The year 2015 heralds the International Decade for People of African Descent. The period is designated to promote Recognition, Justice and Development for the more than one billion people who inhabit the world’s second most-populous continent—Africa and hundreds of millions of descendants scattered in the diaspora. A ceremony to launch the event in Guyana was held at the Parade Ground in Georgetown, on 24th of this month.

Next month, Guyana will mark 45 years since it became a republic. Several activities are being planned to mark this milestone anniversary.

Come April, Buxton will launch the celebration of its 175th Purchase Anniversary. A number of activities are expected to be held within the home village and across diaspora communities to commemorate this important achievement.

On 11 May, Guyana’s electorate will go to the polls to vote in general and regional elections. The decision to return to the polls just three and a half years after the last election follows the prorogation of Parliament by President Donald Ramotar last November.
This is the first month of a new year. It is the year when Buxton will mark a significant milestone in its history — 175 years since the village was purchased by 128 previously enslaved labourers of African descent. Together with its adjoining sister village of Friendship, the community once developed to the status of Guyana’s premier village. But over the last two or more decades, the village which is home to more than six thousand persons, has arguably been on the decline in many respects.

To better understand the issues affecting the community and to help in stimulating development programmes, we asked residents to state some of the initiatives that they would like to see undertaken in the village during 2015.

The interviews were conducted by Mr. Collis Nicholson. He spoke to a wide cross-section of residents.

**Mrs. Yvonne Phillips** *(Senior Citizen)*

Widow of Mr. Ulric Phillips, former Overseer of Buxton-Friendship Village Council & later Executive Officer of the Buxton/Foulis Neighbourhood Democratic Council (NDC)

1. Programmes that will enforce moral values among villagers.
2. Gardening around homes.
3. Clean and friendly environment.
5. More respect for elderly people.
6. Reduction of poverty among residents.
NEW YEAR WISHES FOR BUXTON

MR. DEKWESI YAW (University Student)

1. More scholarships for outstanding students in various fields of study.
2. Awareness sessions for youths to enlighten them about various coping skills in their teenaged life.
3. More role models (male) to instill positive attributes and attitudes.
4. Community meetings so as to edify young people on their role in society.
5. Parents’ involvement in academic opportunities for their children.

MR. LEROY RIDLEY (Businessman)

1. Financial assistance for small business in extending their prospects.
2. Re-establishment of the community market.
3. Development of farmlands and kitchen gardens.
4. More economic opportunities through the village council system.
5. Rapid increase of collection of revenue by village council for infrastructure development.

MRS. LEASON GULLIVER (Housewife)

1. Parental involvement in children’s lives (having a well-rounded child).
2. Parents must perform leadership roles and express moral values.
3. Parents must engage in support systems for their child’s life.

Buxton-Friendship Village Market
Wishes for 2015

Ms. Akua John (Unemployed Youth)
1. Employment opportunities for young people.
2. Technical training for school drop outs and delinquents.
3. Competency-based training for non-academic performers (skills training).
4. Aid for the less fortunate people in the village.
5. More attention to the needs of senior citizens.

Akua John

Mr. Osafo Durant (Carpenter)
1. Opportunities for small entrepreneurs.
2. More infrastructures in the lower part of Buxton.
3. Community development and self help to keep the village clean.
4. Community meetings and interaction among young people.

Hazel Carter-Abrams (Lay Reader, Friendship Methodist Church)
1. More fellowship of children at Sunday school.
2. Teaching of moral values to youth and young adults in the village.
3. More bottom-house meetings addressing various social issues affecting members of the community.
4. Positive role models for young people.
5. Pastoral care in all schools on a weekly basis.
6. More involvement of the church family in the lives of people in the community.

Hazel Carter-Abrams
WHAT VILLAGERS WISH FOR 2015

**MS. KAREN DEY (Primary School Principal)**

1. Responsible parenting.
2. More emphasis on educational development among young people.
3. Addressing social issues such as: domestic violence, teen-aged pregnancy, drug abuse, and juvenile delinquency, among others.
4. Small business opportunities.
5. Guidance and counseling sessions with pupils and parents.
7. Restoration of heritage buildings and other sites.

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**MR. CONRADE HUNTE (Farmer)**

1. Development of farm lands for sustainable development.
2. The need for growing more and shopping within the village.
3. Understanding the issues of the less fortunate and finding common solutions for their issues.
4. Availability of job opportunities for school drop outs.

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**MS. EVADNE SIMON (Vendor)**

1. Parental involvement in children’s schooling.
2. Awareness as to the importance of cleanliness of the environment.
3. Development of the farmlands for a sustainable community.
4. Restoration of village norms and customs.
For this my inaugural article, I shall like to feature a young lady that has been rendering an exceptional and dedicated service to the community of Buxton. She has been providing this service indefatigably for the last six decades. I first met this pleasant, devoted Christian woman the first day I attended primary school. On crossing the timber bridge and placing my BATA sneaker on the concrete strip leading to the ground floor of the Buxton Congregational School, now Buxton Primary, there she was. Wearing a straw hat and a light coloured dress covered with a white apron, she sat on a small bench along the concrete strip near a cement blocks column with two flasks by her side. Today, she still provides that service, though in abridged quantity, it’s offered in more places around the village.

