

AfroPanamanian Newsletter



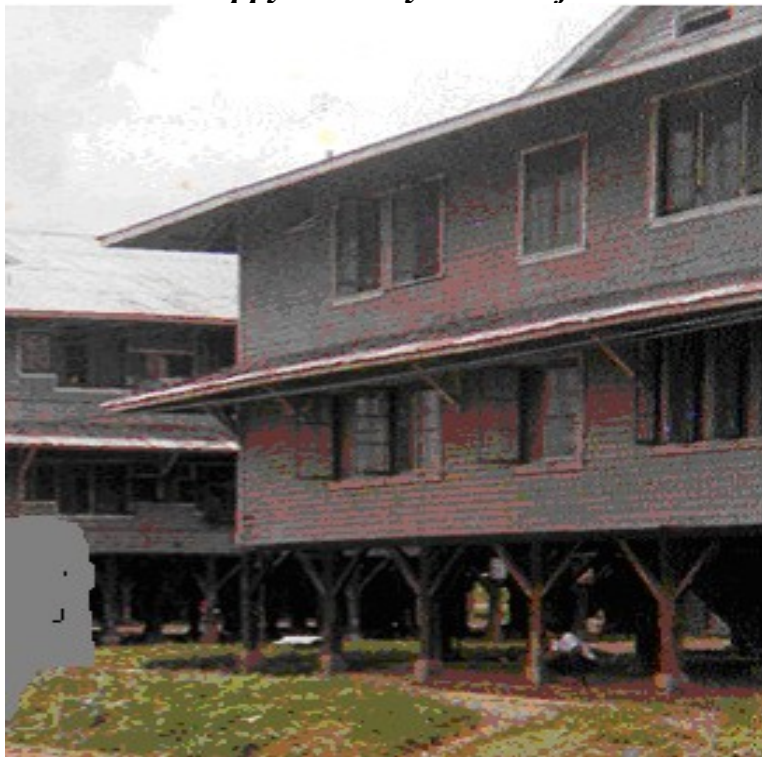
English opens doors. Read the Newsletter.

No.5 Vol. I

June 2010

Donation

Happy birthday Rio Abajo



Controversy

Anecdotes

Poetry

LOS AMIGOS :

Por la superación de la Etnia Negra

A group of friends decided to join forces to work on the rescue of values, customs and cultural traditions bequeathed to us through our ancestors. These have been displaced by others, thus losing a large part of our Black Heritage. We are evaluating all these forgotten traditions and values and highlighting figures as examples for future generations.



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Cover Page: The stamp which appears on the cover was proposed to the Canal Zone Government by Mr. George W. Westerman (r.i.p.) accepted and used as a 10 cent postage stamp for years. Permission for its continuous use was given by his grandnephew, Cecil Reynolds.

EDITORIAL

Happy birthday Rio

***Rio Abajo celebrates its 73rd birthday on
June 18.***

Many years have gone by since Rio Abajo was just a village on the outskirts of Panama City with a handful of hard working West Indian-Canal Zone employees as residents, who mostly bought land and built their homes. Where streets of dirt and stone became muddy pools whenever it rained and transportation was limited.

Changes came as time went by, then Rio became the center of night life in town, almost every street had a night club or bar that identified it: Rincon Caliente, Café Cuba, Morgan's bar, yet crime in any of its forms was not an issue in this mostly Black ethnic community, not that there wasn't any, but very little.

La Boca Town was a well known part of this community.

Today Rio Abajo has another face, very little is left from yesterday; it has flourished into an active living and commercial suburb. Now that doesn't mean that everything is on wheels. There are and always will be lots of things to be done to keep the crime rate down. Everyone has to keep on pushing towards a better environment with law and order.

Cover

Diablo Heights. Houses in 19th St. Rio, long gone.

