

History of the SSCAAT

It was on a trip back home in 1992 that Errol Campbell was approached by a close childhood friend, Bobby Fernandes, Chairman of the Saint Stanislaus College Association in Guyana, about arranging for Toronto-based alumni to support the College in a time of need. The need? To save the College building from an infestation of termites. Errol decided that instead of arranging for a one-time donation it would be better to form an Alumni Association. So, armed with a letter from the College, and bearing in mind the maxim “when you want to get something done, give the task to a busy man” he returned to Toronto. Through his business connections he contacted three of the busiest people he knew: Noel Denny, Rupert de Castro and Paul Camacho, who all played a crucial role in contacting others and getting things off the ground.

A Community Centre was the locale for the first Saints Alumni meeting where it was decided that the first fund-raising event would be an inaugural dinner. This dinner, attended by about 150 people, took place at the Golden Star Restaurant in Scarborough on May 28, 1993, thanks to help of its owner, Tony Persaud, who arranged for a meal to be prepared almost at cost, thus enabling us to make a healthy profit. Many of those in attendance decided or promised to become “Paid-up” members, when the letter from Bobby was read. The money raised at the function was donated to the College for the repairs.

By this time, the Association had been incorporated and an Executive Committee formed under the presidency of Rupert De Castro. Rupert offered the use of the boardroom in his nearby office building for that inaugural meeting. It is now the Association’s official address! The list of Executive officers and founding members, in addition to the four previously mentioned, contains many who have served over many years: Peter De Freitas, Ken Cumberbatch, Randy Bradford, the late Derek D’Oliviera, Stan Gonsalves, Bob and Tony Chee-A-Tow, Mike Gomes, Hugh and Paul Hazlewood, and John Henson. There were other volunteers like Owen Lewis and the late Colin Moore who were not alumni but gave freely of their time and energy. Our constitution was based on the one used by the Toronto QC Alumni with our particular imprint due to Derek’s legal expertise.

From the very beginning there were two important principles accepted and adhered to. The first was that no one would be remunerated in any way, directly or indirectly. Everyone still has to pay his/her own way for every activity, whether it is attendance at our own fundraising events, or travel to Guyana on Saints-related business. The second was that all members and invited prospective members could attend Executive Committee meetings. These principles enabled us to avoid unnecessary friction and guaranteed open consultation. Crucial for success was the personal time many put in voluntarily, without seeking personal glorification. It was also acknowledged that without a firm financial base we could do nothing to really help our Alma Mater from this distance. Innovation would therefore also have to be the watchword in attracting membership, expertise, and funds and as the late Howard Bryce so frequently reminded us in times of stress and frustration, “Doing this for the children”. We are happy to report also that we also played a crucial role in the formation of the other Saints Alumni Associations in Barbados, New York, and Antigua and are presently helping to get a UK chapter off the ground. Increased consultation, co-ordination, and co-operation among them all is very much one of our goals.

Noel Denny, who had had considerable experience in fundraising through dances held at St Lawrence Market during Caribana, <http://www.caribana.com/>, helped organise Saints parties which quickly became a fundraising staple.

He allowed the name **Caribjam** to be used for the Saints party at Caribana time. All the fundraising parties including those at Spring, Fall and New Year's were usually held in hotels but since we only got the money from tickets sold we moved to halls which enabled us to also get profits from bar sales. The lesson learnt was to undertake and plan activities which would maximize profit in proportion to the effort expended. This principle served us well in our historic role of initiating what has become the major Guyanese cultural event in Toronto, the **Last Lap Lime**.

This event, like Caribjam, "cashed in" on the arrival of large numbers of Guyanese for the Caribana weekend in August. It was decided that the alumni of the five major high-schools in Georgetown should hold an event which would facilitate contacts between old friends in the North American Diaspora and beyond. Please read the full account on the LLL site at <http://www.lastlaplime.com/history.htm> to see the important role we played. With the latest proposal from two of our executive members to raise the profit margin, we continue to be an indispensable part of the continued LLL success.

The Saints **Wall of Fame** project was another outstanding success. The brainchild of Rupert, it fulfilled the need for a wall around the perimeter of the school to ensure a secure environment for learning as well as raising additional funds. Alumni were asked to buy a plaque in the wall and in return have their name and years of attendance carved in it for time immemorial. The success of the project was also due in large part to the 2,500 beautiful brochures obtained free of charge through the good offices of Joe Reis, another alumni Executive member. Many alumni forked out an average of \$1000 each. So far \$45,000 has been raised and it is still an ongoing project. These funds have been used to construct a secure concrete chain link wall around the perimeter of the College grounds and to have other necessary repairs done to the College building.

