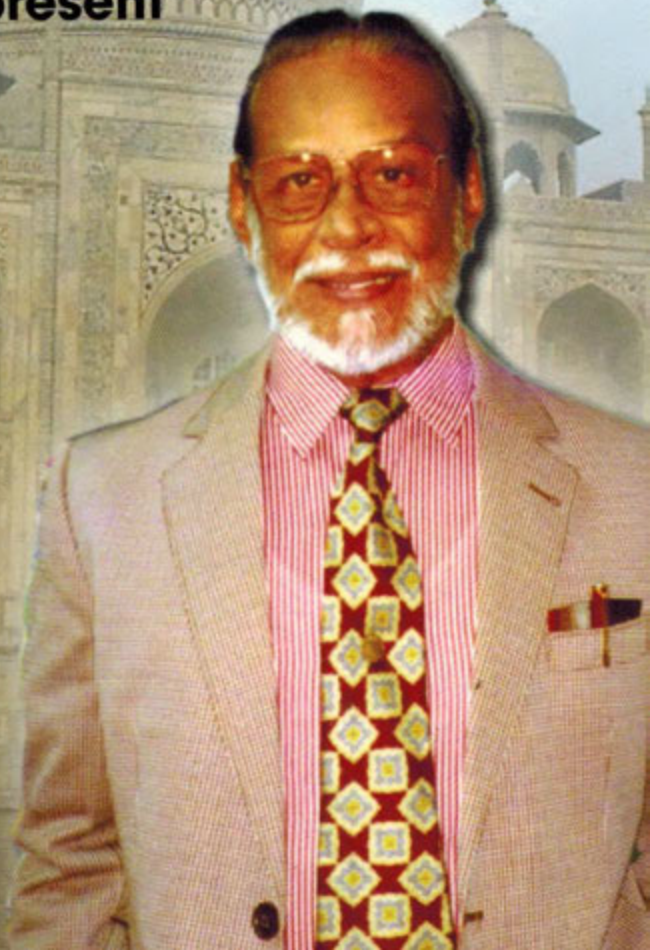
GOLDEN 77 YEARS

A Muslim with a Mission:

the memoirs of Haji Ralph D. Khan

1929-present



A Biography by

Shameen Ali (Ph.D)

The success story of a very ordinary man who has devoted his life to service

A Muslim with a Mission:

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1929-present

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FOREWORD

In 1929, the year of Haji Ralph Khan's birth, Trinbagonian society was markedly different from the society in which the said Haji now lives. How rapidly the times change! At that time, the surroundings of San Fernando were carpeted by cane-fields, the bull or donkey-cart was the major form of transportation between villages and the train was the major link to distant places. A pipe-borne water supply was unthinkable during the thirties of the last century and Hindu and Muslim marriages were not recognized as legal until the Second World War of 1939-1945. As we read in the biography, secondary education was the privilege of a chosen few, who, by dint of considerable mental exertion, were able to scale the heights to Naparima College. The usefulness of this biography lies in its careful tracing of the transition of the society from rurality to urbanity, from widespread illiteracy to reasonable education enabling the emergence of a people from the plantations to the professions. All of this is now skillfully woven into a historic tapestry by a trained historian with a keen eye for detail.

Whilst the large story of the society's transition from cane-field to shopping malls forms the backdrop to the biography, the work also allows us to accurately follow the stage by stage development of the subject of the biography. And one wonders whether such an unfolding could have taken place anywhere else in the world. On the one hand there is the persistence of the family from the time of their arrival from India, in maintaining the Islamic faith of their Asiatic ancestors. In their lengthy sojourn in this country they never deviated from such adherence because it suited their temperament and spiritual development. Thus Ralph refuses to convert to Presbyterianism despite the many advantages which such conversion would have bestowed upon him. In his times of challenge and difficulty, he relies heavily on the Qu'ran and the Hadith for guidance and sustenance; and his firm adherence to the Islamic principles keeps him on the straight, narrow and successful path. At the same time, the family is fully aware that they are part of a small minority in a predominantly Christian, Western Society. They therefore made adjustments in their lifestyles to cope with the circumstances. Ralph's parents gave their children English as well as Islamic names such as Eva Sakiran and Vernon Syed Khan, these children are sent to Canadian Mission Schools because the state did not support the non-Christian Schools before 1948 and Ralph himself at Naparima College does so well in Christian Religious Knowledge that the Presbyterians see him as a potential preacher. Whilst Ralph attends *mauloods* and *Qu'ran Khwani* regularly in the village communities he has no problem in singing in the choir of the Susamachar Presbyterian Church in San Fernando or in serving as President of the Grant Memorial (Presbyterian) School's Parent-Teachers' Association for

eleven years from 1977. The admirable open-ness of his mind enables him to serve as an Executive member of the National Council of Indian Culture and to participate in a wide range of cultural activities, even the arrangement of Carnival festivities. His life therefore is a model of personal adjustment to the realities of the society whilst simultaneously holding on to the core values of Islam.

Adding greater worth to this biography is the detailed analysis of Ralph Khan's political career. Not satisfied with being a mere bystander and armchair critic, Ralph Khan boldly entered the political fray by accepting a Senatorial appointment in the parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in 1990. When we consider his many solid contributions to debate in that Upper House we have to pause in wonder that all of this was achieved in a one-year stint in the Senate. As the press cuttings and Hansard records indicate, Senator Khan covered a diverse range of issues ranging from the need for constitutional reform to the scourge of drug addiction. He spoke of the pressing need to preserve heritage sites and of the urgency of preventing child abuse; he was a strong advocate of the up-grading of the status of Justices of the Peace and of the benefits of faith-based education. His speeches and letters are all reflective of learned research buttressed in deep thought. Most of the problems of which he spoke are very present up to our own time and we now need to re-visit the suggestions presented by Senator Khan.

All of these activities mentioned thus far, would indicate a full life with little room for other activities. However, the subject of this biography was always full of energy, always dreaming new dreams, constantly seeking to live life to the lees. He has organized trips to Saudi Arabia to perform the Hajj and to meet Saudi royalty. North America and Europe are regularly on his itinerary so that when he gives travel advice to clients, he knows whereof he speaks. This has been a major reason for the success of his travel agency. Additionally, a lifetime in the insurance industry renders him a mine of experience and information to the national community. As the appendices show, his correspondence list is equally impressive and the photographs portray a past and present era that needs to be recorded for posterity. This biography is a useful slice of our nation's history.

Brinsley Samaroo
Professor of History
University of the West Indies
St. Augustine Campus
May, 2006

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

GLOSSARY

Allah/Allaah	The proper Name of God, the Creator (in Arabic)
Arafat/Arafaat	The place near Makkah (Mecca) where pilgrims stay on the 9th day of the last Islamic month when performing the Hajj (Pilgrimage)
A.S.J.A.	Anjuman Sunnat-ul-Jamaat Association to which the majority of Muslims in Trinidad and Tobago are affiliated
boxcart	A wooden contraption in the shape of a box with two handles mounted on roller bearings for easy mobility
bul-bul-tarang	An Indian musical instrument
Eid-ul-Adha	Celebration on the 10th day of the last Islamic month commemorating Prophet Abraham's "sacrifice" of his first-born son Isma'il (Ishmael)
Eid-ul-Fitr	Muslim festival celebrating the end of the month of Ramadan (month of fasting)
Fajr	Early morning prayer (between dawn and sunrise)
flambeau	A torch made by inserting a piece of rolled cloth into a bottle filled with kerosene
Hadith	Narration of what the Prophet (uwbp) said, did, or tacitly approved of
Hafiz	Title bestowed upon one who has memorized the entire Qur'an
Haj/Hajj	Pilgrimage to Makkah, (Mecca) Mina and Arafat; at least once in a lifetime for all Muslims possessing both the financial and physical means - performed during a specific time of the year. One of the five pillars of Islam
Haji	Title bestowed upon a Muslim male who has performed the Hajj (Pilgrimage to Makkah/Mecca)
Haram Shareef	Holy Shrine, a term normally used for the mosque with the Ka'bah at its centre - in Makkah (Mecca) - as well as for the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah (Al-Masjid-an Nabawi)
Hijab	Headwear worn by Muslim women
Ihram	Two sheets of unstitched white cloth which must be worn by all males, also the state which has to be assumed by all males and females when performing the Hajj pilgrimage

Islam	Peace/surrender to the will of God. The official religion of Muslims
Ka`ba/h	A cube-like building situated at the centre of the sacred mosque in Makkah (Mecca) the point towards which all Muslims turn during prayer
Khwani	Gathering for the purpose of reciting the Holy Qur'an
lawa	Pre-nuptial ritual performed by Hindus
madrassa	Islamic religious school normally attached to a mosque
mahr	Bridal property or money which must be given by the bridegroom to the bride forming an independent estate of hers (commonly referred to locally as dowry)
Mandir	Hindu temple
Masjid/Mosque	Muslim place of worship
"Massa"	A horseback riding overseer like the "white man" of the colonial era wearing his cork hat
Maulana	Title of respect bestowed upon someone who has studied Islam in certain countries (e.g. India and Pakistan)
Makkah/ Mecca	A leading city in the western interior of Saudi Arabia where Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) was born and which is visited by pilgrims during the Hajj (Pilgrimage)
Madinah/ Medina	A leading city in the western interior of Saudi Arabia to which Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) migrated, lived and was buried. Visited by pilgrims before/after the Hajj
mehfil	Gathering or assembly
Meelad-un-Nabi	Celebration of the Holy Prophet's birthday (p.b.u.h.) on the 12th day of the third Islamic month, Rabi-ul-Awwa, and certain other days as well
Mi'raj-un-Nabi	Ascension of the Holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.) on the 27th night of the seventh (7th.) Islamic month - Rajab - and the commemoration thereof
Moulood/ maulood	Function marking the celebration of the birth of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (u.w.b.p.)
Muhammad (p.b.u.h)	The last and final prophet in the chain of prophets that began with Prophet Adam (p.b.u.h.) Born in Mecca in 571 C.A.
Muslim	A person who consciously accepts and practises Islam
Nagar	Village/place
(p.b.u.h.)	peace be upon him
Qaseeda/h	Islamic song

Qur'an	The Word of Allah, revealed to Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) and preserved by God from any changes, additions, deletions, or distortion. It is used by Muslims throughout the world in their daily prayers and in religious functions
Ramadan	The 9th. Islamic month in which fasting is compulsory on Muslims. Exceptions are provided
sarangi	A stringed instrument used by Indians
Sheik/Shaikh	Title of respect bestowed on someone who has studied Shaykh Islam in those countries (e.g. Egypt and Saudi Arabia)
shura	Consultation.
tawhad/ tawheed	Unity/oneness of God
Umra/Umrah	The lesser of the two pilgrimages (not compulsory). May be performed at any time of the year

INTRODUCTION

HAJI RALPH DASTOOR KHAN J. P. (b. August 3, 1929) has made a sterling contribution to social life in his community. From 1956 to the present, he served in various capacities and at different levels of the community enrichening and inspiring not just the Muslim community but the nation as a whole.

He is the fifth of ten children born to Baraichee Ahmed Khan (1899-1975) - teacher, cane-farming superintendent, social worker, bee-keeper and Registrar of Births and Deaths, and his wife Subrattan, nee Mohammed (1906-1969). The Khans lived at Picton Street, Diamond Village, in suburban San Fernando, where all ten children were born. On August 3, 1968 Ralph married Jennifer Mohammed from Williamsville, employed as a stenotypist at Ste. Madeleine Sugar Company Limited and some time later as a departmental secretary at Caroni (1975) Limited. They have two children, Nadeira, **b. June 10, 1970** and Imran, **b. June 12, 1976.**

Haji Ralph Khan's life can be divided into specific spheres, each contributing to the development of mind and spirit which are pivotal to the evolution of character. The people, places, and events which have influenced his life, and indeed, which he himself has influenced, remains quite varied and fascinating. From his humble beginnings as a community worker at Diamond Village, and a successful and outstanding Insurance Executive, he later assumed several important roles, that of Public Relations Officer of the Anjuman Sunnat-ul-Jamaat Association Incorporated of Trinidad and Tobago, Member of the Upper House of Parliament (the Senate), Executive Member of the National Council of Indian Culture (NCIC), Deputy Chairman of the state-appointed board of "SHARE" (Social Help and Rehabilitative Efforts) for five and a half years, President of the Justices of the Peace Association of Trinidad and Tobago, Secretary/Director of the Haji Ruknuddeen Institute of Islamic Studies, and social worker extraordinaire. Indeed, Ralph Dastoor Khan has not just been a man of the people but a man for all seasons.

Photograph of Ralph Khan in typical business attire (wearing bowtie - quite fashionable during that era) during his youthful years, newly inducted into the life insurance industry with the Canada Life Assurance Company of Canada on the 24th February 1960. ***Photo: Courtesy Victor's Studio***

CHAPTER 1

His Early Life

Ralph Khan grew up in the rural close-knit community of Picton, Diamond Village, in suburban San Fernando, dominated by the sugar industry. Many families were inter-related and the community spirited neighbours who sought the welfare of one another, had a formidable influence on the young Ralph.

More importantly, his parents were his first role models as social/community workers. A first generation descendant of an East Indian indentured immigrant, Baraichee Ahmed Khan, popularly called "Massa" due to the lofty position he occupied in the community during the colonial era, (riding a horse provided by his company and wearing a cork-hat while visiting the plantations) left school at the age of fifteen (15) to become a primary school teacher at a salary of two dollars ($2.00) per month. After leaving this job - in order to help his younger siblings - he was later employed at the Ste. Madeline Sugar Company Limited as a Bookkeeper but was some time afterwards promoted as the company's Cane Farming Superintendent, a position he held until his retirement at the age of sixty five (65). In this capacity, the elder Khan dealt with farmers, negotiated contracts, checked scales, as well as overseered land distribution to tenants and farmers on behalf of the company.

