

## **2009: KENNETH GORDON**

There is no one more deserving of praise in the story of the development of the Caribbean media in the last 60 years than Ken Gordon. No one has given more assistance; emotional support and tangible technical help to print and electronic media stretching from Jamaica to Guyana. He was a vital part of the growth of an indigenous media, so essential in giving voice to our own interpretation of events.

The start of his career coincided with the passing of the old colonial order and the struggles and watersheds of the new Caribbean. His has been a relentless and dynamic story which started off after he left St. Mary's College in 1948 and took up an assignment as announcer at Radio Trinidad, where he eventually was promoted to Programme Director. One imagines that the impulses as a media man were sharpened there, but the competing impulse of business lured him across to the Trinidad Chamber of Commerce where in the year of Independence he took up the position of General Manager. In seven years, with the nationalistic urge beginning to demand institutions be more responsive to mass democracy, he was recruited to the fledgling Trinidad Express as Managing Director.

Under his stewardship, the Express would grow into the multi-media Caribbean giant – The Caribbean Communications Network - which includes:

- Trinidad Express Newspapers Ltd.;
- CCN Television - Channel 6;
- Prime Radio 106 FM;
- Galaxy Caribbean (Caribbean Satellite Services); and
- Direct TV

During this period he was appointed for three years Minister of Industry, Enterprise and Tourism in the newly elected NAR Government in 1986, and he was privileged to observe the system from the perspectives of businessman, publisher and policy maker.

Along the way he opened up frontiers for the democratic press in a number of Caribbean islands, working his diplomatic magic where possible or flexing his muscle where

necessary. Indeed, Burnham, Gairy, Bishop and at times Manley and Williams were all fought at one time or another. Alliances were established in Barbados, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Lucia, Dominica and Guyana. His vision was not ownership of Caribbean media but strengthening the base from which he fought to keep the press independent and free from the dictates of politicians. There was also the further serious complication of foreign ownership of the media. His individual initiatives have coalesced into the creation of various instruments in pursuit of that intangible called Caribbean media through: The Caribbean News Agency (CANA); The Caribbean Broadcasting Union (CBU) and The Caribbean Press and Broadcasters Association (CPBA).

Throughout it all he has been a tireless diplomat in the service of the media. He has wooed and won investments and support of all kinds from agencies around the world; he has in times of crisis, enjoyed the stature to intervene on behalf of the free press. And just when it was thought that he would be ready to relinquish the reins to a successor, he took on the biggest challenge, some might say, gamble of his career in a high-tech, futuristic project with a world player to bring Direct TV to the Caribbean.

The career path on which he embarked has been entirely fulfilling and has provided him with much enjoyment over the years. Generous recognition has been received for his efforts from the Inter-American Press Association - the Pedro Joaquin Chamorro Award In 1983; the Maria Moors Cabot Gold Medal Award From Columbia University in 1984; and the Commonwealth Press Union Lord Astor Award In 1985 - all for his efforts in the preservation of press freedom in the Caribbean. He also received the Media Association of Trinidad And Tobago's (MATT) Service Recognition Award in 1997 and many others too numerous to mention.

Following his retirement in 1997, Ken Gordon has served as Chairman of several boards including those of the businesses of his two sons Rhett and Douglas viz:- Caribbean Paper and Printed Products Ltd.; and Gordon Ventures Inc. He was also President of the West Indies Cricket Board. As a consequence his days are full as they have ever been. He has been married three times and has seven children, most of whom are University graduates and have done well in their respective professions. His wife Marguerite hails from Jamaica and has her own human resource development business, MK Careers. He

was the founder of the well known Great Race in 1969, which is looked forward to each year by its many participants.

His philanthropic acts are many and varied and are carried out in strict anonymity. In his book "Getting it Write" he has documented his personal journey through the years - the story of the media in Trinidad and in the Caribbean of which so little had been recorded previously. It is very much a story that he has not only lived, but defined.

The Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce is indeed honoured to induct Mr. Kenneth Gordon into the Business Hall of Fame on this 11<sup>th</sup> November, 2009.