The stalwart I speak of is the pretty, quiet and polite Mrs. Jean Gill. She grew up in an industrious environment and was a vibrant member of her family’s cottage industry. In 1950, while undertaking her routine as a mobile salesgirl of cassava-bread and other goodies in the village of Beterverwagting, the nineteen years-old beauty captivated the heart of a twenty-five years-old Sugar Estate Mechanical Technician, Lionel Gill. According to Mr. Gill, the two commenced their momentous union on, ‘Wednes-day’, (Wednesday), July 26, 1950.

Soon after her marriage and being domiciled in Buxton, Jean Gill returned to her roots, selling. She commenced with ice-cream. Back then the can filled with ice, laced with salt, had to be churned consistently for thirty to forty-five minutes to produce the firm, delicious and cold cream. Around 1953, while being a young member of the Arundel Congregational Church, she embarked on the sale of fruity and custard blocks at the Buxton Congregational School to the many students who attended at that time. Selling was done exclusively and consistently at the school in the mornings and afternoons for approximately three decades.

During the mid 1980’s when a Mr. Daniels became Head Master of the Buxton Primary School, Miss Jean was prohibited from selling at the school; a situation she has never revealed to anyone until now. Because of her tenacity and expertise in manufacturing a quality product, her location of sale shifted to the Buxton Market and Buxton Middle Walk, outside the late Sherman’s shop. Presently, she provides that service to the residents of Bux-

(Continued on page 7)
ton/Friendship via two locations, Company Line Top and outside of Baby Jarvis’ place on Buxton Middle Walk. Despite modern forms of flavoured ice and their amenities, Miss Jean continues to manufacture, package and market her fruity/ice cycle/custard block old-school and is proud to say she seldom returns home with any. She declares “even while meh going to church Sunday morning, dem children does ask me fuh ice-block and fruity”.

The featured virtuous, assiduous woman is extra-ordinary in many regards. Her matrimonial union with Lionel of sixty-four years is probably the oldest in the village presently; they may also be the oldest married couple alive in Buxton. Her fruity/ice-cycle/custard block business is the single oldest cottage industry in the village. The refrigerator she uses to freeze her fruity/ice cycle/custard block was purchased and put to work in 1968, it’s probably the oldest working fridge in the village today. Miss Jean is the longest actively serving member of the Arundel Congregational Church. She has been serving since 1950 when she commenced as one of the cleaners. At eighty-three years old she presently serves as the Treasurer, a position she functions in since 1978. This dynamic bundle of energy lives approximately three quarters of a mile from her place of worship and about one third of a mile from the places of marketing her products. She makes return trips to those places every day of the week, briskly, on foot.

Miss Jean Gill and her husband presently reside two lots north of Pond Dam on the western side of Buxton Middle Walk, a place they have called home for the last fifty-five years. The couple boasts of having an excellent relationship, one in which they have never had a ‘heated argument.’ When asked what is responsible for them not arguing, the eighty-nine years old retired MANPOWER CITIZENS ASSOCIATION’s Industrial Relations Officer’s response was “JOINT CONSULTATION”. He declares “the key to a successful marriage is “NO ARBITRATOR.” To God be the Glory, great things he has done.

ABOUT THE WRITER:
ANTHONY A. HAYNES is the second child born to Oliver and Yvonne Haynes of Lot 15, Middle Walk, Buxton. He received his early education at Buxton Congregational and Bladen Hall Multilateral Schools. He later attended the Government Technical Institute and the University of Guyana in pursuit of a career in Civil Engineering.

In his younger days Anthony played badminton, table tennis and cricket. He opened batting and bowled leg spin for both the under-19 and senior Buxton Cricket Club teams during the mid 1980’s.

Presently, Anthony works as a Civil Engineer. He is married to Beverly Haynes, nee Dolphin. Their union has produced three sons; Michael, Juan and Samuel. The family resides at 670 Section ‘C’ Buxton, that is, the Middle Street between Buxton Middle Walk and Company Road, near Pond Dam.

DONATIONS

Thanks to everyone who donated to the Buxton-Friendship Heritage Fund this month. Your contributions will help improve the lives of those we serve.

Special acknowledgement to two of our recent donors:
♦ WESLEY JAMES of Brooklyn, New York
♦ ELEANOR KING (CLAUDETTE BURGAN) of Manhattan, New York

Thanks for your generosity and ongoing support!

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Cheques should be made payable to Buxton-Friendship Heritage Fund, Inc. and mailed to 454 Vermont Street, Brooklyn, NY 11207
Joy O’Jon’s gentlewomanly speech and demeanour recall an era long past, and longed-for by many. Her almost fully-grey ‘afro’ seems a throwback to the nineteen-sixties and seventies, but she is very much a part of contemporary Guyanese life, at least where education and Christian discipline are concerned. She is the principal, and (along with fellow-educator Florine Dalgety) co-founder of Dominion Schools, on Regent Road, Bourda. She is also this week’s special person.

