

Class
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The unknown side of Edward Seaga

By Debra Anthony

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E DWARD SEAGA was one of those children you would have hated at school. He was disgustingly brilliant and he was good at sports too! How many parents can boast that their child got a perfect report card his first year in school? Eddie Seaga's can. He came home with a report card from Blake Preparatory School which showed scores of 100% in every single subject.

It is the stuff of legends really.

And when he went to high school, Seaga played hockey – even made the all schools team, he was a diver, he played tennis and he set a record in rifle shooting on his way to winning the Henderson Medal. He did not make the first eleven cricket team at school only because he was leaving to go to Harvard University and his exclusion paved the way for Jackie Hendricks to impress with his cricketing talents.

Seaga was one of the island's top students in chemistry and consistently made good grades in mathematics, physics and the other science subjects.

At 13, he wanted to be a nuclear physicist and at 23 he wanted to be a psychiatrist but at 59 he is a politician. Whatever happened?

"I discovered the social sciences," he said, as he spoke to *Class* about his other, more private life – the unknown side of Eddie Seaga.

"We didn't have any exposure in the school system to the social sciences at that time ... when I went to Harvard I met the social sciences and found them more interesting ... more human ... they weren't cold, scientific discipline and allowed you to use your mind more."

Social sciences...more interesting...more human

After Harvard, Seaga came home and decided to do a second degree but began to do "things the wrong way" - he started research on his thesis first before course work because the University of the West Indies did not yet give higher degrees.

That was the time of his now famous sojourn in Buxton Town, St. Catherine. He produced a "couple of papers" from a study he did there entitled "The Development of the Child" which looked at the child from pre-birth to 15 years old.

"I also took the opportunity to do material for a second thesis on the anthropological side and it was done on the religious spirit cults."

He spent a year there, not only doing academic research but trying to fit into the

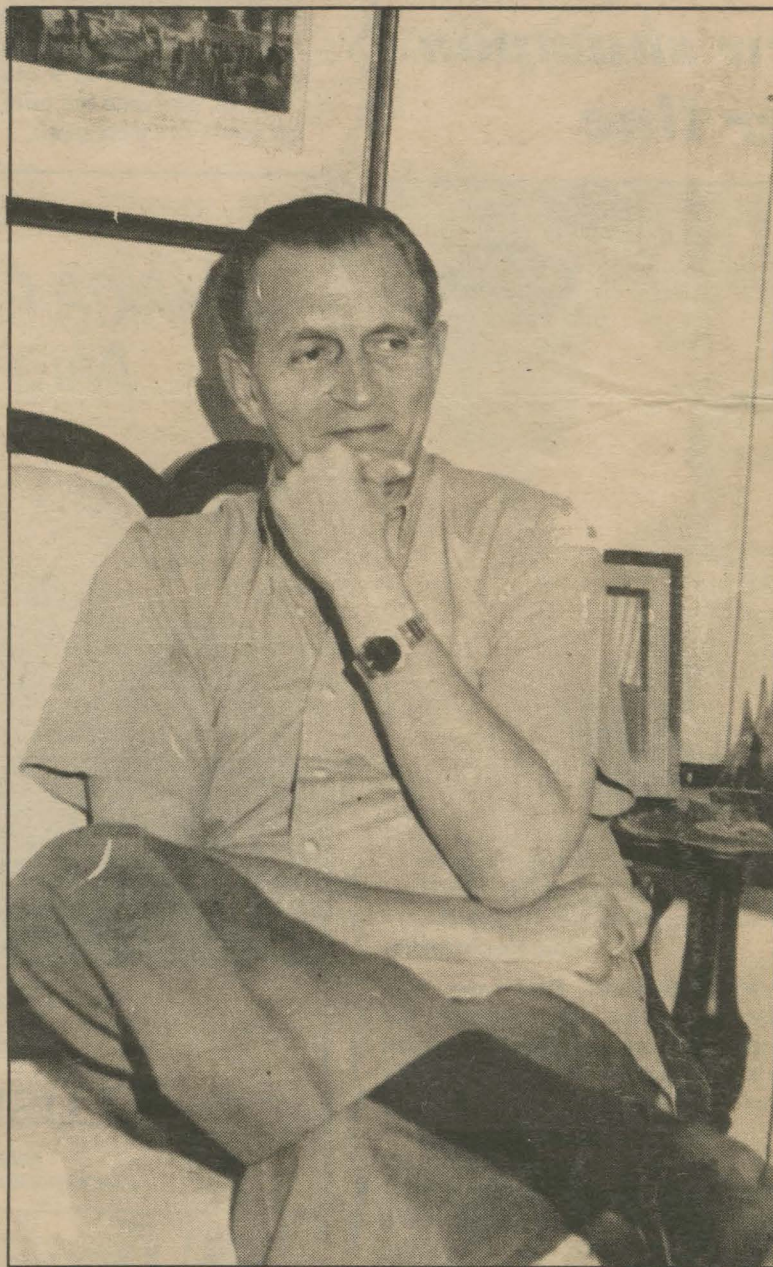
community. So he learnt from the public health inspector how to clean and dress yaws. He participated in the annual deworming exercises making sure that all the children took the "big, green pill" that would clean out their systems and afterwards he listened to the excited chatter of their mothers about how many worms this one or that one passed out. He was even asked to officiate at a funeral once.