Community service was very important to Baraichee Khan who served as President of the Diamond Village Council for several years. He also presided at village council affairs incorporating the Principal and staff of the only school in the community, the Picton Presbyterian School, in the various activities of the council, and assisted villagers in several communal projects. Indeed, in recognition of his dedication and commitment to the society, complemented by his honesty and integrity, he was appointed by the then colonial government as a member of the Victoria County Council (now the Princes Town Regional Corporation) where he served for several consecutive terms during the late fifties up to the mid sixties. He also served for many years as a member of the Old Age Pension and Poor Relief Boards appointed by government and, as a Justice of the Peace for the County of Victoria as well.

Ralph's mother, Subrattan, worked tirelessly bringing up her ten (10) children and also as a community leader, assisting in village folk weddings, village council affairs (for which she prepared all the refreshments) and other various women's

activities in Diamond Village. She was regarded as the matriarch of the village and, as an indication of her deep personal involvement in the community's affairs it was at her home that the vast majority of Hindu prenuptial **Lawa** ceremonies took place during which time she was acknowledged as a cultural icon. It is interesting to note that the practice of religious discrimination in the village at the time was non existent.

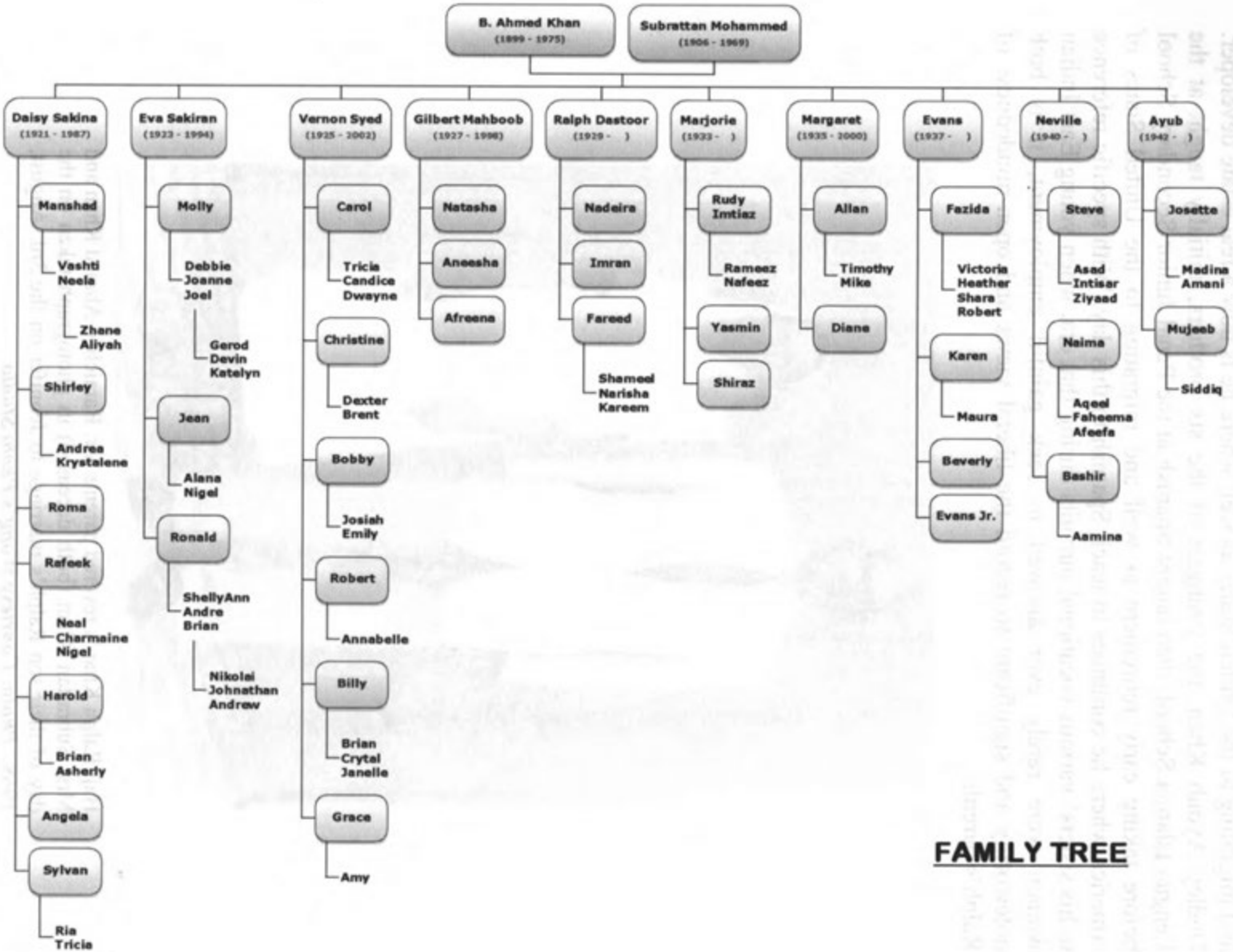
The Khan household was always a hub of activity. The largely wooden edifice comprising five (5) bedrooms and a spacious ground floor, functioned as a community centre (prior to the introduction of community centres by the state) where various community activities were organized and implemented. It is not surprising therefore, that the public, the community that is, viewed the Khans with great awe and reverence. Cognisant of this, and of the important role he played as a member of the Pension and Poor Relief Boards, Baraichee Ahmed Khan, upon his retirement, purchased a new typewriter specifically for the purpose of easily facilitating members in his community and environs in accessing these and other benefits for them. He personally typed letters to the relevant authorities on their behalf at no cost, spending most of his leisure time in their cause until his demise in the year 1975.

Apart from being a cultural and social worker, Baraichee Khan was a visionary whose fervent desire was the education of his children. He clearly understood that education did not only render people socially mobile by providing them with better paying jobs but it also cultivated in them those attributes and abilities which would assist them in being better individuals in their chosen vocations. The elder Khan was also understanding and liberal enough to allow Ralph and his siblings to pursue diverse careers of their own choice.

Ralph's eldest sister for instance, Daisy Sakina Mohammed, was a Registrar of Births and Deaths in the South Naparima district for several years but later migrated to Canada where she passed away in 1987. His second sister, Eva Sakiran Mohammed, worked as a telephone operator with the Ste. Madeline Sugar Company Limited until her retirement. His eldest brother Vernon Syed Khan, retired as the Deputy Health Chief at the Port of Spain City Corporation. Gilbert Khan retired as a senior Fire Officer from the Trinidad and Tobago Fire Services. Marjorie Ameena Khan was a professional seamstress, while Margaret Zobida Khan preferred to be a housewife. Evans Mahmood Khan worked as a clerical officer at the Ste. Madeline Sugar Company Limited before migrating to the United States of America in 1970 where he qualified and served as an accountant in various companies until his retirement at age sixty (60). Neville Yakub Khan

worked as a teacher at the Lengua Islamia School before taking early retirement and migrating to the United States as well where he is now a real estate developer. Dudley Ayoub Khan, the youngest of the six brothers, initially taught at the Lengua Islamia School, then taught Spanish at the Penal Junior Secondary School before taking early retirement as well and migrating to the United States of America where he continues to teach Spanish to this day. With specific reference to his sisters' various vocational pursuits during that era, when young East Indian women were rarely ever allowed to seek gainful employment, it is both noteworthy and significant to record the liberal views and open-mindedness of Ralph's parents.

Haji Ralph Khan's revered parents Mr. Baraichee Ahmed Khan and Mrs. Subrattan Khan (both deceased) in photograph taken on the day of their son Ralph's marriage to Jennifer on the 3rd. August, 1968. ***Photo: Courtesy Wong's Photo Studio***


B. Ahmed Khan (1899 - 1975)
Subrattan Mohammed (1906 - 1969)
Daisy Sakina (1921 - 1987)
Manshad
Vashti Neela
Zhane Aliyah
Shirley
Andrea Krystalene
Roma
Rafeek
Neal Charmaine Nigel
Harold
Brian Asherly
Angela
Sylvan
Ria Tricia
Eva Sakiran (1923 - 1994)
Molly
Debbie Joanne Joel
Gerod Devin Katelyn
Jean
Alana Nigel
Ronald
ShellyAnn Andre Brian
Nikolai Johnathan Andrew
Vernon Syed (1925 - 2002)
Carol
Tricia Candice Dwayne
Christine
Dexter Brent
Bobby
Josiah Emily
Robert
Annabelle
Billy
Brian Crytal Janelle
Grace
Amy
Gilbert Mahboob (1927 - 1998)
Natasha
Aneesha
Afreena
Ralph Dastoor (1929 -)
Nadeira
Imran
Fareed
Shameel Narisha Kareem
Marjorie (1933 -)
Rudy Imtiaz
Rameez Nafeez
Yasmin
Shiraz
Margaret (1935 - 2000)
Allan
Timothy Mike
Diane
Evans (1937 -)
Fazida
Victoria Heather Shara Robert
Karen
Maura
Beverly
Evans Jr.
Neville (1940 -)
Steve
Asad Intisar Ziyaad
Naima
Aqeel Faheema Afeefa
Bashir
Aamina
Ayub (1942 -)
Josette
Madina Amani
Mujeeb
Siddiq

FAMILY TREE

Of all his siblings, Ralph claims to have been particularly close to his elder brother Gilbert, born just before him. They often exchanged clothing and enjoyed befuddling people about their identity (which to them was a source of great fun). They toured the country on their racing bicycles as well as exercised together in their gym at home. Shared activities like these with his family and community members fostered in Ralph Khan a deep sense of the basic humanity and spiritual oneness shared by all individuals. This was the genesis of his caring and sharing attitude which would influence his commitment to social welfare and his dedication to community service later on. He seems to have been attracted to social work early in life because he understood from an early age that the purpose of life is not for us to impress other people and make them feel good about us. Rather, he recognized the real issue is to nurture and develop strength of character and compassion which allow us to treat ourselves and others in a consistently positive way, based upon the company we are in.

At a very young age, Ralph also enjoyed some very exciting and interesting moments having to read the newspaper (the Trinidad Guardian) to villagers who would assemble at his father's home for this purpose, his father being one of the very miniscule number of subscribers to a newspaper during that era, especially more so, during the period of the Second World War. This occurred at a time when basic food items were rationed and were only handed out to individuals on the presentation of their ration cards. Incidentally, Ralph was also a victim of this horrible scenario having to line up for basic foodstuff.

Ralph Khan received his early primary education at Picton Canadian Mission School (now Picton Presbyterian School). On leaving the school, he taught there as a pupil teacher for two years then left to attend Naparima College where he paid a stipend of sixteen dollars ($16.00) per term since the school at that time was a state aided Presbyterian institution administered by the Canadian Mission. But, education for Ralph was not confined to the four walls of the school. The domestic duties he performed gave him the discipline, and provided him with challenges which promoted his holistic development as an individual.

While at school, he assisted in rearing goats, ducks, cattle, rabbits, pigeons, turkeys, chickens etc. to satisfy the needs of his household and to subsidize his family's income, but more so, to help himself financially in the process. The family enjoyed neither the privilege nor the luxury of a pipe-borne water supply so Ralph and his brothers built "box carts" to facilitate themselves with their domestic supplies. Often, he and his elder brother Gilbert would enter and win

valuable prizes in livestock competitions organized by the sugar company at their various sugar estates throughout the country.

He recalls having much fun on one particular occasion, after school. He remained late at the Naparima College recreation ground to play cricket and became so engrossed in the game that he did not return home in time to milk the cow; so his father reprimanded him for returning home late unconcerned about how many runs he had made, or his active participation in sports for that matter. Therefore, Ralph's dreams of playing cricket for the college team was shattered. Such was his father's very strict regimen. Ironically however, Ralph eventually played cricket for his village team, following which he joined team Middlesex in San Fernando which included players like Oliver Demming, Guy Ottley, Ivan Kowlessar and others. Eventually, Middlesex was merged with the Promenade Eleven which then became known as the San Fernando Eleven.

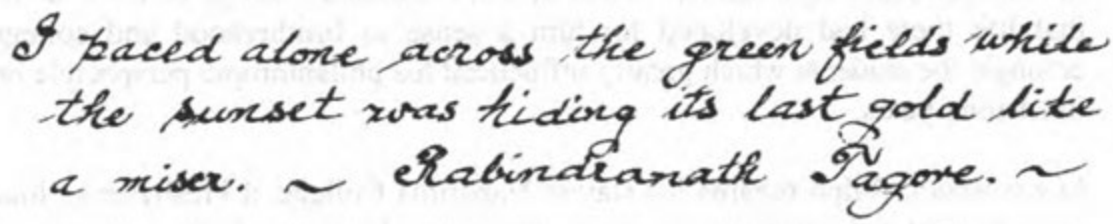
The "boys" were awakened early on mornings and accompanied to the village mosque by their father where they offered their morning prayers (Fajr), and then proceeded to cut grass for their animals, carrying the bundles of grass on their heads. Operating in a rural setting as yet untouched by social services and amenities in the 1930's, Ralph and his siblings had no electricity so they studied by flambeaux and by candle-light, years later, with a Coleman gas light. Usually, they would attend school barefooted, walking three (3) miles per day to and from school. Ralph rode to Naparima College in San Fernando on his bicycle but would occasionally use the bus service which at that time was privately owned and relatively reliable.

Ralph worked very hard, swept and cleaned the expansive unpaved yard at his parents' home with a coconut broom; he also reared a number of birds and, if perchance he forgot to feed the birds, his mother would set them free (from their cages). The amazing irony of this scenario however was that the birds would flit around and about on the abounding fruit trees nearby for a few moments, invariably returning to their cages - apparently their preferred domain - by which time their (bird) feed would have been replenished.

For several years, Ralph's father was also a tenant of Ste. Madeleine Sugar Company Limited from whom he rented extensive agricultural holdings located in the districts of Picton, Debe and Penal respectively; where sugar cane, rice, water melons and other short crops were cultivated. On weekends, Ralph would accompany his mother and other workers to the fields to assist with planting and reaping the crops, having to walk long distances in order to get there.

