begins on December 15th and ends on the December 24th. People from all across the island celebrate in various ways, through singing, dancing, storytelling, or just having fun. Several groups also go caroling and hold caroling competitions. They party from the early hours of the morning from 2:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. for each of the nine mornings before Christmas. Other festivals and celebrations include the Easter Regatta in Bequia, the Blues Festival, and many more which also attract many visitors to the island.

The culture of Vincentians is also expressed through tourism, which besides banana is the major industry in St. Vincent. Through tourism, the country highlights its historical and cultural points of interest such as the oldest Botanic Gardens in the Eastern Caribbean located in Kingstown, which has existed since 1765. The petroglyphs at Layou which are artifacts left there by the original Caribs, the Iron Man representing the number of Vincentians that fought in World War I, the Falls of Balleine, and the beautiful Grenadine islands that attracts most of the tourist. Many tourists who come to the island go snorkeling to enjoy the lovely beaches, the picturesque mountains, and celebrate the warmth and friendliness of the people.

In conclusion, the history and culture of St. Vincent and the Grenadines is very interesting for me as a person of Vincentian heritage. St. Vincent has come a long way from total control of Britain to an independent country, managing its own affairs. Vincentians also have reclaimed their history by declaring National Heroes Day. We are celebrating our own people now. The Vincentians who fought against the European invasion and through their language, foods and festivals have left us with a rich cultural heritage and a history that is unique as well as intriguing; and one that all Vincentians should be proud of.

SVGAT extends appreciation to Elma Gabriel and the PR Committee for producing the 2008 INSIGHT newsletters, website updates, and the Independence Brochure



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BEREAVEMENT NOTICE

The Executive and Members of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Association of Toronto extend condolences to all members and friends of our community who have lost loved ones.
We wish you God's blessing as you cope with your loss and we trust that those who have departed will find rest in the Lord.

Chateaubelair Christmas baby is 100



Centenarian Amanda Edwards surrounded by relatives and friends at her birthday party on Saturday. Her granddaughter Lolita is at her left; her son Mathias is in a pink t-shirt and cap; Area Representative Dr Jerrol Thompson (second from right); Grantley Bramble Jr. is boy in blue t-shirt.

Adrian Codogan.DEC.08

“Peace, perfect peace in this world of sin,” is the Christmas wish of Chateaubelair’s oldest resident, Amanda Edwards who celebrated her 100th birthday on Christmas Day.

Longevity runs in Amanda’s family. Her mother Margaret lived to 105; her older sibling Beatrice, who lives at Murray’s Village, is 102; her younger sisters Odessa and Rita are 95 and 90 years old respectively. Her brother Daman is 97 years old.

When asked how she feels to be 100, she replied, “I feel number one, number two, number three, number four and five”. She also said “Clean food to eat and clean water to drink makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise.”

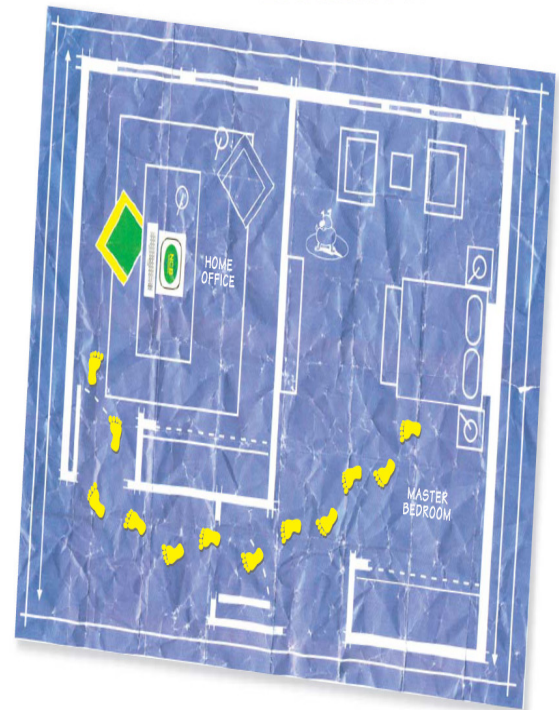
For her 100th birthday, SEARCHLIGHT’s employees donated a black cake complete with icing and candles.

