



# SAINTS NEWS & VIEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ST. STANISLAUS COLLEGE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION TORONTO  
AND THE ST. STANISLAUS COLLEGE (GUYANA) ALUMNI SOCIETY

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From the Toronto Saints Alumni Association and the Toronto Saints Charitable Society

## **A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR**

Editorial

### **THE PANDEMIC, AND OTHER THINGS**

WOW! What a year this has been! On 24<sup>th</sup> November 1992, in a speech at the Guildhall in London to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her Accession, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth referred to that year as her “*annus horribilis*”. Well, 2020 can be described as the world’s “*annus horribilis*”. It has been 101 years since the last major world-wide pandemic occurred when the “Spanish Flu” ravaged the world.

The COVID-19 pandemic hit Ontario hard in March when the Government was forced to implement a lock-down of all stores (except for essential services) including restaurants and places of amusement and exercise, restrict the number of people who could gather indoors or outdoors, make the wearing of masks in public *de rigueur*, and set a minimum distance of 2 metres as the closest for people to be together.

A few months later when the lock-down was lifted, irresponsible citizens took this as a sign that the pandemic was over in Ontario and acted accordingly, causing the count of daily new cases to rise precipitously to the 4-digit level, causing the Government to implement a phase 2 lock-down in November! When will this ever stop!

The spread of the virus will stop only when people obey the rules set out by the Government and Health authorities. Research has found that the virus is transmitted mainly by an airborne process (through breathing, speaking, sneezing, coughing, etc.), and the probability of getting it by touch is very low (unless you touch your mouth, nose, or eyes with your hand) – so this does not mean that the normal healthy habit of washing hands should be neglected. Further, there are those, perhaps quite a few, who are asymptomatic, having the virus but exhibiting no signs of it, but still contagious. It could well be that this may be one of the major causes for the second phase of the spread. Thus, the rules are there not only to prevent you from catching the virus but also to prevent you from possibly spreading it.

Unfortunately, the lock-downs have caused great (even irreparable, in some cases) damage to the economy with job losses and store closings. Yet, paradoxically, statistics show that savings increased during this period, mainly because there were no (or very limited) opportunities for discretionary spending. The problem with this heavy-handed approach to conquering the pandemic is that no one alive today has experienced this type of situation, and so no one knows how best to handle it. There is not a single government in the world which had any plans in place for such an event, so the rules are being made up in an ad hoc manner as they go along. One has to wonder what sort of disaster/recovery planning any government has in place, except for that of nuclear warfare, a far less likely scenario to happen but yet probably planned for in great detail!

The major saviour to be touted is the application of a vaccine. However, the Canadian Federal Government, which is responsible for obtaining the vaccine, has no control over this and is at the mercy of other countries. Government legislation over the years (under both Conservative and Liberal parties) has caused medical firms, creating and producing vaccines, to abandon Canada and to settle elsewhere where the tax regime and patent legislation enable them to recover the high costs of research and production. The result is that Canada has no local source of vaccines, and has to get in line to obtain vaccines from producing countries which will cater first to their own citizens. The Government has been given a promise of the availability of a small number of doses, enough for about 0.33% of Canadians, by no later than the end of 2020, but the real volume of delivery will start (hopefully) in March and will continue through to the summer of 2021! Therefore, it remains very important to follow the rules of the Health authorities.

The upshot of all this is to encourage everyone to stay at home and go out and mix with others as little as possible, and to wear a mask if and when out in public. You cannot catch or spread the virus if you do not have any close contact with an outsider. Be safe rather than sorry!

Ever optimistic, we have announced dates for our regular fund-raising events, and these are shown, as usual, on the back page of this issue, with the first event being the Spring Dance scheduled to be held in mid-April, 2021. However, this date and all the others must still be considered as very tentative in nature, as we do not know how much longer the pandemic will have us in its clutches and when people will feel safe to venture out into large and

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(The following article has been taken (and edited) with permission from the archives of the British Province of the Society of Jesus, London, England.)

*Biography of Jesuits at St. Stanislaus College - 22*

### FR. PARKER LANDER

Parker Joseph Lander was born at Cork in 1846, and went out as quite a child to Tasmania. When fourteen years of age, circumstances brought it about that he should return to Europe. The famous Bishop Willson of Hobart had sought out among his smattering of Catholics those youths who seemed to show promise of a vocation to the priesthood. One rather doubts if there was in 1860 an ecclesiastical seminary in the Southern Hemisphere - there certainly was none in Australasia; consequently, they must go to Europe, and ultimately he selected eight, of whom Lander is the only name we know. They were placed under the supervision of Rev. William Bond, a secular priest who later became famous as the parish priest at St. Thomas', Fulham. It was an adventurous day when this good priest led his little band through the streets of Hobart to prepare for their three months' weary journey round the Cape.