At primary school, Ralph was instructed in Reading, Writing, Arithmetic (as it was then called), Penmanship, Hygiene, Nature Studies and Gardening. But apart from academics, students were engaged in a number of co-curricular activities; one of which was cricket. During that era, Ralph recalls, every neighbouring school was equipped with a cricket ground; engaged in inter-school cricket rivalry and, it is from this area that the world famous spin bowler Sonny Ramadhin emerged. At school, on Friday afternoons, classes were usually suspended while singing, music and drama, were engaged in by all students. The entire afternoon was exclusively devoted to cultural activities. Ralph also participated in concerts organized by the school which eventually set the stage for him to become an active member of the Carnegie Players Drama Group where he played the lead role besides the popular Joyce Kirton (leader of Les Enfants Dance Group) and others. The group's headquarters was the Carnegie Free Library in San Fernando and was led by Magistrate/Justice George Collymore (now retired).

His Head Teacher, Samuel Ramoutar, was a total disciplinarian, and was very meticulous about penmanship and this is where Ralph gained his handwriting skill. The following is a specimen of Ralph's natural flair for penmanship.


I paced alone across the green fields while
the sunset was hiding its last gold lite
a miser. ~ Rabindranath Tagore. ~

Ralph recalls his favorite teachers, George A. Seepaul, who was well liked by students because of his charming and admirable disposition, and Zetty Carrington in particular, who taught music as well, and nurtured Ralph's musical talent by helping him to discover his ability to sing and giving him the confidence to perform on stage. Another teacher who was actively engaged in the Friday sessions and, who positively impacted on Ralph, was Lionel Frank Seukeran (former legislator) with his fiery oratory and impressive debating skills.

At Naparima College, which he attended between January 1944 to July 1949, Ralph enjoyed a high degree of camaraderie and collegial support from his peers and instructors alike, so much so, that he considered it a luxury to have had such an experience. In many ways, life at Naparima gave him the familial support and moral resilience so necessary for survival. The Dean of Studies, Mr. Ivan Bissessar was indeed a strict disciplinarian, and the Principal, Rev. V. B. Walls - a

Canadian - was often described as a comprehensive example of Christian conscience and doctrine.

While at Naparima, the young Ralph did English Language, Literature, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, Latin and French, the latter two being his favorite subjects in which he excelled earning him valuable prizes. He also entered cycle races and boxing to a lesser extent as a co-curricular activity on the College's sports day, and often accompanied his brother Gilbert who was an accomplished amateur cyclist throughout the country. He also participated in oration (debating contests) in which he was often successful. One of his favorite topics was corporal punishment (1946), a topic which is still debated today.

It was this kind of involvement and exposure that would lay the foundation for the young Khan's career in social work later on in life. While awaiting results at college, for the Cambridge School Certificate, Ralph worked as a clerk and cane-weigher at the Ste. Madeline Sugar Company Limited (Picton Estate where his father worked) since he wanted to assist his immediate family, but more so, to use his independence responsibly. When he left Naparima College in 1949, he insists that life there had developed for him a sense of brotherhood and collegiality amongst the students which greatly influenced his philanthropic perspective on life in ensuing years.

In retrospect, Ralph regards his stay at Naparima College, a Presbyterian founded and administered institution, as a rare privilege. In terms of religious persuasion, Islam was ingrained in Ralph and his siblings from a young age. Both his parents were practicing Muslims and his paternal grandfather Haroo Khan, an early East Indian indentured immigrant, had on his own, constructed a Masjid (mosque – albeit a wooden structure at the time) in the Diamond Village district.

Haroo was very adept at creating Indian musical instruments, especially the "bul-bul tarang" and the "sarangi." He was the only tinsmith in the district and also repaired umbrellas. Such was his versatility. Upon his grandfather's demise, the Islamic work of the mosque was continued by his father Baraichee, who some time later, was instrumental in rebuilding the mosque. On the death of Ralph's father the mantle of administering the affairs of the mosque was then left to Ralph and his other siblings. And, when Ralph and the others who for various reasons had all left the village, the responsibility of administering the affairs of the mosque consequently fell on the shoulders of yet another of Haroo's grandson, Haji Fyzool Khan. Haroo Khan's legacy therefore, continues to live on with Ralph and his

other siblings continuing to carry on their Islamic work and responsibilities in various parts of the world wherever they currently reside.

Because of their deep involvement and commitment, Ralph and his siblings proceeded to read both Arabic and Urdu and learnt from the original texts. Transliterations had not yet evolved. Members of the mosque including the Imam, a Punjabi, visited homes regularly by walking in the immediate area/district early on mornings garnering support for his community, especially for the youth and the general membership of his congregation. They participated in the various Islamic religious functions including Meelad-un-Nabi (celebration of the Holy Prophet's Birthday), Mi`raj-un-Nabi (ascension of the Holy Prophet), Ramadan (Islamic month of fasting), Eid-ul-Fitr, Eid-al-Adha and several others.

Ralph Khan feels greatly indebted and eternally grateful to the Punjabi Imam (Muslim Leader from the state of Punjab in India) Syed Mohammed Shah, his religious mentor, who for several decades, invariably spent the entire month of Ramadan with his family at Diamond Village until the time of his demise. The Imam's death consequently thrust a grave responsibility upon the shoulders of young Ralph, still in his early twenties, who then had to assume the mantle of Imam (Muslim Congregational Leader) of the Diamond Village mosque. Fortunately, the timely training which Ralph had received at the hands of his mentor had equipped him most admirably and creditably to fulfill such a challenging role at that critical juncture. History therefore would have recorded that Ralph has had the honour of serving as one of the youngest Imams ever in Trinidad and Tobago.

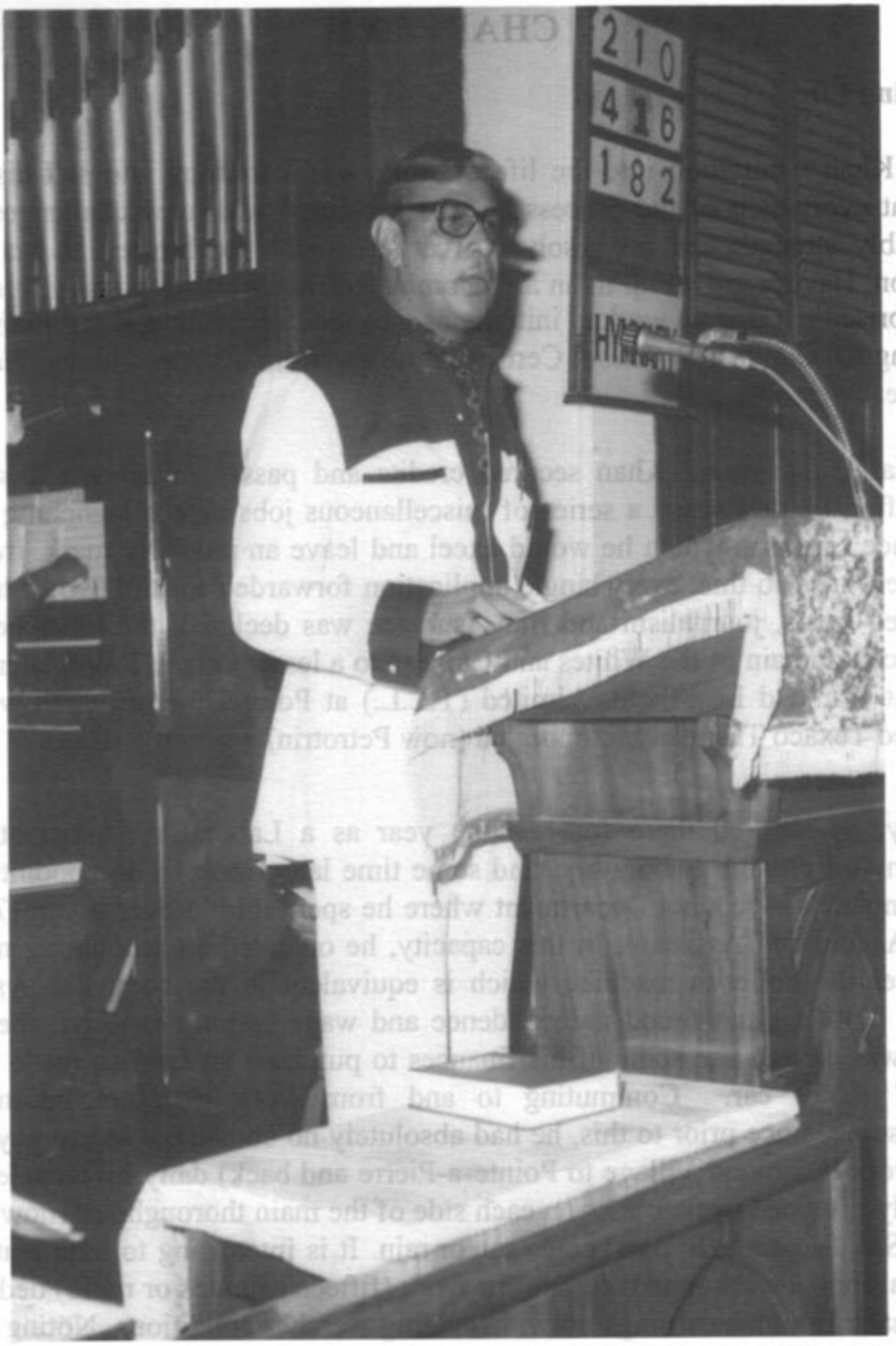
The Diamond Village Mosque where young Ralph in his early twenties officiated as Imam upon the death of Imam Syed Mohammed Shah.
Photo: The Khan Family Album

Young Ralph with well groomed and full grown beard in his early twenties when he officiated as Imam of the Diamond Village Mosque in suburban San Fernando.
Photo: Courtesy Victor's Photo Studio

Ralph (rt.) and three of his brothers from (L-R) Neville Yakub Khan, Vernon Syed Khan, sister Eva Sakiran Mohammed and Evans Mahmood Khan in Toronto, Canada, at his eldest sister's funeral 1987. ***Photo: The Khan Family Album***

His parents also offered homage and familial support to several orphans, often reared and nurtured them and, married them off when they had attained a marriageable age. They also cared for a number of old indentured immigrants as well. More importantly, although a practising Muslim, adhering strictly to the tenets of his religion, Ralph Khan showed a ready appreciation and tolerance for other religions as well. Also, due to his parent's open-mindedness and the close proximity of their Masjid (mosque) to the mandir (Hindu temple), he was able to learn Hindi as well. Ralph therefore has a fairly reasonable knowledge of Arabic, Urdu and Hindi as well.

Having grown up in a multi-religious environment, he knew many Presbyterians (he studied the life of Christ at Naparima College for which he received a credit). In fact, upon graduation, he was approached by the Presbyterian authorities to become a Presbyterian Minister, more so, since the sons of the Cathechists and Reverends did not perform as well in the subject. Nonetheless, despite turning down the offer, he benefitted from such exposure, and always participated in ecumenical services throughout the country. It is interesting to note that despite being a Muslim, Ralph later became a member of the prestigious Susamachar Presbyterian Church Choir in San Fernando, where he sang for a number of years encouraged by the Canadian trained musicologist and wife of Rev. Jack Thompson, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Trinidad and Tobago. He claims that Mrs. Thompson was responsible for his success at the Trinidad Music Festival in the year 1956 when he placed second out of thirty two (32) competitors in the Tenor Solo Class at which Dr. Sydney Northcote of the United Kingdom was the Chief Judge. It is significant to note that this occurred only after his introduction to Mrs. Thompson by Myrtle Gunness, a teacher and close friend of the Khan family. Accompanied by Miss Gladys Namsoo, (deceased), heal so sang at many wedding ceremonies at the church and other public venues. Ralph Khan therefore is probably the first ever and only non-Christian to be a member of that prestigious church choir.



Ralph Khan, President of the Grant Memorial Presbyterian School P.T.A., addressing the audience at the School's Graduation Ceremony, Susamachar Presbyterian Church, San Fernando (1993)
Photo: The Khan Family Album

CHAPTER II

Working Life

Ralph Khan's initiation into the life of work was a journey into self-discovery; since at every step of the process he was presented with new challenges which invariably strengthened his resolve to carve a niche for himself in his chosen vocation. Having grown up in an area dominated by the sugar industry, it came as no surprise then that he worked initially as a cane-weigher for a few months while awaiting the Cambridge School Certificate results from his Alma Mater, Naparima College.

Eventually, the young Khan secured credits and passes in seven (7) subjects. Thereafter, he performed a series of miscellaneous jobs before launching into an insurance career in which he would excel and leave an indelible mark. Ironically however, prior to this, every single application forwarded for the two of his most preferred fields, journalism and life insurance was declined, the latter being the ensconced domain of the Whites and Chinese to a lesser extent. Ralph later started work at Trinidad Leaseholds Limited (T.L.L.) at Point-a-Pierre which was later renamed Texaco Trinidad Incorporated (now Petrotrin).

Initially, he worked there for one (1) year as a Laboratory Assistant at the company's Research Laboratory, and some time later, took up an appointment at the company's Accounts Department where he spent a little over seven (7) years as an Accounting Assistant. In this capacity, he operated an accounting machine and later the hollerith machine which is equivalent to the computer system of today. With his newfound independence and wage earning capacity, the young Ralph was able to use some of his finances to purchase an English made 'Austin Devon' motor car. Commuting to and from work therefore became less burdensome, since prior to this, he had absolutely no choice but to journey to and from work (Diamond Village to Pointe-a-Pierre and back) daily by bicycle on the specially provided cycle tracks on each side of the main thoroughfare (now known as the San Fernando Bypass) come sun or rain. It is interesting to note that during that era once a worker arrived late for work (fifteen minutes or more) deductions were made from his earnings notwithstanding weather conditions. Noting that he was the bona fide and proud owner of a vehicle during such an era, an era when few people owned vehicles, this in itself reflects a true manifestation of Ralph's ambition and sense of independence as a young man.

