

## **2007: THOMAS ALEXANDER GATCLIFFE**

Thomas Alexander Gatcliffe was born in Georgetown, Guyana in 1927 and his parents moved to Trinidad in 1930. He is the son of Harry Gatcliffe of England and his wife Mildred née Massy, who was a direct descendant of Major Charles Massy, a member of the invading British forces in 1797, and his wife Rose Peschier of the Paradise Sugar Estate, now known as the Queen's Park Savannah.

He received his education at Queen's Royal College where he obtained his Higher School Certificate with distinctions in Science in 1944 and became Head Prefect and Sergeant Major of the Cadet Corps. He was also the open Half Mile Champion. After a brief spell acting as Zoology master, he entered McGill University where he obtained an Honors Degree in Chemistry. He represented the University in Judo and was on the boxing team of his faculty. In 1949 he completed an evening course in Industrial Engineering at the University whilst employed as a Chemist with Shell Oil Company of Canada. In 1951 he was awarded an International Fellowship to spend six months in the U.S.A to study Industrial Fermentation and Distillation, and in 1963 completed a course in Business Administration at Indiana University, and later on the Advanced Training Programme in Business Administration at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

He is a member of several professional societies, including the Royal Institute of Chemistry, the American Chemical Society and the Institute of Directors. He has served on a number of Governmental Committees, including the Hobson Committee on Industrialisation in 1957, and was for six years a member of the Board of the Trinidad and Tobago Industrial Development Corporation. He was the leader of the first IDC Investment mission to the United States in September 1963, and has been a member

of several Trade Missions, including the 1967 delegation of the Incorporated Chamber of Industry and Commerce of the Commonwealth Caribbean, under the leadership of Sir Garnet Gordon, to the Heads of Governments Meeting in the region. The delegation promoted the need for an early move to free trade throughout the region. In 1965, together with the Mayor of San Fernando, Errol Mahabir, he was elected one of the two most outstanding young men of the year.

He has been described as “the Trinidad and Tobago businessman who has had more influence than most other members of the industrial and commercial community”, having been involved in three key public sector entities during the late 70’s and early 80’s – the National Advisory Council of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr Williams’ “think tank”; the National Energy Corporation and the International Marketing Corporation – despite being a critic of the Trinidad government. He reasoned: “If you have a chance to influence policy and you don’t take it, there by failing to communicate your views, you have no right to criticize afterwards.” From 1971 to 1976 he was a Senator in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.

Tommy Gatcliffe has held directorships, chairmanships and vice chairmanships, and board memberships of several companies including Trinidad Distillers Limited, West Indies Stockbrokers Limited, Trinidad Broadcasting Limited, Trinidad Express Newspaper Limited, Bank of Commerce Trinidad and Tobago Limited, Neal and Massy Holdings Limited, Fernandes Distillers Limited and Guardian Life, to list but a few. He is also a past Director of the Caribbean Association of Industry and Commerce and past chairman of the West Indies Rum and Spirits Producers’ Association. He is a past President of the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce and was Vice-Chairman of the Trinidad and Tobago Committee for Economic Development. In

1979 he received the national Chaconia Medal (Gold) for service to the nation in the field of business development.

However, the organisation with which the name Thomas A. Gatcliffe is most synonymous is Angostura Limited. It was under his astute leadership, as the first non-member of the Siegert family to be put in charge of the company, that Angostura would emerge as a local giant and an international heavyweight. Under his guidance Angostura won the Export Performance Trophy (1972) and the Exporter of the Year-Prime Minister Awards 1997 and 1998. In 1985 Angostura was awarded the Humming Bird Medal (Gold) for its contribution to industry and received in 1995, its ISO 9002 Certification, the first distillery in the Caribbean to achieve such a distinction.

Thomas Alexander Gatcliffe has devoted 50 years of his life to developing not only Angostura, but also to making a significant contribution to the development of our country and its people, its governmental processes and its growing maturity in the administration of its affairs particularly in the economic and fiscal field.

Above and beyond these public achievements, he is truly a very humble and dedicated family man and has been a devoted and loving husband to wife Rhona and father to his three children, David, Patricia and Margaret. He bought St. Ignatius Bay on Gasparee Island in 1997 and spends practically all his weekends there surrounded by his family, siblings, grand and great grand children, and close friends. He is a very keen sailor and owns a Peterson 34 sailing boat call Sea Wyf and enters races regularly throughout the Caribbean. Tommy is also an accomplished jazz pianist and his signature number is "Smoke gets in your Eyes"; he is very fond of and often sings the famous calypso, "Never make a pretty woman your wife".

Many men go through a lifetime as good people, without making a significant change or contribution to the lives of those around them. Tommy is undoubtedly a good man, but he has also improved the lives and prospects of a very great number of people, both inside Angostura and within the country and region generally. His working life has been one of achievement allied with a humility and courtesy which is rare in a person of his position, and the standards of behaviour which he has set, not only for himself, but for everyone working with him, have been quite remarkable.

The Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce is indeed honoured to induct Mr. Thomas Alexander Gatcliffe (posthumously) into the Business Hall of Fame on this 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 2007.