

AfroPanamanian Newsletter



English opens doors. Read the Newsletter

www.afropanameniannewsletter.mex.tl

No.8 Vol. II

September 2011

Donation

TRAIN LEAVING CALIDONIA



Controversy

Anecdotes

Poetry

**LOS AMIGOS :
Por la superación de la Etnia Negra**

**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**

CREDITS

Editor : Sandra Patterson

Assistant: Ines V. Sealy

MEMBERS

**President
Anthony Cox**

**Treasurer
Fernando A. Goldson**

**Others
Ines V. Sealy
Sandra M. Patterson
Roberto L. Alleyne**

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

Editorial

Let's Stop the Crime

It is alarming how crime is getting the best part of our society, mainly our youngsters –teenagers--. Every day there is news about someone being murdered.

What's going on – why do adolescents get involved in illegal activities that lead them to death?

*No one said that “**life is a bed of roses**” or a paved avenue wherein everything is easy. It's a struggle to “**keep your head above water**” and not sink into the darkness of illegal acts.*

We have to show our youth the path in which they should walk, encourage them to go the right way, to be honest, to study and make something of themselves.

FEEDBACK (from August Newsletter)

Mea Culpa: Fe de errata: Ines used the Barbados flag instead of the Jamaican. Sorry about that. I suppose I'm biased.



Jamaica

Hi Sandy this history about the bus is very interesting, I did not know that's where the name came from.

thank you
añõicaseo=hasta luego

Afropanamaniannewsletter is sentimentality itself, and as someone once said:

"The best use of sentimentality is as a solid rock that allows us to leap into the future"

Hazel

Very very nice info. Please do not forget Teatro Roxy in Marañón and the live program by Jorge Carrasco at *Teatro Presidente "Lo Tomas O Lo Dejas"., "La Hora", "The Panama Amercan" "Panamá América" "Gráfico" "Dominical" "Prensa Libre" "La Nación"* newspapers. I sold them all. That is why I remember them.

We had: "*Radio Programas Continental (RPC)*" (whose owner, *Fernando Eleta [R.I.P]* just died on August 12) with programs like *Tanganika El Rey de la Selva* Eduardo Roble, Jean Lefitt and plenty "*Radio Novelas*" with Isabel María Kelly, Estela María Paz Etc. "*Radio Panamericana*" with *Un drama Policiaco*" among others "*Radio "Miramar", "Radio Mía", "Radio Reloj"* which seldom gave the right time.

"*Radio Variedades* in *Rio Abajo* where I got my initiation on the air with my nightly program, "Juke Box Review" My radio name was Jonnie Keyton. Graduating to Radio and Television at "SCN Television Canal Zone" My mentors in Journalism were Roy Naylor and Íbero Fernandez. Also, we had HOG Radio with Josh Russel and "Joe Gavini" operating from *Radio Panamericana* in English. We also had Radio HOXO, beginning with "Manna in the Morning", with Pastor William Beebe. I just thought I would share some of this information with you.

John Caton

Hi Mrs. Sealy? Blessing's! Best Regards. Both newsletters, are full of memories for me...

First! Do you know that my Dad worked for the Panama Tribune in the Sport Section?

Was located in front of the President Theater at that time... I remember a guy they call something like Westerman (more or less)

Second! It's true and is a fact, that memory's are part of life...

Thank you!

Alfredo Montilla

----- ***Slide show of very interesting historical Canal pictures (received from Donaldo Benito)***

[http://www.kodakgallery.com/ShareLanding.action?
c=10zu3vbw.3qffi560&x=0&y=8jgayh&localeid=en_US](http://www.kodakgallery.com/ShareLanding.action?c=10zu3vbw.3qffi560&x=0&y=8jgayh&localeid=en_US)

Many remembrances. I just had to read it two times. Thanks for another outstanding newsletter so we would not forget where we came from.

Tony R.

Hi Inesita,

How interesting to introduce yesteryear pictures.

Thanks again. Carmen

FIRE IN PANAMA I

Many people relocated to other homes or communities after they became victims of FIRE both in Panama City and Colon. When someone said “I got burn out”, it was to mean that their homes on the tenement buildings had burned down leaving many families destitute, having to scotch at their relatives until they could get back on their feet.

