



Vere Johns SAYS...

Bright and early one Monday morning a little boy approached the gate of the then Mandeville Middle Grade School. Besides his books, he was carrying a very long sugar cane and he told us (his schoolmates) "I bring it for Teacher." "Teacher" was my father, the late Rev. M. F. Johns, who soon arrived, received the cane graciously and ordered it placed in a corner of the room. The boy was Scholarship winner Edward Victor Vivian Allen, fresh behind the ears from elementary school.

The year was 1907. Two weeks ago they buried the little boy (that was) in his 70th year and Jamaica mourns the loss of one of her most respected Parliamentarians and successful businessmen. I mourn too, for he was my close friend and schoolmate throughout the years.

The sugar cane got us into a lot of trouble, for my father forgot it at the noon recess and we promptly ate it. When he ordered it taken home at 4 p.m., there was no cane, and the whole class was detained until one Alva Wood and myself confessed that we were the culprits. We got a lecture on the Eighth Commandment and a stern warning.

It was some satisfaction when, a few days later, we heard Teacher say "Allen, go into my study!" My father towered over Vivian, cane in hand, and then said: "Take off your pants and bend over!" Soon the cane was descending and the yells Vivian was letting out proved that there was no sugar in it.

We gave Vivian a nickname — called him "Ticky-ticky", which was the local name given to a tiny prickly weed that was found in the grass of the Rectory common. Once when I threatened to disclose it in my column, the Honourable E. V. V. Allen, M.L.C., threatened me with mayhem. He preferred "Dada", the name affectionately given to him by the people of St. Elizabeth, whom he served so long and so well.

Teacher Johns would have been proud of Vivian Allen — Parochial Board Member, Legislative Council Member, MHR and Senator, besides being the owner of his own drug establishment in Black River for many years. The little boy with the sugar cane was a credit to his Alma Mater and his country.

Vivian Allen was strictly honest, a man of integrity, and one who would not be pushed around by tin-born "dictators", or allow himself to be involved in shady politics and politricks. When he felt it was time to speak out, he did so, regardless of party policy or political expediency. For this reason he was not popular with PNP executives, and it is to the undying shame of those responsible that he was never appointed a

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Minister. Nevertheless, he was ever loyal to the party of his choice and served it well.

I never passed through Black River without stopping at the drug store and having a word with "Dada". We would sit at a table on the back porch cheek by jowl with his large white hogs and drink, then I would go back to the city and demand that the St. Elizabeth Council rid Black River of pigs, beginning with Councillor Allen's hogs.

Once after one such article, certain Councillors of the Opposition baited him at a meeting. Allen got up and said "My pigs are better kept and better fed than some of the Councillors here". Several Councillors sprang to their feet and there were cries of "Withdrawal!" When the Chairman had restored order and requested Councillor Allen to withdraw his remark, Vivian said "I am not withdrawing a damn. I know its true for I've been to their homes". Next item.

Vivian was one of the few politicians who could truthfully say "The Party did not make me, I helped to make the Party". Sometimes, following some rabid criticism of the PNP by me, he would say to others "Just listen to this damn man! And it was him that made me join the PNP. I remember the days when he used to come down to Arlington House and insist that I join the Party".

True — about seven of the MLCs used to stay at Arlington House around 1939-40 and I used to sit with them at a round table upstairs and bait them. I joined the PNP too, but soon left it when I realized that the real motive was the advancement of personalities and not the country and its people.

May God rest the soul of Edward Vincent Vivian Allen in eternal peace. To his sorrowing widow and children I extend my sincerest condolences. He was my friend, faithful and just to me, and to all men, but unlike Caesar, he was not ambitious. Just a homespun, plain, blunt Jamaican that loved his people and did everything that he could to help them individually and collectively. Would to God this country had more like him.

IN MEMORIAM

Vivian Allen deserves some commemoration at the hands of the citizens of St. Elizabeth. I remember his once driving me along the new coast road leading from Black River to the border of Westmoreland, which he was instrumental in getting constructed. "I call this Allen's Highway" he said. And my suggestion to the Council is that it should be named "ALLEN HIGHWAY" and a memorial plaque be placed somewhere along it.