

Glasspole Augustus Florizel

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF JAMAICA



**HONORARY DEGREE:** Sir Florizel receiving an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws conferred on him by the Nova University of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and is congratulated by the Chancellor of the University, Dr. Alexander Schure.

# 'I HAVE CREATED A NEW IMAGE

*says His Excellency the Most Hon. Sir Florizel Glasspole, Governor General in a conversation with Ivorall Davis*

**F**LORIZEL AUGUSTUS GLASSPOLE was appointed Governor General of Jamaica on June 27, 1973, by the Government of the People's National Party after its victory in the General Elections of 1972. Since that time Governor General Glasspole has, with graciousness, courage, impeccable integrity and dignity, consistently maintained in this high office the qualities which make Jamaicans proud. He has been a shining example of their highest aspirations.



**FIRST OFFICIAL DUTY:** The Chief Justice, Hon. Kenneth Smith kissing the Bible after being sworn in by the Governor General, who was performing his first official duty.

This article recounts some of the highlights of his career in office and some of the things which he has done during his record-breaking 10 years as Governor General of Jamaica, in the hope that Jamaicans will reflect and be satisfied that he is the best Governor General Jamaica has had.

The Governor General told the **GLEANER** on Tuesday, that it took him three "solid months" after the Prime Minister, the Hon. Michael Manley, had offered him the post to make a decision. He wanted to be sure, he said, that as a man who had been in the "rough and tough" of the political life of the country "I could conduct myself in such a way as would be consistent with the requirements of the office in terms of impartiality and all those things which would necessarily have to be done to preserve the status of the post of Governor General. Having decided that I could, I told him I would accept, and the swearing-in ceremony was set for June 27, 1973. Sir Herbert Duffus, the President of the Court of Appeal, administered the Oath of Office.

There was a very large crowd at Kings House that evening, which showed its unanimous approval by its spontaneous applause when His Excellency, the Most Honourable Sir Florizel Glasspole, O.N., C.D., took the Oath of Office.

### Bit his tongue

The Governor General then settled down to the serious business of being Governor General, and his first official duty was performed the following morning when he swore in the Honourable Kenneth Smith as Chief Justice of Jamaica.

The Governor General, said on Tuesday that for the first six months in office he was tormented when he saw all the political activities "passing under my nose" and he could neither say nor do anything about them. The G-G said he literally bit his tongue, because of those circumstances.

He then proceeded to be named Patron of different uniformed youth movements, clubs and organisations like the Red Cross, the YMCA, YWCA, Kiwanis, Rotary, United Nations Association of Jamaica and many others.

In the months ahead he responded to requests to be guest speaker of several important functions and meetings in different parts of the country. One of the first important body he addressed was the annual general meeting of the Jamaica Agricultural Society at the George Lisle Centre, East Queen Street, Kingston, on July 18, 1973.

During that same month he received his first important overseas visitor in the person of the Lord Mayor of London.

When the Commonwealth Parlia-

mentary (Regional) Conference opened at the Sheraton Kingston Hotel on July 23, that year, he was the guest speaker. By the end of that same month he gave his "stamp of approval" to the holding of the "Miss Jamaica Beauty Contest" which was being scoffed at and discouraged in certain quarters.

On November 28, in the first year of his Governor Generalship, the Key of the City of Kingston was presented to him by the Kingston and St. Andrew Corporation at a ceremony at the Ward Theatre, and it was here that the first pointers of his moral leadership of the country came into focus.

Having spoken about some of the problems facing the nation, Governor General Glasspole ended his address with these statements: "The future (of Jamaica) rests strongly on the shoulders and in the hands of our people. We have got to understand that without hard work and discipline our country cannot progress.

### Respect for Flag

"All will have to develop greater self-reliance in themselves. We must develop greater tolerance, respect and love for all our people regardless of their racial origin.

"We must develop at all levels of our society patriotism for our country, respect for our Flag and our National Anthem, love for our families and our God.

"We must have confidence in the future of our country.

"That way lies success.

"Any other must lead to disaster."

Princess Anne and her husband Captain Mark Phillips became the GG's first royal visitors when they spent four days in Jamaica from December 12 to 15. By year's end the GG and Her Excellency the Most Honourable Mrs. Glasspole strode into the gubernatorial Christmas activities like troubadours, and all Jamaica was pleased.

In the following year he had become somewhat "seasoned" in office and performed his many duties with distinction and calm, whilst constantly imploring the nation to be disciplined, hardworking and patriotic. His advice to the youth always urged them to reach for excellence in whatever they did.

On April 26, 1975, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the Queen of Jamaica, arrived in Jamaica accompanied by Her Husband, His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh for a five-day visit. She had come to Jamaica as Head of the Commonwealth to attend the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting which was being held in Kingston.

### Not Knighted

During her stay Her Majesty and the Duke were the official guests of Governor General Glasspole and Her Excellency Mrs. Glasspole.

Jamaica expected that toward the end of the visit Governor General Glasspole would be knighted. That was not to be, for the Prime Minister, Hon. Michael Manley, had to give his consent and he ruled that the GG should not accept the GCVO (Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Victorian Order) which had been offered.