High hopes were justified. Two went to the English College, Rome, two more to Oscott, Lander and another pair went to Stonyhurst, and the eighth, a very little boy, spent three years at Mount St. Mary's. Five years later, Parker Lander entered the Society and, though he travelled much, Tasmania saw him no more. The Church of the Antipodes lost a good priest.

The Catalogue of the year 1865, in which he entered, is an interesting document. We had only 296 members in the Province, though the *Ordo regiminis* contained only three less names than it does to-day. Scotland was considered quite off the map, for it comes after Pontefract, Skipton, Barbados, and Jamaica. The London Residence was then in Hill Street, and the historian of the Province, Br. Foley, was Lay-brother Socius to the Provincial. Of the novices with whom Br. Lander associated, only Fr. Clement Barraud is alive. His Juniorate was done at the Seminary where he secured B.A. (Classical Honours) at the London University.

Soon after his ordination in 1880, he was made prefect of Studies, first at Glasgow and then at Mount St. Mary's, but the last seven years at the latter school were spent as Spiritual Father.

In 1902, he went to St. Ignatius', Malta, in the same capacity, but reverted to his former post of Prefect of Studies after the first twelve months. These five years were times of stress for the Community at St. Julian's. In one term, sickness was rampant among the members of the staff but, in spite of it, the Rector, Fr. Joseph Dobson, was able to say at a public prize distribution that "hardly an hour of school work had been missed." He did not confide to his auditors that it was owing to his own heroic work, seconded by Fr. Lander's devoted services, that the flag had been kept flying.

In 1907, there was a further upheaval. Once already, the

school had been closed, owing to a complex series of difficulties. The time had now come to shut down the College for a second time. Woe and lamentation swept the Island; the Provincial, Fr. General, the Holy Father himself, were petitioned; but the decision was based on reason, and no adequate reasons were ever produced for rescinding it. So, S.S. Arabic bore away the majority of the priests, scholastics, and Brothers to England.

Fr. Lander was one of them; but he was not to stay long in the country. The fact that he had lived in one hot climate pointed him out as eminently suited to live in a still hotter one! Consequently, he received orders to sail for British Guiana. However, no news of his coming seems to have reached the Colony till the passenger-list was cabled from Barbados. Fr. Beauclerk had been notified that his period as Superior at Georgetown was coming to an end, but no news of his successor had arrived. When, therefore, the cable arrived, it was immediately assumed that Fr. Lander was the man. Rather tactlessly, someone asked him, even before landing, if such was the case, and the old man was bitterly pained. However, when a belated letter arrived explaining that Fr. Vincent Hornyold was the Superior designate, and he was but Prefect of Studies, his normal serenity immediately returned.

The senior boys at the school were greatly attached to him, and were deeply affected when the inevitable breakdown took place, and he had to return to England. This was in 1910.

A few months' rest, and he was petitioning to work again. First, he served at Worcester and, when the war broke out, went to Tisbury, which he administered for ten years.

On the death of Fr. Chandlery, he was appointed to assist Fr. Cooksey with the Retreats at Craighead, though he seems to have thought that his working days were over. They well nigh were. Whilst giving a Retreat to some Glasgow Ordinandi, he was found sitting on the stairs in a comatose condition, and could not remember how he had got there. A week later, after a few days in bed, a similar attack came on during recreation. He was anointed and brought to St. Mary's Hall by slow stages. The day he left Craighead was Ladyday, 1925; exactly sixty-five years before, he had sailed from Hobart. There was joy in his countenance and gratitude on his lips; indeed, the old man seemed to radiate kindness, for it communicated itself even to the porters who helped him into the express at Glasgow. The end came rapidly; he received the Last Sacraments for the second time at the end of September and died on 10<sup>th</sup> October.

*Requiescat in pace.*

**BLUE BUTTERFLIES AND COVID-19***A story by Mark McWatt*

When Jairo Mackenzie was little more than a toddler, his parents lived in Mabaruma, in Guyana's North-West district, where his father was a government district officer. They lived in a large wooden house in the government compound and, for Jairo and his two brothers, it was a perfect life. Jairo was five and a half years old, and his two brothers—the twins—were almost four.

