

BIN Charles Hyatt

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Entertainment

Charles Hyatt on the past

Here we continue our interview with actor-extraordinaire, Charles Hyatt, which began in *The Sunday Gleaner*. The previous instalment appeared in yesterday's *Star*.

CHARLES HYATT is known for his wonderful career as a comedian, actor, writer and radio and television presenter. However, now he reveals some of the happenings which helped to shape him into a man beloved by the nation. He has already told about his love for his parents, his pet chicken, and one of his grandmothers. With very little interruption, he continues his story, continuing to talk about his grandmother, by his father.

Hyatt: *(he laughs as he remembers her)* "She was quite a buxom lady. That's her picture over there. *(He points to a picture of a stately looking woman, her hair pulled back, on the far end of his wall)*. Her association with my grandfather... When he left Jamaica and went to Panama with the hope of marrying a Panamanian girl, for Panamanian girls looked a certain way, yuh know. So he found this lady. Married her. And after five children she decided she would go home... And home was Bog Walk in Jamaica. *(He laughs at the irony of the situation, before going on to explain)*. She speaks di Spanish very fluently and looked very much like, and behaved very much like a Panamanian. She came back home. He stayed in Panama. I only met him once. Never seen him again.

Whereas now my maternal grandmother, never, never punished me. She was an African *(he says with his voice filled with awe)*. She was the daughter of a slave. And, oh, she was a beauti-



ful woman. God! So... very slender and aquiline. Beautiful black woman. And she loved me to distraction.

Her daughter, my mother, was apparently her favourite child. I suppose because it was her first. She had two after, another girl and a boy, but my mother was her favourite. And I became, as it were, her favourite grandchild. And she never, ever, punished me. Ah mean, not that she discovered anything that was punishable. Poor soul. Amilee. She was so trusting.

(He appears to be so wrapped up in the memories of his beloved grandmother, that he can hardly finish a thought, but with a smile pasted on his face, simply moves from one unin-

ished memory to the other). She left me to my... She couldn't read. She was totally... she couldn't read at all, but she knew the Bible from end to end. Oh Lord, yes. Any quote at all. She was a church-goer. Any church, especially Emancipation Day. She knew all about Garvey. She took me to Garvey meetings. Garvey assemblies. Garvey... She was a Garveyite apparently. At any rate, an admirer of Garvey. She took me to wherever and whenever Garvey was.

She took me to every church there was. Whereas my paternal grandmother was Catholic, she went to any church, especially on 'Augus' Mawnin'. Any church. And she was the poorest. My mother was the person who sustained her. Her partner, he was a Jew. She was a fisher lady, used to sell fish, and they met, and I suppose her beauty attracted him. Her beauty would attract anybody. And, I don't know, I suppose his beauty, because he was a beautiful man, attracted her. She had three children for him and then he subsequently married a Jewess. Which probably was an arrangement of whatever. But you know... Amilee. I loved her, loved her, loved her.

Anyway, yes so, those were the formative years, as it were. Of which there are a great deal of memories. Oh God, that have lived with me. I was a diffrant kinda pickney I suppose. So things that other people might have taken for granted, I examined. Why, why, why? So as a result, when my mother died, she died last, that was the question I was asking. Why did this happen? Why did... am I now without a mother and father?

I remember the day when I came home from the hospital... I

arrived there just minutes after she had died. When she was going into the hospital, the day before, she was on the stretcher and she said, "Remember what ah teach you." I'll never forget that statement, "Remember what ah teach yuh." Apparently, she knew she was gonna die. The next morning, in the wee hours of the morning, the wee hours of the night, somebody came to tell us that we need to go to the hospital because she was travelling, as dem seh, when they refer to somebody on the verge of death.

On the way there I was sent back home, for something, one of those books, some registration book, that Burial Society thing, that they had forgotten and I went back home for it. By the time I got there she had died.

I came back home saying 'Why? Why?' Was it something I did? Why this had happened to me. I mean two people who I had loved... you know.

Any way, the day of the funeral, I remember when I arrived at KPH, at the morgue. They said, "Oh see di child" - they made a reference to me. "Come, come, help to dress her." And that was fine with me... Until they gave me a foot of stocking, and I lifted her leg and I was frightened because my mother never felt like that before. She was cold and stiff. That's not my mother. I couldn't mek nobody know dat ah frighten. One thing I never allow, yuh mussen know seh I afraid or frighten.

So, I put on the stocking. I put a yellow rose - I pry open the fingers and put a yellow rose in it. But I couldn't be afraid, is mi madda. Ahh Sah".