



The Gleaner's

SUNDAY

# Magazine



B/N

ALLAN, EDRIS

KINGSTON, JAMAICA, SUNDAY, AUGUST 28, 1977.

## LADY EDRIS ELAINE ALLAN

National Library of Jamaica

# TIRELESS SOCIAL WORKER

### .. and widow of Jamaica's first black knight

by Wilbert Hemming

**R**ATTLES and shake-downs of instruments of Jamaica's Constitution in the processes of change, and what in one aspect, if no more, may be read someday as "midwife of denial by malice, of Jamaica's political citizens from acceptance of the Knighthood", have also bred the shedding of titular salutation of "Lady" to Jamaica's women, whose husbands may have aspired, worthily, to that noble Order.

Fortunately for Jamaica's first truly coloured Lady, Edris Elaine Allan, outstanding widow of Jamaica's first coloured Knight, late Sir Harold Egbert Allan, with other Ladies so endowed since the advent of Universal Adult Suffrage, 1944, she had lived in times of frostless political thinking.

For when Sir Harold Allan, the underfeated (Independent) Member of the House of Representatives for East Portland for over 26 years, became Jamaica's first Negro to be Knighted, his wife immediately shared the honour of the accolade. She has since early in the 1950s, therefore, been addressed as Lady Allan.

Daughter of the late Robert Henry Trotman and his wife, Alice (nee Feurtado) of Linstead, St. Catherine where she was born, Lady Allan has done



LADY ALLAN

honour to the womanhood of Jamaica.

Before the bestowal of the Knighthood upon her husband to whom she was married after a two-year-old courtship on February 12, 1941, Edris Elaine, reputedly "a pretty black girl" had worked as supervisor in succession to an Englishman, at Nathan's, one of King Street's most sophisticated dry-goods establishments, situated at the corner of King and Barry Streets now a branch of Barclay's Bank. It was there the plain Harold Egbert Allan met her, in 1939.

The shrewd ex-schoolmaster's eye for stature, led him far along with the new

(Continued on C/spread)



SIR HAROLD AND LADY ALLAN after their return from the trade talks in Geneva.

*INSIDE*

- *John Agers have a ball*
- *Boys in the street*
- *How's your colour-sense?*

## Eloquent voice from the underworld

Echo — Orlando Wong — Sangsters Book Stores Ltd. — 44 pages, \$2.00

By now the name of Orland Wong is by no means unknown, particularly by those interested in poetry but also to the general reader of the press as considerable attention was given to his public reading of poetry last year. Not only because of the poetry itself but because of where Orland Wong lives. He is, if you have forgotten, a resident of the prison at Fort Augusta.

Sangsters Book Stores have now given readers the opportunity to see for themselves why such interest was taken in his writings — he also achieved successes in last year's Festival — by presenting a collection of three dozen of his poems. They are presented without any indication of who did the collecting. No doubt it was one of the three well known personalities (or perhaps all three) whose Christian names are given among the five to whom the collection is dedicated.

However modest the presentation may be — but mention must be made of the striking cover design by Mervyn Palmer — there is no doubt of the eloquence of the poet's voice, carrying out from the underworld of poverty and hopelessness where "youth nu have nu rite, babylon terrorize dem day an nite"

In "How Long", the poet says, "Day after day/ you burn with rage/ when you look/ at the rat/ roach / chink infested shack/ You live in..." "and you become angry/ when you think/ of the well-fed cats/ and dogs uptown." And in "Echo" "fi de ghetto youth/ it kinda cute / all day I trod earth/ a look fi work/ till I shoes sole wear down/ an I foot a touch de groun".



Orlando Wong writes sometimes in the vernacular and sometimes in "correct English" and apart from his vivid pictures he puts across a telling sense of rhythm as in "Beat Yu Drums" (admittedly a subject which gives scope to this) which ends "Rasta Man/ beat yu drums/ drum/ drum/drum/ Rasta Man/ si/ dem cyan resis de soun / beat you drums/ Rasta Man/ beat dem loud and lang".