The boys wandered at will around the small government compound—around and under the houses and other government buildings and, especially, among the fruit trees that grew behind the buildings and at the edge of the forest. They plundered mangoes and guavas and golden apples and whatever other fruits were in season. Adult relatives of the family who visited from time to time were put out by the fact that the youngsters were allowed to wander around freely on their own; but any children who visited thought it was wonderful and were happy to join the boys' adventures.

When the boys' Uncle Bertie came to visit for the first time, he woke early on the first morning and came down for breakfast, expecting to see the boys, who had gone to bed hours before him the night before, but there was no one there except their Mum, in the kitchen, brewing coffee and preparing breakfast.

"Where are the boys?" Uncle Bertie asked, "Don't tell me they're still asleep!"

"Oh no, they're wandering around somewhere outside... they'll soon be here for breakfast"—and, when she glanced up and saw the look of surprise and apprehension on Bertie's face, she added "Don't let it worry you, Bertie dear, they do this every morning; it's quite safe in the backyards and among the fruit trees—and, besides, there are probably a few older boys with them; there's usually quite a gang of youngsters wandering around on mornings."

Uncle Bertie was not sure that he felt entirely comfortable with this picture of his young nephews, but he helped his sister-in-law with the preparation of breakfast. Sure enough, at around ten to seven, the boys came noisily up the back stairs, shouting goodbye to other members of their morning gang. They entered the kitchen, arguing about who had the biggest mamie-apple, their shirts and faces yellow from the juice of mangoes. Uncle Bertie was happy to see them and to hear all about their morning adventures—although he did not quite understand all their references...such as Jairo's complaint about Mrs Ramacindo's noisy fowl-cock, who kept following them around ("like if we had chicken-feed in we pockets!").

"So what did you do?" Uncle Bertie asked.

"Well, Alex throw—"

"No, it was Andy—"

"OK. Andy throw a rotten guava and hit the fowl-cock... and he make a lot of noise, but stop following we around."

"But", Uncle Bertie asked, "aren't you all afraid that some

dangerous animal might come wandering out of the forest and attack you?"

"Oh, they know not to go close to the forest" their mum said, "but to stay on this side of the fruit trees..."

"Talking 'bout that", Jairo said with a grin, "Attie Solomon was telling me: 'Chase da noisy foul-cock over the other side—let some wild-boar or something come out and

eat he rass!'"

"Behave yourselves, all of you", Mum said, as the twins began to laugh with their big brother—and even Uncle Bertie flashed a smile.

Shortly after that, the children's dad came down, and they all had breakfast, chatting about the creatures of the forest and the fruit trees. At one point, Jairo said: "And don't forget, Uncle Bertie, that I have a weapon" — and he waved a sturdy sling-shot before taking a stone from his pocket and shooting it through the open dining-room window and onto the roof of the iron shed behind the house... "If any wild boar was to come near me —"

"That's quite enough Jairo", his father said sternly; "I've told you before not to shoot that thing in the house; you could have missed the open window and shattered one of the glass panes!"

"Sorry, Dad, I forgot"

"Don't do it again."

Shortly after all this, the boys' father said goodbye and walked over to his office in the building next door. Alex, one of the twins, then said: "Come with us, Uncle Bertie, and we'll show you the fruit trees and the places we go to in the mornings."

"Yes, come, Uncle Bertie", Andy, the other twin, said, "we'll show you everything".

And that's what happened; they showed Uncle Bertie all the best fruit trees and identified for him all the bird-songs and other noises that they heard coming from the edge of the forest. Uncle Bertie thoroughly enjoyed it all; but the fruit tree that interested him the most was an avocado tree which had several large pears ready to be picked. His enthusiasm, as he collected three of them, was as great as that of the boys when they were picking ripe mangoes or guavas. The boys were happy to see him enjoying himself, although Jairo said: "I guess pears are OK, but they not sweet like mangoes or oranges or mamie-apples."

Uncle Bertie was also introduced to a bunch of older boys who were his nephews' regular accomplices as they participated in the morning plunder of ripe fruit; there was Zack and Morris and Attie Solomon who was probably, at ten years old, the eldest of them all. Uncle Bertie thanked them for fruit-hunting with his nephews in the early mornings and asked them to make sure that the young ones kept safe and didn't get into any trouble. Uncle Bertie and the boys had many more such morning adventures over the next couple of weeks.

