

Bishops' High School Old Students' Association

Senior Class Notes

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September Affair 2014

By Florine Dalgety

On Saturday, September 22, 22 seniors and 2 guests gathered for an afternoon of fun and fellowship, glad for the chance to reconnect. The seniors were joined by a nice group of Juniors and "Middlers," members of the Seniors Committee.

Persons seated at tables chatted with those around them as well as with others from nearby tables. Regulars knew what to expect!

Bingo was the main game played. It has now become a staple of September Affair and is much anticipated by the seniors. Yes, many prizes were won. However, for several of the seniors, the joy was listening for the numbers, covering those on their cards and hearing someone shout "BINGO." The games were so engaging that we just wanted to stay on and on for more fun.

Those of us who did not attend Reunion 2014 in New York City were in for a treat. The video which showed highlights from the Reunion, helped us to appreciate what took place. The main item shown was the cultural presentation of the Bishops' High School Old Students' Association in honour of Cecile Nobrega's "Bronze Woman." Snapshots of presentations of some Chapters were also screened. It was good to see persons whom we had not seen for donkey's years! Just the sight of them brought back memories of schooldays.

Once again, Derry's home was the venue for the event.

The memories of a very pleasant afternoon and evening are yet with us!



B I N G O				
2	21	32	46	66
15	30	44	58	70
5	29	FREE	48	74
6	16	33	52	68
10	26	45	53	63

INTERESTING SIGNS

TOILET OUT OF ORDER. PLEASE USE FLOOR BELOW.

In a Laundromat: AUTOMATIC WASHING MACHINES: PLEASE REMOVE ALL YOUR CLOTHES WHEN THE LIGHT GOES OUT.

In a London department store: BARGAIN BASEMENT UPSTAIRS.

In an office: WOULD THE PERSON WHO TOOK THE STEP LADDER YESTERDAY, PLEASE BRING IT BACK OR FURTHER STEPS WILL BE TAKEN.

In an office: AFTER TEA BREAK, STAFF SHOULD EMPTY THE TEAPOT AND STAND UPSIDE DOWN ON THE DRAINING BOARD.

Outside a second hand shop: WE EXCHANGE ANYTHING - BICYCLES, WASHING MACHINES, ETC. WHY NOT BRING YOUR WIFE ALONG AND GET A WONDERFUL BARGAIN?

Notice in health food shop window: CLOSED DUE TO ILLNESS.

Spotted in a safari park: ELEPHANTS PLEASE STAY IN YOUR CAR.

Seen during a conference: FOR ANYONE WHO HAS CHILDREN AND DOESN'T KNOW IT, THERE IS A DAY CARE ON THE 1ST FLOOR.

Notice in a farmer's field: THE FARMER ALLOWS WALKERS TO CROSS THE FIELD FOR FREE, BUT THE BULL CHARGES.

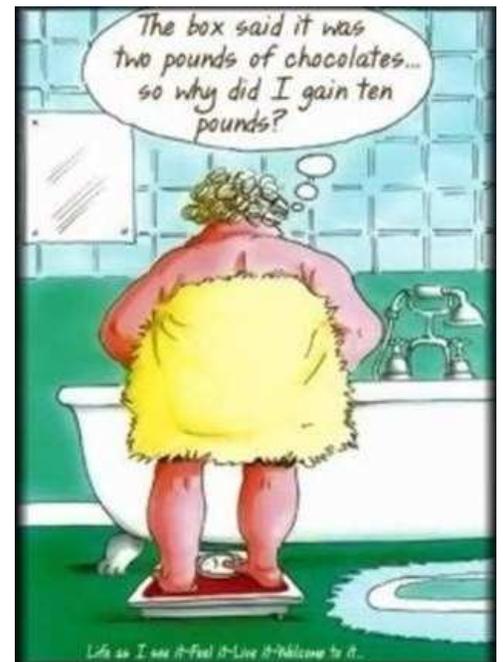
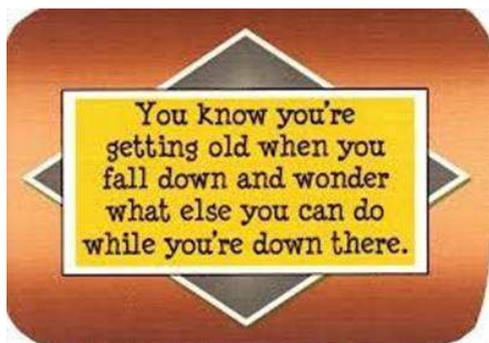
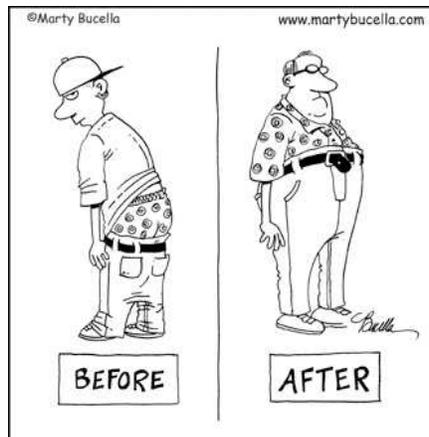
Message on a leaflet: IF YOU CANNOT READ, THIS LEAFLET WILL TELL YOU HOW TO GET LESSONS.