FIRE in La Boca Town

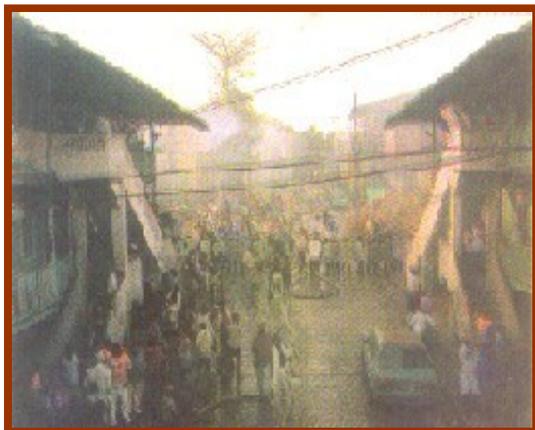
A grand conflagration on a Sunday midday in 1946-47 consumed Four of the 5 La Boca Town board buildings leaving many families who had moved there from the Canal Zone destitute.

Rebuilt later, on the afternoon of February 21, 2002, La Boca Town burnt once more.

More than 50 burnt out families and several persons injured resulted when three of the five La Boca Town (Rio Abajo) buildings were consumed by fire.

*Carmela Govern’s Cyberspace News
Vol. 2 No. 5; March 1, 2002 reported*

In a legal action to evict the residents towards tearing it down or rebuilding instead of making it an historical monument depicting the transfer of Construction Day buildings from the Canal Zone to Panama, someone (some say the police, some say one of the residents) torched La Boca Town.



PANAMANIAN CALYPSO

Up to now nobody can tell
Who start the FIRE in San Miguel



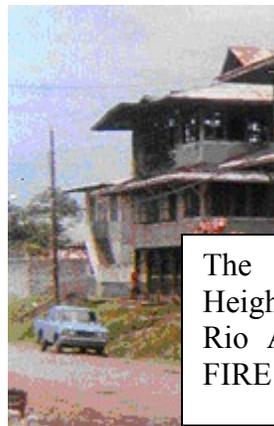
Chorus
FIRE, Oh mama, FIRE,
Call the *bombero* to put this FIRE out, FIRE!

FIRE in San Miguel

Hector Gadpaille states:

When the *San Miguel* fire began in 1958, I was sitting in the *Juan Demostenes Arosemena* Stadium studying for the only test I had to take to graduate: Spanish. Some people were shouting **fire, fire** in *San Miguel*. Upon hearing that the fire was between M and N Streets, I ran the fastest race of my life to get home in time to try to help to move our things to safety. There was little I could do, since friends of the family had already moved us out, so, I could then help others who needed to move their things before the fire got to them. Fortunately, the fire was quenched Five houses before ours and we were able to maintain our residence until graduation. Two years later, the owners asked us to move out for reconstruction and we moved to 19 Street Rio Abajo in January 1961.

FIRE in Diablo Heights buildings



The first of the Diablo Heights buildings in 19 St. Rio Abajo was gutted by FIRE in 1978.

Talking About Lodges:

Excerpted from Alberto Barrow's Notes on Alfredo Cragwell (R.I.P.) and translated by Ines V. Sealy.

During Alfredo Cragwell's political life, which lasted from 1948 to 1956, he served the Republic of Panama as Alternate Deputy and Principal Deputy for the Province of Panama.

While in his post as Elected Principal Deputy he was able to save fraternal organizations (lodges & societies) from being considered insurance companies with the consequent tax of \$50,000.00 to the Government. Deputy Cragwell took a commission of lodge representatives to a meeting with the then President of the Republic, *Jose Antonio Remon Cantera*, who was sympathetic to the cause, suspending the law until Deputy Cragwell could present a new project-law.

The Honorable Alfredo Cragwell, true to his word, presented the proposal to benefit the fraternal organizations to the Assembly, where it was approved, sanctioned by the President and became Law 4 of May 11, 1953. As a musician, he also got the *Sta. Cecilia* (Musician's day) law passed.

As a lodgeman, he has been a member of Court Minerva No.9284, Foresters; King George Lodge No.2789 Loyal Order of Ancient Shepherds; Flowers of the Isthmus Lodge, Mechanics; Unity Lodge No.1084-I.B.P.O.E. of W., Elks; The J. Henry Bonny Lodge No.390 – Scottish Rites of Free Masonry.