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## MEMBERSHIP

The following is the list of alumni who are currently paid-up members in 2020. Membership is based on the calendar year.

<b>CANADA (84)</b>	Peter DeFreitas <sup>1</sup>	Clayton Jeffery <sup>4</sup>	Albert Sweetnam <sup>4</sup>	John Jardim <sup>1</sup>
Paul Abdool <sup>4</sup>	Noel Denny	Anthony Jekir	Beverly Vandeyar	
Lance Alexander <sup>2</sup>	Clive Devers <sup>2</sup>	Amanda King	Arthur Veerasammy	<b>U.K. (3)</b>
Howard Amo <sup>4</sup>	Roger Devers <sup>2</sup>	Vibert Lampkin <sup>4</sup>	Vibert Vieira <sup>3</sup>	Tony Gomes <sup>2</sup>
Paul Archer	Terence Devers <sup>2</sup>	Geoffrey Luck <sup>2</sup>	Paul Vincent <sup>4</sup>	Neville Jordan <sup>1</sup>
Glenmore Armogan <sup>1</sup>	Neville Devonish <sup>2</sup>	Gerard Martins	Howard Welshman <sup>3</sup>	Charles Kennard <sup>4</sup>
Bernard Austin <sup>4</sup>	Jerome D'Oliveira	Michael Mendes de Franca <sup>3</sup>	Godfrey Whyte	
Malcolm Barrington <sup>3</sup>	Paul Duarte	Anthony O'Dowd <sup>4</sup>	David Wong <sup>3</sup>	<b>U.S.A. (16)</b>
Gerard Bayley <sup>3</sup>	Joe Faria <sup>2</sup>	Michael Persaud	Wayne Yeates	Mark Anthony
John Rene Bayley <sup>4</sup>	Paul Farnum	Renuka Persaud <sup>3</sup>	John Yip <sup>1</sup>	Satynanand Bhagrat-tee <sup>3</sup>
Teddy Boyce	Raymond Fernandes	Compton Pestano <sup>5</sup>		Ronald Chanderbhan <sup>4</sup>
Randy Bradford	Andre Fredricks <sup>2</sup>	L. A. Phillips <sup>2</sup>	<b>AUSTRALIA (1)</b>	Ronald DeAbreu <sup>1</sup>
Paul Camacho <sup>3</sup>	Darwin Fung <sup>3</sup>	Carl Ramalho	Lennox Yhap	Joseph Brian De-Freitas
Alfred Carr <sup>4</sup>	James Fung	Marcelline Ram-charan <sup>2</sup>		Dalip Etwaroo <sup>4</sup>
Wilfred Carr <sup>3</sup>	Trevor Gomes	Linden Ramdeholl <sup>4</sup>	<b>BRAZIL (1)</b>	Bernard Friemann <sup>4</sup>
Joseph Castanheiro <sup>2</sup>	J. Neil Gonsalves <sup>3</sup>	Alex Rego	Stephen DeCastro <sup>3</sup>	Edward Gouveia <sup>4</sup>
Bob Chee-a-tow	Ken Hahnfeld <sup>4</sup>	Romeo Resaul <sup>3</sup>		Philip Greathead <sup>4</sup>
Sydney Chin	Hugh Hazlewood <sup>3</sup>	Peter St. Aubyn <sup>2</sup>	<b>GUYANA (1)</b>	Edwin Jack
Ivan Choo <sup>4</sup>	Paul Hazlewood <sup>4</sup>	Savitri Seenauth <sup>4</sup>	Fitzgerald Yaw Jr. <sup>2</sup>	Kenneth Jordan <sup>2</sup>
Tony Clarke <sup>4</sup>	Jocelyn Heydorn	Asoka Robin Singh <sup>3</sup>		Jolyon King <sup>7</sup>
Paul Crum-ewing <sup>4</sup>	Desmond Hill <sup>3</sup>	Michael Singh <sup>3</sup>	<b>NEVIS (1)</b>	Joey Lopes
Edward DaSilva <sup>2</sup>	Yale Holder	Vanita Soman <sup>1</sup>	Robin Shaw <sup>4</sup>	Hugh Rodrigues <sup>2</sup>
Terry DeAbreu <sup>4</sup>	Andrew Insanally <sup>4</sup>	Akisha Somrah <sup>3</sup>	<b>TRINIDAD (3)</b>	Peter Rodrigues <sup>2</sup>
Tyrone DeAbreu <sup>4</sup>	Richard James <sup>6</sup>	Walter Spooner	Richard Harford <sup>3</sup>	Leyland Thomas
Gregory DeCastro <sup>4</sup>	Desmond Jardine <sup>3</sup>		Ronald Harford <sup>3</sup>	
Rupert DeCastro <sup>2</sup>				

There are 110 paid-up members.