<p>FEEDBACK (from our May issue)</p> <p>We need to have a copy of this newsletter in our Museum to help our guides give a more interesting explanation to some of our exhibits. Keep up the good work. Melva</p> <p>---</p> <p>Melva: We are happy to have you make a printout of the Newsletter for the Museum. At the end of the year we will publish the volume in book form.</p> <p>---</p> <p>Like the news Ines. Thx. Toni</p> <p>---</p> <p>Hola Ines, Muy original el Newsletter....lots of "goodies" from yesteryear. I mentioned your Newsletter in the last CyberNews....did you see it? Congratulations to all of you who are behind it. Carmela</p> <p>---</p> <p>Yes Carmela. I mentioned it to the others. Ines</p>	<p>---</p> <p>I believe that this news letter is absolutely necessary. It is also well put together and newsworthy. Congratulations</p> <p>LIC. ARMSTRONG</p> <p>---</p> <p>Thank you for having me in your mailing list, I Found the News letter very interesting, it is a concrete way of preserving our forefathers' legacy. I am willing to support this effort. Dr. & Mrs. Smith</p> <p>---</p> <p>Inés.</p> <p>I enjoy receiving the newsletter. Kudos to you and the other members of 'Los amigos por la Superación de la Etnia Negra' for helping us to keep in touch with our history and culture.</p> <p>As for the meaning of Quashie, it is originally one of the African 'Day' names given to a male born on Sunday. It's still used today in the Twi language spoken in Ghana. The word came to Panama, from Jamaica, already being used as a pejorative term for anyone (male or female) considered to be of low class.</p> <p>(In the DICTIONARY OF PANAMANIAN ENGLISH it appears as Kuaashí because all spellings in the dictionary are based on the International Phonetic Alphabet)</p> <p>Keep well and keep up the good work,</p> <p>Leticia <i>(This comment is from the author of the Dictionary, Leticia C. Thomas Brereton, Ph.D.)</i></p>
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OPPORTUNITIES:

Scholarship Program at the U.S. Embassy for young people, focused on offering young Panamanians more opportunities to learn English, attend universities in the U.S. and participate in exchange programs. Some scholarships offer courses in Panama in order to make the student more competitive in obtaining U.S., Panamanian Government and Fulbright scholarships.

Access Program – NEW

A Two-year scholarship focused on improving the knowledge of English through an after-school class for Panamanian underprivileged students 15 to 17 years of age. **English level required: none.**



FEEDBACK FROM FACEBOOK ON THE HOMAGE TO MAESTRA ELMA:

TRANSLATION

Jose Weeks I would have liked to attend, but I'm too far away to be there and pay homage to maestra Elma. From Bagdad, Irak, May God bless her and many thanks for all those years of work.

Myrna Alvey Mark My brothers and my nieces were students at Kinder San Cristobal. My children were summer "students" when they visited with their grandparents who were school bus administrators of the Escuela San Cristobal for over 20 years. Congratulations Maestra Elma, from the Alvey Family.

Aida Daniel Congratulations on the success of the homage to maestra Elma de Payne; very emotional, candid and beautiful. To tell the truth, I am not an alumni, but my children and grandson are now members of the cristobalina family.

Aida Daniel: I would like to see some support from the alumni, maybe a "return to our alma mater day", to share with the new members of the family, who need to know and see what a good base in education can do, and the quality of professionals existing, who got their start with maestra Elma and the excellent group of teachers who, with dedication and determination dropped that grain of sand in their minds.

LOS AMIGOS: We would have liked to see a larger crowd, but we thank all those who attended the homage. It consisted of dedications to maestra Elma, a classroom setting, presentation of a plaque, anecdotes, etc. It was very entertaining for those who were there. Thanks for your support.

We stand behind Mrs. Aida Daniel's suggestion that alumni visit the school whenever they can to serve as role models for the present students.

Ines V. Sealy For those who could not attend this homage, you can plan to attend the 60th anniversary of Escuela San Cristobal, to be held at the Paradise Banquet Hall on July 11, 2010. Tickets may be obtained at the School 224-1414.

OLDEN DAYS SAYINGS:

June

“Putting fun a jokes aside”, he “promised to come and never put a foot” but “reading between the lines” we can tell that he is “backsliding”, because the “stiff necked” bastard doesn’t realize that he is “betwixt & between” “Hell and high waters” and that by applying the saying “a stitch in time saves nine” he could be saved from jail or the gallows. We stood by laughing until we got a “stitch in the side”.

“Let your conscience be your guide.”

