

**FROM** the beginning he was special.

Whether Edward Philip George Seaga was born that way or made so by life experiences is debatable.

Grandparents, aunts and uncles, parents and all others who came in contact with him always treated him as if he was special.

Family and oral history — as told to me and from my own recollection, being the third child and fourth daughter — cast him in a special light with an aura surrounding him. That is how I remember him as a child.

He was born in Boston, Massachusetts, USA on May 28, 1930, where his parents had migrated to try and make a new life. Our mother always told the story of the hard times they encountered as they tried to make a living during the height of America's great depression. Eddie was born in a free Salvation Army Hospital in Cambridge, Massachusetts, which was close to Harvard University. Our father vowed to send him to that prestigious university when he was ready. They returned to Jamaica when he was about six months old, and were welcomed back into the family.

My most vivid recollections of my big brother are linked to a period when we lived in Montego Bay, where our father had managed a retail store. As the youngest at that time — twin sisters were later to be added to the family — I remember tagging along with him, our sister Fay and their older friends. The names of Eldemires, Scotts, Crichtons and Magnus come to mind.

We lived in many areas in and around Montego Bay: Reading and a property in Anchovy which, I recall, had a train running through its grounds.

Eddie was the one whom I always screamingly begged to protect me from the many terrors in those locations. Having to go through a forest with large iguanas in the trees terrified me. They jumped out of the trees, landing too close for comfort. And every time the fierce tom turkeys that were reared by our parents threatened my life when I went out into the back yard, it was always Eddie who laughingly came to my rescue. I also remember him trying to teach me to swim, which I never was able to do as well as he did.



BY JEAN ANDERSON

# Born to be different

## Seaga through the eyes of his sister Jean Anderson

Then there was our life in the Bournemouth Gardens area of Kingston, which again held terrors. This was at the time of the now-famous labour unrest and riots which led to the rise of the Labour movement and Bustamante. Our father, along with others, acted as a voluntary Special Constable that patrolled the area protecting the neighbourhoods from marauders and thieves who were very active.

This left our family — my mother, her mother, a staunch Seventh-Day Adventist, and us three children — alone. It was a terrifying experience for vulnerable children and we learned to lean on grandma and her faith for comfort.

Another vivid memory which stands out of life at that time is that of a strong earthquake, the first in my young life, which violently shook our house. Our parents were out and we three children were alone on one side of the house with our grandmother on the other side. At first, Eddie scoffed at our terror, reassuring us that we were safe. His bravado lasted only until the next shock hit. As we girls started running for the protection of grandma, we found that Eddie had beaten us to her bed and was busy praying with her. I didn't know it then, but this was an early indication that he would become a man of action and a realist.

We remained in Kingston during our formative years. I recall that we moved a lot as our father, the



Edward Seaga as a baby.

breadwinner, struggled to provide for his family. He worked as a trader and later as a travel agent. Our parents wanted to ensure, at whatever cost and personal sacrifice, that their children had access to the education that had been denied them.

Eddie began his school years at Vaz Preparatory, which apparently gave him a good foundation that enabled him to achieve the academic excellence which he continues to call for today.

He later went to Wolmer's Boys' School, which our father had attended for a period of time. During this time, Eddie exhibited a love for the sciences, especially Chemistry, and Math. I recall our father buying him a Chemistry set and setting up a lab under the stairs at our then residence at 61

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Half Way Tree Road. Eddie spent a lot of time in that lab, from which horrible smells emanated. Then one day, there was a loud explosion and Eddie emerged, singed and blackened, from the wreckage of his lab.

Despite that setback, he was not discouraged from pottering around in his home laboratory and still pursued his fascination with Chemistry. This trait persisted throughout his life and his career; he is never easily discouraged or daunted, even against great odds.

His other love was sports. Cricket, as a wicket keeper, tennis, a stint at football, and pole vaulting which caused him injury and worried our parents. His leadership skills were evident as he was made a prefect early on and later, if I recall correctly, became head boy. He was the most focused young man I knew and applied this in his pursuit of excellence. In fact, we seldom saw him as he immersed himself in whatever was required to achieve his goals.

He was popular with males such as Jerry Alexander, a football hero of that era; George Lazarus, who later dedicated his life to serving the constituents of West Kingston; the Mahfood boys Derrick and Kenneth, and many more.

His success with the girls stemmed from his quiet, sincere charm and humour which captivated many gorgeous young ladies. He had one rule that I noted then: he had only one girlfriend at a time, never playing the field and manipulating girls like young men are prone to do. This was yet another example that he was a special type of "yout".

Edward Seaga's story cannot be told in a few words. There is also a lot to be said about his

university years when he changed direction from the sciences and math to social sciences, as well as his return to Jamaica and his attempt to please his mother by entering medical school at UWI. That only lasted a short time because he could not eat and was constantly nauseous as he could not stand cutting cadavers and the sight of blood.

He moved on to pursue his Masters' Degree in London but that attempt had to be aborted.

He returned to Jamaica to continue working on his thesis and joined the then extramural department at UWI. It was during that time that he lived unassumingly among the people in villages and ghettos, recording work songs, not allowing "privileged" family or friends to visit, and dispensing medicine when asked by health authorities.

I can also recall the hilarious stories he told about his experiences with local transportation, often having to get out and help push the country bus over steep hills.

Eddie's experiences and social conscience led him to start writing to the media, bringing the plight of the people to the attention of the authorities. Instead, it brought him to the attention of the political parties, and Sir Alexander Burtamante invited him to join the Jamaica Labour Party to serve the people better.

The rest is history. The continuation of his life story, when written, will undoubtedly prove to be a most interesting, exciting piece of literature.

It will truly prove the saying that sometimes fact is stranger, or in this case more incredible, than fiction.

He is, in every way, a very special person.



The Seaga family in 1946. Twins Pat and Pam sit on the laps of their mother Erna and father Phillip, while standing in the rear from left are Fay, Edward and Jean.