On a repair shop door: WE CAN REPAIR ANYTHING. (PLEASE KNOCK HARD - THE BELL DOESN'T WORK).

AS TIME MARCHES ON



WD-40 is a lubricant. It can stop squeaks and loosen rusty parts, for example!



Meet the Seniors

Megan Bender née Charles

The first born of Robert Charles and Olga Charles née Van Tull, Megan Bender recalls the grounding she received at home. She considers Robert a good father whose actions and examples resulted in the building of character in his children. She values the contributions of her mother who, initially a pupil teacher, chose to devote her time to raising her children.

Megan attended All Saints Anglican School in New Amsterdam where her father was headteacher. She gained the Government County Scholarship for Berbice which enabled her to attend the Bishop's High School from 1944 to 1949. Her achievement resulted in her mother moving to Georgetown with Megan and her two younger sisters. Her brother remained in New Amsterdam until he gained a place in Queen's College the following year.

When Megan entered BHS, the school building was an old 3-storeyed building with a tower, the former site of Queen's College. The new building was erected around the old one during her stay, with the east-west corridor being an addition.

The teachers at that time were from the United Kingdom. Since World War II was in progress, no teachers could be recruited for a while. As a result, some staff members were wives of colonial officials. One of those teachers used to "smoke like a chimney, taking a puff outside the gate before entering the school." One told some students that they were natives and immediately provoked a response for Bhanomattie Persaud Fraser and Lyla Sankar Kissoon. Permanent staff was hired from 1947. Lilian Dewar who taught her Latin was the only Guianese teacher Megan had.

Megan has memories of life at BHS from 3rd form. Her classmates included Irma King, Leila Beramsingh Too-Kong, Anita Shepherd Whitehead, Marlene Kwok Crawford, Amina Sankar, Joy Leitch, Erica Henwood Gomes, Patricia Moore Ellis and Audrey Knight. Many others were expatriates. She notes that rules applied to all students, regardless of their background and were applied fairly. Whether a girl wore Bata yachtings or leather shoes which had to be plain, the uniform had to be worn by all.

Megan said that she attended school because her father sent her. She was often bored. Her desk at the back of the class near the window was strategically placed, allowing her to seek stimulation from what was occurring outside the classroom.

One lesson learnt was that "your purpose is not to serve a man but to go as far as you can." Others were social graces and knowing what to say and what not to say. On reflection, Megan states that "you didn't know what a good education you had until you left."

Megan left BHS after 5th form. Entry to 6th form was on the recommendation of teachers. The teachers judged whether a girl was "6th form material" rather than using examination results as a guide. Thus at 17 years of age, Megan attended commercial school where she stayed for three years. She then applied to the Civil Service.

With no appointment to the Civil Service, Megan joined the staff of All Saints Anglican School and lived with her father in New Amsterdam. There she met Pat Bender, her future husband. After one year as a teacher, Megan joined the staff of the Department of Health, serving from 1952 to 1954. After her marriage in 1954, she was required to resign from the Civil Service. She returned to teach with her father in 1955.

Because of her husband's job, Megan moved to Cove and John. The area was not generally served by electricity and neighbours lived some distance away. However, since she lived in a government house, she secured light from the police station. She taught at Enmore Government School which was built by the sugar company for the children of the estate field workers. She said that the children lived in logies and spoke a dialect heavily influenced by Hindi. Girls were allowed to attend school until nine years of age and were then prepared for marriage. She witnessed cruelty meted out to many women on the estate.

During the 1963-64 riots, Megan "had to run out of Enmore." After the 80-day strike, she moved to St. Andrew's Primary School. There she began training for the Teacher's Certificate through the new In-service Training Programme. Eventually, she was appointed Senior Mistress and taught in the secondary section of the school. Her students lived in "depressed" areas such as Tiger Bay, Charlestown, Yarrow Dam and Lombard Street, while several others were children of market vendors from the East and West Demerara who preferred to have their children attend school close to their place of work.

Megan's last stint was as Deputy Headteacher at Carmel Community School, an amalgam of students from the secondary section of St. Stephen's, St. Andrew's, St. Phillip's, Trinity and Carmel.

Teaching older students from depressed areas was an experience in itself. Megan's education was broadened by the harsh realities of some of her students. Some girls were "sold" to older men when they were around 12 years of age. Others used drugs. Yet others had parents who were in prison or would come home drunk.

When Megan retired in 1987, she felt sad. Her observation of the lives of some of the students left her feeling helpless. After retirement, she taught art at St. Margaret's Primary School. She also shared the mothering of her nephews. Once her nephews and two sons had moved on, she faced an empty nest. This did not last long as Megan welcomed a brother and sister whose mother asked her to help raise them. She revels in the fact that both have developed into responsible young adults.