After a little over seven (7) years, on the 12th July 1958, Ralph opted to leave this job since he kept meeting the same people everyday with the same daily mundane conversations either centered or focused on whe-whe (now marketed by the State as play-whe) or horse racing and the like since apparently there was nothing new to talk about. The job itself thus became very monotonous and less challenging. Ralph claims that at the Accounts in Trinidad Leaseholds/Texaco, discrimination and inequality of treatment persisted since the average East Indian worked very hard but never enjoyed the concessions and the rewards which they felt they deserved. This in itself proved to be a source of great disenchantment and discouragement to him, and proved to be a crucial factor in his decision to leave the company once more. Unfortunately, this discrimination syndrome still persists to this day and has now totally enveloped the entire public service with the tacit concurrence of the government of the day, the Peoples National Movement (PNM).

Thereafter, for a little over one (1) year, Ralph decided to operate a poultry farm in order to subsist and to prove his entrepreneurship to himself and to others. This enterprise, though challenging, proved to be quite a successful venture since he enjoyed a very wide clientele (including the villagers who bought from him, as well as restaurants in the city) since a miniscule number of poultry farms existed during that era. Eventually, Ralph found this enterprise to be rather labour intensive and, as a result of his awesome spirit of adventure, he once more decided to explore new horizons.

The 24th February, 1960 proved to be a red-letter day for young Ralph. It was the first day of his new career, the day he was inducted into the insurance industry as an Insurance Agent for the Canada Life Assurance Company of Canada. Ironically, life insurance was a vocation he'd practically sworn that he would never adopt. According to Ralph, during that era, when insurance agents visited prospective clients at his workplace, at Texaco, their modus operandi was extremely slipshod, unscientific and very discouraging, which led him to conclude that this was a "starvation" profession.

Nevertheless, despite his reservations at the time, he eventually decided to take the plunge into the field of life insurance firmly convinced that he could make a difference. Thus, having assessed his personal abilities and gift for persuasion, he convinced himself that through life insurance he could become both economically independent, while at the same time, nobly serving the cause of humanity. This was very significant since during that era many insurance agents were notably unscrupulous and, did not enjoy the trust or the confidence of the East Indian

population, particularly those living in remote village communities. Later, as philosophized by his manager, Ralph discovered that "the sky was the limit" to his earning capacity based on his input, ability and persistence, rather than just holding some other position which would provide for him a fixed income. In other words, he envisaged that his earning capacity would be commensurately enhanced by his skills and diligence. Eventually, this indeed proved to be a reality in the following years.

Ralph Khan nostalgically recalls the individual who eventually became his mentor and first inspired him to enter this vocation - Allan Sydney Outridge - a Caribbean White, Regional Manager for the Canada Life Assurance Company of Canada in the Caribbean. An advertisement had been placed in the daily newspaper seeking a south representative, the company having only recently made its entry into the local market. It is noteworthy that in response to their advertisement the company received no less than two hundred and forty (240) applications but only one person could qualify for the job at the time since there was only one vacancy. Eventually, the young Ralph was chosen only after the company through their private investigator, had conducted and completed a meticulous investigation into his personal background and family connections as well.

The day of his interview proved to be a mixture of anxiety and adventure, as well as expectation. Ralph journeyed to the capital city, Port of Spain, and because of existing traditional prejudices during that particular era he reluctantly decided to visit a barber shop in the city to have his well groomed, full grown beard, shaved off in preparation for the interview, skeptical as to how his colonial interviewers would view his bearded appearance. Finally, he was interviewed by a panel of three people (all whites) who enquired about his family's as well as his own background, his education, experience, and training etc. Ralph cited the monotony of the job at Texaco as his main reason for quitting his job. He was also questioned about his possible ownership of a car which was critical in an insurance salesman's career since it involved a great degree of mobility. Fortunately, Ralph had recently purchased a new car during that year - a Hillman Minx from Wahid Sumadh Limited, Southern Agents for the Hillman and Humber motor cars which replaced his Austin Devon.

After the interview, the young Ralph was not informed whether he had been successful at the interview or not. It was two (2) weeks after the interview that he learnt he had been chosen for the job as the company's south representative. During his first year as Canada Life's south representative, Ralph worked both conscientiously and diligently and. his production sales record was so impressive

that in the following year 1961 - just one year after - he qualified to attend the company's annual convention at 1ts Head Office in Yonge Street, Toronto, Canada. Ralph eventually became the company's Sales Supervisor for South Trinidad.

The Convention itself can be regarded as a turning point in Ralph's life. He was singled out together with an African representative from the U.S.A., James "Jimmy" Alston of New York, as well as other ethnic representatives from other parts of the world which the company proudly portrayed as a mini United Nations. The convention proved to be a great learning experience for Ralph since it gave him the opportunity to socialize and to fraternize with a wide spectrum of people from different countries with various religious and cultural backgrounds and lifestyles. Ralph claims that his foray into and his experiences in the life insurance industry have completely changed his life, all for the better.

Ralph (3rd. from rt. partly hidden) and other Canada Life Representatives from different countries gather for a photo during the Canada Life Assurance Company's Convention in Toronto, Canada (1961) ***Photo: The Khan Family***

Ralph (stooping bottom left) in company of officials and other Agents of the Canada Life Assurance Company in Toronto, Canada, at the company's Convention (1961) ***Photo: The Khan Family Album***

Ralph Khan (Rt.) with another Trinidadian Qualifier Cyril Joseph (Lt.) in the company of the Chief Executive Officer of the Canada Life Assurance Company at the company's Annual Convention in Toronto, Canada (1961)
Photo: The Khan Family Album

The Convention took different modes; lecture sessions during the day interwoven into a planned itinerary including several tours to various places of interest in Canada. Those attending the Convention were warmly embraced by top executives who made a personal effort to meet and welcome all the qualifiers so that they genuinely felt as an integral part of the "Canada Life Family." Ralph recalls staying at the Royal York Hotel in downtown Toronto where all his needs were fully met (including a full complement of valets providing every imaginable service). Ralph became very close to the African representative from the U.S.A., with whom he still keeps in touch. Ralph claims that he and Jimmy being the only two "blacks or rather non-whites" to qualify for the convention apparently commanded great attention and respect from the executives of the company. And, bearing in mind that this was Ralph's very first trip outside the Caribbean this experience proved to be very exciting, especially more so, as a "typical country boy" who admits that at the time, he possessed many inhibitions. Thus, having the pleasure of being attended by valets (young "white" boys) at every turn was indeed a most wonderful, pleasurable and unforgettable experience for him.

Eventually however, with national independence in the year 1962, the nationalization policy of Dr. Eric Williams, then Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, sought to localize and indigenise certain industries and companies with particular reference to banks and insurance companies. In this context, the Canada Life Assurance Company was forced to dissolve its local operations departing these shores in 1965. Ralph, in the circumstances, spent a little over five (5) successful and productive years with the Canada Life Assurance Company of Canada which he thoroughly enjoyed.

For Ralph Khan, the insurance industry provided him with new insights and perceptions about human nature and life, which prepared him for future challenges. At a time when his contemporaries viewed the life insurance industry with scepticism, classifying it as a "rip-off" industry monopolized by unscrupulous, deceptive and wily individuals out to fleece people of their hard-earned cash, it was particularly challenging for the young Ralph to prove himself. But he was undaunted and confident, and he persevered. He interacted with individuals of different temperaments, with varying conceptions of insurance and the insurance industry. Insurance proved to be the catalyst, the great leveller which allowed Ralph to transcend ethnic, religious and cultural barriers as he intermingled with people from every strata of the society. Initially, because of his father's contacts with cane-farmers, the latter formed the majority of his customers. Later, as his clientele expanded to include teachers, doctors, lawyers

and other professionals, his business acumen sharpened and so did his appreciation of the simple realistic truths of life.

Due to his notable success and reputation in the industry, Ralph's insurance services were extended to a number of teachers, business magnates and professionals. Notable among them are Dr. Ivan Aldwin Perot (cardiologist) and Dr. Peter Vinod Sagar (both recently deceased) - and both island scholarship winners, Dr. Surrendra Y. Bhimsingh (District Medical Officer), Dr. Vivian Dominique, Dr. William H. Swanston, officials of S. M. Jaleel and Company and Sheikh Lisha Limited, Haji Nizam Mohammed (former Speaker of the House of Representatives), Mr. Wesley S. Gopaul, Mr. Suresh Dodol, Mr. Faraaz Mohammed and Mr. Imran S. Khan respectively - Attorneys-at-Law and, Haji Nizam Baksh - Member of Parliament, to name just a few. And, precisely at the time this particular chapter was being written, Ralph received the most profoundly regrettable and depressing news of the sudden and tragic death of Dr. Ivan Perot, a tried, trusted, and noteworthy friend; long standing client, and foundation member and Director of Ralico Insurance Services Limited, of which Ralph himself is the architect and founder.

Prior to this however, on Tuesday July 5, 2005 Dr. Perot had learnt that his very close friend and associate Dr. Andrew Yiphoy had not been seen for a couple days. And, together with Dr. Yiphoy's son, they forcibly entered Dr. Yiphoy's home only to discover that he had already been dead for two to three days. Apparently, this immediately sent him into a state of shock leading to a massive heart attack from which he never recovered and to which he eventually succumbed mere hours afterwards. Needless to say Ralph and his family suffered untold grief and sadness through the tragic loss of an intimate and dearly cherished friend like Dr. Ivan Perot with whom he had been associated for over four (4) decades.

From his interaction with various individuals as an insurance agent, Ralph mentions the unique philosophy which assisted his cause as an insurance agent which assisted his cause as an insurance salesman. Often, the young Ralph was able to turn an adverse situation to his advantage. Commenting on the narrow perspective of rural Indian men at that time, he recalls a familiar sentiment/fear expressed by many of them when approached for life insurance; "boy, when ah dead, me wife go take another man if I have insurance" was the retort.

Historically, while there may have been some truth in this statement at that time, Ralph was often quick to inform them that the women didn't have to wait for their men to die to make a switch, they could choose to leave at anytime since their men

folk could not look over them twenty four (24) hours a day having to work in order to make a living. Furthermore, he re-assured them that life insurance could not only secure their wives' loyalty and interest but also provide them with family security in old age as well as in the case of premature death or disability. He therefore brought himself to the people's level of understanding in order to be a good insurance salesman. This endeared him to the people, and earned him their respect.

The late Dr. Ivan A. Perot, Director of RALICO Insurance Services Ltd. presenting the International Quality Award (IQA) Plaque to **Ralph Khan, Managing Director of RALICO** upon his tenth consecutive year of qualification for this award -1983. ***Photo: The Khan Family Album***

During the 1960's in spite of independence, the lingering authority of the Whites remained strongest in the colonial mentality of many Trinidadians, especially those individuals living in village communities which remained relatively untouched for some time after 1962. In this regard, Ralph recalls that whenever his Regional Manager, Alan Outridge, joined him on his weekly visits to the southland (meeting him at the Royal Hotel in San Fernando), and accompanied him to the rural communities on their business trips, potential clients were vastly more accommodating and pleasant to deal with, presumably due to his manager's pigmentation. Such was the perception, the outlook and pervading mentality at the time of "Massa Day."

When the Canada Life Assurance Company closed its doors in 1965 Ralph joined American Life and General Insurance Company located at the Tropical Plaza, Point-a-Pierre. However, his stay there would be short-lived, lasting approximately six months because of incompatibility with his manager despite being volume production leader in the Eastern Caribbean for most of that time. Thereafter, he assumed duties as a Sales Supervisor with the local company West Indian National Insurance Company Limited (WINSURE) from April 1966 to March 1970. As supervisor of the south branch his duties were two-fold. While seeking the interest of agents working at the south branch, he was also expected to represent the company's interests as well. But, as Ralph soon discovered, it was virtually impossible to reconcile both interests.

Eventually, at a meeting held with top management at the Company's Head Office in Port of Spain, Ralph officiated as the intermediary for the South agents, who, for a significant period had been receiving their monthly salary and commissions late. At that meeting, the Managing Director questioned whether Ralph primarily sought the interests of the agents or that of the Company. At this point, he responded by saying that he represented both the agents as well as the company. Soon after, this led to a conscious decision on his part to leave the Company since he felt convinced that the company was no longer operating in the best interest of the community.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, during the years 1966 -1970 Ralph was mandated by the management of his company, West Indian National Insurance Company Limited (Winsure), the sponsors of the Carnival "Bomb" Competition in south Trinidad to manage and coordinate the competition on their behalf. This event which proved to be a huge success was hotly contested by all south steelbands and usually commenced at five o'clock on J'ouvert morning. His role included determining the route of the bands, the recruitment of suitable judges (judges with

musical background etc), and the procurement and distribution of prizes in addition to the challenge trophy sponsored by the company.

In Photo(l-r): South Jaycees Queen - Nicole d'Abadie, Lloyd Cartar - company official, Ralph D. Khan – Winsure's Coordinator of the South Steelbands Bomb Competition and Milton Austin, Bandleader of the winning steelband *Fonclaire* - receiving the Winsure Bomb Trophy - 1969 ***Photo: Courtesy The Trinidad Express***

On account of the foregoing disagreement, having had many interesting experiences, and having learnt some valuable lessons from his debut in insurance, Ralph's career path took a temporary detour as he decided to become a restaurateur. From 21st April 1970, interestingly at the same time of the Black Power uprising, Ralph opened two restaurants in San Fernando. One was located at the corner of Sutton and Lewis Streets called ***Khan's Kozy Korner*** where he sold a mixed cuisine (Indian, Chinese and Creole food) while the other was established at the corner of Victoria and Chacon Streets, offering a mixed cuisine as well. Significantly, yet ironically, on the date on which permission was granted for the official opening of the latter establishment, the 21st April, 1970, a state of emergency was declared in Trinidad and Tobago.