The underworld and its opinion of authority is strikingly shown in a few telling words. "Tin Line" sums up the situation and deserves to be given in full, it reveals a cynical wit in contrasting the uncertainty of where a meal will come from with the sureness of the arrival of the police. "Standin/ on de corna/ nat well dress/ wandain/ weh anada/ meal ago/ come fram nex/ wen/ dung /com babylan/ dem ask/weh yuh name/ weh you com fram/ weh you ado yah/ before you can ansa/ yuh kiss cole concrete/ an feel batten lick/ an kick/ fi de yout/ a de ghetto/ dere's a tin line/ between/ freedom an jail".



MRS. JEAN YOUNG, wife of the United States Ambassador to the United Nations, admires a sculpted head by student Sammy Davis, presented to her by Mr. Jerry Craig, Director of the Jamaica School of Art. Mrs. Young visited the Cultural Training Complex while here recently.

## Dramatizing thoughts of Afro-American writers

By Jo Campbell

"I AM like a griot," actress Vinie Burrows told an African journalist. "I am telling the story of the tribe's experience...the black American tribe."

Her programme, called "Walk Together Children," dramatically projects the words and thoughts of black writers, past and present, known and little-known before enthralled audiences on university campuses, on network television and most recently at the Library of Congress in Washington.

"Walk Together Children," one of six programmes Ms. Burrows has formulated for her unusual style, includes the works of such writers as Paul Laurence Dunbar and Sojourner Truth from the past, and Richard Wright, Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Brooks and Robert Hayden from the present.

"I assembled the material and then tried to recreate the mood of the poets and prose writers involved," she explained. "I think that there is always time and that it is always right to expose good writers. We have a great many very fine black writers who are still not recognized in the traditional anthologies. I think it is marvellous, considering this, that Robert Hayden is the poetry consultant for the Library of Congress. This is recognition of his tremendous skill and craftsmanship in the use of the English language."

Modern writers of Africa are on her mind as well, Ms. Burrows said. "I had a programme that I called 'Echoes of Africa' which I may need to rework with some modern African writers. Of course Africa is so vast with writers from East, West, North and South."

### Phenomenon

A phenomenon in the American theatre, Vinie Burrows made her Broadway debut as a child with Helen Hayes. Often called "first lady of the American theatre," Ms. Burrows' credits mounted as she grew up. Despite a number of Broadway plays and many off-Broadway productions as well as two international theatre festivals, she eventually came to believe that parts for serious black actresses were too rare to sustain a career. She also realized that the black



**BURROWS:**  
We have many very fine black writers who are still not recognized

poet/writer lacked public exposure. She she created a one-woman show using the poetry and prose of black Americans.

Ms. Burrows was a performer at the First Pan-African Cultural Festival in Algiers, and also at FESTAC in Nigeria. As a result of her experience and observations at FESTAC, which she called "a sort of cultural explosion," she decided she must make some changes in one of her programmes, one she calls "Africa Fire!"

This retelling of myths, folklore and legends of Africa, with drums and dance accompaniment, brought rave reviews at performances last year. But that is not enough for the actress.

"The first time I told the stories, a

young man came up to me and said, "Oh, it was like listening to my grandmother in Kenya." And so I deluded myself, saying "An African told me it was just like listening to his grandmother in Kenya, so I must have it, made." But I do not have it made. What I saw and heard in Africa made me realize that I must change — not the concept but the spirit in which it is done. I have got to find ways to translate what I saw in Africa, and to bring that to the programme. What I was doing before in terms of African folklore was erzatz! Definitely, I have got to go back to Africa."

### Folklore

The growing appreciation for folklore and oral history, Vinie Burrows believes, has the potential for bringing people together in mutual appreciation.

"I often say and I do believe it is true that the black consciousness of the sixties really gave rise to a concept of ethnicity in Americans. I think that it was because of "Black Power" that "Polish Power" and "Irish Power" and "Jewish Power" ...and whatever other groups said to themselves, "Maybe we have got something!" I think that consciousness-raising among blacks sparked consciousness among these other ethnic groups and among the women's groups, too.

"In fact, I am very much involved now with a new programme called 'Sister, Sister' that I am developing. I call it a salute to women of all ages, races, classes and beliefs."

