

2012: GEOFFREY R. INGLEFIELD, C.M.T. (1924-2011)

To the late Geoffrey Inglefield, “insurance” meant infinitely more than a career and a business. It was the arena in which he demonstrated his values of love and family, hard work, discipline, honesty, fairness, and above all, trust — a quality that underpins the success of the insurance industry.

In all aspects of his life "dictum meum pactum" – “my word is my bond” - defined the principle of his business dealings and set the standard of integrity for the industry.

These values would become synonymous with the man and his commitment to the service of his many business relationships and numerous social causes, and his service to Trinidad and Tobago.

In times of disaster, in matters of life and death, these qualities were of ultimate importance to his customers. His values defined and shaped his entire career in business and helped build a Caribbean insurance firm that could boast without objection of being “The most trusted name in insurance throughout the Caribbean.”

Born in Trinidad on June 19, 1924, it is no doubt that his qualities were nurtured from an early age by his father, Harry Roberts Inglefield, a chartered accountant who had left the UK in the 1920s to work in Venezuela and eventually settled in Trinidad with his wife, Ruth Elsie Nock.

Geoffrey Inglefield graduated from Queen’s Royal College with an outstanding record in both academics and sport. He held the 100m and 200m school records in track until they were broken many years later by Wendell Mottley. An avid and passionate tennis player well into his declining years, Geoff was ranked No. 2 and represented Trinidad and Tobago in 1950 and 1955, and captained the Brandon Cup Team before going on to represent the West Indies in the Davis Cup in 1954, and captaining the West Indies Davis Cup team in 1969.

The values of discipline and sportsmanship were to define and shape his career in the insurance business.

Geoff started his working life at Pan American Airways’ flying boat terminal in Cocorite and later at Piarco Airport as a flight dispatcher, where he also qualified as a

meteorologist and secured his flying license. Another passion he would often animatedly talk about. As he would about his stint as an army reserve during the WWII.

He began his insurance career on May 1, 1948 with Hunter, Smith and Earl, the local agents of National Employers' Mutual General Insurance Association. He spent two years working and training in their UK office from 1951.

On January 1, 1960, a locally registered company, N.E.M. Insurance Limited (NEMWIL) was launched with Geoff Inglefield as Director and General Manager. Three years later, he was appointed Managing Director. Under his leadership NEMWIL would become the industry leader in service and innovation. The ethos of trust, integrity, responsibility discipline and compassion were imbedded in the culture of his organisation and, by extension, the brand of his business. He loved people and took pleasure in being there for them in their moment of greatest need. Later, his children would remember seeing a newspaper clipping, showing Daddy handing over a cheque to a family within a week of their home being destroyed by fire. Such rapid insurance response was unheard of then.

Geoff's tenure as Managing Director was marked by several pioneering and innovative initiatives. Among the several firsts he offered were the NEMWIL inOne Policy that bundled house, contents, car, boat and so on, into one policy with one competitive premium. NEMWIL "Legacy" allowed longstanding policyholders to include their spouse and younger dependents in one comprehensive policy, thereby growing premium income while attracting the next generation. His keen sense of the market also led him to develop reinsurance arrangements that built the underlying strength of one of the most reliable insurance companies in the region. His unshakable commitment to service and good faith created a bond of respect and trust between NEMWIL and its customers that endured for generations.

Geoff Inglefield was widely known and respected throughout the Caribbean for his leadership and business acumen in establishing and promoting NEMWIL. For decades he was an exemplar in the field and was widely recognized as the "Best General Insurance Practitioner in the West Indies". His commitment to promoting professionalism in the industry was demonstrated through his many years of active support and involvement in the Academy of Insurance.

While many international insurers were reducing their exposure to catastrophe risks in the Caribbean, Geoff Inglefield expanded. NEMWIL was the first Trinidad and Tobago company to establish agents in Belize, the British Virgin Islands and United States Virgin Islands, territories that others considered too risky - adding to a portfolio of business that covered every English-speaking country in the Caribbean.

In 1984 he was made Chairman, a position he would occupy until retirement on December 13, 1994. By then NEMWIL was the market leader with an enviable reputation as the first insurance company in Trinidad and Tobago to earn an International A.M. Best rating of 'A' Excellent.

Throughout his career, Geoff was at the top of industry leadership and public service:

- President, Junior Chamber of Commerce of PoS (1958)
- President, West Indies Junior Chamber (1962)
- Commission Director, Junior Chamber International (1964)
- President, Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Commerce Inc. (1970)
- President, Trinidad and Tobago Insurance Institute (1960, 1965)
- Director of the Rotary Club of Port of Spain (1962–1975)
- Member, Executive Committee, Insurance Association of the Caribbean (1974–1979)
- Honorary Secretary, Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme Trinidad and Tobago (1967)
- Chairman, Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme Trinidad and Tobago (Re-named President's Award Trinidad and Tobago in 1976) (1972–1987)
- First President, Caribbean Award Scheme Council 1977–1979
- President, Association of Trinidad and Tobago Insurance Companies (ATTIC) (1977–1979)
- Governor of the Academy of Insurance (1978)
- Board member, Air Transport Licensing Authority (1975–1983)
- Board member, Water and Sewerage Authority (1981–1983)
- Chairman, Rediffusion (West Indies) Ltd., Rediffusion (Trinidad) Ltd., Trinidad Broadcasting Company Ltd.
- Director of Trinidad and Tobago Insurance Ltd.
- Director of Royal Bank of Trinidad and Tobago Ltd.
- Chairman of Hardware and Oilfield Equipment Company Ltd.
- Director of Neal and Massy Holdings Ltd.

- Director, Barbados Mutual Life Assurance Society
- Director, BH Rose Ltd.
- Director, Guyana and Trinidad Mutual Insurance

Geoff Inglefield's towering contributions were recognized and honoured locally and internationally through several awards of distinction from industry, the Rotary Club and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago including:

- Certificate of Appreciation for outstanding services as a President of the Trinidad and Tobago Insurance Institute (TTIA) (1977)
- Silver Award (TTIA) (1982)
- Insurance Hall of Fame (TTIA)
- Paul Harris Fellow Award by the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International (1982)
- Inducted to Honorary Life Membership in the Insurance Association of the Caribbean (IAC) (1999)
- Chaconia Medal (Gold) from the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for Community Service (1977)

Ultimately, however, Geoff Inglefield's great and inspiring contribution to business and society came from the love and happiness in his family life.

His life-long partner was his wife Katharine "Kitty" Isabel Skinner, whose nickname came from the name of her birthplace, St Kitts. She co-founded of the advertising company Trinity Advertising, the Caribbean Flower Shop and was also very active in numerous social causes. Together, Geoff and Kitty raised nine children who gave them the joy of 24 grandchildren.

Their love endured to August 6, 2011 when, in a space of four hours, they died peacefully in the embrace of their children and grandchildren.

The Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce is indeed honoured to induct Mr Geoffrey R. Inglefield into its Business Hall of Fame on this 10th November, 2012.