

AfroPanamanian Newsletter



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No.10 Vol. IV

(November 2013)

ISSN 23088524



Coat of arms Panama

Anecdotes

Controversy

Poetry

LOS AMIGOS :

**Por la superación de la Etnia Negra
(Incorporated to SEAPAT EVENTOS, S.A.)**

A group of friends, in Panama, 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.

“For Black history to be done right, we must do it ourselves.” Edward Gaskin

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The editor is not responsible for the opinions expressed by our collaborators

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 issued in 1951 as a 10 cent postage stamp, used for years. Permission for its continuous use was given by his grandnephew, Cecil Reynolds.

Editorial ADVICE FOR LIFE

***Good friends are like stars...
You don't always see them,
but you know
they are always there.
Keep them close!***

-0-

***Once you've done a good deed,
don't remember to whom,
once you've received one,
don't forget who did it.***

Kindness is the language the blind can see and the deaf can hear.

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October Feedback

Hello Afro Panamanian New Letter,

Great Job!!!

I religiously read your newsletter and forward it to my 32 & 16 year old daughters.

The article on "Papellillo" brings back memories of me playing Cowboys and Indians..... especially during the Christmas season.

In fact, even today we use the term papellillo to mean an item of less or low value, substandard, poorly executed or organized effort. e.g: *Who's in charge of this Papellillo organization" or "That's a papellillo camera"*

Equally remembered is the "Bombita" during the carnivals. Full confession: We used to find women wearing stockings and explode the bombita close to their legs. The explosion caused the contents of the bombita to shatter their stockings. It's not funny now but, back then, it was a different story. Although innocent, I remember getting my ears rung by my mom and big sister....."just for being in the proximity of the culprits".

One more thing.....If not already done.... can you do an article on children from parent of West Indians who had to have a Spanish first and maybe middle name such as mine...."Enrique Alejandro"? I was told that there was a decree circa 1954 - 1955 that mandated this. Accordingly, It was later found to be unconstitutional sometime later.

In fact, a look at the names in my 1973 RCHS year book shows that a large percentage of us have Spanish first names. This cannot be by accident. Back then, English was the only fluent language spoken by our parents and in our homes. I think it would be highly unlikely for them to name all of us with Spanish names.

High Regards,

Ricky Tucker
Rainbow City High
Class of 73

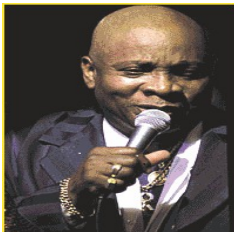
*Thank you
Ricky Tucker:*

With regards to the investigation of said decree or law. As soon as we get the correct information, we will publish it.

We would not be adverse to a reminder sometime soon.

How about sending us something on life in RC.

Thanks again.



Follow up on Sparrow on Musician's day. We ask your continued prayers

He was released from the hospital and is now at a rehab facility. I just spoke to Lord Tokyo. He said that he is still blocked from receiving visitors.

Leticia

Thanks for all the work you do to remind us of our contributions to the fabric of this nation.

Melva

<http://www.nycaribnews.com/news.php?viewStory=4341>
The website offers information from his daughter.

Attention everyone: *(contributed by Shirley George)*

Apparently there are persons distributing key rings in parking lots as gifts. These key rings or chains contain a GPS chip which will permit them to monitor your movements. You are in danger. Be careful!

OLDEN DAYS SAYINGS:

“Cut and swallow”, “Niam and go way”, “jinx”, “langy lala” “makes my skin crawl”, “circumstances alter cases”

“Train the child in the way he should go, when he is grown he will not detour from it”



“Don't spare the rod and spoil the child”

(excerpts from Earl Newland's Researcher Pleasantly Amazed Over Wealth of Musical Material in Tiny Panama)

By mistake US born **WILLIAM OSCAR SMITH (1917-1991)** discovered that in Panama there were afrodescendant musicians writing classical music.

As a Music Professor on a Faculty Research Abroad grant, from the Nashville University Center “to study the Classical Music of Black Composers of the Caribbean Region”, intending to only study the music of Jamaica and Colombia, on a stop over in Panama, he was shocked to hear from Roy Bryce-Laporte about professors: Emily Butcher, Reginald Prescott, Arnold Walters, George Coulbourne and world-reknown Roque Cordero. *(Of course, there are others)*

Smith stated, “Panama has a wealth of musical material... I am very much impressed by the work of George Coulbourne. His works definitely point to the new generation succeeding Roque Cordero... And to think I had just considered it a stop over point.”