Ralph operated as the manager of both restaurants and, although he had competent staffs, he did some of the cooking and selling himself, often sweeping and cleaning afterwards. At times, clients would pass by seeing him sweeping and cleaning the premises and would exclaim: "you should not be doing that kind of thing" to which he would invariably respond saying: "if the place is unclean, you yourself would be the first to complain." However, restaurant work entailed long arduous hours and often they were kept open as late as 3.00 o'clock in the morning. But he persevered with the restaurant business until 1973. Needless to say, Ralph's involvement in the restaurant business left him very little or no time for family life, but at the same time, he did not want his family to be involved in the business. During his sojourn as a restaurateur, he was consistently being wooed by several insurance personnel (managers and company officials especially) to return to the insurance business on account of his previous successful record in the industry.

As a sequel to this, Ralph eventually decided to sell both restaurants in 1973 having logically and reasonably concluded that in the restaurant business, like many other private enterpreneurships, the individual/owner had no choice but to invest either his own or borrowed capital in order to make money, whereas in the insurance industry, one only had to utilize/invest his abilities and talents with absolutely no cash outlay whatsoever. While in the restaurant business however, senior managers from two major insurance companies viz. Colonial Life Insurance Company Limited and Maritime Life (Caribbean) Limited (now the Maritime Financial Group) would visit Ralph's business place on a regular basis and persuade him to re-enter the insurance arena.

Consequently, after meticulous thought and careful deliberation, Ralph requested to see both companies' insurance plans, premium rates etc. in order to make a final

decision regarding his possible re-entry into the industry and which company he should seek to represent. Having thoroughly examined those plans and programmes he then opted to join Maritime Life (Caribbean) Limited in December 1973.

Two years later, in 1975, Ralph was appointed Unit Supervisor, then Unit Manager with the South Branch of Maritime Life. His job now became more demanding since he had to train agents often accompanying them on field visits to prospective clients, while at the same time, doing his own personal sales as well for which in 1976 Ralph qualified as Maritime's Agent of the Year. But on the 23rd. September 1980, Ralph established and operated his own insurance business under the name - Ralico Insurance Services Limited - and in 1981, he moved out on his own as an independent contractor continuing to transact business on behalf of Maritime Life from an office located in Minimax Building on San Fernando Street, in San Fernando.

He remained there until 1985 when he transferred his operations to a more spacious and strategic location at the Textel Building on St. James Street in San Fernando, where he operated until 1991. Thereafter, he transferred his company's operations to 24 Rushworth Street, San Fernando, his present business location and home address where it stands at this time. Ralico Insurance Services continues to be agents for the Maritime Financial Group. By December 2005, Ralph had served the Maritime Financial Group for thirty two (32) consecutive years and had been awarded in different ways on numerous occasions for his long outstanding, loyal and dedicated service to the company as evidenced by the relevant certificates of appreciation and other paraphernalia strategically placed in his office.

Ralph D. Khan Managing Director Ralico Insurance Services Limited relaxing at his Agency at Minimax Building, San Fernando, amidst his several Awards and the Trinidad and Tobago Coat of Arms (1983). ***Photo: The Khan Family Album***

Ralph D. Khan, Managing Director of Ralico Insurance Services Limited (Agents for Maritime Life (Caribbean) Limited) delivers Maritime Life Death Claim Cheque to Beneficiary (1984) ***Photo: The Khan Family Album***

Ralph D. Khan Managing Director-Ralico Insurance Services Limited (Agents for Maritime Life (Caribbean) Limited, lounges at his Insurance Agency at Minimax Building in San Fernando (1984)
Photo: The Khan Family Album

Ralph D. Khan Managing Director of Ralico Insurance Services Limited (2nd Left & Mrs. Khan 3rd. Lt.) at the formal opening of Textel Building, San Fernando, by Board Chairman Gerard Montano (centre in black suit) and other VIP's. (The Home of Ralico Insurance Services Limited 1985). ***Photo: The Khan Family Album***

During his tenure with Maritime Life (now The Maritime Financial Group), Ralph not only qualified but also excelled in various aspects of insurance as is reflected by the numerous awards and certificates which adorn his office walls. Included among these are:

1. **Maritime** - Executive Member of Leader's Club - several successive years
2. **Member** – Life Underwriters Training Council of Canada
3. **Award for Tax Aspects of Life Insurance** - 1980 awarded by the National Insurance Academy of Trinidad and Tobago
4. **National Sales Achievement Award** – 1980 and several consecutive years - **awarded by the Life Underwriters Association of Trinidad and Tobago**
5. **Diamond Seal Award** - 1981 and several consecutive years - **awarded by the Life Underwriters Association of Trinidad and Tobago**
6. **Maritime Award** Director of Leaders Club - several consecutive years
7. **Maritime** - Membership in **THE TOP TEN CLUB** - several consecutive years
8. Membership - Life Underwriters Association of Trinidad and Tobago
9. **International Quality Award** – Ten Consecutive Years
10. **Member Million Dollar Round Table** (achieved at a time when a mere 3% of insurance personnel worldwide met the criteria for this award.)
11. Certificate for Completing Course in 15th School in Sales Management - 1977- awarded by the Life Insurance Marketing and Research Association of Hartford, Connecticut, United States of America
12. **Maritime** - Agent of the Year 1976 – and even more recently Top Producer General Insurance
13. **Maritime Financial Group's Millenium Gold Club Member, 2002 - 2005**
14. **Maritime Financial Group's Top Achievers Club - 2006**

Insurance man wins international award for 7 consecutive years

By JOHN ALLEYNE

MR. RALPH D. KHAN, founder and Managing Director of Ralico Insurance Services Limited, Insurance Consultants, 106 and 108 Minimax Building, San Fernando Street, San Fernando, has received his seventh consecutive Insurance International Quality Award.

BUSINESS

The award, granted jointly by the most advanced life insurance institutions of North America and Canada, was presented recently by Mr. Ivan A. Perot, senior company director, and was won on performance in 1983 in recognition of "quality life underwriting service to the public."

It was stated that in order to qualify for such an award, a recipient, apart from evincing an excellent record maintaining and extending the benefits of life insurance and the sale of a substantial amount of life insurance, must demonstrate consistent and quality client service, high ethical standards and industry involvement all aimed at professionalism.

MR. RALPH D. KHAN
quality service.

Through Maritime Life (Caribbean) Limited of which Ralico Insurance Agents are agents, Mr. Khan also qualified for membership in the prestigious Million Dollar Round Table Conference to be held in San Francisco, US.

He qualified for this international award through membership in the Life Underwriters Association of Canada. He is also a member of the Caribbean Association of Life Underwriters and has been a member of the Trinidad and Tobago Life Underwriters Association since its inauguration. He has earned the distinction of qualifying for seven consecutive years for the Quality Service Award, and the National Sales Achievement Award. He gained the Diamond Seal Award in 1981, and has qualified repeatedly for the Maritime Life Millionaires' Club Award since 1976.

An old boy of Naparima College, San Fernando, Mr. Khan has served both the petroleum industry and the business sector for many years. He is an active sportsman and an official of the Trinidad and Tobago All Fours League.

Photo of Ralph D. Khan typically attired in business suit during his continuing tenure with Maritime Life (Caribbean) Limited at the Textel Building, St. James Street, San Fernando (1985) ***Photo: Courtesy Chung's Photo Studio***

Haji Ralph D. Khan (Left Standing) together with other members of The Maritime Financial Group's **Million Dollar Round Table and Millennium 2000 Gold Club** Qualifiers (2003) ***Photo: Courtesy Maritime Financial Group Annual Report 2003***

Haji Ralph D. Khan (3rd. Rt.) together with other members of The Maritime Financial Group's **Millennium 2000 Gold** Club Qualifiers (2004).
Photo: Courtesy Maritime Financial Group Annual Report 2004

Relating to his long tenure in the insurance industry the following question was put to Ralph. How is it that you have endured having spent more than forty (40) years, or, probably the better part of your life so engrossed in the life insurance industry when the vast majority of sales personnel/agents who enter this field get out even faster than they got in?

Following was his reply: "Through my involvement in the field of life insurance, I soon discovered that when an insured person leaves this material world, the only person in a favourable position to provide a much needed income for his/her dependent/s, beneficiary or surviving relatives is his or her insurance representative. This, even more so, at a time when every other institution, for example, the funeral home, the public utility services, the banks or mortgagee, the motor or fire insurance company and several others, they all continue unabatedly to forward bills in the name of the deceased, even long after his/her demise. Therefore, it was with great pride and a wonderful sense of innermost satisfaction that I discovered being among a very small select group of people able to fulfill their financial needs. And this, particularly at a time when it was most needed. In this context therefore, I was able to provide a vital humanitarian service to my people, something which I thoroughly enjoyed doing and continue so to do to this day."

CHAPTER III

Socio/Religious Work

From his childhood days at Diamond Village, on the outskirts of San Fernando, social work and social service have played a formidable role in Ralph Khan's life. It is instructive to note that whilst many individuals practise charity and community service for selfish and mercenary ends, Ralph quickly understood and appreciated the fact that service to man is ultimately service to God. In fact, his career in social work amply illustrates that true service; that is, his ability to give lovingly of his time, knowledge and resources without expecting to be rewarded or recognised kept him focused and, fuelled his passion for life, thereby giving testament to his philosophy that **"evil only prospers when good men do nothing."**

Ralph Khan's father, Baraichee, had been deeply involved in community affairs. Like a well oiled engine, his home, which was often the centre of activity in the village, churned out many productive and self-fulfilled individuals. Ralph served as Secretary of the Diamond Village Welfare Council (1955-1965). In this capacity, he overseered harvests and other activities which saw a tremendous community input from the villagers; raised funds, and invited various lecturers to share their knowledge and perspectives on agricultural issues and others as well. In this way, he helped to cement the relationship amongst villagers in the community by fostering a wonderful bond of camaraderie and cooperation amongst them. Personnel from several government institutions were invited and often visited to lecture to the people engendering a greater sense of productivity, a culture of thrift, and fellowship sorely needed in this typical rural community.

Unlike nowadays, meetings were always well attended, and there was a great community spirit. In fact, through the Village Council, Ralph was able to generate a spirit of production, togetherness and harmony, since racial bias then was at a minimum. Even where racial disparity existed, there was no overt manifestation of this since villagers understood that their economic and social realities were the same and, those shared needs, transcended the issue of race. For this reason, people participated collectively and of their own volition, and the village produced many outstanding professionals including doctors, magistrates, lawyers, parliamentarians, successful businessmen, teachers and public servants.

After a temporary lull, Ralph's involvement in social work was revived in 1977 when he was elected President of the Grant Memorial Presbyterian School's

Parent-Teacher Association (P.T.A.), a post he would hold until 1988, **eleven consecutive years, a standing record of selfless service**. As President of the P.T.A., Ralph claims that the Presbyterian Board at the time was never in a position to assist them financially. However, being ably assisted and supported by competent and professional individuals and parents who engaged in fund-raising activities in an effort to meet the infrastructural needs of the school during that time, the PTA was able to provide the kind of atmosphere that was more conducive to teaching and learning at the institution. He worked with competent officers like Ramsanahi Nandlal who at the time was an Administrator at the Ministry of Works and Transport, Southern Division, and Fyzal Hydal, who later became Principal of the A.S.J.A. Boys' College in San Fernando. At the time, the latter was Dean of Discipline at Naparima College.

More importantly, the P.T.A. enjoyed an extremely good relationship with the members of staff including the Principal at that time, Michael Shrikrishensingh (may his soul rest in peace) and later Mrs. Lynette Sidial, (another outstanding villager) now residing in Canada with her family. The only antagonist to the operations of the PTA during this period was the succeeding Principal Stephen Ramsamooj.

Through their various fund-raising initiatives, Ralph and his team were able to provide their own security system for the school during that era, **a pioneering effort in this area**. They also equipped the school with overhead and standing fans, an improved and modernized lighting system, constructed an additional staircase for the safety of the students, erected an entire block of toilets, installed water tanks and guttering, repainted the school, and had the entire yard paved to facilitate both students and staff of the school accommodating the vehicles of staff members in the process.

At the time, Grant Memorial Presbyterian School had a student population of approximately eleven hundred and sixty eight (1168) pupils continuously achieving excellent results. Not surprisingly therefore, Ralph's two children Nadeira and Imran, attended this school with both of them eventually moving on to seven-year schools. Questioned regarding his lengthy uninterrupted stint as President of the PTA, Ralph stated that it was his natural and insatiable desire and, his deep passion for seeing the students succeed in their academic pursuits eventually propelling them into becoming first class professionals and future leaders in society. This he claims was his real motivation.

Between 1977-1981, in his role as social worker, Ralph Khan served as Vice President, Auditor, and Executive member the San Fernando of A.S.J.A. Mosque Board, located at 68 Mucurapo Street, San Fernando. Simultaneously, he worked as Chairman of the Fund Raising Committee, a post he holds to the present time along with that of Public Relations Officer/Assistant Secretary of which he has been a member of the executive for the past twenty years. With monies realised from this venture and, in collaboration with his colleagues, he was instrumental in rewiring both the ground and upper floors of the mosque hall, installing air conditioning units throughout the mosque, including the mosque hall as well and in purchasing additional property on both the northern and southern sides of the mosque as well as a modern public address system costing over one million dollars ($1,000,000.00). This target was realised through the kind and generous contributions of fellow Muslims in the community. Eventually, the Masjid Committee plans to erect a commercial property on this site with provision for a car park, youth recreational facilities, library facilities, counselling and medical facilities, as well as for religious and social events and occasions.

He claims that this exercise is an ongoing one since the proposed building must meet contemporary standards to conform to modern day needs. He confesses that the kind of dynamism and consistent adaptability required is most challenging on the one hand, but rather gratifying on the other, since it allows one to give back something to his community and to society while earning Allah's (God's) reward. As a social worker, his sense of fulfillment comes from the knowledge that he has to some extent satisfied the need/needs of his people in the community. With life, such needs are continuously generated and created, and therefore provide for Ralph Khan, a real purpose and a stimulus for living and to continue working for his community.