Many Jamaicans were disappointed but GG Glasspole just contin-

ued doing his duties calmly and without ill-will.

In the meantime indiscipline and violence begun to rear their ugly heads in the land.

On November 14, 1975, in a speech at the annual dinner of the Master Builders Association of Jamaica, at the Pegasus Hotel in Kingston, the "Brown Bomber" of the early 1940s, blasted off. He said: "Today the whole wide world is plagued with confusion, chaos, increased crime rate, violence of one sort or another, indiscipline, racialism, inflation, fears of one kind or another...Has Jamaica escaped her share?"

"The answer rings out loud and

clear. No she has not. It is true that our Jamaican people have never been as alive and alert as they are today. Equally so many have never been as confused and fearful as now.

"Our economic progress is being shattered by the contradictions in their behaviour patterns...I am not a scaremonger. I am not a prophet of doom...I still have great faith in my country, but I would hope that in these serious times no one would expect me to make a speech comprised of a mass of words with no message.

"It gripes my stomach to see the constructive efforts of the past in one form or another being thrown down

the drain destroying our national unity or blurring our sights looking into the future.

"Those of us who know and understand the problems must not shirk our responsibilities.

"We must raise our voices in one

huge chorus of advice and warnings to those of our people who do not understand. We all want a society where eventually all will flourish in good time as free man. Let us not forget John Milton's words — 'None

can love freedom heartily but good men; the rest love not freedom, but licence.

"To yield to licence in building our new society could see the beginning of its destruction.

"Never let the future generations of our country say that we contributed to licence or participated in its consequences."

### 'Attacked' by PNPYO

The following Monday (November 17) the PNP Youth Organisation was on the warpath attacking the Governor General. It called on the Prime Minister "to immediately cause the demise of the tenure of the Governor General." The PNPYO said it regarded the statement by the GG "as being hostile to the Government and a clear indication of the Governor General's alignment with the reactionary forces as well as intrigue of which the masses are totally aware."

Unwittingly the PNPYO was creating the biggest moment in the public life of GG Glasspole. Support for his stand was widespread. People in all walks of life from almost every district in Jamaica flooded Kings House with letters and telegrams. They thanked him for speaking out for them. They prayed God would grant him long life and strength to continue to speak out.

Some messages came from supporters of the PNP who were distressed about conditions in the country.

"Your speech will serve to reassure the many persons whose fears arise from uncertainty of what the future holds, not only for themselves, but even moreso for their children; also fears bred of uncertainty, concerning their personal safety from physical harm and their personal freedoms," one letter said.

### Courageous leadership

Another said: "Your speech was outstanding, and said exactly the things that need to be said at this time. There are many people in Jamaica who will continue to respect you for the courageous leadership that you are giving."

As the issue continued to be the main theme in the Press, the Governor General continued on his courageous journey of giving leadership to the people of the country, with

Prime Minister Manley declaring that he had the right to express himself as he felt.

But in August 1977 there was a "war" between the Governor General, the Prime Minister and the Cabinet over the appointment of the Privy Council. The GG had consulted with the Prime Minister about the persons he intended to appoint. The PM and the Cabinet sought to dictate that he should appoint three persons they wished appointed. The Governor General insisted on his right

under the Constitution of Jamaica that he was "not obliged to exercise that function in accordance with the advice" of any person or authority whom he might consult.

Jamaica was once more solidly behind the Governor General.

In 1978 the GG received the Venezuelan Honour of Order of the Liberator and in December 1979 was selected as the first awardee of the first Gleaner Honour Award.

So well had Governor General Glasspole distinguished himself, and so high was he held in the esteem of all well-thinking Jamaicans, that when the Jamaica Labour Party gained its landslide victory over the PNP in 1980, Prime Minister Edward Seaga asked the Governor General to continue in office, and he agreed.

### Finally Knighted

On April 18, 1981, Her Majesty the Queen bestowed on the Governor General the Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George, and the University of the West Indies followed on January 9, 1982, by installing Sir Florizel as an Honorary Doctor of Laws. Toward the end of her visit to Jamaica this year, Her Majesty the Queen further bestowed the GCVO on Sir Florizel.

Looking back over his 10 years as Governor General last Tuesday, Sir Florizel in answer to a direct question said:

"I think I have brought a new thrust and dynamism to the office of Governor General. I have undoubtedly created a new image for the post and I have engaged in more widespread activities. For example I have chaired the Wolmer's 250th Committee for the purpose of the establishment of a John Wolmer Anniversary Sixth Form building and it is to become a reality on July 5, when we have the ground-breaking ceremony.

"I have engaged in many other activities, the fruits of which have borne, and I have preserved the dignity of the office at all times.

I am very, very proud of my 10 years in office. And I pray that I will be able to continue as I have done for the remainder of the period that I have to serve here.

"Throughout this time I have been overwhelmed by the support and confidence of the people of Jamaica. Without their support I probably could not have achieved what I have achieved, and I pray God that they will continue to give me that support as they have done over the past ten years."

As the Governor General spoke another diamond was being placed in his crown, this time by Prime Minister Edward Seaga, who in a message of congratulations said: "The whole country owes you a debt of gratitude for the service you have given it over the decade and looks forward to many more years of your wise and dedicated presence as Head of State"