## Notes :

1. These (8) alumni have paid in advance through 2021.
2. These (18) alumni have paid in advance through 2022.
3. These (22) alumni have paid in advance through 2023.
4. These (28) alumni have paid in advance through 2024.
5. This (1) alumnus have paid in advance through 2025.
6. This (1) alumnus have paid in advance through 2026.
7. This (1) alumnus have paid in advance through 2028.

## SPECIAL NOTICE ON MEMBERSHIP

Membership is paid by calendar year i.e. January to December. Therefore, membership for 2020 will expire on 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2020. This applies to all those in the above list who do not have a superscript number next to their name. We request they submit their membership fees as soon as possible to the Association - see page 8 for the membership form and Association address, or submit your payment electronically at [www.torontosaints.com](http://www.torontosaints.com). We remind you that the fee is \$25 (Can) per year but, if you pay \$100 (Can) for 4 years, you will receive an extra year for no further charge. Selecting the multiple year membership will mean that you will not need to worry about having to remember to pay the fees for the next five years.

## Editorial

(continued from page 1)  
close gatherings. We shall keep you informed as the dates get closer.

In a few past issues, we have featured some very short stories and poems submitted by alumni (mainly members of the Toronto Executive) but, in this issue for the first time, we have included a full short story by an alumnus who is not only an academic but also a published author. This story has never been published before, but will be published in an upcoming book by the author. He is Mark

McWatt who visited Toronto in 2005 on a promotion tour for his first work of fiction, *Suspended Sentences*, which won a Commonwealth Writers' Prize in 2006, as well as the Casa de las Américas Prize for best book of Caribbean Literature in English or Creole. We thank Mark for his permission to include it in this issue. Enjoy!

On behalf of the Toronto Association and Society, we offer all our readers and their families the very best for a Merry and Holy Christmas, and a Happy New Year in 2021 without enduring the COVID-19 virus - or any other.

## ALUMNI IN THE NEWS

**FOUNDER SCALES BACK ON HIS WORK**

In a letter to his staff in early December, alumnus (54-59) **Rupert DeCastro**, one of the Founders in 1994 of the St. Stanislaus College Alumni Association Toronto (SSCAAT), announced that, effective 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2021, he will be cutting back on his work responsibilities by winding down Century 21 CAMDEC Real Estate Ltd., a Real Estate Brokerage Business which he had created in 1977 with his late wife, Camille.



Having reached the "ripe old age of 78", Rupert will spend more time in managing the building in which his firm is located and which he owns, but he still will continue to

work as a one-man operation in the real estate business.

Not only is Rupert a Founder of SSCAAT but he is also a very generous benefactor to SSCAAT by providing, free of charge, space in his building for SSCAAT to hold meetings and to store its records and goods. He has promised that this will not change in the future. Also, he still will continue to be active with the Toronto alumni/ae in providing support to the College in Guyana.

On behalf of the Toronto alumni, we wish Rupert all best wishes in his new approach to life as he heads toward retirement at some distant time.

**OBITUARIES**

**Alumnus (43-51) Gerard (Gerry) A. Bayley** died in London, Ontario, on 28 October, 2020, at the age of 86 years. He was the brother of *alumnus (38-43) (the late) Arnold* and *alumnus (47-53) John Rene*, a Director of SSCAAT and Secretary of SSC(G)AS. His parents were the late Dr. Randolph Bayley, a well-known Physician in Georgetown, and the late Dorothy Bayley who was the Mayor of Georgetown for many years. After leaving St. Stanislaus College, Gerry attended the University of Guelph, Ontario.

**Alumnus (53-60) Peter Winston Denny**, the brother of *alumnus Noel Denny (54-59)*, passed away in Guyana on 23 Nov, 2020.

In addition to being a former teacher at the College where he was sometimes known as "Peanuts", Peter served as one of Guyana's outstanding Diplomats, having been Ambassador to the Russian Federation from 1982 to 1989, and Ambassador to the People's Republic of China from 1990 to 1995.

In his spare time, he served as President of the Guyana Amateur Radio Association (GARA), and was a committee member of Alliance Française of Guyana.