In his capacity as a social worker, Ralph has contributed to a rejuvenation and development of Indian culture in Trinidad and Tobago. As an executive member of the A.S.J.A. for a number of years, and executive member of the A.S.J.A. Mosque Board in San Fernando for well over twenty (20) years, and as a former executive member of the National Council of Indian Culture, Secretary/Director of the Haji Ruknuddeen Institute of Islamic Studies, together with others, he was able to invite internationally acclaimed Islamic scholars and missionaries to share their knowledge with the local community especially the Muslims. Most prominent among them was Syed Ali Ashraf, a Senior Member and Professor at Cambridge University and President of the Islamic Academy of Cambridge who made several visits to Trinidad and later founded and served as Principal of the Al Ehsan University in Bangladesh in which capacity he served until his demise

Haji Ralph D. Khan (centre) Public Relations Officer of the ASJA welcoming Haji Faisal Rahman (left) and ASJA'S President General Dr. Mansoor Ibrahim to the lighting ceremony of the crescent moon (ushering the month of Ramadan) at the San Fernando Hill (in the background- 1994). ***Photo: The Khan Family Album***

Sen. The Hon. Ralph D. Khan (Lt.) Public Relations of the ASJA introduces ASJA's President General Dr. Mansoor Ibrahim (extreme rt) and other ASJA Officials to H.E. Professor Chintamani Lakshmana, Indian High Commissioner to T&T at his office POS (1991). ***Photo: Courtesy the Trinidad Guardian***

Sen. The Hon. Haji Ralph D. Khan, Public Relations Officer of the ASJA (2nd.Rt.) in the company of Justice Noor Hassanali, President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (centre) and other ASJA officials at President House, St. Anns, POS (1991) ***Photo: The Khan Family Album***

Haji Ralph D. Khan Secretary/Director of the Haji Ruknuddeen Institute of Islamic Studies addressing the audience at the Institute's Graduation Ceremony, Gulf City Auditorium, La Romain, July 2003 ***Photo: The Khan Family Album***

On one of his visits to Trinidad, the professor met with and presented to the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Basdeo Panday, and the Minister of Education, Adesh Nanan respectively, a comprehensive document on **"FAITH BASED EDUCATION"** with the hope and aspiration of having the same introduced in all schools throughout the country. This approach he explained had the potential of bringing about a faith-based system of education in an effort to enhance the spiritual and moral values of students in the country. Among other activities locally, he also delivered several public lectures including the enlightening topic **"Islam in a Western Society"** held at the Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre, Couva, coordinated by Haji Ralph Khan, which drew a packed auditorium. (See **Appendix 1** for a brief summary of his lecture on Faith-based education).

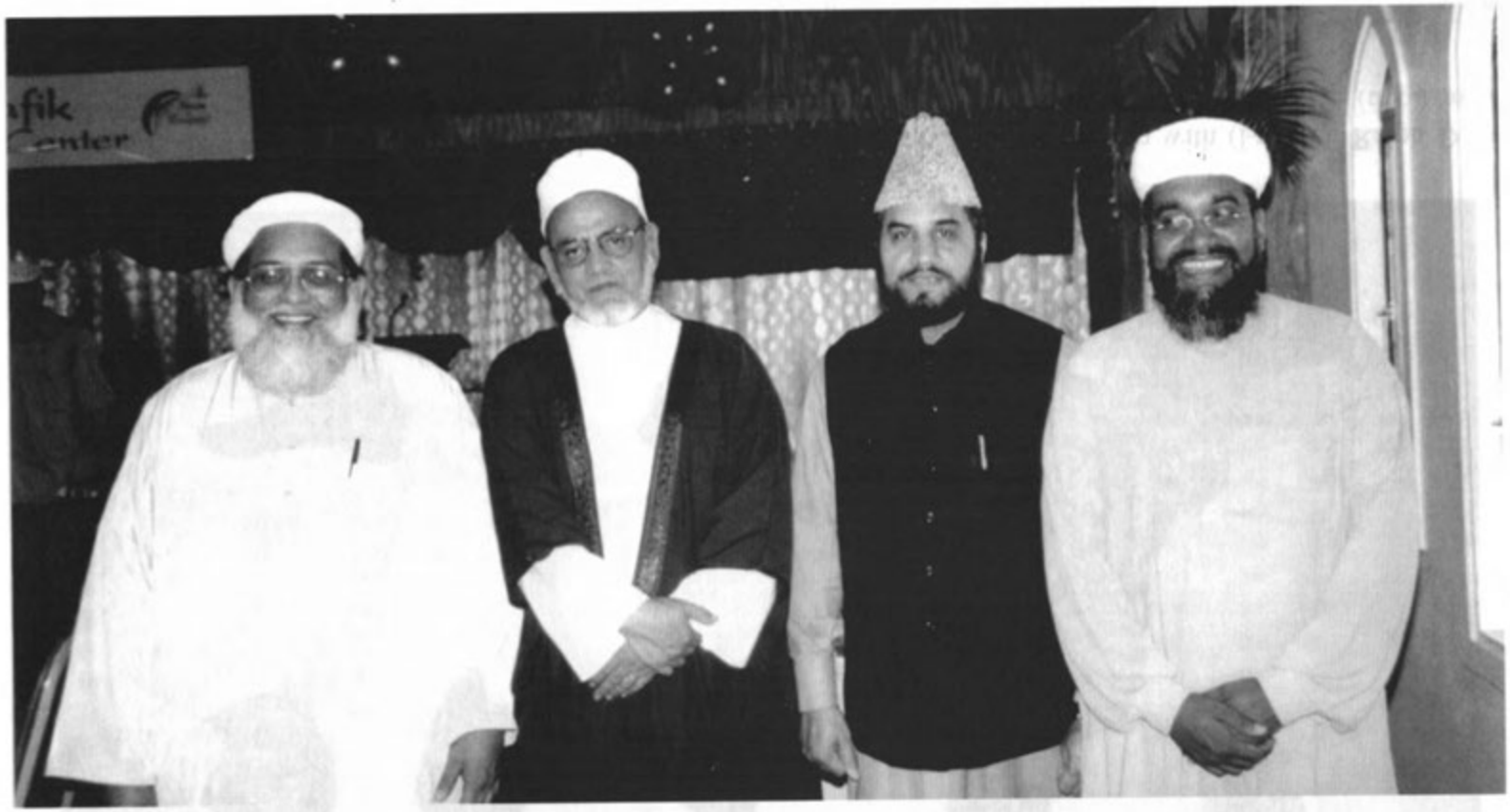
Prof. Syed Ali Ashraf (Professor - Cambridge University, U.K.) (centre) on one of his regular visits to Trinidad in conversation with Haji Abdul Sattar-President General of the ASJA (left) and H. E. Al Hajj Udu, Nigerian High Commissioner to Trinidad and Tobago at the official opening of the renovated mosque Southern Main Road, La Romain (1995). ***Photo: Haji Ralph D. Khan***

Muslim VIP's including Haji Sayeed Sattar ASJA's President General 2nd Rt.) and Sheik Tantawi Abdel Ati Ali of Egypt (rt) listening to lecture by Cambridge University Professor Maboud at the Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre commemorating the Second Death Anniversary of Professor Syed Ali Ashraf, Resource, Centre, Couva (2000). ***Photo: Haji Ralph D. Khan***

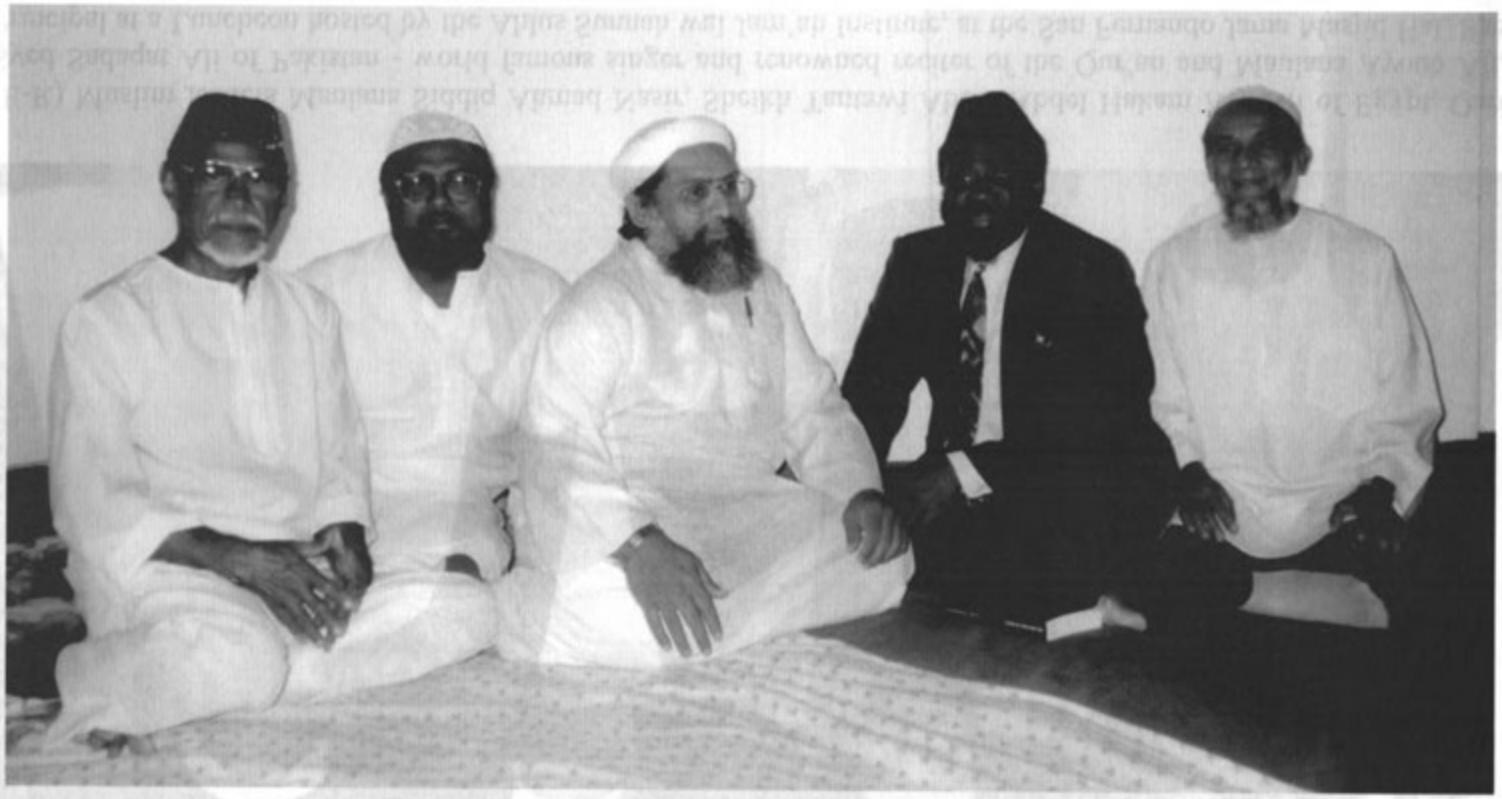
The internationally acclaimed **Qari Syed Sadaqat Ali from Pakistan**, world famous reciter of the Qur'an, visited Trinidad in 2002, 2003 and 2004 and thrilled audiences at various strategic locations with his melodious and soul stirring rendition of Islamic songs and recitation of verses from the Holy Qur'an. Further still, scholars from Lebanon, Syria and Canada as well visited the island and conducted classes at the San Fernando Jama Masjid, Mucurapo Street, San Fernando. In this way, these scholars/missionaries were able to disseminate knowledge in the community since they were despatched to various districts to conduct discourses. By so doing, they fostered immense pride in the local Muslim community for their religious and cultural heritage.

Ralph also vividly remembers the visit of the internationally renowned "Black" Ghanaian born Hafiz, **Sheikh Ahmed Tijani Ben Omar,** who lectured publicly at Woodford Square in Port of Spain; at the respective bandstands in San Fernando and Point Fortin; as well as at several mosque halls throughout the country. Through his interaction with the community, Sheik Tijani was able to convert a significant number of non-Muslims to Islam because of his thorough understanding and knowledge of both the Bible as well as the Qur'an. He challenged many Christians to come forward and answer his questions on the Bible which proved to be very stimulating and of great interest. In this context therefore, it is most interesting to note that the **Holy Qur'an in Chapter 2: Verse: 256 states: "Let there be no compulsion in religion."** Ralph's role in all of the above was pivotal since as Public Relations Officer his was the responsibility of organizing these events, overseeing the preparation of the venues and coordinating news releases to the various arms of the media including television. Incidentally, Sheik Tijani recently visited Trinidad and Tobago for a second time and departed these shores on Saturday, 29th. April, 2006.

As a former key player, Executive member and Public Relations Officer of the Anjuman Sunnat ul Jamaat Association of Trinidad and Tobago Incorporated (A.S.J.A), when questioned regarding the current status of the ASJA, this is what Ralph had to say: "I believe that the organisation had in the past been managed by competent people, individuals with honesty, integrity, and Islamic etiquette and knowledge, characteristics which undoubtedly contributed immensely to retaining its membership as a cohesive unit. Unfortunately however, under the present administration run by a group of sycophantic acolytes, there exists several factions within the ranks since as an acknowledged religious organisation the status of the spiritual leadership of the ASJA is now ideologically divided instead of being united."