The **Golf** Committee has been responsible for bringing off very successful annual tournaments. The leading lights in this venture have been Des Jardine, Hugh Hazlewood, Paul Hazlewood, Bob Chee-A-Tow, Paul Camacho, Phillip Rodrigues, Sherlock Martin, Art Veerasammy, Joe Castanheiro, Maurice Serrao and, of course, Bernard Arokium who has been at the helm in more recent times. They first got started in 1998 when Tony Sookrah, in an Executive meeting which was wrestling with the idea of how to engage, entertain and attract alumni members, suggested that a golf tournament be held. The initial tournament was played at Deer Creek Golf Club in Pickering, with Tony Sookrah presiding as Chair of the Golf Committee. There were about 30 to 40 duffers who ventured out and had a good time on the course and then a great dinner after. The tournament has since grown to the annual well-attended event that it is today. Then as now, meetings were held at Friendship restaurant, one of the first sponsors of a hole. We continue to solicit sponsoring of holes to help pay for the prizes.

Golf has not been our only venture into Sports. In 1993, Joe Castanheiro arranged a **cricket** match against our old rivals, Q.C., dubbed the "Jacob Cup revisited". Queens triumphed in the inaugural match but for the next 7 years, it was Saints all the way. After Q.C. indicated that they could no longer field a team, Central High School entered the fray. Some very entertaining and well contested games ensued but, alas, these games also fell away as Central could no longer field a team. Paul Camacho did something similar for **soccer**. Matches were played against QC Alumni teams and we are proud to report that we never lost a game to them. Eventually they could no longer field a team. The idea behind all these matches was to build a better working relationship with our traditional rivals, and we can report success in that department too.

Our latest venture has been our recently held 5K **Walk-in-the Park** (with hot-dogs, fruit, and water on the house) which we hope to make an annual Spring event. A relatively small number of Walkers were able to amass more than \$2000 in pledges. Future years will no doubt bring about much greater participation and perhaps a 10K walk for the more intrepid among us.

Over the past 15 years, the SSCAAT has contributed in excess of \$500,000 (CAD) in cash, equipment (kitchen equipment for the students' new cafeteria, Science and Computer laboratory equipment, refrigerators), and miscellaneous materials (hundreds of school books, uniforms, etc.). We have paid for the refurbishing of the Industrial Arts building and the washrooms, repairing the roof and floors, painting the buildings and replacing the windows. We even received a set of basketballs for the College through the good offices of Isaiah Thomas, the then manager of the Toronto Raptors.

In 1995, the first **Paint and Party Reunion** took place. Forty-seven (47) members, spouses, family and friends painted several rooms at the College, including the Sick Bay, Staff Room, and Chemistry Lab. A Fun Day included a Tug-of-War, soft-ball cricket, sprint and sack races. \$300,000 (GUY) was raised at a Thirst Park Bar-B-Q and Dance. Three Saints teachers were awarded scholarships to attend U.G., at that time. In 1997, another such reunion trip was made.

We continue to work assiduously to raise funds to refurbish the class rooms and to finance projects identified by the Board of Governors. Three class rooms have been completed already. The work was financed by the Association and by the Howard Bryce Memorial Fund. However, our contributions have not been confined to repairing and improving the College campus, only. After the Guyana "tsunami" floods in 2005, individual members of the Association raised and donated \$ 5,715 (CAD) to the Guyana Red Cross Society for its general relief fund. In the name of the Association, an additional CA \$5,377 was sent to the College for the rehabilitation of its farm, which had been devastated by the flood <http://www.motorsportsguyana.com/monday17th-jan.htm>.

In co-operation with **VSO-Canada** <http://www.vsocan.org/default.aspx> , we have sponsored the visits of experts in IT and Project Management to work at the College for short stints. On our own, we made arrangements for Mr John Choy, a member of our chapter, alumnus, and former Saints master to return to Guyana and the College to teach Math to the 6th Formers.

Along the path to success we have benefitted from the remarkable dedication of alumni, sponsors and members of the public who have unstintingly supported our events. Our efforts over the years have been recognised by the Guyana Awards Committee which bestowed on us the **2008 Guyana Award for Community Service (Organization)**, http://www.guyanaconsulate.com/awards_2008_winners.pdf and we have promised ourselves not to rest on our laurels but to strive to achieve greater things. To do this and to ensure continued success we need to enlarge our membership roll with many more, young, vibrant, dedicated individuals, both male and female. Please join up, volunteer, and help us do it "for the children".

SSCAAT Timeline

Dates (to appear in column as on the Farm history page)

Meeting of first Planning Committee - 1993

Incorporation of SSCAAT - 1993

Inaugural Dinner – May 1993

Painting Party Reunion Trips – August 1995 and 1997

First Last Lap Lime - 1995

Wall of Fame Inauguration Trip - 2005

First Golf Tournament - 1998

First “Walk-in-the-Park” – May 2008

Guyana Award for Community Service (Organization) – May 2008