**Alumnus (72-78) Horace Andre Kirton** passed away on Sunday, 8 November, 2020, in the U.S.A.



**REQUIESCANT IN PACE.**

**2020/1 EXECUTIVES FOR SSCAAT & SSCGAS****St. Stanislaus College Alumni Association Toronto**

At the Association's Annual General Meeting to report on the financial year of 1 Sept., 2019, to 31 Aug., 2020, held in Toronto on Sun. 27 Sept., 2020, the following were elected to the Executive Committee for the 2020 - 2021 year:

**President:** L. A. (Bunty) Phillips

**Secretary:** Akisha Somrah

**Treasurer:** Alfred Carr

**Directors:**

Malcolm Barrington

John Rene Bayley

Paul Camacho

Neville Devonish

James Fung

Des Jardine

Amanda King

Michael Persaud

Renuka Persaud

Andrew Insanally (*Immediate Past President*)

**St. Stanislaus College (Guyana) Alumni Society**

At the Society's Annual General Meeting to report on the financial year of 1 Sept., 2019, to 31 Aug., 2020, held in Toronto on Sun. 15 Nov., 2020, the following were elected to the Board of Directors for the 2020 - 2021 year:

**Chairman:** Rupert De Castro

**Vice-Chairman:** Paul Abdool (*independent member*)

**Directors:**

Lance Alexander (*independent member*)

James Fung (*independent member*)

Des Jardine

Amanda King

Renuka Persaud

The following were elected to the Executive Committee:

**President:** Rupert De Castro

**Secretary:** John Rene Bayley

**Assistant Secretary:** Godfrey Whyte

**Treasurer:** Alfred Carr

**Assistant Treasurer:** Akisha Somrah

**Community Relations Executive:** Amanda King

**Executive-at-large:**

Des Jardine

Renuka Persaud

**Blue Butterflies and COVID-19** *(Continued from page 3)*

Then there was ‘steamer day’, when the passenger steamer arrived from Georgetown—and Uncle Bertie was due to leave the following day on its return trip to the city. For Jairo and the twins, steamer day was no different from the others; they were gone on their fruit-hunting ramble before six that morning—although Uncle Bertie didn’t accompany them this time as he was preparing for his trip home the next day.

It wasn’t yet seven o’clock when the boys could be heard coming up the back stairs—and, from the sounds they made, both their mum and Bertie sensed that there was something wrong. The twins burst into the kitchen, followed by Attie Solomon—but there was no sign of Jairo.

“What’s going on? Where’s your big brother? Young Solomon, isn’t it?” She continued, “What’s happened to Jairo?”

The twins burst into tears and shouted “Oh Mum—he’s lost!”—and that seemed to be the signal for everyone to start talking at once. It was just at that point that the children’s father came into the room; he managed to settle everyone down and asked Attie to tell what happened. The ten-year-old explained that, as they were all picking ripe guavas, they suddenly saw Jairo pull out of his pocket a small butterfly net and was shouting: “A blue Morpho! A blue Morpho!” And he took off behind the butterfly.

As the story unfolded, it became clear that the large blue butterfly (which has always fascinated the young Jairo) had fluttered into the forest, with Jairo in hot pursuit—despite the shouts and warnings of his brothers and the three older boys who were with them at the time. “I followed him into the bush”, Attie said, “but it hard to see anything inside there and, although I keep calling out his name, he never answer...He mussee gone in real deep...I din want there to be two boys lost in the bush so, before I went in too far, I just stan up and holler ‘Jairo! Jairo!’ a few times and, when I ent hear no reply, I run back out and we hurried back here to tell you all.”

“Come and show us where he went into the bush”, the boys’ dad said, and soon there was a large search party at the edge of the forest.

“Now, let’s not all rush wildly into bush, or there will be more people lost! Let us spread out here along the edge of the forest and each make our way in slowly calling Jairo’s name and looking for signs such as broken branches, etc. And don’t spread out too far—we have to be in shouting distance of each other.”

It was Attie who found him, and whose shouting voice was heard by all the others: “I find him! I find Jairo! I find him!” They all hurried to the source of the shouting and saw Jairo sitting on a rock and trying to smile through his tears. It turned out he had actually caught the butterfly in his net, but that was the beginning of his troubles because he had no clue where he was nor how to get out of the forest. He wandered around for a while, shouting at the top of his voice but, when there was no response, he sat on a rock and cried... until he heard Attie in the distance.