The Elks have been donating scholarships to deserving students mainly in the Provinces of Panama and Colon. He has held various posts in the order of Elks, but in 1985 he was appointed Director of the Education Department for the whole area of the Republic of Panama by: Doctor Donald P. Wilson, Grand Exalted Ruler

Cragwell was distinguished with many medals: the Grand Cross of the Order of *Amador Guerrero*, the Grand Cross of the Order of *Vasco Núñez de Balboa*, and the *Eloy Alfaro* International Foundation Medal, besides the first Gold Medal of the Worldwide Order of Elks.

Taken from his obituary

He certainly was a man blessed with many God-given talents: Teacher, Musician, Fraternity Brother, Professor, Certified Public Accountant. He was also a Deputy of the Panamanian National Assembly and Principal of the Rainbow City Junior-Senior High School. All these talents and important positions were used to improve the quality of life of both young and old, from all walks of life, in Panama, Colon, and Canal Zone communities.



It is important to note that Kwanzaa is a cultural holiday, not a religious one, thus available to and practiced by Africans of all religious faiths who come together based on the rich, ancient and varied common ground of their Africanness.

OLDEN DAYS SAYINGS:

“As old as Methuselah”

Methuselah – The person who is reported to have lived the longest, died at age 969. He was Noah’s grandfather, the last godly man on earth besides Noah, and he died 7 days before the flood.

- When did you find out that a “**needle case**” is a dragonfly?

<http://blogs.abc.net.au/queensland/2011/08/eliminating-dengue-fever.html>

Sarsaparilla (pronounced sauceperilla), a “**soft drink**”, was very popular during the construction of the Canal, *this information I got “from the horses mouth” (my father, L. Sealy)*. **Quinine** was taken for medicinal purposes to “**ward off**” or placate Malaria symptoms. Shots of rum were taken to kill the worms. And check out the possible cure for dengue: at the URL

Radio in Panama

Sandra Patterson

*Up to the late 30’s radio frequency in Panama was controlled by the USA Armed Forces – due to canal security -. But in 1937 four Panamanian men: Fernando Jolly, Álvarez, Paniza and Nuñez got together and created the first radio station that transmitted via Kilohertz (khz) from a local room on a tenement building in Panama. They claimed that the old building shook so much with every movement they made that they decided to call the station **Radio Tembleque**.*

As they had no permit, the Armed Forces considered it a violation to the Canal Treaty but the Panamanian government stood its ground and that is how radio started in Panama.

There is a discrepancy with regards to which radio station got the first license to operate -- whether it was Radio Miramar or La Voz del Pueblo. Both claimed they were the first. It is said that La Voz del Pueblo was the first but no one knows why when the licenses were issued it was given to Radio Miramar first.

The first radio announcer was Don Ignacio (Nacho) de Jesus Valdes.

After radio was officially established, it became the source of and for many happenings in the country: news, music, cultural and other entertainments. Mostly women enjoyed this novelty (men were out working).

Programs were live, transmitted directly from the scene, starring local and foreign artists such as Teresa Ducasa, Harry Iglesias, Eneida Valdes, Adolfo Legendre, Juan Antonio Tibau, Dalila Aguilar, Alex Araujo and many more. Now those were real actors who presented live dramatizations of literary works. If you had the opportunity to be present while an episode was being transmitted, you marveled to see how and what they did to produce the sound effects would blow your mind.

United Nations told the countries of America to count their Black inhabitants. In Panama, the Comptroller's institution did not train its personnel, so that, the 2010 census was not carried out correctly, and now, we neither know how many inhabitants there are in the country, much less how many Blacks.

We will have to wait another 8 years.

Black Population in PANAMA in the year 2002 App. 600,000?

By Claral Richards

Panama was the first place in the Western region's mainland that had a Black settlement.

Formerly, a part of Colombia until its independence in 1903, Panama is not always considered a Central American nation, historically at least. The first Blacks arrived around 1513 as explorers who built vessels, the next batch arrived a few years later as slaves who transported goods from ships and to work on gold mines. The first African slave rebellion in the Americas took place in Panama as they overpowered the slavemasters and received help from the AmerIndians. These people were called "*cimarones*" (the wild ones) but are now known as "*Playeros*" (the beach people), Spanish speaking and Roman Catholic Black people.