Prof. Arnold Walter's Coro Polifonico *(excerpt from Earl Newland's article in La Republica, Sunday Aug. 24. 1986)*

On April 30, 1960, when Arnold Walters gathered a group of young people to form a choir, little did he know that in the future this choir would become famous enough to represent the country abroad. At the beginning, it concentrated on Roman Catholic liturgical music: Palestrina, DeLasso, Victoria, Schultz, Bach, Handel, which was performed at concerts and carolling at Christmas time.

Its international performances took its members to: The 14th Zimriya 1986 World Assembly of Choirs in Israel, besides its individual performances formed part of a 1000 voice choir before thousands who congregated outdoors in Tel-Aviv. Although Coro Polifonico was scheduled to perform twice in Israel, it gave more than 20 presentations by public demand, including in Jerusalem.

And, during an audience with Pope John Paul II on July 30, 1986 in the Vatican Assembly Hall, the Coro performed before approximately 12,000 persons besides being televised and transmitted by all of Europe's news media.

Also, permanently imbedded in the hearts of all members of the Coro Polifonico was the presentation given on Aug. 7 in the Dag Hammarskjold Auditorium of the United Nations, where Kraysztof Ostrowski, Executive Director of the United Nations' International Year of Peace offered the U.N. Peace Medal to the Choir for its exceptional contribution toward World peace.



ROY A. PRESCOD is a composer/arranger, vocal coach, educator and church organist born in the province of Colon (Atlantic side of the Republic of Panama), the son of H. Alonso Prescod and Alejandrina I. Armstrong de Prescod, of West Indian descent; also conductor of the Roy Prescod Chorale which he founded in 1979 and its first performance accompanied by orchestra was done in 1980.

His first introduction to music was with Mrs. Sylvia Laird, organist of Christ Church by the Sea, Colon. While studying at the University of Panama (on the Pacific) he participated in the St. Paul's Senior Choir and directed the Junior Choir. He also took organ lessons from the organist at St. Luke's Cathedral, Mr. Sweeney. After emmigrating to the US, he now holds a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Arts degree from New York University in Voice and Music Education.

Besides his vocal and musical presentations in Panama, both before and after his emmigration, Prescod has had vocal performances at Carnegie Hall, The Lincoln Center in NY, Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.; the Metropolitan Opera “I am the way”, and, at the Jerome Hines Opera.

The Chorale has performed in Panama, Costa Rica, Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and this year in Grenada. They have been asked back to several of these countries more than once and sometimes three times such as Panama, Barbados & Jamaica.

CELEBRATING MUSICIAN'S DAY

LESLIE RAYMOND GEORGE McCRAY

Etnomusicologist

The third of Seven children born to West Indian descendants: Clarence S. George (for many years solist of the St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Panama) and Jeanne Ehtlynde McCray (George) (sister of Maestro Victor Boa) on April 30, 1941 in the City of Panama.

He was exposed to music early on by hearing classical music on the radio played by his mother. Most of his early studies were done in the City of Panama, but he finished in Pto Armuelles, Chiriqui (West of the Republic). He studied music at the National School of Music of Panama, graduating in 1978 as a Technician in Musical Education Specializing in Direction and Formation of Choirs and Bands.

Obtaining a scholarship from the OAS to the Interamerican Institute of Etnomusicology and Folklore (I.N.I.D.E.F.) in Caracas, Venezuela, he graduated with a specialty in Etnomusicology (the only one in Panama). He has taken varios seminars, both here and abroad.

Leslie has a powerful voice which ranges from obligato to bass. He has sung with vocal groups and has been featured as solist by the National Institute of Music, also, in Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, throughout the Republic of Panama in churches: St. Christopher's Episcopal, Wesley Methodist, Roman Catholic churches: Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, Don Bosco, Miraflores, and as tenor solist with the National Symphonic Orchestra at the National Theatre of Panama, Coro Polifonico and Coro Musica Viva.

He has been a prolific founder of choirs preparing arrangements for them all:

Together with William Barnaby and Vernon Cox, during their High School days, recruited members to start the Starlight Chorale which delighted audiences in churches and the Jamaican Society hall during the time when groups such as the Cleff Melodaires were popular (late '50s early '60s).

His own pet choir the Coro de las Américas in 1963.

He has taught music and folklore both at the High School and University levels.

These choirs were founded at schools at which he worked throughout the country:

Coro Escuela Secundaria de Puerto Armuelles (ESPA) in 1966

Choir and Musical band of the Colegio Rufo A. Garay (province of Colon) in 1969

Coro del Colegio Elena Ch. de Pinate, Panamá City in 1974

Grupo Coral del Escultismo in Penonomé

And the choir of the "Cristo Sembrador" Seminar in Penonomé

Besides, "Prof. Leslie" has directed choirs for:

The "Angel María Herrera" school in Penonomé; Coro Universitario (DEXA); Coro Centenario Metodista; Coro del Centro Regional Universitario, Las Tablas (Pacific Central Provinces of Panama), Coro Cuarto Centenario de Penonomé.