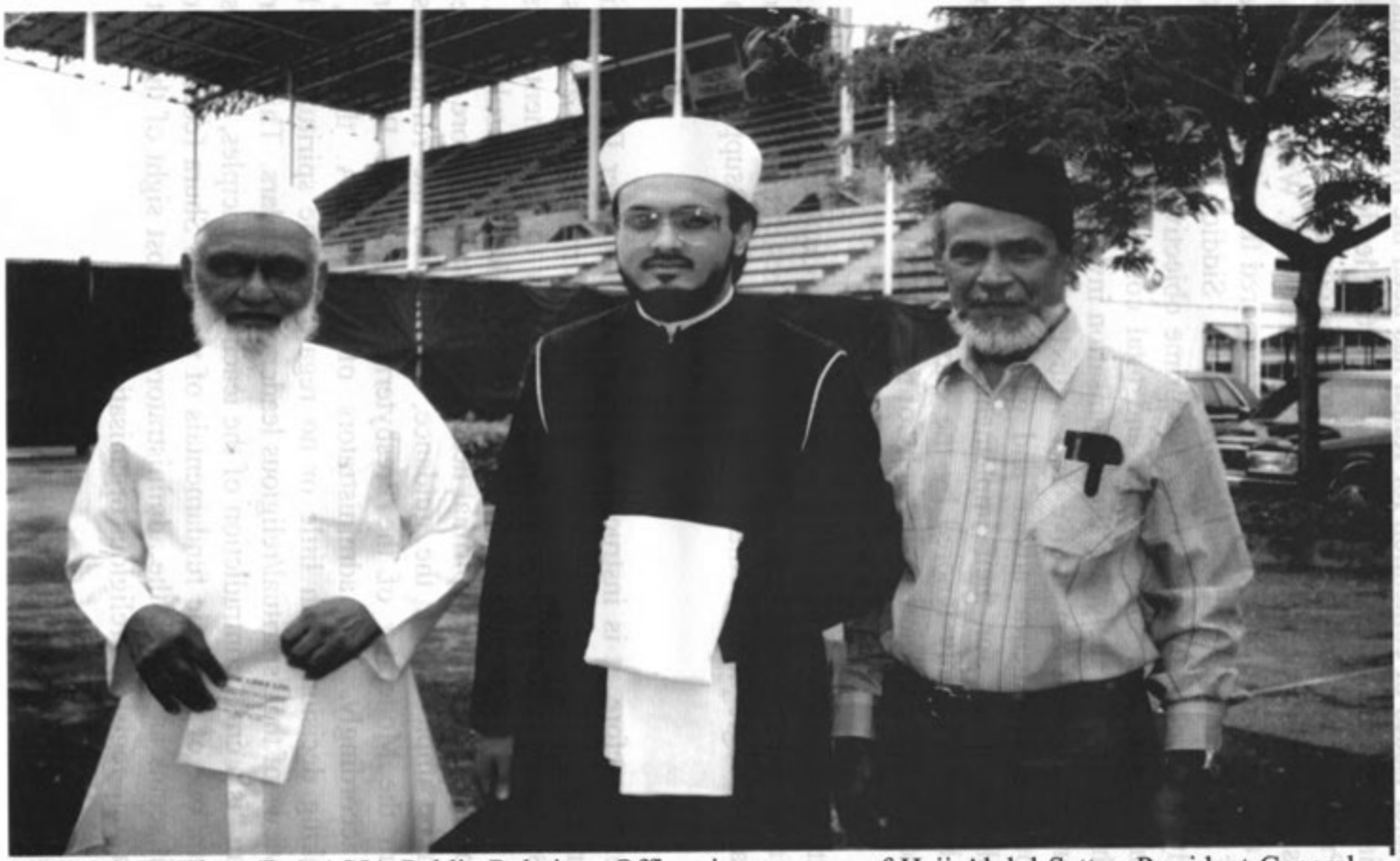
(L-R) Muslim leaders Maulana Siddiq Ahmad Nasir, Sheikh Tantawi Abdel Abdel Hakam Aty Ali of Egypt, Qari Syed Sadaqat Ali of Pakistan - world famous singer and renowned reciter of the Qur'an and Maulana Ayoub Ali, Principal at a Luncheon hosted by the Ahlus Sunnah wal Jam'ah Institute, at the San Fernando Jama Masjid Hal, San Fernando (2004). ***Photo: Haji Ralph D. Khan***



Visiting Ghanaian Islamic Scholar Sheikh Ahmad Tijani bin Omar (2nd rt) in session with (l-r) Haji Ralph D. Khan – PRO - ASJA, Haji Imtiaz Ali Maulana Siddiq Ahmed Nasir, and Haji Mustapha Mohammed – (dec.), at the Princes Town Jama Masjid, Princes Town (1993).
Photo: The Khan Family Album

Haji Ralph D. Khan, Public Relations Officer of the ASJA - chatting with Maulana Mushtaq Ahmad Sulaimani (ASJA Muslim Missionaary) at the Band Stand, Harris Promenade, San Fernando during the public lecture by Ghanian International Islamic Scholar, Sheikh Ahmed bin Tijani (of the USA) – 1993.
Photo: Courtesy The Trinidad Guardian

Muslim women in their regular Islamic wear gathered at the Band Stand, Harris Promenade San Fernando, during the lecture by visiting Ghanaian Missionary Sheikh Ahmed bin Tijani (1993).
Photo: Courtesy The Trinidad Guardian



Haji Ralph D. Khan (Rt.) ASJA Public Relations Officer in company of Haji Abdul Sattar, President General (ASJA) (left) and visiting Missionary Faizul Aqtab Siddiqui (England - centre) at ASJA's National Milad-un-Nabi Function at the National Stadium, Port of Spain (1990) ***Photo: The Khan Family Album***

One of the major issues of contention for Ralph has been the irrational behaviour of the association's administrators vis-a-vis its spiritual leaders. He believes that the current President General of the organisation has continued to usurp the role and functions of the association's spiritual leader and advisor. Within recent years, more so, the administrative body has deliberately ignored the religious advice and guidance of its then spiritual leader - Maulana Siddiq Ahmad Nasir, an internationally acclaimed Islamic scholar, the prime objective of which has been the unrelenting quest for absolute power and total control of the organisation. Historically however, over the years, this organisation invariably consisted of both a spiritual arm and an administrative arm with the religious or spiritual arm providing sound and authentic advice and guidance to the administration on important Islamic affairs for their implementation. However, this important process has been completely ignored by the current administration which now imposes and dictates the religious philosophy of the association instead.

Quite regrettably therefore, this development has undoubtedly created great divisiveness and unease within the Muslim population resulting in several of the larger Jamaats (congregations) silently withdrawing their support from the A.S.J.A.

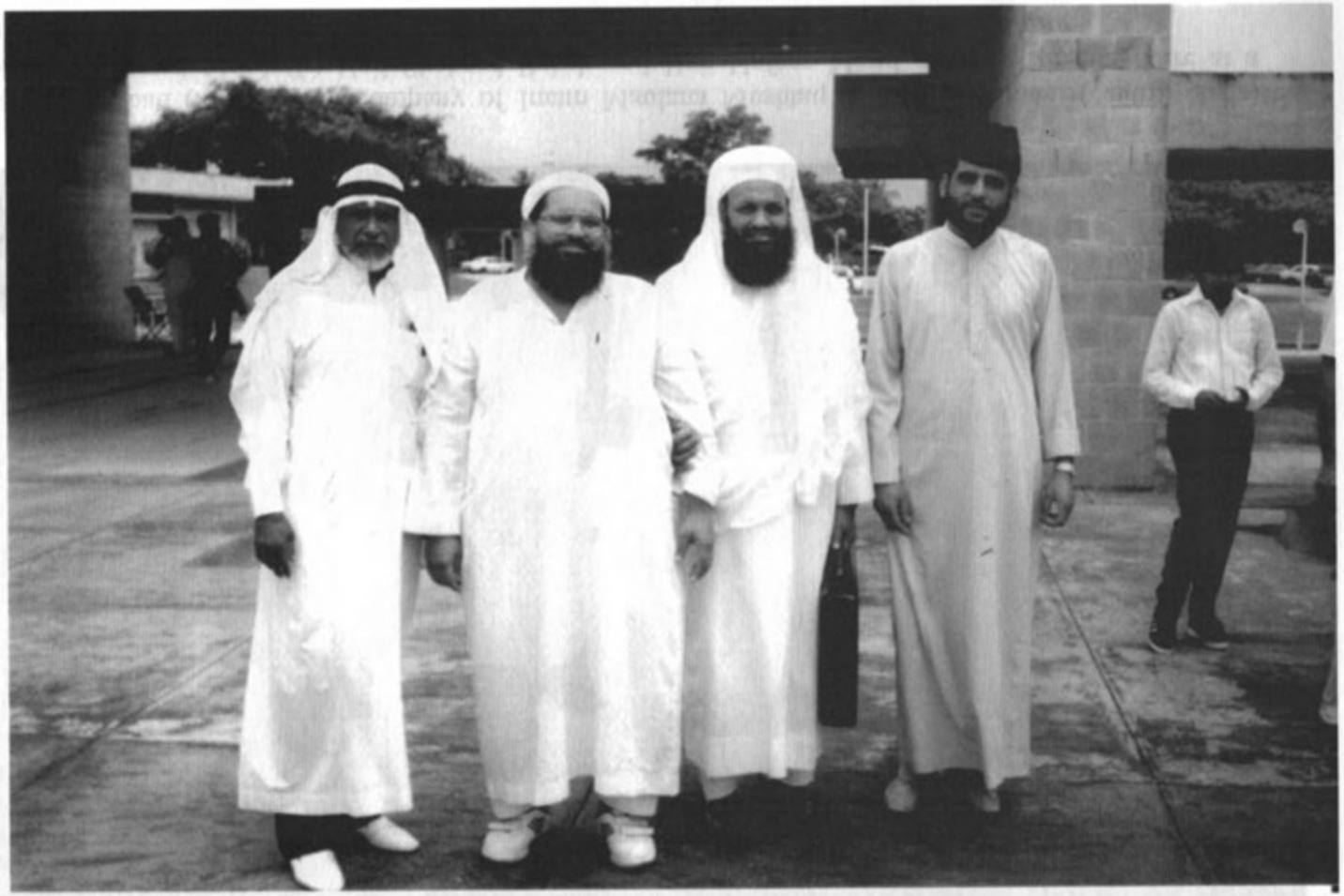
In this context therefore, it is instructive to note that no other Denominational Board in Trinidad and Tobago; be it the administrative arm of the Catholics; the Presbyterians; Anglicans or otherwise; has the temerity to implement decisions and policies of their organisation without proper dialogue, consultation, and approval from their religious or spiritual head/s. For instance, before a project of any sort can be implemented, the guidance, advice, and the ruling must be obtained from the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, the Bishop or the Archbishop accordingly. The administrators of the A.S.J.A. therefore, are currently making decisions with little or no regard for the spiritual and legal opinion and views of their spiritual/religious leaders and scholars. This, according to Ralph Khan "is a crass contradiction of the teachings, principles, practices and tenets of Islam, one of the basic fundamentals of which is Shura (consultation)". Apparently, it seems as though the administrators have lost sight of the fact that the ASJA is a state-registered religious organisation."

Spiritual Leader and Islamic Scholar Maulana Siddiq Ahmad Nasir presenting an award to Haji Ralph D. Khan Secretary/Director of the Haji Ruknuddeen Institute of Islamic Studies for his outstanding contribution to Islam (2003) ***Photo: The Khan Family Album***

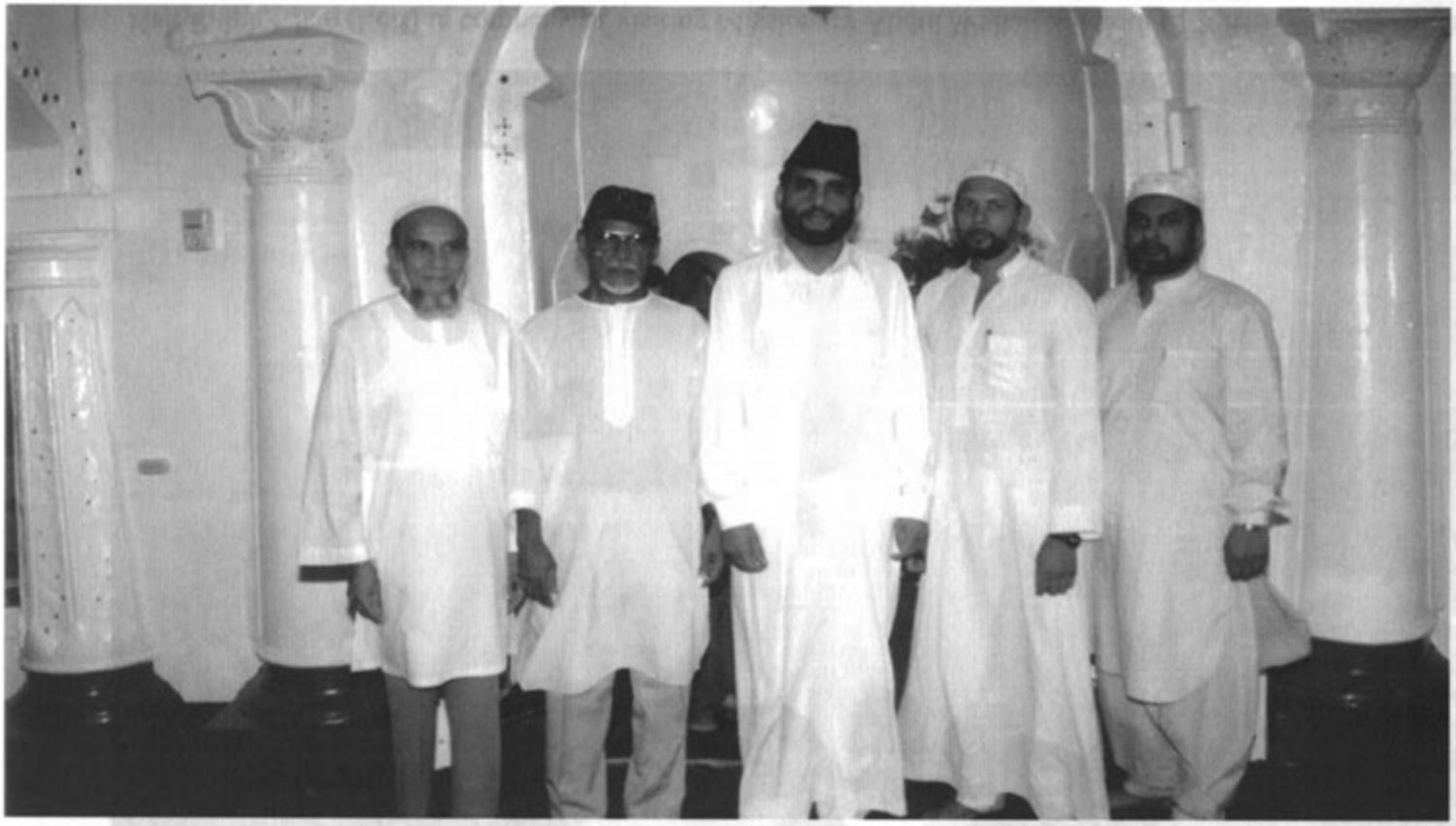
Ralph's social and cultural work would be enhanced later on between 1992-1994 when he served as an Executive Member of the National Council for Indian Culture (N.C.I.C.). In this capacity he attended monthly meetings and engaged in decision making regarding the Indian dignitaries to be invited to our shores and implementing plans and programmes. This provided a window of opportunity for him to meet face to face and hold discussions with the then President of the Republic of India, His Excellency Shankar Dayal Sharma on the occasion of the celebration of the one hundred and fiftieth (150th) anniversary of Indian Arrival in Trinidad at the Divali Nagar in Chaguanas.