The original Blacks in the country are nicknamed "*nativos*" while the Afro-Caribbeans are known as "*antillanos*". The lack of unity between these two groups is very surprising. There are still laws that are directed towards Afro-Caribbeans in Panama but they are getting closer everyday to equal human rights. Both groups have been fighting for their rights for 500 years.

Afro-Caribbeans preserved their culture and traditional ways as a way to rebel against North Americans and other Latinos. Conflicts between them and Spanish-speaking Panamanians last through today. Discrimination and lack of citizenship caused Afro-Caribbeans to stick together even more and develop their own communities with Protestant churches, schools and businesses.

Former Panama president, *Arnulfo Arias* tried to deport all Afro-Caribbeans, East Indians and Chinese out of Panama. Segregation in the Panama Canal Zone ended. The *Torrijos/Noriega* regime and the government has made laws to enable equal treatment. During the Mireya term law No. 9 was instituted to celebrate Black Heritage. The West Indian culture has been and is always on the rise in Panama. Most Blacks from Panama, when they migrate to the USA, don't always identify as Latinos but as Spanish-speaking Blacks. Calypso, Reggae, Socca, Creole English and French, have all been retained. *(to be continued)*



Black Heritage Day Celebration Colon

- ***Celebrating the International Year of the Afrodescendant, View this documental of the Summit held in La Ceiba, Honduras Aug 17-21, 2011.*** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XGe1eGqr7Po> *(sent by Leticia Thomas)*
- Watch "A War for Your Soul!" <http://vimeo.com/3658572> (contributed by L. Eccleston)

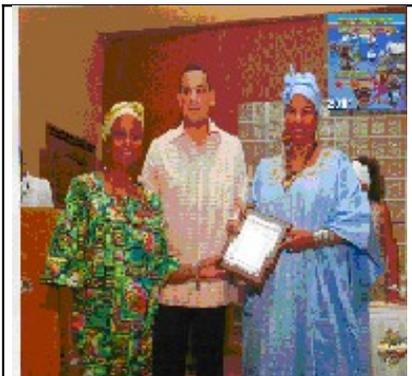
World's First Afrodescendants' Summit

Sandra Patterson

Organized by ODECO, for three days in La Ceiba, Honduras' third city in importance was the scenario for the World's First Afrodescendants' Summit.

La Ceiba is a symbolic city of the Department of la Atlantida, (a "Garifuna country"). The Garifunas are a people that migrated from St Vincent and settled on the coasts of Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala and Belize. These people were never enslaved, dispossessed or subdued. Their spirit, self determination, and organizational force are their biggest recourse. They still speak their native language and conserve African traditions.

The summit was called and organized by ODECO, a "Community Organization For Ethnic Development" which has its headquarters in La Ceiba. More than 1000 persons attended this summit either as a delegate, observer, press or other.



**Cecilia Moreno & Sandra
receiving the Plaque**

H.E. Mario Ruiz, Panama's ambassador to Honduras played an important supportive role to the organizing committee together with Cecilia Moreno from the Red de Mujeres Afro Panameñas (REMAP) as a part of the international committee. For the work done, Panama was awarded a plaque.

<http://www.facebook.com/#!/photo.php?fbid=10150410850894535&set=a.10150410843909535.446092.516544534&type=1&theater>

Together with members from various local groups, Panama was represented by approximately thirty delegates.

Dignitaries present at the inaugural reception were: aside from the President of Honduras, Porfirio Lobo Sosa, H. E. Álvaro Colom actual President of Guatemala and its ex President Vinicio Cerezo. From Costa Rica came its Vice President Luis Liberman. Each one committed his country to joint efforts, not only for the success of the summit, but also to provide benefits for the afrodescendant people within their territories.

The welcome and closing gala were held at La Quinta Real Hotel, while the summit was held at the La Atlántida Regional University Center.



**(left to right) Hermelinda Rodríguez,
H.E. Mario Ruiz, Sandra Patterson
(editor of this Newsletter), and Sol
Berguido**