Surprisingly, Ms. O’Jon was not born in Guyana, but in south central Africa, in the then British Protectorate of Northern Rhodesia, now Zambia, in 1935. Her father, George, was an African with Guyanese connections, and her mother Lily, a native Guyanese. Having left Africa at the age of four, she understandingly has little recollection of life there. She nevertheless remembers that her father was a mechanic who worked on a major project to channel water from the mighty Zambezi River to Northern Rhodesia, and recalls the jubilation with which this accomplishment was greeted.

Ms. O’Jon declared that having come here, she never had the urge to go back to her homeland; that is, until she saw a video of South Africa a few years ago, and waxed nostalgic. “Oh, the beauty was so patent; In that moment I prayed the Lord, if there was an opportunity for me to go back to Africa, please open up the door,” she enthused.

In 1940 Joy O’Jon was brought to Guyana by a Bermudian missionary friend, and taken to live with her Aunt Ivy [Jacobs], her mother’s twin sister, in the East Coast Demerara village of Buxton. Her parents and siblings came later, except for her youngest brother who died in Africa. Buxton is where her life story really begins.

Ms. O’Jon attended the Buxton Congregational School, and admits that her school days there were relatively uneventful, except for the day a small plane crash-landed on the sea front in the neighbouring village of Annandale, around 1945. She recalls with a chuckle that ‘everyone poured out of school’ and ran to the sea wall, and to the spot where the crash occurred. Thankfully, she declares, no one died.

She left the village school in 1947, having secured a government scholarship, and began a long and distinguished association with The Bishops’ High School, first as a student, then as a science teacher, and finally as headmistress of what was considered the premier high school for girls in the country.

In reminiscing about her high school days, she remarked on my observation that she speaks in a very cultured and restrained manner. This she attributed to the expatriate teachers at Bishops’ who, she said, influenced by their own speech, both tone and diction in their charges.

Ms. O’Jon’s secondary education lasted eight years, after which she left for the Mona Campus of the University College of the West Indies in Jamaica, on a conditional scholarship, to study for her Bachelor’s in Science, the condition being that she had to return to teach at Bishops’ for five years.

Having achieved her BSc., she went on to get her Diploma in Education right there, and in 1959, returned to Guyana, and started her career as a science teacher at her alma mater. Returning to Bishops’ just four years after leaving the institution was, in her words, ‘a lovely thing … coming back to your alma mater as a teacher.’

(Continued on page 9)
This meant, of course, having to interact with some colleagues who were once her teachers, including the headmistress, Carmen Jarvis. But that wasn’t a problem, she asserted, since the staff at Bishops’ acted as a team and reached consensus on most issues, a development which Ms. O’Jon said helped lighten the load of responsibility, especially after she took over the headship from Ms. Jarvis. She said she also enjoyed a respectful relationship with students at Bishops’, although admitting that sometimes ‘things tended to get somewhat turbulent’ as is often the case with bright young people who are maturing intellectually, socially and politically.

Ms. O’Jon revealed that Christian discipline has always been a part of her life. Her parents were both missionary workers, and members of the Christian Brethren Fellowship, an indigenous body started, by an Anglican clergyman in 1827. “So I grew up in a Christian home, got saved early, nine years, and baptized at 15,” she asserted. At Bishops’ she was a Bible Club member, part of the Inter-School and Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, (IS/IVCF) an inter-denominational student ministry which facilitates the proclamation of the gospel, and which she describes as a ‘bulwark for many a Christian’. Still a part of the Christian Brethren Fellowship, she is also a member of Aglow International, Guyana, (formerly Women’s Aglow) which meets regularly to pray, essentially for the country, members’ spouses, and each other. Members also get involved in extra-church activities such as reaching out evangelically to street children.

Ms. O’Jon left Bishops’ and joined the staff of the Ministry of Education’s Science/Math Unit (SMU), then a part of the National Centre for Education Resource Development (NCERD), as Science Education Coordinator/Teacher. She and SMU team members visited schools in several areas across the country, supervising and supporting teachers She revealed that one of her main tasks at the unit was involvement in a project called the Emergency Science Programme, (ESP) the brainchild of her colleague, Ms. Dalgety “This was where we took teachers and trained them... kind of like a crash course, to be science teachers in the secondary schools. It was a programme offered by the Ministry of Education via the Distance Education Unit, and you had teachers from all over the country.” She noted that one feature of this programme presented hands-on experiences for its members in areas such as masonry, plumbing, carpentry and electrical installation, so that when science teachers went into the schools they could, in addition to teach, ‘handle themselves in a laboratory environment’. Ms. O’Jon was also Territorial Coordinator (Guyana) of the CXC/ACCC/CIDA Curriculum Project, an initiative geared at helping Science, Business, and Vocational Subject teachers in the Caribbean (and beyond) become more efficient and effective instructors. “This project was similar in purpose and design to our ESP; and in effect it did on a much wider scale what the local programme was doing in Guyana,” she observed.