Everyone in Mabaruma—and beyond—heard the story of Jairo’s adventure; he became famous as ‘the boy who loss away in the bush wid a butterfly’; and, indeed, the blue morpho butterfly was his prize although it was already half-dead. He knew it would not live long in captivity, so he was resigned to having it mounted and enclosed in glass—as it turned out he ended up with two blue morpho butterflies mounted, because old Mr Hernandez, who had a shop down by the steamer stelling, heard the story and gave Jairo another blue butterfly that he had had mounted some time ago. The child was overjoyed and has ever since identified himself with and by the two blue Morpho butterflies.

You can conclude from all of this that Uncle Bertie was able to pack that evening and take the steamer safely back to town on the next day. As for the boys? They carried on as usual—hunting ripe fruit every morning. Jairo and the twins became great friends with—and indeed inseparable from—Attie and Zack and Morris for the rest of their childhoods....

The story resumes fifty-four years later, in Guyana...

Jairo is pushing sixty and finds himself back in his native Guyana. He left to attend the University of Toronto when he was eighteen and, apart from a few brief visits over the years, has not lived in Guyana since. After Graduation, he moved to Florida and got married and raised his two children there. He kept in sporadic touch with Attie Solomon who remained a loyal friend over the years. Jairo’s two children are now grown-up and have families of their own. This has been a bleak and tragic year for all of them; the Corona Virus arrived and they all hated having to stay home. Jairo’s wife, Louise, came down with the virus and died horribly, hooked up to a machine that breathed for her in a hospital in Florida. Around the same time, Jairo learned that Alex, one of his two twin brothers who lived in New York, also succumbed to the virus. All this affected Jairo deeply, but he was the kind of person who kept it all bottled up inside and put on a brave face. Now retired from his job, he would have been happy to help with his grandchildren, but they too were all adults now and coping with their strangely cramped lives—given the raging pandemic. Thus, Jairo was alone and found it hard to cope without wife and family, and became careless about the COVID-19 pandemic—perhaps hoping to catch it and be gone from a strange and unfriendly world. He decided that, if he was going to die, he’d prefer to do so in his native Guyana, so he wrote his friend Attie and told him about his plans to return “home”. Attie encouraged him and told him that he must come up to Iwokrama, the forest station in which he worked as a guide, though his age directed that he should retire later in the year.

Thus it was that Jairo found himself at Iwokrama, staying in one of the cabins facing the Essequibo river. It was serene and wonderful and, since there were very few others staying there at the time, it was very casual and easy-going. Attie, in his role as guide,

**Blue Butterflies and COVID-19** *(Continued from page 6)*

took Jairo all over the river, into creeks and up to a mountain-top overlooking the Essequibo. He also took him several miles by road up to an impressive “Forest Canopy Walk”, built some years ago by the Canadians. Jairo was able to relax and enjoy the company of his friend from childhood.

Then they began to get news about people in Georgetown and along the Guyana coast who had succumbed to the Corona Virus; many of them had died. As the reported number of deaths crept up towards 50, Jairo became uncomfortable and moody, although Attie tried to calm him down. He began to wish once more that the virus would claim his life, for he would be happy to die in the forests of his homeland.

Meanwhile, a small party of guests from Europe had arrived at Iwokrama, and, much as Attie would have preferred to stay at the forest station and comfort his friend, he had to take these newcomers on the various tours. When the party returned at night from a trip to the canopy walk, Attie could see no light on in Jairo’s hut and concluded that he must be sleeping. Next morning, there was still no sign of Jairo and, when he enquired, Attie was told by one of the gardeners that Jairo had been seen taking walks in and around the property, and had probably gone on an early morning exploration of one of the paths into the forest. Attie didn’t like the sound of this but was busy with the tourists all day and again came home late that night to find Jairo’s cabin dark and there was no response when he knocked on the door.

Next day, when he returned around noon from a river tour with the European visitors, he was handed a letter which was found on the pillow in Jairo’s hut. The unopened envelope said “Please give this to Attie Solomon” and was signed by Jairo and dated three days before. As soon as he could, Attie sat in his room and, with a certain amount of dread, he opened the envelope. Inside was a letter;

Dear Attie,

I still can’t get over renewing our friendship after all the years! I’m sure you will remember that incident from Mabaruma in the old days, when I got lost chasing a blue morpho butterfly and you and the others eventually found me—in tears—and with the butterfly almost dead in a little net. I was only five at the time, but I remember it mainly because of you; it was you who first found me—and you who, a year later, told about it to our whole Mabaruma school, when it was your turn to stand on the stage and tell a story to the whole school.