He was invited to direct the Grand Finale of a combined choir of 150 voices; and the Coro Polifonico.

He has been Musical director of the following choirs: Fort Clayton Protestant Church, Assistant Director of the Wesley Methodist Choir, also supporting the Methodist Jr. Choir and the Juvenile choir of the Rio Abajo Methodist Church and St. Christopher's Episcopal Church in the '60s.

Prof. George has represented his country abroad, both as soloist, lecturer and trainer: Dominican Republic, Mexico, The US, Barbados, Nicaragua, Venezuela, besides being appointed investigator in the project to prepare the Diccionario de la Música Española e Hispano Americana, sponsored by the Ministry of Culture of Spain and the Sociedad General de Autores de España in commemoration of the 500 years of the discovery of America.

His writings have been published in various national and international magazines, including COPA's, which is distributed in its airplanes.

As a specialist in folklore, Prof. Leslie is now bent of rescuing pan-caribbean music in Panama, promoting and singing calypso and encouraging young artists.

Elisha Taitt (Piano teacher)

As stated by Earl Newland (La Republica, April 1, 1977): During an interview, world-reknown Panamanian singer Basilio made teacher Elisha Taitt responsible for his musical background. He stated "I owe my musical background to Mr. Elisha Taitt. He taught my sister and me the piano, and, he did a good job of it..."

Elisha Taitt, born in Jamaica on July 3, 1891, came to Panama on February 16, 1913. His co-worker at the Commissary, James Evans, the organist at Wesley Methodist Church, bought a reed type organ in 1916 and offered to teach Taitt to play. That started Taitt playing on the keyboard. He later studied with Mrs. Burnett in San Miguel until she emmigrated to the US., continued studying on his own, was invited to be organist of the Corozal Baptist Church in 1921 and taught his son Eric to play the piano. Hearing Eric perform at age 8, many asked Mr. Taitt to teach them to play. Then at 10 Eric was so proficient that his father turned over the organist post to him and concentrated on directing the choir.

When he moved his wife and 10 children to La Boca in 1935, his neighbors asked him to tutor their children, to which he dedicated himself from then on, even after he moved the family to Parque Lefevre.

In the '50s piano teachers presented recitals with their music students, Taitt also did, to large audiences. As a good Jamaican, he had his own garden where he planted: yucca, yam, corn, banana and other vegetables.



Young Musicians:

Santi DeBriano

Born to Panamanian parents of West Indian descent, Santi is the son of Alonso Wilson (R.I.P.) and Elsa Wood (retired nurse).

Santi is a young Panamanian string instrument player, specializing on the bass. He moved to New York with his parents as a child.

His interest in music came from his pianist-composer father. As a young child he studied classic bass guitar. As an adolescent he learned to play the guitar, which he played regularly with a jazz rock group, developing, during that time, his love for jazz.

As a teacher he has contributed a lot to musical education, besides sharing the stage with great musicians in the world of jazz, such as:

Archie Shepp, Chico Freeman, Billy Hart, Kenny Werner, Don Pullen, Pharoah Sanders, Hank Jones, Larry Coryell, Randy Weston, Freddie Hubbard, Cecil Taylor, and others.

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Milagros Blades

(excerpted and expanded from The Panama Cyberspace News)

Considered a prodigy by the Danilo Perez Foundation, Milagros Blades Romero has been in the field of music from the age of 2. At 16, studying in the Eleventh grade of Diversified Arts at the National Institute of Culture, she has been awarded 3 Summer scholarships to the Berklee College of Music in Boston (USA).

An expert on percussion instruments: drums, *caja* (*small drum of Panama's folklore*), tumba, timpani and also on the accordion, Milagros has participated in several of the Jazz Festivals produced by Danilo Perez in Panama. In January 2013, together with other young upcoming artists, she participated in the gran finale of the Panama Jazz Festival in which Ruben Blades presented his "Patria".

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ORxm_27RT7Y

November 2013

Lloyd George Gallimore Goffe

(translated/expanded from his homage by SAMAAP in 2007)

Born on Nov. 1, 1945 in the City of Almirante, province of Bocas del Toro of West Indian descent parents (both born in Bocas): Lloyd George Gallimore Edwards and Viola V. Goffe Gallimore.