Area representative Dr. Jerrol Thompson said that he thinks that it’s important to stress that all the residents of North Leeward and the entire nation wish Amanda the very best on her 100th birthday. Thompson also said that simple life, hard work and a good diet may have very well contributed to her longevity and that North Leeward is very proud of its centenarian.

Always remember to forget the troubles that passed away,

But never forget to remember the blessings that come each day.

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The Office of the Consulate General in Toronto is here to attend to the needs of Vincentians. It also strives at strengthening its ties with organizations looking to do business in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

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From the President's desk

Greetings Members and Friends,

As we begin 2009 we ask God for His guidance, wisdom, strength and peace within. We also ask that He will guide us and that His love will enfold us.

Let me take this opportunity to extend, on behalf of the Executive Committee, a special thank you to the Membership and the community at large, to our sponsors, and to individuals whose advertisements enabled us to produce and maintain our website and quarterly newsletter. A special thank you to the Past Presidents Council for the time that they have taken to assist our Organization as they work on the review of the Constitution.

As we focus on the upcoming Annual General Meeting an invitation is extended to all SVG Nationals to become involved in the Association. Please consider taking an active part by volunteering on the Executive Committee or on a committee and help us build our Organization.

In 2008, I was elated to see the number of persons who volunteered their time and contributed to the Organization in one way or the other. All of our major events were

resounding successes. We are asking for your continued support in 2009.

Thanks to Pastor Trudy of the Rosewood Church of the Nazarene for bringing the spiritual message, and to those who attended the Thanksgiving church service for the offering collected, with which we were able to give our support to four charities here in Canada and in SVG.

Through the generosity of our Members and Corporate Sponsors, we assisted nine families through our Christmas Hamper Outreach Project during the Christmas season. Santa was quite generous to the children in our community. He entertained our children at the annual Children's Christmas Party where over 110 children attended and received gifts.

On behalf of all Executive Members of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Association of Toronto Inc. let me again express our gratitude to all persons who contributed in one way or another to the life and work of our Organization in 2008.

Respectfully submitted

Francelia George
 SVGAT President, Fiscal Year of 2008

TORONTO CONSULATE OFFICE

Consulate of St. Vincent and the Grenadines

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Mr. Steve O. Phillips

Consul General

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Website: www.svgconsulate.org

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Immigration Matters

IMMIGRATION MATTERS: Consulting with an Immigration Representative
Contributed: Sandra Sutherland, CCIC

Anyone who contacts my company or me and mentions that they became aware of my immigration services through my articles or advertisements in *The Insight* is eligible for a free consultation with me.

What is a consultation and what should be expected at a consultation? A consultation is a confidential interview session whereby various factors of your situation and circumstances may be assessed for validity purposes and/or to provide you with a general evaluation regarding the possible success rate of your case. You should expect to give a brief and accurate synopsis of your situation and circumstances. Be prepared to exchange contact information, to declare any current or prior dealings with Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and to declare if you already have retained another immigration representative. In some instances the immigration representative may grant an opinion or give general advice based on the facts disclosed.

There are several misconceptions about what a consultation entails. It is sometimes perceived that a consultation is a "how to" session, that it is an opportunity to obtain a second opinion, or that it involves having your existing case reviewed or thoroughly evaluated. These circumstances involve in-depth review and analysis of documentary evidences in conjunction with your statements. If you are in the process of compiling an application package or already have submitted one to Citizenship and Immigration Canada, it would take considerable time for a representative to analyze your case.