In the community of La Boca, in days gone by, there were West Indian families with a numerous amount of children. Breakfast, lunch and dinner were family moments when everyone sat around the table. **Reverence and communication were instilled at that moment.**

As the children grew up, they got involved in activities such as: sewing, music, typing, trade and handicraft lessons. Some of the boys began to work and would come in late, after everyone else had eaten. If more than one boy was coming home late, then food had to be left for them. But, each one would have to be conscious that someone else was still out, or the last one would get nothing to eat.

Restaurants and fast foods were not as proficient as they are today, so that if someone did not let his conscience be his guide the others would be left without.

Of course, when you are before a buffet, or at the table and the platters are being passed, “**let your conscience be your guide**”.

ODDS & ENDS

The first musical instrument invented in the XX century was the steel drum. This was in **Jamaica**. Now in Washington, Andy Mackie, a Scotch, has invented a musical instrument which he calls strum sticks, I suppose we could call it musical instrument No. 2 of the XXth Century.

<http://biggeekdad.com/2010/01/the-harmonica-man/>

ENGLISH SERVICES ARE BEING HELD AT 6:30 P.M. ON SUNDAYS AT HOSSANNA BY PASTOR ROBERT ROBINSON. “MISION VIDA INTEGRAL”

MORE OPPORTUNITIES:

Youth Ambassadors – NEW

Three-week Exchange program focused on business management skills, community interaction and leadership, for public school underprivileged non-English speaking students (16 to 18 years). **English level required: none**

Community College Program – NEW

Study for a year at a Community College in any of the following areas: Agriculture, Applied Engineering, Business Administration, Health Professions including Nursing, Computer Technology, Media, Tourism and Hotel Management. For those with a basic knowledge of English, the scholarship includes some additional space for up to 6 months of Intensive English study in the United States. **English Level required: intermediate.**

Tell us about your experiences, both living in the Canal Zone and Panama City. Many of our ancestors had leased land in the Canal Zone. Tell us about them.

Commissary Privilege

By Ines V. Sealy

In the 1940's and up to 1956 when the Canal Zone commissaries closed to non residents, as long as there was someone in the family working for the Canal Zone, there was commissary privilege.

At one time shopping was done with commissary books. This book contained a long tongue with the amount of money it was worth. Upon purchase the cashier would tear off the amount of purchase and return the booklet to the client.

The wife did her shopping, stocking up on staple commodities to serve for the month or "*quincena*", since some were paid by the month and others biweekly. But there were times when a neighbor ran out of some article: sweet oil, tomato paste, matches, onions, sugar, flour, Carnation milk, etc.

Then one neighbor would borrow from the other until she had gone shopping to buy it back.

There was also **contraband** (pronounced = country band) of cigarettes (bought in cartons and retailed), matches (matches made in Panama at the time were no good), tomato paste (was not made in Panama). Even those who didn't have privilege bought these articles from those with privilege.

*See commissary book
on
Page 8*



Cold Storage Ham

By Antonio Cox

There was a gentleman who worked in the Cold Storage of the Commissary and had access to all kinds of meat. One day he decided to take home a boneless ham, the best they had, only sold to people with US privilege.

When his wife saw there was no bone in the ham, she got angry and told him she didn't want it. The ham was in the freezer for days, 'till one day she decided to change it, without a receipt. She took it to the manager a "White" man. She told him her husband bought it there and she wanted one with a bone in the center. The manager asked for her husband's name. Not knowing that her husband had stolen the ham she gave the name and explained that she could not **make soup** without the hambone.

Naturally, her husband got fired.

It's your guess what happened to her.

When did we begin to use **them to replace or double the plural of a noun?**

Ex: children them, people them, things them...

Cooley centavo

By Sandra Patterson

Before the 1955 treaty between Panama, and the USA took it away from those residing in Panama City, all Canal Zone workers had commissary privilege, that meant that they could shop at the commissary.

As my father never worked on the C.Z. we did not have privilege but grandma Nety had, so she bought some things for us over the border, task that she did on Saturdays and I must say I accompanied her a few times. Anyhow, my brothers and I had to be attentive to her arrival to help carry the bags. Yet this is not why I write this article today, but because of what transpired with a particular piece of transportation that brought shoppers back from the commissary.

To transport passengers to and from the commissary there where some small buses with a peculiar shape called "chivita" that made a good amount of trips no further than Calidonia.

