

The second time around

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People

By Baz Freckleton

It was the second nuptial walk up the aisle for 77-year-old educator-politician-lay reader, Edwin Allen, on October 2 in the private chapel of Archdeacon Walter Omeally in Mandeville.

Making the journey with the former Jamaica Labour Party Minister of Education and Minister of Labour was Kingstonian, Edith Monica Dale, a practical nurse with eighteen years of practice in the United Kingdom, ten years in the USA, but not a single day of duty in her homeland.

It was the second adventure in marriage for the one-time fiery Mico Honours graduate and BA. Honours (Education), who now weighs 130 pounds as against the 170-pounds he was when he married Mabel Blanche Hector in December 1930 and lived happily until she died forty three years later in 1973 without their parental desire for an offspring ever having been satisfied.

It was the second marriage, also, for the new Mrs. Allen, whose first husband died in 1978 after only three years of marriage.

'EXTREMELY PRIVATE'

The Mandeville wedding was "an extremely private affair with my elder brother, 79-year-old building contractor Shemuel as best man and his wife, Lucille, as bridesmaid", Mr. Allen told this reporter.

In an atmosphere redolent of two young lovers "Teacher" Allen and his spouse admitted while holding hands "we are so happy together. Our qualities blend and at this time we can grow older together pleasantly."

Mr. Allen must have been engaged in some telepathic review of my mind for he suddenly gave out: "I have decided not to seek re-election at the end of this term of duty."

As I expressed my gratitude for this piece of lively political news Mr. Allen added:

"I like to establish firsts and with good health I could go on for another term or two if the support of the people in this constituency was the only determining factor."

"But I have identified two good candidates, who could fill my shoes, or well, let us say, take over as Member of Parliament, for this is a tied-up JLP constituency. I have made it so".

Asked who were these two persons to whom he referred "Teacher Allen," named Dr. Keith Allen, a Jamaican-born Toronto University teacher with a doctorate in education "if he finds it able to make the sacrifice", and Senator Clifton Stone, BSc, Island Supervisor of the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union.

Mr. Allen has known what it is to lose and fight back to the top of the pile. He lost to O. Alphonsous Malcolm in 1959, stormed back in 1962, bowed out to PNP'S Dr. Percy Minott in 1976 and returned in triumph over the goodly medico in 1980.

MILESTONES

Among the greater milestones in Mr. Allen's career, and he spoke feelingly about them to me, were his introduction of the controversial 70-30 system of awarding places from the Common Entrance Examinations; the introduction of comprehensive schools as Minister of Education and the addition, against the law at the time, of a secondary school segment during his nineteen years at the Leicesterfield Elementary School, taking students to fourth form secondary and then funnelling them to Clarendon College; adding also a Teachers College on a correspondence course basis and week-end summer course, and a pre-university course extending to the intermediate arts level.

ECSTATIC

Mr. Allen was equally ecstatic about his successful processing of over ten thousand young women for nursing courses - both State Registered and Practical - in the United Kingdom and providing, through his travel agency, opportunities for poor young men and women to go to England to tap the then viable work market.

As I got up to begin the 61-mile journey back to the Gleaner Editorial Office in Kingston I casually asked "Teacher" if he would care to express a view on the education climate of the day.

"I am not anxious to comment" he replied and added "I'd rather not comment as anything I say may be misunderstood."

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