Make the most of your consultation by being open, truthful and precise with the representative. Use the consultation to ascertain the expectations, potential role(s), and competency of the immigration representative prior to retaining him or her. Likewise, he/she may be able to ascertain if you could be a genuine client and if he/she may be adept in handling your case. Consultations permit both parties the opportunity to determine whether the other party appears to be trustworthy, cooperative and welcoming.

It is wise to meet with your prospective immigration representative for a consultation prior to retaining him or her. The insight gained will prove to be invaluable.

Sandra Sutherland is a Certified Canadian Immigration Consultant (CCIC) and can be reached at (416) 431-2829 or via e-mail at ssutherland@suthernimmigration.com. View her advertisement in this copy of the *Insight* or visit her company's website at www.suthernimmigration.com.
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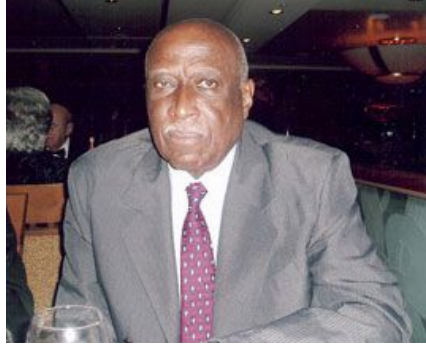
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St. Vincent and the Grenadines Association of Toronto – Serving our community

Special Features - SVG

Former Commissioner of Police tells it like it is



Commissioner of Police, Benjamin "Ben" Jackson now retired in Barbados.

Kirby Jackson 12.DEC.08 "SEARCHLIGHT"

"The job was divorced from politics. He didn't mix matters. We could be friends, but when it came to the job, friends had nothing to do with it."

Those are the words of former Commissioner of Police (COP) William Harry as he reflected on the service of another former COP, Benjamin "Ben" Jackson.

Ben Jackson agrees with Harry's description of him. It represented what he stood for and what propelled him to the honoured position of COP.

Ben's eventful life began on August 16, 1933, when he was born in New Grounds to his mother Katharine, who was "both mother and father," he forthrightly stated, when questioned about his father.

After attending the Union Methodist Primary School, Ben taught for three years at the same school as a part time teacher under what was a common teach and study programme.

Unfortunately for the teaching profession, but very fortunate, it proved to be for the police force, Ben was not one of the teachers selected to continue teaching after the three-year programme finished.

So in 1952, after working as a bookkeeper for a short while, Ben Jackson became a police officer, and judging from what he said, the discipline is what impressed him most about the Force.

"The discipline," he said: "It is something I respect up to now; you do as you were told."

It is no surprise that his star shone brightly and he made it to the top of the pile.

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He told SEARCHLIGHT that he believes that besides his hard work, the fact that he was based at the main office for a long time aided his climb.

"When you worked at the office, you had more scope," Jackson admitted.

He also received additional training when he was sent to Hendon Training School in London for five months, while he was an Acting Inspector.

However, the celebration of his October 6, 1972, appointment as Deputy Commissioner was short-lived, Jackson explained, as the next few months would prove very trying.

Jackson was caught in the middle of a political power struggle. Suddenly, the "light in the tunnel" that he said he saw leading to the Commissioner's chair in 1971, when he was made Superintendent, started to fade.

On October 7, 1972, the Government Gazette published that the post of Deputy Commissioner had been abolished.

What had happened is that Sir James Mitchell, then Premier, had sanctioned Jackson's appointment, along with that of COP Robert O'Garro, following the retirement of their predecessors.

However, while Mitchell was abroad, then acting Premier E.T. Joshua had moved against the appointment.

The legal battle went on for months, before he was eventually named Senior Assistant Commissioner. The post of Deputy Commissioner was reinstated in 1975, and he held that until his appointment as COP in 1977.

"I remember the controversy," said Sir James when SEARCHLIGHT contacted him.