The very multiplicity of American society, Ms. Burrows believes, is the reason why the community-centered American groups which attended FESTAC were so appropriate, and were greeted during the march-past by a standing ovation of Nigerians shouting "Black America, we love you!"

"Part of the virtue of America is its free-wheeling individualism. The United States does not have national dance troupes or national theatres, supported and subsidized by the state. If you were to go to any international festival — what group of our many could you say represents the United States? What is our national culture? It may have been unfortunate that some of our mature artists were not in Nigeria, but we had community groups and I am glad they were there.

"It is good that we had so many young, energetic black people coming to Africa for the first time. I know that they will spread the word in the United States about what they saw. I think they got great inspiration and I know that many of them will return, and that is good."

— IPS

## Tragedy of an actor's life

MONTY... Robert LaGuardia... Arbor House (USA \$12.95 — 287 pp.)

In this biography of Montgomery Clift, Robert LaGuardia takes a step forward in his writing career. The subject helps him to attain new literary heights, for it is the story of a man of talent who from childhood seemed doomed for destruction. This biography also gives more than a glimpse of the world of theatre in the United States of America, certain aspects of the social scene, and more than a glance at Hollywood and the jungle tactics that often prevail.

Burdened with a possessive mother, and belonging to a well-off upper middle-class family, Montgomery Clift was not geared for life in the workaday world. Perhaps he entered theatre life too early, losing out in the maturing process that many adolescents pass through when unsheltered and facing the crudities of normal life. His ambivalence in sexual desires might not have overwhelmed him otherwise. But then he might nevertheless have still wandered into the world of drugs and consequent neurotic behaviour.

This tragic life story is interlaced with the names of the famous in the stage and film world. Many beautiful and talented actresses would have given anything for a long involvement with Monty Clift, both those of his own age group and more mature women who sensed he needed a mother in addition to Mrs. Clift who had ruined him. Unfortunately there were not enough sympathetic or unselfish people in his circle to protect him from the vultures. By the time he was forty his acting career seemed ended, and only death was ahead.

Robert LaGuardia's biography manages not to be sensational, and the discerning reader will therefore find it more palatable.

## Bridge between fact and science fiction

The Iron Sun — Adrian Berry — Jonathan Cape — 176 pages, 3.95 pounds (UK)

Adrian Berry, science writer for the Daily Telegraph, propounds a fantastic idea in The Iron Sun with its sub-title, "Crossing the Universe through Black Holes", that of using black holes (the existence of which is not accepted by all scientists) as a means of making voyages through space at speeds faster than light. Science fiction writers have long postulated man's travelling through 'hyperspace' as a means of avoiding the interminable times which ordinary travel would demand. But Berry is not writing fiction but rather hard facts backed up by mathematics carefully set out for the reader, making it sound very possible.

He writes clearly and simply and sets out to show that in the next few hundred years mankind will have the means, financially and technologically, to do just what he propounds, that is, the artificial construction of black holes, those bodies so dense that even light cannot escape from them. Matter appears to be drawn into such holes and disappears once it comes within their gravitational influence. Where does such matter go if it vanishes from our universe? Berry says that it appears instantaneously in another part of the universe through the opposite of a black hole.

If this is so this could be a means of travel. He makes some assumptions, that mankind's advance materially will continue at the same rate as today (ignoring the Club of Rome's prophesy of approaching doom) and of supposing that a black hole constructed close to where the white hole appeared must inevitably lead back to the original black hole. Otherwise, he justifies practically all his statements by quoting from numerous scientists and giving all his references (and thereby displays an extraordinarily wide knowledge of modern scientific theories) and, as stated above, works out things mathematically to justify them.

Very readable and nearly convincing, providing a bridge between reality and what is still science fiction.

LADY ALLAN:

# Tireless social worker

(Continued from Page One)

political tide that swept Jamaica into a brighter era. She stood by him.