After leaving the Ministry of Education, upon retirement, Ms. O’Jon went to work in ‘the bush’ as it were. She took up an offer to teach Science voluntarily at a community school in Hauraruni, a co-operative village three miles off the Linden-Sedesyke Highway, founded by the Guyana Full Gospel Fellowship. There, from 1990 to 1997, she helped establish a secondary science department for students who had done well at the Secondary Schools Entrance Examination, but whose parents were unable to upkeep them, because of financial and transportation constraints while attending schools in Georgetown where they had been placed. The science department expanded and thrived, and a few years later permission was sought of the government to allow the first group of fifth form students there to write the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) examination. It was granted, and the Hauraruni group promptly distinguished itself, with every student being awarded Grade One at
the Basic Proficiency level in Integrated Science which, Ms. O’Jon explained, equated to the higher General Proficiency Certificate in that subject. So in effect, each student was credited with a GP achievement in Integrated Science. When asked to teach there, she had intended staying just two years, but after a ‘revelation’ by one Prophet Conrad Jordan that ‘God would lift the curse of ignorance in Guyana’ she decided to stay on. Later, when the students did well, she took the examination results as a reward from God for what was done.

After a seven-year stint at Hauraruni, Ms. O’Jon left the community and turned her attention to helping Ms. Dalgety start her own school. Four years later, her colleague and friend (to whom she deferred as the one with the vision) opened the doors of Dominion Schools on Regent Road, with Ms. O’Jon assisting in administration. ‘God First’ was their guide, coupled with the motto ‘Knowledge with Integrity honours God’. The school admitted its first ‘batch’, two one-year-old pupils in September 2001. “Why so young?” I queried. “When we envisioned having the school, we wanted children from birth, but the logistics were difficult, so we decided the entry age would be one-and-a-half, the reason being that we wanted to train them for the Lord, and the younger you are, the more pliable … you want to teach them morals and Christianity before age five. We have two ‘distinctives’ – the first, that you should know God and be able to pray effectively, and the second, that you learn to read before you leave Nursery at age five,” Ms. O’Jon explained.

She disclosed that one of the two children they started with, Sarah David-Longe, went on to secure the third highest place in the country when she wrote the SSEE (Continued from page 9)

Dalgety is considering expanding the school to accommodate a secondary department, as both of them are secondary-trained, and only ‘dabbling’ in primary education as she laughingly puts it; furthermore, they are setting their sights beyond secondary education to offer subjects at the university level since Ms. Dalgetty has been trained in distance education, the vehicle to be used for the delivery of such a programme. This, she clarified, would be done through the use of multi-media instruction, modules, and online study, although time would have to be made for ‘fairly regular’ small group tutorials, as well as plenary sessions periodically where the entire student body would meet and interface with their instructors.

Ms. O’Jon draws social and spiritual sustenance from present and past membership in a number of organizations including the aforementioned Aglow International, the Caribbean Missions and Research Ministries, a pastor-mentoring organization led by Guyanese Paul Woolford, and the Valley of Decision Ministry, started by Trinidadian, Sister Gloria Gray, which holds faith-based ‘Fast Camps’ (no food, only water, for three days) periodically. She has received several commendations and awards for her educational and religious investment over the years. These include an Outstanding Service and Dedication award from The Bishops’ High School on its 125th anniversary, one from IS/IVCF in appreciation of sterling contribution to the ministry, and an SMU joint-prize awarded at a Commonwealth Association of Science and Math Educators competition.

Ms. O’Jon is also a health enthusiast, and she is especially proud of an award she received from Golden Neo-Life Diamite, an international health-food corporation, for helping to sell a large amount of its Soft-Gel diet supplements.

What about the age gap between her and her students? Never having had children of her own, she admits, “I am glad for the opportunity to interact with young persons, and to help to mould them; yes it was happening at Bishops’ but at that age (over 11) many of your mores are fixed; here our youngest is two years and our oldest is 10, and … I just see myself as devoted to this school.”

Christ-centred, success-oriented, and an education pioneer in her own right, Ms. Joy O’Jon continues to seek excellence in her work, and in her charges. This, as much as anything else she has done, qualifies her to receive KN’s ‘special person’ status.
For the Christmas Season, Buxton-Friendship Heritage Fund presented two senior citizens, who are in their nineties, with special gifts to help cheer up their holiday spirit.

Mr. Ulric Gordon, who is believed to be the oldest male residing in the home community was visited at his Annandale Railway Embankment home. He is expected to celebrate his 95th birthday next month—4th February.

The other recipient was Mrs. Mary Elaine Huntley. The Vigilance resident celebrated her 93rd birthday last November 15th.

Mr. Ulric Gordon, seated in chair, receives the gift from community activist, Mr. Lyndon France

Mrs. Mary Elaine Huntley is seen receiving her gift from Mr. France
The General Assembly, by its resolution 68/237 of 23 December 2013, proclaimed the International Decade for People of African Descent commencing 1 January 2015 and ending on 31 December 2024, with the theme “PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT: RECOGNITION, JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT”.