"They weren't quite sure

two years living in Salt Lane continuing his research on revival spirit cults and then in 1955 he moved on to London University with the material, to do his advance degree.

But after "three or four months" Seaga came back home.

"I found myself becoming very agitated when I read the papers of what was going on at home, because the government had just changed and here I was locked away in a foreign land and not being able to



what I was, because in those days the university wasn't well known and I wasn't a teacher and I wasn't a farmer and they really didn't know what to make of me. After two or three months I was just totally accepted."

A journalist...of a sort

After Buxton Town, he spent

share some of the insights I had learned living in those communities."

He decided to come home and "await the time the university would grant advance degrees."

So Seaga became a journalist ... of a sort.

"I did some freelance things for the Gleaner ... just contributions ... not

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2) assignments ... and I was able to advance some arguments about what ghetto life and rural life were really like, and this brought me to public attention."

Out of that began his involvement with the Jamaica Labour Party -- "just behind the scenes," he added quickly. He met Sir Alexander Bustamante at a friend's home and Bustamante knew of his writings and from there he worked on the 1958 federal election and the 1959 general election. The rest is history as they say, he was appointed to the Legislative Council in 1959 and then after the 1962 election became Minister of Development and Welfare.

Seaga was always partial to Sir Alexander and to the JLP.

"When I was a child in 1938, the maids in the home were for Busta and I was always for the maids ... I always identified with them, because I always wondered how they could devote so much time to other people's houses."

A happy childhood

Seaga remembers his childhood as being a happy one. He was the first grandchild and the first and only boy of his parents' five children. He was looked upon as a role model for all the others who came along.

"But it wasn't a role model with any pressure and my sisters, my friends and cousins and I, we had a very active social life."

He grew up in both Kingston and Montego Bay after being born in Boston, USA while his parents were travelling. He was brought back to Jamaica when he was three months old "because in those days, they travelled on steam ships and my parents had to wait until I was old enough to

travel."

Some his most vivid childhood memories include the time his father threatened to send him away to boarding school at Munroe because he was neglecting his school work. "I buckled down immediately ... I was happy where I was ... I didn't want to go to boarding school," he said.

Seaga also remembers the time when he was 14 years old and he was on Lime Cay and a squall blew up. He and a friend used a little dinghy to ferry people from the beach on to the main boat.

"After making the last trip, we threw the rope to someone on board who missed it and the winds took us way past Port Royal before we were rescued by another boat."

His main concern at the time was when he landed how he was going to get home wearing a bathing costume.

"Although, I haven't cared much for boats since that day," he added smiling.

Mitzi was the one

It was Mitzi's vivacious personality that struck him at their first meeting. He met her at a function where he was appearing as the Minister of Development and Welfare and she was Miss Jamaica.

"I didn't follow up on that meeting but later on I met her again. A friend re-introduced us and we started dating."

Seaga was 35 years old and had to wait a year until Mitzi's reign had ended.