Anyway, I’m writing this because I don’t want you wasting your time all these years later searching for me again—this time in the forests around Iwokrama. I say this because if you are reading this letter, it means that I have “disappeared” again. This time I am not chasing blue butterflies, and you won’t find me in tears sitting on a rock—in fact you just won’t find me, because I don’t want to be found. The other evening, when we were catching up on each other’s life-stories, I told you

when we chatted how happy I was to be back in my country Guyana, especially after my wife and brother had died...what I didn’t tell you is how much I hate this fucking COVID-19 Virus that has taken over my—and everyone else’s—world.

Ironically, it seems to have completely ignored me; God knows I have tried to catch it and die like the others—but, no, it will not come to me! So now I intend to die somewhere in the forests of my beloved Guyana, leaving no debts nor burdens for anyone. So...see you on the other side—whenever it is your time to come. I thank you for everything.

I love you,

Jairo

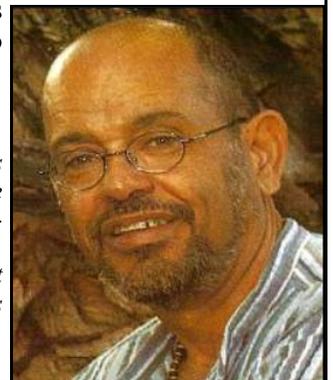
Attie wiped the tears from his eyes and felt so glad that he was retiring in a month’s time. He knew it would be a month of sorrow and mourning and he hoped that visitors to Iwokrama would keep him busy until then. However, there were no visitors that day nor the next. On the third day after he had read the letter, there were shouts in the yard and people calling his name. He walked outside to see a grimy, wet, and dishevelled Jairo walking towards the building, trailed by several curious workers. Attie was overjoyed.

“Oh God, Jairo, I so glad to see that you ent kill yourself in the bush after all. The first time you run in the bush after blue butterflies—you get lost and you kill the butterfly. This time you run in the bush looking to die, and you find your way out alive! Your letter had me so sad! Wha’ make you change you mind?”

“Boy, Attie, it aint that easy to die, hear. It especially not easy to die in peace in this forest. Wha mek me change my mind was those fucking Screaming Pihas! They scream their terrible screams all day—and don’t let you think ‘bout anything else! That Piha is the worst creature God ever create!”

Attie hugged him and laughed. “If you had stayed and lived in Guyana, you would have got accustomed to them—to the point where you don’t really hear them no more!...But I so glad they screamed some sense into your head. I just want you to know that I love you, Jairo, you are my best friend and, when I retire from here in a month’s time, I want you to come and live with me for as long as you want. I have a nice, comfortable little house on the river—not far from the Mabaruma of our childhood. So say “Yes”, you’ll come”.

Jairo put his arm around Attie’s neck and they walked back to the main building...



*Alumnus (59-66) Mark McWatt is Professor of West Indian Literature at Cave Hill Campus of the University of the West Indies, Barbados. He obtained his B.A. and M.A. at the University of Toronto, and his Ph.D. from the University of Leeds.*

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### COMING EVENTS

Date	Event	Location	Cost
Sat. 17 Apr., 2021	Spring Dance (Dinner: 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.)	West Rouge Community Centre 270 Rouge Hill Drive, Toronto (Hwy 401/Hwy 2/Port Union Road)	\$50 (includes dinner and all drinks)
Sat. 10 Jul., 2021	Golf Tournament	Lebovic Golf Club, 14020 Leslie St, Aurora, ON L4G 7C2 (W. of Hwy 404, N. of Bloomington Road)	\$150 (includes breakfast, lunch, 3 drinks, and snacks on-course)
Fri. 30 Jul., 2021	Caribjam	Thornhill Community Centre 7755 Bayview Ave, Thornhill, ON L3T 4P1 (At Bayview Avenue at John Street)	<i>tba</i>
Wed. 11 Aug., 2021	Golf Tournament	Lebovic Golf Club, 14020 Leslie St, Aurora, ON L4G 7C2 (W. of Hwy 404, N. of Bloomington Road)	\$150 (includes lunch, dinner, 3 drinks, and snacks on-course)
Sat. 16 Oct., 2021	Fall Dance (Dinner: 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.)	West Rouge Community Centre 270 Rouge Hill Drive, Toronto (Hwy 401/Hwy 2/Port Union Road)	\$50 (includes dinner and all drinks)

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