As together they grew, she remembered too well how she held no less, select jobs. First, at Sherlock and Smith on King Street; next at Nathan's and then at the Island's Post Office Headquarters where she distinguished herself as being the first Operator to launch the All-Island Jamaica Telephone System. She had held this job for four years, and that at Nathan's for a decade, signifying her competence and dedication.

Soon her husband was honoured with the O.B.E., and she was made a Justice of the Peace for St. Andrew, and later a Magistrate for the parish of Portland where the then Hon. H. E. Allan, held not only considerable community influence but was a political bastion in himself, defying the sway of both political parties, the JLP and the PNP, to win all his elections as an Independent candidate.

By this, to the time of his death, he had done 26 years in public life, had achieved the distinction of being the first black Jamaican to be Knighted, and was in Parliament, Minister of

been allowed a paltry allowance, so incredible, it was hardly mentioned by the Government who would be discredited on the score.

Because of the small daily allowance, Lady Allan stayed with her husband at a second rate hotel, Waldorf Regina, and assisted in his secretarial work. It was performed without charge to Jamaica.

But to uphold Jamaica's reputation among delegates from all parts of the world, Sir Harold was compelled to incur expenses which had to be met from a loan of \$4,000 charged against his Ministerial post.

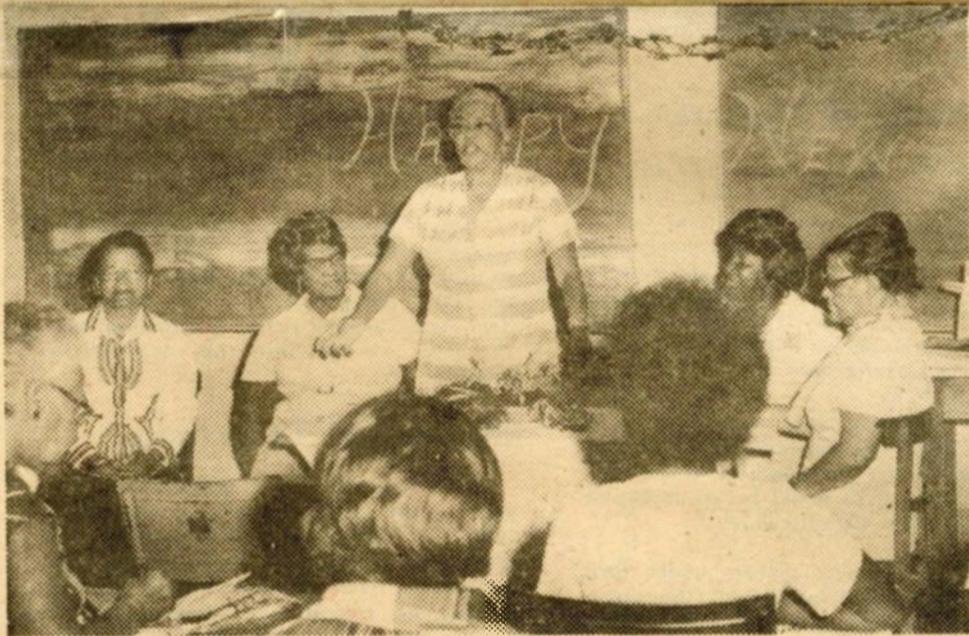
It proved a shock to Lady Allan who was called upon and compelled to repay the amount to the Government, after Sir Harold had returned to Jamaica and died shortly after, almost suddenly.

Although she appealed to the PNP Government of the day, and despite what she has ever since regarded as a most sympathetic and heartening gesture on the part of Premier Norman W. Manley, in protecting her from utter distress, as a result of her husband having died intestate, the Government demanded repayment of the loan that was incurred on Jamaica's behalf. She paid it.

## Embarrassing

No less embarrassing to Jamaica's first coloured Lady -- is the fact that Lady Allan does not receive as other Ministers' wives would have been enjoying, a pension. And nobody has yet considered it apposite to see to her welfare, although her husband had given 26 years of distinctive service to Jamaica, and died at his post. Nor was she considered for such benefits as allowed by the sitting Government, but refused by the late widow of the late Marcus Garvey, Mrs. Amy Jacques and offered to Mrs. Edna Manley.