"I didn't want the police politicized, so I stood my ground on the issue...Jackson was a good police officer who served this country well," he said.

As he reflected on his time as COP, Jackson couldn't help but reflect on the one disappointment, the thing that haunted him about his time in that honourable chair.

And as we interviewed him over the phone, you could almost see him shaking his head in disappointment from Barbados where he now lives with his second wife Eloise.

"My biggest problem with the police force was the political directorate. I voted for a party but didn't support a party," he said, adding "I never saw the support of a political party as part of my agenda."

"Part of me being in Barbados was because I was not willing to bend to political wishes," he told SEARCHLIGHT frankly.

Jackson spoke of many run-ins with the late Hudson Tannis, who was then Minister of National Security under the St. Vincent Labour Party Government, who he claims tried many times to influence him in the execution of his duty, which he fiercely resisted.

"The Minister wanted to run the police from his desk, but I wanted him to respect the independence of my office," Jackson said.

He recalled an incident when a man imported a truck chassis that didn't meet licensing specifications - it was too long.

Jackson said that he instructed the owner that he had to get it cut, but then two weeks later got a memo saying that Cabinet had decided to accommodate the applicant.

"I responded by letting them know that by saying they agreed to accommodate the applicant they were overlooking the law," Jackson said.

He said that he made it clear that if the applicant needed to appeal a decision made by the Licensing Authority, then he had to appeal to the Chairman of the Transport Board, whose decision would be final. The catch was that Jackson was also

the Chairman of the Transport Board.

"In a matter of weeks, the guy cut it and it was approved for the road," he said.

There was another time when Tannis, Jackson claims, intervened on the behalf of a constituent who was not accepted into the police force and was disappointed that he did not budge from his decision, for stated reasons, not to accept the applicant into the Force.

The run-ins were too numerous to list for the interview, Jackson said. But it would be 1979 that would test his mettle and give him the greatest challenge and greatest honour.

In March of 1979, the late Maurice Bishop led the coup that toppled the Eric Gairy administration in Grenada.

"I had to put our police on alert, because there were sympathizers of that movement here," he said.

On April 13, La Soufrière erupted, forcing the evacuation of more than 17,000 persons from the northern end of St. Vincent. "Many days I couldn't sleep. We had to evacuate the people."

Then came the proud night of October 27, 1979, when as COP, he was central to the organizing of what transpired that night, when this country gained its political independence from Britain.

He had so much to do that when the first Prime Minister, the late Robert Milton Cato, refused to excuse him from the pre-flag raising dinner at Government House so that he could make sure all was in place for the ceremony, he had to pull a fast one.

"I looked at the dinner invitation and realized that it was

from the Governor-General and not the Prime Minister, so I asked the Governor-General for leave and he granted me it," he said, with a slight chuckle.

The threat that he believed was posed by people aligned to Bishop's movement was also being bargained for that night.

Jackson revealed that heavily armed police officers were placed in strategic positions around Victoria Park and prior to Independence night, acting on intelligence he had received, a hole was dug and a generator hidden in it, close to the park, in case the electricity service was disrupted.

Now comes December 1979!

"No surrender. Tell the officers they have to die with their boots on and may God be with them."

Jackson says that it is still difficult to speak about the situation that led to him uttering those words.

Word came that a band of Union Islanders was staging an uprising - within 48 hours of the just concluded general elections, and among other things, they were bombing the police station - attacking the officers on duty.

They were being called on to surrender by the insurrectionists, but their COP, though fearing the worst for his men, would have none of it.

A State of Emergency was enforced, including a curfew.

"I remember telling the Prime Minister not to move from his home until I sent for him," Jackson recalled.

The government sent to Barbados for help from the Barbados Defence Force, and while they waited, Jackson prayed to God for direction, planned to deal with the situation, and gave instructions to his men, determined to crush the uprising before night fall.