The main objective of the International Decade is to promote respect, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for people of African descent, as recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The decade will provide an opportunity to recognize the significant contribution made by people of African descent to our societies and to propose concrete measures to promote their full inclusion and to combat all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

The Decade shall focus on the following objectives:

- To strengthen national, regional and international action and cooperation in relation to the full enjoyment of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights by people of African descent, and their full and equal participation in all aspects of society;
- To promote a greater knowledge of and respect for the diverse heritage, culture and contribution of people of African descent to the development of societies;
- To adopt and strengthen national, regional and international legal frameworks in accordance with the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the International Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Racial Discrimination, and to ensure their full and effective implementation.

The International Decade will enable the United Nations, Member States, civil society and all other relevant actors to join with people of African descent and take effective measures for the implementation of the programme of activities in the spirit of recognition, justice and development.

“We must remember that people of African descent are among those most affected by racism. Too often, they face denial of basic rights such as access to quality health services and education.”

— United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

IDPAD LAUNCHED IN GUYANA

On 24 January, 2015, a number of prominent African cultural organisations assembled at the Parade Ground in Georgetown and launched the International Decade for People of African Descent, in Guyana. Among the organisations represented were the African Cultural & Development Association (ACDA), the Coalition of the 1823 Parade Ground Monument, and the Guyana Rastafari Council.

(Guyana Chronicle Photo)
Next month, Guyana will celebrate its 45th anniversary as a republic. The milestone will be marked with the traditional Mashramani celebrations, under the theme: “One People One Culture One Celebration”.

The festivities kicked off this month with cultural activities at schools across the country. They will culminate with the Costume band float parade in Georgetown on Republic Day, 23rd February.

The GBTI/Buxton Pride Steel Orchestra, which won last year’s School Band Competition, is busily practising for this year’s contest. According to its manager, Mr. Rollo Younge, the Band will be entering into two (2) categories in the Mash Competition this year:

(1) School Category - Song: “On Mash Day” by Slingshot

(2) Big Band Category - Song: “Pan Party”, composed by the Trainer.

Both competitions are slated to be held on Sunday, February 8, at the Cliff Anderson Sports Hall on Homestretch Avenue, Georgetown.

Meanwhile, Buxton will host two Mash festivities that will take place weeks after the national celebration is held. On Sunday, March 8th, the Buxton-Friendship Spice Mango Girls International will stage a carnival-styled costume parade across the Annandale-Vigilance community. The group is led by Brooklyn-based designer, Lynette Zephyr (Imogene Williams), and caters extensively to children and young adults.

The following week — Sunday, 15th March — popular promoter, Father Moey in collaboration with Divine Starz will put on their 11th Annual Buxton/Foulis Mash & Soca Bacchanal. The revelry will commence with a road tramp from Melanie Damishana to the Buxton Recreational Ground. A number of unnamed artistes and bands — local and international — are being touted to perform.
When Guyanese journalist and actor, John Philips looks back at 2014, he certainly feels a sense of accomplishment that he is climbing the performing arts ladder relatively quickly in Canada.

Using his training, experience and exposure in his homeland, this proud Buxtonian has not only taken his craft to Guyanese and wider Caribbean audiences in Toronto on stage but he has moved on to play key roles in film.

For the now 50-year old John, who hails from the land of El Dorado, coincidentally his biggest ‘hit’ so far is acting as the richest and most noble king in Mali, a gold producing country in North Africa, in a segment for National Geographic’s docudrama titled “The Quest for Gold: Lord of the Mines.”

While he was easily and surprisingly selected for the role of King Mansa Musa rather than an old villager for which he had been called, John’s encounter with a horse is perhaps the most memorable and “scary” aspect of filming that production.

“I was doing good for about half an hour until the director said he is ready and the Assistant Director said ‘action’ and just as he said ‘action’ there we are trying to create the scene of me going to Mecca for Haj, and then the horse started to behave bad, bucking and jumping up and my feet came out of the stirrup and I started to slide all over the saddle and I threw myself off and the horse ran away and I had to get back on top of the horse to do this all day. It was a bit scary, I don’t know if I want to do it again ever,” says John.

(Continued on page 15)
Dramatic Achievement

(Continued from page 14)

SO HOW DID HE FIRST GET THE ‘BREAK' TO ACT ON SCREEN?
The boy from Company Road, Buxton on the East Coast Demerara has not forgotten and certainly cherishes his drama roots that began with the fertilization of his talent at the state-owned Guyana Sugar Corporation (Guysuco) that had staged several plays at the Theatre Guild. He also acted in several plays including “Rope and The Cross”, “Beef Moh Chicken” and many Link Shows.

By the time he migrated to Canada 10 years ago, John was already a household name among Guyanese in both journalism and drama; something he used to his advantage and took up offers from Guyanese Luther Hansraj and Trinidadian Marvin Ishmael to perform at Caribbean events. “My background from the Theatre Guild and from all the teachings from the Andre Sobryans and the Ron Robinsons, Jasper Adams – all those guys helped me when I came to Canada because it’s different the way they do things but because I had that initial training, preparation I was able to slowly penetrate and after a few years on the Caribbean scene, I decided I wanted to try something different which was going mainstream into the heart of the big theatre scene,” he said.

