

TRIBUTE TO NORMAN FRANCIS, LLB.(HONS) UWI at the Special Sitting held on Monday 18th February, 2019

BY MARY JULIANA CHARLES, LLB (HONS) LOND.

My Dear Norman,

I know that I cannot now address you in person but I feel compelled to do so in Spirit.

I am instructed and verily believe that some 40 years ago, to be exact in 1979, the year of Saint Lucia's Independence, you quietly arrived in Saint Lucia to attend the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College, Morne Fortune, Castries following the devastation by hurricane of the College in your beloved island home, Dominica, known for its Rivers for every day of the year.

I am instructed and verily believe that your father, a lawyer and Parliamentarian, had arranged your stay in Saint Lucia at the home of his cousin, the late Mrs. Leonce who headed THE SAVE THE CHILDREN FUND once located in Saint Lucia's botanical gardens.

I am further instructed that while attending the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College, you met and befriended your first wife Elma-Gene, and after your College years in Saint Lucia you attended the University of the West Indies in pursuit of legal studies. You were on the football team during your tenure there. On completion of your legal studies, you returned to Saint Lucia and you were called to practice law in Saint Lucia on 8th October 1986 together with our good friend CHERYL MATHURIN, now a retired High Court Judge, JEANINE GIRAUDY, now President of the Senate and VICTOR PHILIP LACORBINIÈRE, former Minister of Legal Affairs.

Soon after your Call to the Bar, I was introduced to you by CHERYL MATHURIN who was then employed at the firm of GORDON, GORDON & CO., where I also worked, at that time as a legal secretary. You had by that time secured employment at the Registry of the High Court as Deputy Registrar and you had also married ELMA-GENE.

You became a frequent visitor of the firm of GORDON, GORDON & CO., because your good friend and classmate, CHERYL, who affectionately called you BWAPS, worked there.

We hit it off well. I called you NORMS and you called me JU.

At that time GORDON, GORDON & CO., had on staff lovers of carnival, parties, and games, and so laughter was never absent from those Chambers and we all would be seen with you in tow at a Disco on an odd Friday evening, at a planned lunch or Christmas party, at the Bonne Terre home of Cheryl's dad the late, Mr. Eldon Mathurin, at my home in Entrepot and once at your first home in Balata. We all worked hard and partied hard. You were a frequent participant of the King and Queen of the Bands competition and were crowned King on a few occasions; other members of Staff who were also ardent carnival revelers, were never far behind.

I remember with fondness when you were supposed to prepare your Balata home, when the home was vacant in preparation for its repair, for our Christmas party. Upon inquiry as to whether everything was in order, you responded that EVERY THING IS COOKED AND CURRIED; but upon our arrival with the party drinks and food it was NOT, and we, the staff quickly had to prepare the place before the arrival of other invitees. To this day the expression "EVERYTHING IS COOKED AND CURRIED" is a commonly used by those of us who worked with you.

In 1987 you joined the firm of GORDON, GORDON & CO. as an associate and I recall that both you and CHERYL MATHURIN worked on an article on WOMEN AND THE LAW IN SAINT LUCIA, with CHERYL MATHURIN taking the lead in a radio talk on SEXUAL HARRASSMENT in the Workplace. Although I was a Secretary then, I was kindly invited to participate. Also participating in that forum was Attorney-at-Law, ALBERTON RICHELIEU.

Do you recall the gentleman who repeatedly, without your request, washed your vehicle and the shiny cutlass display? Hushhhhh not to be elaborated upon here, but it still draws laughter from those of us who worked with you.

You remained at the firm, GORDON, GORDON & CO. until 1993 when you left to join the then National Commercial Bank (NCB) as its Corporate Secretary and Legal Officer. In August 2001 following a merger of NCB and SLDB, the Bank of Saint Lucia emerged. You established a legal department at the Bank while operating as its in-house lawyer partnering with THADDEUS ANTOINE, now President of the OECS Bar.

In 2010 I joined you at the Bank of Saint Lucia until the return from Law School of your eldest child JARED (DANIEL FRANCIS), now Deputy Registrar of the High Court.

NORMS, I cherished the moments we shared as if you were my brother. We danced at the Christmas parties of Tolyn Manufacturers and Engineering Services Limited in Vieux Fort; we lunched at my former home in Entrepot from meals prepared by my husband during his vacation leave and had fun at my birthday tea parties where I used to have a baccannal section, which was simply a one-pot dish of green figs, salt fish and ochras, all cooked together in one large pot.

You did not eat meat and so I would have to hide your fish in the oven until you arrived.

You claimed not to like the guava juice my husband made when it was on sale but you were caught red-handed drinking it at one of our lunches (we had a good laugh at you when you expressed dismay at not realizing what juice it was).

Yes, my brother no two persons on God's earth could have polished off local roasted peanuts as you and I did. We loved them and they used to be our dessert.

You encouraged the purchase by my husband and myself of the parcel of land on which my home now stands, and I became your neighbor.

You were there at my side when my husband Justin, died in 2007.

After the death of my husband, you quietly paid to burglar-bar my entire new home to ensure my safety.

You chose me to be a witness at your second marriage to Eleanor and it was only on the 7th January, 2019 that you chose me as one of the Referees for the entrance of your daughter PERDITA FRANCIS, known to me as Chelsea, into law school, and I kindly obliged.

We had our good times and bad times when I found it fitting to chastise you. The good times always outweighed the bad and so everyone who knew of our friendship and the respect you afforded me, would complain to me if you had offended them, which would not go unattended by me. You were never insolent when I chastised. You listened, dodged me for a while and then returned after a calm.

Brother, on the morning of the 7th February, exactly one month since we last spoke and before I could exhale, you quietly and permanently left this world and all those you loved and who love you, but after you had taken your young son ETHAN to school that very morning.

How fickle can life be!

Your service to Saint Lucia was of quiet but profound dispensation.

Besides your tenure as Deputy Registrar of the High Court, you served as a Rotarian being first introduced to that discipline by the late PETER BARNARD.

You taught Criminal Law in the para-legal programme at Sir Arthur Lewis Community College from 1989-1991 and 1992 to 1993.

You served briefly on the Legal Aid Board in Saint Lucia and executed much notarial work *pro bono* from your chambers.

My brother, you came quietly, served quietly and have left quietly. Death is never easy though inevitable. A good friend and neighbour wrote me this

“Grief never ends but it changes, it’s a passage, not a place to stay. Grief is not a sign of weakness, Nor a lack of faith. It is the price of Love.”

I WISH TO EXPRESS MY DEEPEST SYMPATHY TO YOUR FAMILY, YOUR MOM, AUNTIE, YOUR SISTERS AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE FRANCIS FAMILY. YOUR WIFE ELEANOR AND ALL YOUR CHILDREN, two of whom are already in the legal profession DANIEL AND DAVID with another, PERDITA FRANCIS or CHELSEA on the way, and I trust that shew shall continue her legal studies to conclusion.

My condolences also to your extended family, your staff, your friends, Edison Raoul who drove you to the polyclinic on the day you passed, your first Secretary at the Bank of Saint Lucia Sherlan Louis, Pearl Charlemagne and your clerk, those with whom we worked at GORDON, GORDON & CO., your trusted contractor affectionately called UNCLE, your burglar-bar man ISSAC CHERY and many others too numerous to mention.

REST IN PEACE my friend, brother, mentor and colleague – you shall not be forgotten and I promise that while I sojourn this earth. I shall keep a keen eye on your children.

Sincerely,

Your SISTER and COLLEAGUE

MARY JULIANA CHARLES.