*In those days some bus drivers accepted to be paid with pennies. Cooley was an Indian man (baboo) who drove a chivita and was very popular among those requiring service because he new everyone's stop. Whenever Cooley's chivita arrived at a stop, children would gather and call out **Cooley centavo** and he'd throw out pennies for them and those children would help the passengers with their loads.*

OVER ONE HUDNRED YEARS... AND WHAT?

by Antonio Cox
27-4-10

West Indians are here in Panama for over One hundred years and we have nothing to show. Is it that we still have the slave "syndrome"?

Most of our parents were schooled in the Canal Zone, a higher education, back then, evidently we were conditioned to consume. We tried to break that myth, but they closed the door on us and we never tried to open other doors.

We are injecting Millions of dollars in the economy every month, but you can't see where it's going, "Taxation without representation", you can hand pick the amount of Blacks that work in supermarkets and banks where we deposit our hard earned cash.

When you gamble it is because you need, retirees gamble like if there's no tomorrow. Yes they say it's their money and they do what they want with it, but their close relatives go to public school, while their neighbors sacrifice and send their kids and grandkids to private schools. In the end, the offspring of those with more money get inferior education, while those with less money through sacrifice educate their children better.

Who's to blame?

Mt. Hope Cemetery, a memory to the Builders by Anthony McLean H. (continued)

Many of us used the cemetery as a short cut to and from the train station, especially those living in Camp Coiner and the Heights. Entering at the back entrance next to the Bethany Baptist Church thru a maze of trails, it would lead alongside the Cold Storage on to Roosevelt Road then to the Mount Hope train station, the last stop before entering Colon city. It was also the workers' night train's last stop, and during rain or storm, bright nights, dark nights, duppy or no duppy, it was easier to go thru the cemetery's main entrance, walk the maze of trails existing to the above mentioned church and catch a bus to Colon. "yuh talk about run"

THE 50'S & 60'S WHAT YOUNG BOYS DID

by Fernando A. Goldson

IN THOSE DAYS, young boys were outdoor people, busy trying to impress the girls, with their hairdo, their special walk, their attire and their musical, sports and artistic ability. They did dance routines, choreographed singing groups, skits, etc.

Let's go back a bit to the 1950's and early 1960's. Those of us from that generation can relate very well to the need to belong to a group. At church, there was Young People's Fellowship, Girl's Friendly, Daughters of the King, Youth choir, and others.

And in the community, there were the Social Clubs in which the boys pooled their efforts to present artistic entertainment for the general public.

Taking a train ride to the Atlantic side and a visit to the Kenmore Social Club and some of the stars of that era: Ruddy Welch, Turo Doyle, Frank McDonald (Skillet), Frederick Willis, Carlos Lucas and "Peame"

It is difficult to imagine, if you did not experience it – a Night of Fun which was being held upstairs on a tenement building, such as the Wilcox, Phoenix or Ashwood. The area was closed off with palm fronds, we did the best we could with what we had. The party was all night long, no regrets of what we did and how we did it.

The famous Red Top dances at the Tropical dance hall in Colon sponsored by *Club Social Los Romanticos*: Clancy Grant, Roy Clarke, Rudolph Beach, Norman Thomas, Albert Douglas, George Fisher, Carmen and Silvia Fisher, Louise Jean Baptiste, Earl Hudson, Chico Solomon, Vernal Laing and Ziggy & Zaggy.

There were the popular *Infantil* dances at the Elks Club, upstairs Encanto Theater in Panama City. Several Social Clubs had functions at this famous hall.

The price to enter these dances was 0.25, one single quarter and the effort that was placed into getting that quarter is unbelievable. Some of us shined shoes, delivered newspapers, collected empty soda and liquor bottles, to change them for money so that we could attend this "can't miss" event. After all that effort, some of us still fell short of our goal. One guy would purchase a ticket for a quarter. This ticket was stapled to the tail or sleeve of your shirt. You then entered the dance, removed your shirt or tag, gave it to someone, usually a girl, to take it outside so that the next guy could enter for the same quarter. Real *juega vivo*, it was worth it.

"The prettiest girls in town are going to be there." After the dance if you were lucky, that evening, you could escort a hip chic to the Pacific Club House, down the road and enjoy a Ricky soft drink

COMMISSARY BOOK