This reluctant student of BHS did eventually enjoy her school days. Her sister, Waveney, niece – Konyo Addo, and nephews – Anim Addo, Ansa Addo and Laurence Charles also attended BHS.



Dawn Elvis

In 1949, Dawn entered the Bishops' High School in the 4th Form after winning a Government Junior Scholarship while at Enterprise High School. She soon bonded with Louisa Fitzpatrick and Lilavati Persaud, fellow Government Junior Scholars that year. Lilavati excelled in Mathematics, and with Dawn's strength in French and Latin, these two thereafter accounted for all the top class prizes.

There, in 4th Form, Dawn learned the ways and culture of the school through impressive and sometimes searing interactions with Mistresses such as Mrs. Medas – Latin, Miss Lee – English Literature, Miss Graham – Biology, Miss 'Granny' Grafton – French (“Bonjooooour, mes enfants!”), and Mrs. Nobbs – Mathematics (“Now girls, look at your figures”, to which the girls responded sophomorically by casting their glinting eyes around their by then fully blossomed bodies). Sitting next to Shirley Ho-a-Yun in Biology class brought the two into close friendship as they focused during class on designing their personal signature with just the right flourish, while dissecting some worm or rabbit's head.

Dawn was soon introduced to the extracurricular activity that later became one of her passions, i.e., theatre. She twice represented Elizabeth House in intra-mural dramatic competitions, to good reviews, playing Bassanio in William Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice, and then a cowering steward in George Bernard Shaw's Saint Joan. Dawn developed a love and understanding of theatre and became a keen follower of the art in later years, attending many plays across the world, and script writing and directing on odd occasions.

In 1951, Dawn became the first recipient of the Pollard Shield awarded for best academic accomplishment in 5th Form. This, despite committing a most shameful faux pas of one's school career, namely, being caught skipping the Headmistress' Current Events class which she and her co-conspirator (to remain anonymous) considered to be not worth their while. Dawn didn't care how harsh a punishment would be meted out at school, just as long as her mother wouldn't learn about it – about this disgraceful transgression by her child, this flouting of authority.

Notably, French class was a most pleasurable 6th Form experience. Led by the French mistress, Miss Bone, the class often planned social events, which provided opportunities for immersion in the language outside of the classroom. These teas plus a weekend out of town also fostered a cohesiveness among the students that lasted well beyond schooldays. The relatively close knit group included Waveney Trotman, Jean Thomas, Waveney Ng-a-Kien, Holly Morgan, Louisa Fitzpatrick, Lilavati Persaud, Shirley Tang and Stella Mohammed.

After high school, Dawn was offered teaching assignments in primary schools in Georgetown as well as on the East Coast and on the West Coast of Demerara. During those years, she developed a strong friendship with Erma (Alexander) Walks as they found themselves to be teachers at the same school on the West Coast. Dawn at this time also taught temporary stints at BHS whenever a French or Geography mistress took leave. Though it paid well, this proved to be hazardous work, as Dawn's very youth (being not long out of 6th Form) when she showed up in front of a class of 4th Formers made her an easy target for schoolgirl pranks. In later years, grown women have reminded her, with deep regret, that they were complicit in the shenanigans back then.

Though Dawn aimed as a youngster to become a translator at the United Nations, circumstances steered her away from the languages she loved into a completely different field, namely, Economics. She discovered her competence in Economics at the UCWI/London where she earned a BSc Hons degree in the subject. She later earned a PhD in Economics from the University of Michigan. Her career followed this academic path – teaching Economics at the undergraduate and graduate levels at Fisk University and Vanderbilt University; later, via a Brookings Institution Fellowship, to the World Bank in Washington, DC.

As a World Bank economist, Dawn travelled widely, propounding the World Bank's policy advice and conducting economic policy analysis in various developing countries: from Indonesia and Cameroon to selected Caribbean countries. This work also exposed her to international scholars and policy makers, and provided opportunities for further study in places like Harvard University and Nice, France. During these years, Dawn jointly authored several World Bank developing country economic reports, World Bank Operations Evaluation reports, and moderated World Bank seminars on the environment.

In retirement, Dawn developed an interest in creative writing. She attended creative writing workshops and retreats in New York and Maryland and wrote a number of pieces for limited audiences and for her own pleasure. Short stories and poems claimed her interest. She has shared her poems and stories with small audiences of fellow writers. Many of her stories tend to bear a streak of magical realism.

Currently Dawn keeps intellectually engaged by attending Learning in Retirement classes, particularly in English Literature and World History. Here she experiences Shakespeare in new lights and savours learning about the world shaping roles of major historical figures.

Dawn also lent some of her time to the once active Washington Metropolitan Area Chapter of the BHS Alumni Guild, serving stints as Treasurer and Secretary. She found this reconnection with BHS extremely rewarding and made a number of new friends among the younger generations. She always looks forward to the International Reunions.