John recalls being afforded the opportunity to perfect his craft through more training opportunities and “lots more reading material” to better understand why he needs to do certain things during preparations. “Yes, the initial teaching down there (Guyana) was very good because it helped me to fit in,” he said, adding that he has to keep abreast with the various challenges.

Since playing the role of Martin Luther King about one year ago, his colleague who acted as Malcolm X, encouraged him to get an agent who collected his resume and photograph and later called him for an audition. Since then, he has been on several commercials, short films and documentaries. He has acted as a detective in “Murder in Paradise: Stranger Danger” that featured the killing of a Canadian woman in Bermuda. Currently, he is preparing to participate in an episode of the “Untouchables” for Discovery Channel’s “Investigation Discovery.”

Now, he does not necessarily have to be auditioned intensely for some of the roles. Instead, his agent just presents his track record and other attributes to the contracting company and he is often selected with little or no hiccup.

Though John’s ascendancy appears to be a big move, he admits that he still has a longer journey before he can quit his ‘day job’ and concentrate exclusively on the stage and film.

John has made immense strides in a field that he loves dearly, but he remains humble, proud and grateful. “I am just excited at the way things are happening for me. I am all excited but I still have to remain grounded and be thankful for where I came from and the things that have been happening for me.”

He plans to share his expertise with Guyanese actors when he returns home later this year.

Before leaving Guyana, he was a journalist at the then Vieira Communications Television (VCT)-owned and operated “Evening News.”
My friend Luther Wendell Miller lost his life quite inexplicably. After several days complaining of pain to his throat and having difficulty breathing, he expired. We were all shocked to learn of his death. My friend, by all accounts, didn’t die from a disease; he died from the fortuitous swallowing of his own dentures. Quite disgusting! Couldn’t those doctors or nurses figure out his dentures were blocking his windpipe? Couldn’t they timely do a simple X-ray? I am no medical doctor, but I know the basic protocol carried out whenever an individual complains of difficulty breathing is to immediately assess that person’s airway status. In so doing, any obstruction would be detectable. Clearly, my friend’s tragic demise was a result of wanton negligence. Yes, his senseless death is just another episode of high class mediocrity that is so pervasive in our culture.

Despite being fully cognizant and comfortable with the reality that “everything that comes into being will go out of being,” I am still livid over the way my friend went out.

My friend was too good a man to experience that kind of suffering. He was a character. His brother, Rawlins “Mojo” would say, “Character with a capital ‘C’”. He was cunningly funny and consistently happy. Anyone who had the pleasure to know this remarkable human being will certainly miss him. His placid and pleasant personality always served as antidote for distress. Surely, it was a delight to be in his company, especially when you were down-and-out. He always gave, and was never stuck-up about his goodwill. Those of us who attended Friendship Methodist School with him knew him as a gut-busting person.

My friend was endowed with charming manners – always respectful. He was always thoughtful and trustworthy. His hilarity was virtuous and his happiness was contagious. He had a special way of extracting humor from complex life's circumstances, giving us, “belly stitches.” My last outing with him was enlightening as he expressed to me, “Life is one crop, enjoy it when you can.”

Who can forget how he was able to gain entitlement to his nickname? Well, Luther was able to convince all of us, in those days when cricket was cricket, that he was the English off-spinner, Pat Pocock. Pat Pocock was one of the slowest spinners to have ever played the game. In 1976, Pat Pocock toured the West Indies and created havoc – bowling the great Lawrence Rowe and the flashy Alvin Kallicharran at will. His casual slowness befuddled many great batsmen. Luther was fascinated by Pat Pocock’s uncharacteristic style; he subsequently changed his nickname to “Pocock” and started to bowl like him. After a while, my friend perfected the style and mesmerized some big time batsmen. Many of Pocock’s victims included “Cocodee”, “Gullah”, “Bowrag” and the best, Tony Philander.

As an active member of Buxton Sports Club, Pocock was in the Drama Group and the Circle Tennis Team. For the Circle Tennis Team, in his debut match, he scored a century against the Mildred Mansfield Youth Club of Georgetown. After he made that century, and was adored by all the females in the team, those of us who earlier dismissed the sport as effeminate had to dial back our chauvinistic views, in trying to get the similar attention like Pocock. After a while the Circle Tennis Team was made up mostly of men. Farmer Brown, Zorey, Bumba, Walkabout, Colin Burke, Hangers, Mboya, Joka and Puddin became permanent fixtures on the Circle Tennis Team. We were unbeatable. Thanks to Pocock!

