

Background To The Development Of This Project:

The Growth and Development of the Bahá'í Faith in the Leeward, Windward and Virgin Islands from the Virgin Islands in The North, to Grenada in the South:

By Patricia Paccassi

It started over 20 years ago when I realized after the death of a dear friend, Jeffery Lewis, a long time Grenadian believer and worker for the Bahá'í Faith that his stories were no longer available. He had become a Bahá'í in Grenada in the 1960's, at the time of Winston Evans. We could not sit and listen as to how it was in the "old-days" of serving the Faith in our Caribbean Islands; how the struggles, victories, the tears and the laughter would not be shared with new comers and those who had similar experiences in other islands.

This would not do, someone needed to collect other stories and experiences! Many shared this regret and desire, but because of our long years of service, plus traveling in the area, Frank and I were, perhaps, the best ones available to do it.

To start, I began traveling to the Bahá'í National Headquarters of United States and Canada, gathering information on both the pioneers and travel teachers to the islands. At a later date, I went to the national headquarters in Barbados, and the Leeward and Windward Islands. There, I gathered additional information on the events held on each island.

Our next step was to compile a chronological listing of all the above information, Pioneers, Travel Teachers and events on each island. Danielle Cailaud, a pioneer in the French Islands sent me their information in English. Copies of these were sent to each National Spiritual Assembly and the World Centre.

The third step came about in the mid-nineties. During a trip to California, we met two Bahá'ís, Linda Cicada and Oma Richmond, who had a small independent film company and they became interested in our project and offered to help. We finally decided to start in Grenada and travel up the islands to capture the stories and experiences of those who had helped to establish the Faith in our Islands. We used both on video and audio. Unfortunately, Oma and Linda had to return to the States after Saba, so the video recording stopped there.

After this trip, I began to get lots of encouragement to write a book. This really had no interest for me. I did inquire at one of the Bahá'í Publishing Trusts about the feasibility of the publishing of a book like this, with stories, etc. It was their opinion that at this stage of the Faith, there probably wouldn't be much interest.

After this stage, my time and interests lay in more outreach efforts for the Faith. It wasn't until several years later, my research again reached the top of my priority list. The explosion of the Internet was now available, and it was easier to assemble my material in a manner suitable to this medium.

This is the first step in making the information available on a global scale. It is not definitive. My hope is that those who can, will help by adding, correcting, or sending me more photos, stories, etc.

My next step will to ask others to help me transcribe the recorded stories on the 85 CD's I have as well as the many DVD's. This is where the research will come alive. The stories and the faces of those who helped will be preserved. In this age, there is really no excuse for not making this information available, not only for now, but also for those who come after us.

Its hard to name all those who have already helped, but special mention has to be made of Joyce Olinga scanning in hundreds of photos belonging to Tom Millington, the Nedden family and from the estate of Lorana Kerfoot; and Rick Berry who did the photo editing of these very old photos and all of his help on the web site.

My goal was to trace, as much as I could find, the growth and development of the Faith in the islands from their beginning, up to the formation of each ones own National Spiritual Assembly. These are the dates I am using as the cutoff period for this research document. The following years will have to be done by others.