It took him that long to find a wife because he was waiting for someone who fit the image he had in his mind and it was clear in his mind that Mitzi was the one.

"It was the night of the announcement for the new candidates for the Miss Jamaica contest that we made

our engagement known. It was a very, very popular announcement. The night of the crowning of Mitzi's successor she (Mitzi) had to walk down the aisle and as Minister I had to escort her down. I don't think I've ever heard louder cheers in my life anywhere else.

"When we got married at the Parish Church there was a tumultuous crowd outside ... they climbed a huge, cotton tree, and we heard the noise inside but we didn't know what happened."

"The entire tree fell down and several people were hospitalized including some friends who couldn't get inside the church and were standing outside."

If the marriage got off to such an unusual start, what of the honeymoon?

"I don't think Mitzi regards it as much of a honeymoon," he said, adding that he attended the World's Fair as special guests of the World's Fair Committee. The newlyweds were accompanied by Seaga's sister, her husband and their children.

"The New York Herald Tribune wrote it up as a honeymoon for seven."

Seaga was also in a hurry to get back to Jamaica for the start of the shooting season which "marriage or no marriage I wasn't about to miss," he said.

Not proud of his record as a father

As a father, Edward Seaga is not exactly proud of his record. He wished he had spent more time with his children when they were younger.

"I'm a loving father yes, and I provide for them, but I never had the time to be as close to them as I wanted to be. I gave seven days a week to my

B/N Seagas Family

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work, I may have been wrong about that but I just couldn't hold back when there was something to be done. And I'm trying desperately to make up now before it's too late."

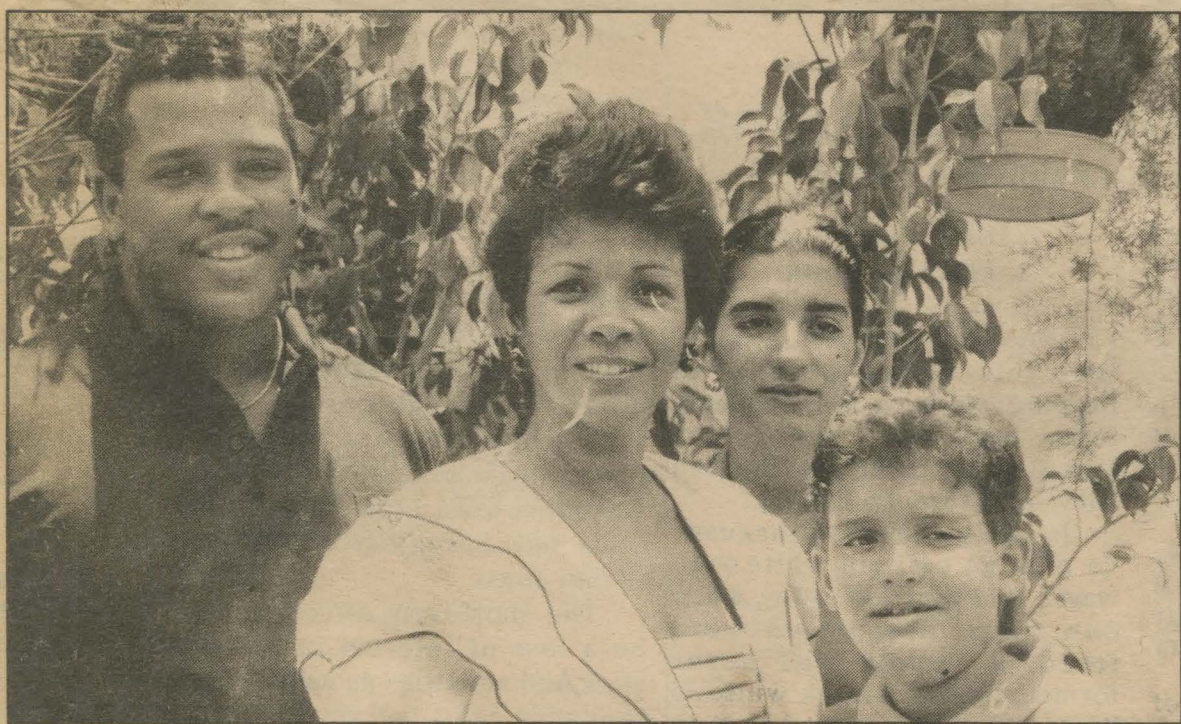
He speaks fondly of his children noting with pride that Christopher shares his birthday (May 28), that Anabella is becoming more aware of social issues and that Andrew is "everybody's loverboy."