Pocock and I became closer friends soon after I selected him to be the leading actor in the first play I wrote and directed for a Buxton Sports Club’s concert. His comedic performance was phenomenal. I remembered him bringing laughter to those dull lines with his own witty extemporizations. During our many rehearsals, our clubroom at Castello’s Bottom House was jam-packed with onlookers just to see Pocock in action. Upon reflection, the audience was there to laugh its sorrows away. Night after night, Pocock skilfully provided what we now know as “laughing therapy,” salving the economic poverty and soothing the emotional pain.

Pocock was a true master of manufacturing amusement - spontaneously inducing laughter in others, and creating a milieu of communal harmony. Pocock was the only person I knew who could “tantalize” someone, and you don’t want to kill him. He had an amazing way of making you laugh at your own frailties.

My friend Pocock got a kick out of horse racing and was a great prognosticator of the sport. He was always lucky to pick the winning horse, and from his winnings he would lavishly foot the bills of friends and family. I can remember, like if it were yesterday, Pocock taking a team of us to Uncle Sam and Eagles after a big win. We always ended up at Bull.

Notwithstanding his many arty and affable attributes, my friend Pocock had a healthy appetite for wild meat and a passion for sharing. Whenever I visited his spot, he expertly prepared and seasoned that iguana or labba meat and made sure that I shared in his sumptuous and exquisite cuisine. I will surely crave for his tasty wild meat dishes, but mostly I will miss his comical rendition of constantly reminding me, “This life is one crop, enjoy it when you can.” What I know for sure, Yankee, Smoh, Muriel and Pocock are, right now, making everyone in Heaven crack up.

Rest In Peace, my friend!

~Dr. Clayton Quintin Bacchus
RECENT DEPARTURES

♦ **RUTH JOYLYN ARMSTRONG-ROSS** She passed away on New Year’s Day. Her obituary can be found on the next page.

♦ **CAMILLE MENTORE**—Affectionately known as Pammy Williams, she was a former resident of Annandale. She passed away on 4 January, 2015, in Guyana.

♦ **DORIS DARRELL**—She passed away on 4 January, 2015, in New York.

♦ **SAMMY BENJAMIN**

♦ **GASTON ORVILLE FOX**, former Chief Education Officer of Guyana. He passed away on 12 January, 2015, at the age of 97, in Maryland, USA. See obituary on page 15.

♦ **GOLAMADEAN KHAN (DEAN)**; former butcher of Buxton Market and hire-car driver. He passed away on 12 January, 2015 in Queens, NY. He was 87 years old.

♦ **DIONNE SMITH**—She passed away 14 January, 2015 in New York, at the age of 45. She was the daughter of Thelma Ifill-Smith and the late Clifford Smith; mother of Courtney and Devonte; grandmother of Courtney, Jr; sister of Stacie and Laticia Smith; niece of Shirley Davis and Roxanne Hoyte; great-niece of Edna Ifill, Agnes Fredericks, Cecil Persaud and Celest McDonald; cousin of Kim Davis, Yonnette Abrams, Nicole Belgrave, and several others.

**OBITUARY: DOREEN KERSSELLIUS**

**DOREEN KERSSELLIUS** passed away on December 31, 2014 at the Jewish General Hospital in Montreal, Canada, from where she had retired as a Registered Nurse.

Born in Buxton, the former resident of Company Road turned 85 years old on December 30, 2014. She emigrated to Hertfordshire, United Kingdom in 1961. She later moved to Sheet Harbour, Nova Scotia in 1965, and then to Montreal, Quebec in 1966.

She was predeceased by her parents, Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Kerssellius, and siblings Vivienne Glasgow (Teacher Vivian) of Buxton, Felix Roberts of Friendship Village, Tom Kerssellius of Richmond Hill, New York, and Fred Kerssellius of Springlands, Correntyne.

She was the aunt of Evadne Felix (Bonnie Glasgow), Stephen Glasgow (Orrin), Harold Kerssellius, Hazle Duncan, Robert Kerssellius, Roy Kerssellius, Roxanne Kerssellius, Carl Kerssellius, Evette Kerssellius, Emette Kerssellius, Gillian Obedeka, Lyndon Kerssellius, Otis Kerssellius, Harvey Kerssellius, Joan Roberts, Julian Roberts and Staye Roberts.

Funeral Service for the late Doreen Kerssellius was held on 10 January, 2015 at the Montreal Unity Church in Montreal, Canada. She was later laid to rest at the Rideau Memorial Gardens in Doolard-des-Ormeaus, Quebec.

**RHONDA PAUL**
Sunrise: 3rd June, 1972
On the 23rd day of October, 1960, Joseph & Rosaline Armstrong welcomed their first daughter into this world. They named her Ruth Joylyn Armstrong. As a child, she was funny, jovial and very friendly.

Her parents, being devoted Christians, guided her to become grounded in the evangelical faith. The late Joseph Armstrong, who was a pastor at the Christian Brethren Assembly (Brethren Church) was very serious with the Doctrine. He ensured that his children attended Sunday services for at least four sessions. In addition, they were always present for weekday programmes at the Church.

