Biographical Dictionary of Guyana

Including Literary and Military Biographies and Discographies

A Comprehensive Single-Volume Reference with Over 1100 Entries From 1595 to Now

Compiled by

Lal Balkaran

This biographical dictionary provides profiles of over 1,100 men and women who, in relation to Guyana, have either made an impact, achieved a great deal, or were recognized in their own disciplines. Whether in the fields of sports, science, arts, religion, community work, social work, law, medicine, politics, education, entertainment, travel, exploration, academia, or business, this compendium showcases those prominent Guyanese and others as well as the unsung heroes who have left their mark regardless of political stripe, religion, race, or belief. Such renowned individuals like *John Agard, Stephen Campbell, Professor Jan Carew, Arthur Chung, Ken Corsbie, Martin Carter, Dr. B. Doobay, Bishop Randolph George, JOF Haynes, Rohan Kanhai, Sir Lionel Luckhoo, Pandit Ramsaroop Maraj, Sr. Mary Noel Menezes, Dave Martins, HPC Melville, Edgar Mittelholzer, Michael Parris, Yesu Persaud, Rajkumari Singh* and over a thousand more can all be found here. Meticulously researched, each profile is objective, precise, and accurate and is presented in good literary form. Indeed, it is a unique and pioneering dictionary that should be the pride of all Guyanese and those with an interest on Guyana.

PRAISE FOR THE BOOK

Lal Balkaran's *Biographical Dictionary of Guyana* is an admirable work of devoted scholarship and a signal achievement in nation building…He gives a lead in the effort which must never cease to record and give credit to the men and women who have built and moulded Guyana to this point and those who will continue to contribute to its growing strength in the future.
- **Dr. Ian McDonald - *Literary Icon, Renowned Poet, Sportsman,* and *Columnist***

Highest praise and thanks due to Lal Balkaran for his indefatigable scholarly efforts to produce this monumental work.
- **Dr. David Dabydeen – *Professor Emeritus* and *Hon Fellow*, Selwyn College, Cambridge University**

Lal Balkaran's latest publication *Biographical Dictionary of Guyana*, is not only useful but essential to our knowledge of the history and culture of Guyana
- Dr. Frank Birbalsingh – *Renowned Author and Professor Emeritus of English*

Lal Balkaran's *Biographical Dictionary of Guyana* is an outstanding work of succinct narrations by a Guyanese who also has distinguished himself as writer, videographer, and auditor. This massive encyclopaedic work sketches the professional achievements of over 1100 Guyanese and joins Mr. Balkaran's other publications on Guyana's history, culture and geography as a testament to his patriotism. I hope this volume will encourage Guyanese from every walk of life to aspire to lofty heights.
- Dr. Walter Edwards – *Renowned Professor of Linguistics*, Wayne State University

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EXAMPLES OF ENTRIES

CAMPBELL, Stephen Joseph (1897-1966) *First Amerindian Parliamentarian*
Of Scottish, Spanish, and Amerindian descent, Campbell grew up at Santa Rosa in the North West but lost his parents when he was a boy. He and his wife Umbelina, who was a Portuguese widow from Pomeroon accompanied legendary Jesuit Fr. Cuthbert Cary-Elwes in the Rupununi in 1919. In the August 1957 general elections, he ran as a candidate with Lionel Luckhoo's National Labour Front and it is a matter of historical interest that the only seat that party won was Stephen Campbell's. He attended the Constitutional and Guiana Independence Conference in London in 1965 where he was able to make the voice of Amerindians heard. His efforts were rewarded as provision was made for Amerindian Land Rights in the 1966 Independence Agreement. He was a father figure of the Amerindians. A self-made man, he taught himself Spanish and how to play the banjo, the guitar and the violin. An accomplished musician, he wrote his own songs just like his son, David Campbell, and nephew Basil Rodrigues wrote theirs. Their music centred around the Amerindians, their heritage, and the flora and fauna. Stephen Campbell's life-long work in promoting and defending the interests of Amerindians is comprehensive. Mr. Campbell was credited to have created an Amerindian Association to promote indigenous interests – the first of its kind in colonial Guiana.

CHIN, Dr. Walter Augustus (1932-2004) *Acclaimed Pediatrician and Physician*
Born in Georgetown, he attended Queen's College (1946-1950) and was a consummate cricketer playing left-handed batsman while at school. He entered the University of the West Indies where he studied medicine and returned home to practise in the 1950s. He was an eminent pediatrician and physician and an accomplished administrator in addition to being Chief Medical Officer and President of the Guyana Cancer Society. Dr. Chin became the best-known name in medicine and public health in the country. He was also head of the former Guyana Agency for Health, Education & Food Sciences (GAHEF) and a columnist as well. Dr Chin received Guyana's third highest national award, the Cacique Crown of Honour (CCH) for his outstanding contribution to medicine and a lifetime achievement award from the University of the West Indies Medical Alumni Association also for his contribution to medicine.