"I remember when he was very young in the 1980 elections

He has outgrown that now, Seaga said, noting that he has tried to keep his children out of politics. "I wanted to give them as normal a childhood as I could."

Not an easy person to know

Christopher is 23 years old today and is at the University of South Carolina studying hotel management, Anabella, 21, is at American University in Washington and Andrew, at 12, goes to Campion College.



Seaga's family; from (L-R), son- Christopher, wife- Mitzi, daughter- Anabella and son- Andrew

and his nurse, who was a very political person, she used to tell him about the orange and the PNP and the green and the JLP.

"And we once went into an ice cream store and Mitzi was about to buy him some orange ice cream and he began to scream and shout 'no mom, I don't want that one, it's a PNP one, I want my daddy colour' and pointed to the green pistachio ice cream."

But what of Edward Seaga the man now? What of his cold public image? What does he have to say about this?

Seaga sees himself rather differently. He concedes that he is not an easy person to get to know.

"I'm not a small talk person I'm not a beer-on-Friday-nights-out-with-the-gang person either ... I'm more of a Have-a-drink? O.K. thanks- goodbye person ... I can't spend one

whole night just drinking and chatting and just doing nothing... I feel guilty."

Why does he feel this compulsion to always do something constructive?

"If I had absolutely nothing else to do, I could do it. For instance if I go out for a day just fishing or shooting, you know, the day is just spent for pure relaxation. **That is the purpose of the day ... everything must have a purpose, I can't just say okay tonight I'm not going to do anything and just sit down and rap and drink. It's not me. I can have fun but it must be a time already set aside.**"

Friends and politics don't mix

He has a small circle of friends. "I've found out that friends and politics don't mix ... because sometimes you have to tell a friend no and you lose him as a result," the Opposition Leader said. "And then again you have different types of friends for different reasons you have friends in politics, friends in your recreational life and friends you just like to sit down and talk to ... in any case it all adds up to very few."

"Leadership is a lonely existence, very lonely ... and if you're not able to use your time constructively and productively

and fierce as he was in his earlier days.

"Mitzi made me a softer person earlier on in the marriage ... there are some people who tell me that some of the fire has gone ... and I know I've become more patient, more willing to do things over."

Seaga is not satisfied that he is the best person he could be, but he lived his life the way circumstances demanded.

"I can't abstract myself from the circumstances I experienced and that's what you would have to do in order to say what you would have changed about yourself or your life."

But if he could, Seaga would have loved to be back in academic life, to study and write.

He would love to go back to spend a year at Harvard and "just have access to all the libraries and all the people and be able to activate my mind without being responsible for implementation of what my mind creates ... here I have to be doer and thinker. I would love the luxury of being just thinker."

Wished he had learned French...play the piano

And he wished he had learned to speak French and play the piano, two things he regrets he never learnt.

He likes the sound of French; "it's like poetry" he says, adding that while he was Minister of Development and Welfare he won a gold medal in Festival for a poem he wrote. He however, did not accept the medal because of his position.

Seaga, if he could, would love to be a composer. But, he hastens to add, he has no talent in that direction at all, "it's just something that I wished I could do, because I love good music so much, I would love to be able to create it."

Finally, who are Seaga's heroes?

"I never had heroes when I was growing up ... but now, I admire people like Abraham Lincoln for his oratorical eloquence and for his deep and far sighted vision of equality; Marcus Garvey because he was such an outstanding man ahead of his time; Lee Quan Yew for building from nothing a society ... economy that is successful; and Martin Luther King Junior and Gandhi for creating the non-violent revolution ... those are the kind of people I admire."

and get satisfaction out of that it could be a lonely situation ... It would drive other people crazy, but not me."

Would love the luxury of being a thinker

Seaga says he has changed since entering politics. "I'm more disciplined in my own life and more demanding in what I expect of others."

And yet now he is not as stern