Lady Allan holds no malice nevertheless. She has expressed gratitude to the present Government for reduction to



LADY ALLAN, then chairman of the Federation of Women addressing members of the Women Teachers Association, an affiliate of JTA on the importance of a law requiring the registration of fathers.

Finance and General Purposes, allaying his parliamentary services with the majority JLP, led by the then Hon. William Alexander Bustamante, and our late National Hero.

## Exemplary

In the years that followed, Lady Allan and her husband maintained an exemplary life. A man of eloquence, suave approach, immaculate and sober in attire, Sir Harold Allan and Lady Allan were a diplomatic pair, so to speak, and ambassadors of goodwill for Jamaica at world conference tables.

One of these, the GATT (General Agreement on Trade and Tariff) talks in Geneva, saw the pair making financial sacrifices, which though undertaken for the benefit of the Jamaican nation, echoed to the detriment of Lady Allan, following Sir Harold's death in 1953.

It was reported that Sir Harold had

\$200 yearly of an imposed unrealistic taxation of \$400 per year on the site of her burnt down "Capitol Theatre" in Pt. Antonio. Because of this and other financial burdens, she has put the site up for sale, she said, and would be willing to make it available to the Government, if acquired for public service.

Sir Harold died on Ash Wednesday (February 18, 1953) and was laid to rest in a state funeral attended by about 30,000 people four days later.

Going it alone since then, Lady Allan's name has been a household word in women's affairs and many other social aspects of public life. A tireless social worker, she is a former chairman of the Jamaica Federation of Women, that vibrant organization founded by Lady Molly Huggins, while in Jamaica as wife of Governor Sir John Huggins, from whom she has since been divorced.

(Continued on Page 14)

# Tireless social worker

(Continued from C/spread)

In addition to her numerous duties connected with the Jamaica Federation of Women, with headquarters at 74 Arnold Road, she was a member of the Board of Directors of Mico Teachers' Training College; she also served on Jamaica Social Welfare Commission; the Beach Control Authority; the Minimum Wage Committee; Laundry and Dry Cleaning Trades; the Commission on Milk Industry; Commission on Beaches and Foreshore Lands; the Panel of Justices of the Peace and the Juveniles (Delinquency) Court.

As late as March 14 this year, she opened at the JFW's conference room, a seminar on Better Family Life. It was attended by Mrs. Laurel Casinder of the International Alliance of Women to which the JFW is affiliated. Earlier in June '76, she pointed out at a meeting that the JFW had provided material, for just under 22,000 needy causes including building material for basic schools, and had donated money for equipment such as benches and desks for such schools.

Except for minor criticisms, the JFW had done exceptionally well under her chairmanship. The minor dress down came in March last year (1976) when, Her Excellency the Most Hon. Mrs. Glasspole, wife of the Governor General who himself had been in attendance at the meeting, resigned as President of the JFW. Her Excellency stated that the post of presidency was one of a "figure-

head and a waste of time" for it allowed her no real expression of duty, save that of signing cards and presiding over meetings.

## Tribute

In clearer terms, the Governor General told the meeting that the Constitution of the JFW was now illogical, not having been revised over a period of its 30-year lifetime.

Last year May, the Minister of Local Government at the time, Mrs. Rose Leon, speaking at the 30th annual all-island meeting of the Federation, paid tribute to its work and its leadership. And 10 months ago, in October '76, tribute was paid to the out-going chairman, Lady Allan, by the President of the Private Sector Organization (PSOJ), Mr. Carlton Alexander.

He delivered his address at a luncheon in her honour at the Federation's headquarters when among those present were the Rev. John Dunlop, Mrs. Percy Miller and her successor chairman, Mrs. Joyce Robinson, Director of Jamal.

In Lady Allan's travel abroad, she never failed to indicate Jamaica's place on the map of the world, projecting it as a country which if unknown by important people, constitutes a loss in their lifetime. She did so when she travelled to England - in 1964, to Taiwan and other countries in 1972, and as guest of the U.S. Government that same year when she addressed a number of clubs on life in "Jewel Isle of the Caribbean." Jamaica, her native land.