MARAJ, Pandit Ramsaroop, MBE (1889-1950) *Dharamshala's Founder* and *Outstanding Humanitarian*
As a youth in Wakenaam, he learnt the jewellers' craft and at about the age of twenty he settled in Albouystown practicing as a successful jeweller. He invested in real estate and had amassed a considerable fortune while still in his twenties. Son of a pandit, he immersed himself deeper in Hinduism and was moved into a Hindu's position that he could serve God best by serving the disabled, poor, aged, homeless and helpless. He accordingly gave up his wealth to charity and devoted the rest of his life of nearly 40 years to serving society's poor. Indeed, he was the Mother Theresa of his time. He founded *dharamshalas* (benevolent homes) in Albouystown and New Amsterdam for the poor and homeless irrespective of their race or creed. He was also responsible for the building of temples in New Amsterdam and Albouystown. He travelled over the entire country helping the sick and poor and bringing consolation and hope to thousands of families in their time of bereavement.

GEORGE, Kenneth Montague (1930-2009) *Legal Luminary, Former Chancellor of the Judiciary*
Born at Pln. Rose Hall in Canje, Berbice, he obtained his early education from St. Barnabas School in Georgetown and the Mission Chapel Congregational School in New Amsterdam. He went on to Berbice High School and Central High school after which he pursued a legal career and earned his BA in 1951and later his LLB in 1954 from the University of London. He studied at Gray's Inn and qualified as a barrister in 1955. In 1962 he went to Harvard and successfully completed the LL.M degree as well as an International Program in Taxation. He was Crown Counsel and Assistant Legal Draftsman from 1959-1961; Senior Crown Counsel from 1961-1963; Puisne Judge from 1967-1977 and Justice of Appeal from 1977-1981 before being appointed Chief Justice (1981) and subsequently, Chancellor (1988), a position he held until his retirement in 1995. Referred to as 'King George' by many who worked with him throughout his eminent career, he was also President of the Courts of Appeal in the Bahamas and in Belize between 1996 and 2000. He was bestowed with two national awards: the Cacique Crown of Honour (CCH) in 1982 and later, the Order of Roraima (OR).

EXAMPLES OF ENTRIES (Contd.)

CAMACHO, George Stephen (1945-2015) *Outstanding Cricketer*
George was born in Georgetown and attended Saint Stanislaus College, for which institution he made his early foray into the world of cricket in Guyana. He was an admired schoolboy cricketer whether playing for his school or demonstrating the art of batsmanship against Queen's Royal College in the Regional Jacob Cup competition in Trinidad. George was selected to play for Guyana against the Australians in 1965 at the age of 19 and he played all of the great strokes in reaching 165. George eventually won his cap and made his Test debut for the West Indies team in 1968 (West Indies v. England). He eventually became Secretary and then the first Chief Executive Officer of the West Indies Cricket Board (established in 1928) as well as Manager and Assistant Manager of West Indies cricket teams. George's first-class scoring record includes 4,019 runs including seven centuries.

MARTINS, Dave Anthony (1940 -) *International Singer/Songwriter*
He has produced over 100 songs, several advertising jingles, and an award-winning play. He was born on the West Coast Demerara and grew up at Hague and Vreed-en-Hoop. He attended Sacred Heart Primary School and later St Stanislaus College. His interest in music started at Vreed-en-Hoop when he was fascinated by the sound of the guitar played by two brothers Joe and Jack Henry on box guitars. Their children Jeffrey and Julian Henry followed suit and became accomplished guitarists playing at various concerts throughout the country. He and the Henry brothers started a band playing a lot of Latin music and some calypsos at people homes at Vreed-en-Hoop and Pouderoyen on the West Bank as well as in Berbice. After high school, he worked at Booker Shipping and at Atkinson Airport (now Cheddi Jagan International Airport). He moved to Canada in 1961 and five years later established the "Tradewinds" band which included two Trinidadians. By then he wrote a few original songs including "Honeymooning Couple" which went on to be a huge hit bringing the Tradewinds and Dave much acclaim in the Caribbean and firmly establishing his stardom. After that, a string of hits ensued including "Mr Rooster," You Can't get", "Copy Cats", "Cricket in the Jungle", "Not a Blade of Grass," "Where are our heroes", "Boyhood Days", "Civilization", "West Indian Alphabet", and "We are the Champions." The popular "Not a Blade of Grass" is a fiercely Guyanese patriotic song written in the 1980s when Venezuela was making threatening noises over the unfounded Guyana/Venezuela border dispute. Dave wrote it in an hour in a hotel room at the Pegasus while on tour in Guyana around 1976 after being instigated by the late broadcaster, the iconic Pat Cameron who challenged him to write a patriotic song at the height of Venezuela's threats. The song took off like a savannah fire. At one point, it was the first song played on the radio station every day, and people began referring to it as "Guyana's second anthem".

AUTHOR'S PROFILE

Guyana-born and Toronto-based Lal Balkaran is an award-winning internal auditor and author with over fifty articles on a wide range of subjects published in some prestigious journals and twenty-two publications and documentaries on his native Guyana and on business. Principally self-taught, he holds fellowships to four recognized professional accounting associations and an MBA from the Edinburgh Business School. He has had over three decades of internal auditing, accounting, and management consulting experience in a range of industries including the Big Four and has presented at several conferences. His well-researched publications are used by several reference libraries, international associations, and institutions of higher learning. He can be reached at lalbalkaran@rogers.com and at 416-451-6075.