He studied at the Changuinola and Almirante public elementary schools in Bocas del Toro. His High school was done in the province of Chiriquí at the Felix Olivares Contreras and in the province of Colon at Jose Guardia Vega. He also studied at the Faculty of Commerce of the Univ. of Panama, besides special courses in marketing and sales from the Panama Canal Company. His piano studies were done at the National Institute of Music under Maestro Roque Cordero between the years of 1961 to 1965. Loyola Studios and Ducret y Ducret housed his practices and recording.

In 1966 he went back to his native Bocas, where he was appointed to manage one of the offices of the Chiriqui Land Co. joining one of the local orchestras. The next year he founded his own group "The Beach Boys" later changed to "The Beachers". The musical group was such a boom that they all moved to the Capitol, Panama, getting jobs so as not to depend economically on performances. That was the beginning of a very successful musical career.

He worked at Marketing and sales for years until 1998 when he went into Marketing his own group, turning it into the success it is today.

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Wilbert Wesley Morrison

*(taken from the Easter drama cantata's program
"Let my people go")*

Eldest child of the late Robert Lancelot and Medora Morrison, born and reared in Red Tank, former Canal Zone townsite.

At a tender age he mastered the organ and violin and later learned to play the saxophone which, was favorite instrument.

His musical career included participating with the Colon Symphony Orchestra, the San Francisco Garden Orchestra and the Angelo Jaspe Orchestra. After assuming directorship and management of the band, the late comedian George Bryan suggested he use "Willie Moro".

He held membership in the Panama Fire Department Band from 1972 and in 1988-89 affiliated with Viento y Percusión de Panama. On November 28, 1988 the Fire Department presented him a "Distinguished service plaque".

Willie served as chorister in the Trinity and Wesley Methodist Choirs for many years and participated in religious, classical and civic programs on both sides of the isthmus as violinist and saxophonist. As a member of Wesley Methodist Church, he was Assistant Class Leader and Coordinator of the Worship Committee.

In spite of his demanding schedule, he shared his time with fraternal organizations such as the Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks Of the World, where he served as District Deputy, Grand Exalted Ruler. He was also a member of the Independent Order of Oddfellows and held the position of Deputy to the Central American District. Willie was the Warden of the St. Charles Lodge No. 7252 and Treasurer of the Past Grand Lodge No. 31.

After 39 years of service with the U.S. Government and Air Force, Willie retired in November of 1980, being his last place of employment Howard Air Force Base where he occupied the position of Base Aircraft Engine Manager.

Married to Maizie C. Conliffe Mason, they had Two children: Mrs. Celeste Maria Stephens and Jaime Ricardo Morrison, both living in the U.S.

Panamanian Symbols



The month of November is celebration of Panama's Independence. Throughout the month one province or another has something to celebrate. Much of it is celebrated with parades, which have become more and more folkloric. The national dress in all its different presentations: "de lujo, montuna, zaraza, congo, darienita, etc.", the school bands, the government delegations and the independent bands, strut on all the routes designed for these parades.

These parades were concentrated in the Capitol some years ago, but with the facility of new roads and vehicles, the school bands are invited to perform in other provinces and almost each district prepares its own parade route.

Beginning on the 2nd of the month, All Soul's Day is celebrated with a ceremony to honor the Independence soldiers at the cemetery which includes a parade.

-November Third celebrates Panama's Independence from Colombia.

-Up to last year the 4th of November was celebrated as Flag day, but a law changed it to Symbols (above) Day: The National Anthem, The Flag, the flower and the Coat of Arms (presented on our cover).

We were also taught in school that the coin was a symbol, recently apparently it has been deleted.

Notice that the coat of arms carries 9 stars above the eagle's head from wing to wing. These stars represent the number of provinces in the country. This year a new law approved by the National Assembly has added a new 10th province, causing a need to increase the amount of stars in the emblem. This emblem will have to be changed on all official documents and rebuilt for the frontispiece of buildings, etc.

November 5th consolidates Panama's independence from Colombia after the US citizens, owners of the Panama railroad, and sitting on the ship out in the Atlantic ocean, helped the Panamanians to oust the Colombian Army which had come to placate the Panamanian independence uprising.

Thereafter, almost everyday the different provinces and towns celebrate a "shout" until we reach November 28 when the Independence from Spain is celebrated.

This verse from my poem Holidays in Panama (AfroPanamanian Newsletter January 2010) depicts the month's celebration:

*"Halloween with trick or treat in October made no hit,
but November was the month when holidays were it:
from the first to the fifth in Panama, a whole week;
marching the tenth in Panama was not for the meek.
The Zone had its Veteran's and Thanksgiving Days
while Panama celebrated their Four Independence shouts."*

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