"I told the Prime Minister (Robert Milton Cato) that I couldn't let nightfall come with this situation, and that if I succeed I don't want any recognition, but if I failed my resignation will be on his desk the next day."

By the time the Barbados troops arrived at Union Island, the back of the uprising was already broken by local police.

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Jackson is, however, thankful that based on information gathered during the investigation after the uprising, had it not been for an act of God, the uprising could have been worse and more drawn out.

It was revealed that a shipment of automatic weapons that was sent from Grenada to Carriacou for Union Island never arrived because the boat that went for them sank. The virtual end of Jackson's tenure as COP came in 1980, when Prime Minister Cato, without discussion with him, summoned Scotland Yard detectives to investigate a high profile murder in the Villa area.

"I couldn't live with that. It wasn't that Scotland Yard was called, but that it was done without my knowledge... I distanced myself from them when they were there, and in the end they told the Prime Minister that everything they did, the local detectives had already done," Jackson said.

So in 1982, he asked for early retirement, and when a move to Miami didn't work out, in 1983, he eventually took up the position as Staff Officer, which was second in command at

the newly formed, Barbados-based Regional Security System (RSS).

He served the RSS for seven years and since then has managed his own security consultancy firm, headed up the security department of a hotel, served as property manager at the same hotel, and now, happily retired.

Jackson, a father of four, told SEARCHLIGHT that despite the testing times, he enjoyed his career, and policing was his life.

He has on more than one occasion refused to be granted honours for his service, including once when Prime Minister Cato told him that he was being recommended for a Queen's honour, the MBE.



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ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES ASSOCIATION OF TORONTO CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR 2009

| | | |
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| Sunday, January 25 | Annual General Meeting | Northwood Community Centre |
| Sunday, February 22 | Monthly General Meeting | Northwood Community Centre |
| Sunday, March 29 | Monthly General Meeting | Northwood Community Centre |
| Sunday, April 26 | Monthly General Meeting | Northwood Community Centre |
| Sunday, May 10 | Annual Mothers' Day Dinner | Crawford Adventist Academy |
| Saturday June 13 | TBD | TBD |
| Sunday, May 31 | Monthly General Meeting | Northwood Community Centre |
| Saturday, July 18 | Vincy Unity Picnic | Brown's Bay Provincial Park, 1000 Islands |
| Sunday, July 26 | Monthly General Meeting | Northwood Community Centre |
| Sunday, August 30 | Monthly General Meeting | Northwood Community Centre |
| Sunday, October 25 | Thanksgiving Church Service | Venue to be Announced |
| Saturday, October 31 | Independence Banquet | Venue to be Announced |
| Sunday, November 1 | Town Hall Discussions | Venue to be Announced |
| Saturday, December 20 | Children's Christmas Party | Venue to be Announced |
| Christmas Week | Christmas Hamper Project | Across the Community |

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Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Association of Toronto Membership Registration Form

*Become a Member!
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Mission Statement

The St. Vincent and the Grenadines Association (SVGA) of Toronto is a non-profit community-based Association. We are committed to providing assistance and support to groups and institutions in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Ontario, and wherever the Association deems fit. We are also committed to provide an anti bias forum for Cultural, Educational, Social and Recreational enrichment and to maintain a network of communication through information and referral.



Objectives

- To maintain a high level of volunteerism through recruitment, training and effective utilization of skills.
- To provide a forum to promote leadership and advocacy for the enrichment of Culture and Education.
- To provide an anti bias environment for the discussion of matters of general interest to its members.
- To plan, implement and participate in fundraising activities to meet urgent human needs.
- To promote social and recreational events to enrich the lives of Children, Youth, Adults and Seniors.
- To maintain a network of communication through information and referral.

Our membership meetings are held on the LAST SUNDAY OF EVERY MONTH from 4:00 p.m. at Northwood Community Centre, 15 Clubhouse Court, (Keele St. & Sheppard Ave. W. area), North York.

We hope to see you there!

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