During her formative years, Ruth attended Friendship Government Primary School, Buxton Government Secondary School and Bladen Hall Multilateral School. She proceeded to become a school teacher, capping her 37-year career as the Headmistress of Dolphin Government School in Charlestown, Georgetown. She also served at primary schools located in Kamarang, Bartica, Port Kaituma and Strathspey. Moving up in the profession, she taught at Golden Grove Secondary School, St. Rose’s High School, St. Stanislaus College and Tutorial High School.

Her illustrious teaching career commenced on 3rd October, 1977 as a pupil teacher at Kamarang Primary School. Though the job took her far away from the comforts and security of her home in Buxton, she was not afraid to face what could be a major challenge for many a 17-year old lass. Moreover, her father was not comfortable with the thought of his young daughter residing alone in the distant location. Her mother managed to persuade him to allow Ruth to take up the appointment.

From the inception, she grew to love her vocation and all of the students who came under her care. She took steps to improve her qualification and skills as an educationist by completing training at the Cyril Potter College of Education. She also successfully completed programmes at Critchlow Labour College, Guyana School of Agriculture and the University of Guyana. From the university, she obtained a diploma in Social Work, with distinction.

On 28th December, 1996, Ruth tied the knot with Lieutenant Colonel Tony Linden Ross, a dashing officer in the Guyana Defence Force. Their happy union was cut short by his death twelve years later. “Miss Ruth,” as she was affectionately called, made many friends in her lifetime. They meant a lot to her, and she cherished those associations dearly.

She loved life. She also loved the finer things offered in life and worked hard to achieve them. She was quite a versatile individual. Her warm smile, kind spirit and sociable personality will live on in her loving memory.

She is survived by her mother, Mrs. Rosalene Armstrong, and siblings—Archibald, Ivan, Billy, Efuah, Bobbie and Dale.

Ruth Joylyn Armstrong-Ross was laid to rest at the Buxton Cemetery on 8th January, 2015.
GASTON ORVILLE FOX, formerly of Company Road, Friendship Front, passed away on 12 January, 2015, in Maryland, USA. A former Chief Education Officer of Guyana, he was 97 years old at the time of his transition.

He is survived by his youngest sister, Valerie Holder (née Fox); his three children – Hartley, Patricia (Valerie), and William Fox; two grandsons – Kwamina and Kofi Fox; and three great-grandchildren.

He also leaves to mourn his loss, his nephews - Stanny Fox, Dr. Allan Emerson Fox, Bartley Holder, and Gordon Holder; nieces – Julia Angela Fox, and Denise McNair; as well as their children and grandchildren, and other relatives.

Mr. G.O. Fox was predeceased by his parents, Jacob Nathaniel Fox (Natty) and Julia Maria Fox (née Blackman); siblings – Joseph Fox, Siegfried Fox, Irma Fox-Hendricks, and Mildred Fox-Allick; nephew - Orville Sholto Fox.

His funeral took place on 21 January, 2015 in Brentwood, Maryland.

PASSING OF AN EDUCATION GIANT

GASTON ORVILLE FOX

6 April, 1917 - 12 January, 2015

Remembering Fox as an Avid Farmer

Of the late GASTON ORVILLE FOX, “Uncle Gaston” to me, I say that his contributions to education and culture should outlast what soldiers and builders had achieved.

I had known Uncle Gaston from my early childhood at Buxton Front. He lived at Friendship Front; my father was eight years his senior. They were great friends. I would be with them on many Saturdays or Sundays on our family farms in Ogle Polder, in the backlands of Buxton. I saw them swimming in the Middle Walk Canal, cooking on the dam, and collecting loads of ground provision and firewood and stowing them in the Arno, my grandfather’s backdam boat which, when it was not at the backdam, was moored and tied on the eastern bank of the Company Canal, opposite the “Fox House” on the Friendship side of the canal.

It is often said that “it takes a village to raise a child.” Well, Buxton-Friendship did help Uncle Gaston and my father and their siblings to certain levels of excellence in their respective lives. I will always remember Uncle Gaston as an icon in the mould of great thinkers of yore.

I will remember him, although he was not a very tall person, as “taller than the regal peak of pyramids. He will never completely die”. Quintus Horatius Flaccus, the ancient poet Horace, as he was known: “Exegi monumentum aere perennius regalique situ pyramidum altius non omnis moriar.”

He erected a monument more lasting than bronze. Uncle Gaston was Chief Education Officer, Ministry of Social Development & Culture, and I was the Permanent Secretary (pro tems) in the same ministry, in the early 1970’s. He was 55 years of age, and I was 40 years of age at the time.

...Rampersaud Tiwari
Toronto, Canada

“G.O’s passing represents the passing of an education giant. He made a name in that position and his name became a household word during that time. In addition, he executed that role with great aplomb, dignity, and humility.”

Victor Moses
SAVE THE DATE

Buxton-Friendship Heritage Fund, Inc.
presents
A Gala Celebration
Awards & Recognition Banquet
in commemoration of
175th Buxton Purchase Anniversary
Saturday, May 16, 2015
5:30 p.m. — 10:30 p.m.
St. Gabriel’s Banquet Hall
331 Hawthorne Street, Brooklyn, NY 11225