As Public Relations Officer (PRO) of the A.S.J.A between 1992-1998 and, in his capacity as a member of the San Fernando A.S.J.A Mosque Board as well, Ralph was able to interact with several government officials. Consequently, whenever arrangements were made for scholarly visits to these shores, Ralph would then liaise with key personnel of the Immigration Department and the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago respectively enabling the smooth facilitation and implementation of plans to host these internationally renowned religious and spiritual guests and artistes. Ralph claims that this is a task which indeed he really enjoys doing, a role which he continues to perform to this day, having recently done so on behalf of the Haji Ruknuddeen Institute of Islamic Studies, as well as the Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah Institute of which the internationally acclaimed scholar Maulana Siddiq Ahmad Nasir is the head and spiritual leader.

Due to his alignment with various groups and organizations, and his prowess as a social worker, Ralph Khan was ultimately lured into the political arena. Between 1990-1991 when the National Alliance for Reconstruction (N.A.R.) was in power, Ralph was appointed a member of the Senate of Trinidad and Tobago and served as a U.N.C. Senator during that time. His stint in politics proved to be a great learning and rewarding experience having afforded him the opportunity to serve the society at the highest forum in the land, the Senate. At the time, the United National Congress formed part of the opposition led by the Hon. Basdeo Panday. Ralph claims that his experience in politics taught him above everything else a great lesson in how politics and politicians can ruefully divide a community.



Haji Ralph Khan (Left) in company of visiting Missionary Abdul Wahab Siddiqui (2nd. Rt.) Maulana Siddiq Ahmad Nasir and Maulana M. A. Sulaimani at 3-day Symposium, JFK Auditorium, UWI.
Photo: The Khan Family Album



Haji Ralph D. Khan (2nd Left) in company of Imam Maulana Mushtaq Ahmad Sulaimani (centre) Hajis: Mustapha Mohammed (dec.) (L) Haji Shaheed Baksh and Haji Hafeez Majid, in their Muslim attire at a function held at the San Fernando Jama Masjid, San Fernando. ***Photo: The Khan Family Album***

A consummate statesman, Ralph had the opportunity to air his views publicly on various matters related to the state of the nation. It is in this context that he was prompted to remark on divers occasions that "we are living in a most decadent, degenerate, and corrupt society." On many occasions, he also reiterated the fact that "despite the majority of the wealth of this nation being derived from the "southland," the south has invariably been neglected by successive governments."

He felt that the party in opposition does not, and cannot serve the wider needs of the society since it is deliberately starved of much needed funds by the party in power. Consequently, it is generally commonplace for the opposition to oppose the most brilliant of ideas (merely for the sake of opposition - a characteristic deeply ensconced in the system) which in his view has conclusively proven that the Westminster system of government (first-past-the-post system as it is called) has now outlived its usefulness in a society such as ours. Further, he believes that such a concept and practice has invariably been leading the country down the road of regression rather than building a nation with its focus on the future welfare of its people.

One of the political practices which Ralph vehemently resents and which he claims to have discovered over the years, including his tenure in politics, is the fact that notwithstanding the benefits which may be derived by the population from any worthwhile proposal or submission made by the party in opposition, such ideas are invariably struck down by the government in power. A classic example of this blatant folly relates to the building of the Uriah Butler/Churchill Roosevelt Interchange proposed by the United National Congress while in government. But having been replaced by the People's National Movement shortly afterwards, they completely rejected the idea for no obvious or logical reason/s whatsoever, except for the fact that the proposed project was conceived by the United National Congress (while in government). Alas! After a lapse of several years however, work now seems to have commenced on this project which has been long overdue.

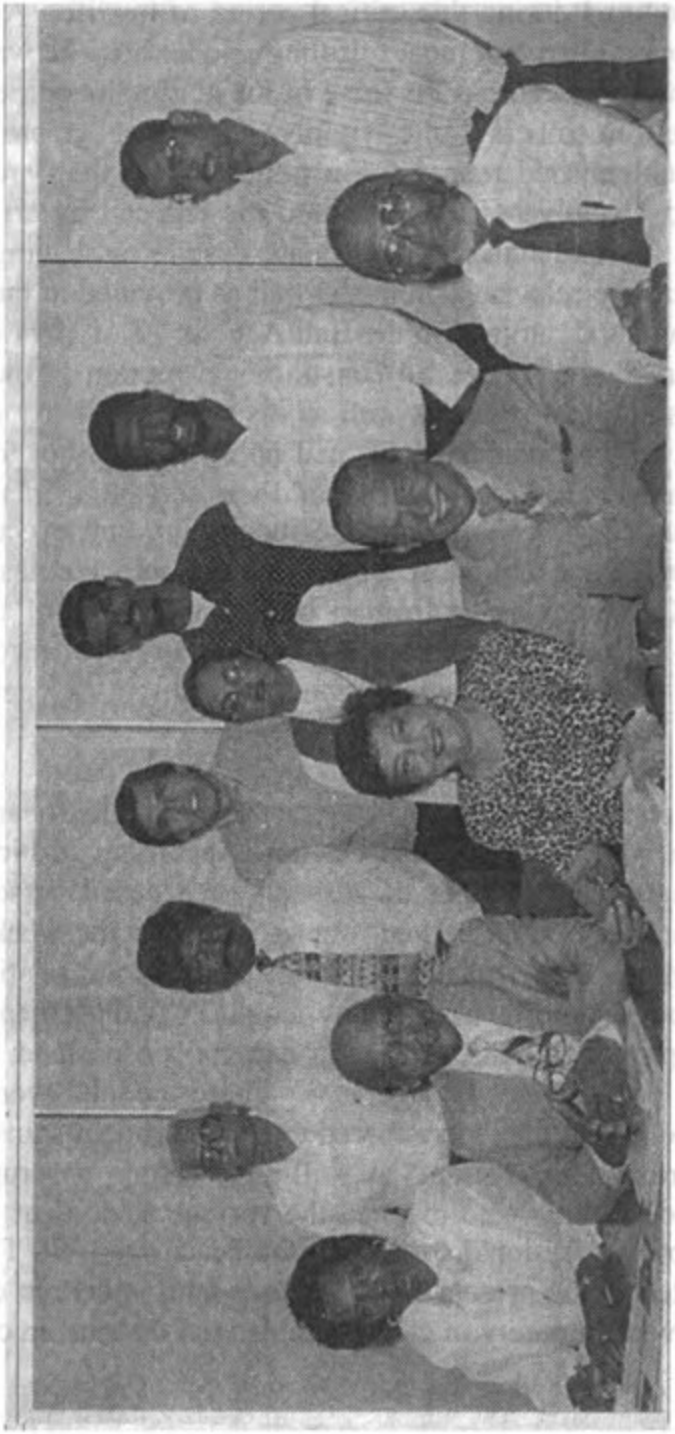
During his tenure as a politician, Ralph was able to endear himself to a number of government ministers including Winston Dookeran, Minister of Planning and Development and former governor of the Central Bank, (currently a serving member of Parliament and Political Leader of the U.N.C.), Dr. Sahadeo Basdeo - Minister of External Affairs and International Trade, and Minister Brinsley Samaroo, Minister of Agriculture, now Professor in History at the University of the West Indies, three very outstanding gentlemen, all intelligent and affable intellectuals as well as Selby Wilson, Minister of Finance.

He admits that his most unpleasant parliamentary experience occurred when the N.A.R. government introduced a Bill proposing the establishment of additional vistas of communication in Trinidad and Tobago viz. radio and television stations. Ralph considered this to be an excellent idea which in his view was long overdue, and consequently, complimented the government for its initiative in introducing such a bill following which he then went on to expose and explore the flaws in the Bill. However, this lofty action of his was vehemently opposed, not only by his fellow senators, but also by his U.N.C. party colleagues in the Lower House, and because of his complimentary remarks, some of his colleagues even concluded that he was colluding with the government of the day.

Nevertheless, he claims that in spite of their differing views and party affiliations, there existed a keen sense of camaraderie and goodwill amongst fellow senators and elected members as well, more so, on a social basis. At this juncture, it is instructive to note that upon the dissolution of Parliament in late 1991, a mere two to three weeks prior to the general elections of that same year, Ralph was chosen by the United National Congress to contest the seat for the San Fernando West constituency and, despite the short notice given him by the party, he polled a remarkable two thousand two hundred and seven (2,207) votes in a contest versus Dr. Allen Sammy of the N.A.R. and Ralph Maraj of the P.N.M. Significantly, this took place in an era when the U.N.C. would only muster a mere two to three digits number of votes in the urban constituencies.

In his continuing service as a social worker, it is noteworthy that Ralph Khan also held the position of Deputy Chairman of the "SHARE" Board (Social Help and Rehabilitative Efforts) in the Ministry of Community Development for five and a half consecutive years from 1996-2001 and acted as Chairman for most of that period. This auxiliary arm of the Ministry of Community Development is to the present day entrusted with the responsibility of providing hampers for the poor and needy throughout the country without prejudice. However, when Ralph assumed that position he discovered that only the people of the East-West corridor were favoured as recipients of this programme and, was therefore faced with the formidable task of extending the service to other depressed areas as well against many odds. With the cooperation however of other board members and ministerial staff, tremendous improvements were made in providing a more equitable and just hamper distribution system. He claims that it was sheer political patronage over the years and, that absolutely nothing else, was responsible for the continuing disparity in an equitable hamper distribution system. This covert type of

discrimination he claims, has without doubt contributed to the continuing entrenchment of an unfortunate dependency syndrome in today's society.



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The Board of SHARE: seated from left to right are: Director, Lana Charles; Chairman John Bharath; Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Social and Community Development; Shastri Ali; Deputy Chairman, Haji Ralph Khan; Deputy Chairman, Dennis Bryan. Standing from left are Lincoln Jhagroo, Tahir Ali, Gawram Ramnanan, Rekha Ramjit, David Law, Junior Barrack, Roy Saroop.

Yet, undoubtedly, Ralph Khan's contribution to social work reached its pinnacle in his capacity as a Justice of the Peace between 1993-1998 then 2000 and continuing as none of his previous experiences could compare with the tribulations or the triumphs he endured during this critical period of his life. As a Justice of the Peace (J.P.) he found his role a most fulfilling one because he was placed in a position where he could seek redress for some of the glaring inequities in the local Judicial System. He remembers quite vividly how after granting bail to a youngster with an unblemished record (on a minor crime) that young man was unceremoniously and illegally hoisted back into the jail cell by an abuse of the police who regarded the bail fixed as inadequate despite his having pointed out and explaining to them the relevant criteria for bail as provided in the constitution of Trinidad and Tobago and outlined in the Bail Act No. 18 of 1994 as well. Soon after, this young man filed a successful constitutional motion in the High Court proving that his constitutional rights as well as his rights to liberty and life were infringed. The State, in the circumstances, had no alternative but to give in and compensate the youngster for the misdeed of their servant/s, in this case, the police, who, not strangely, felt that they were judge, jury and executioner at the same time. What an obtuse abuse of power indeed and a colossal waste of taxpayers' money! The shocking realization here is that none of those persons responsible for this travesty has been called upon to give account or held responsible for such high-handed and irrational conduct in the performance of their duties.

In this context, Ralph is best remembered for his struggle to ameliorate the existing Bail system which he views as corrupt. According to him, the police usually arrested a significant number of suspects or accused persons late on a Friday evening so that they could be kept imprisoned over the weekend. In such circumstances, but more often than not, the generally poor relatives of those persons held in custody would then go to any length in finding members of their family who owned property (house and land especially) to stand bail for their relatives or friends who were incarcerated. These people were then very systematically fleeced in that they were forced to pay exorbitant sums of money to what was termed "professional bailors" as well as to certain unscrupulous, venal members of the police service who manned the various stations at the time, and also to certain corrupt "professional Justices of the Peace" as well. This untenable situation is perpetuated to the present day he claims and, in certain cases, is even covertly perpetrated with impunity in certain magisterial districts in collusion with the "police".

Having experienced such a scenario for approximately three (3) years, Ralph began to question himself as to whether he should resign as a Justice of the Peace, or alternatively, initiate efforts to rectify the situation. After serious contemplation and deliberation he concluded that it would be irresponsible of him to resign his position and, resolved therefore, to address/correct this iniquity; which resulted in his preparation and submission of a comprehensive memorandum outlining the deficiencies and inherent corruption in the bail system. This memorandum was initially discussed with the then Attorney General (Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj) whose reaction was that a Commission of Enquiry would not elicit any positive results. But Ralph, in his memorandum, had categorically stated that in view of the existing scenario **"nothing less would suffice but a Commission of Enquiry"** into these injustices and the inherent corruption in the bail system.

Ralph then discussed this matter with Basdeo Panday (Prime Minister at the time), who gave his unconditional support to Ralph's proposal, particularly on the setting up of the Commission of Enquiry. Copies of this memorandum were then circulated to strategic organizations and individuals for their attention including the Prime Minister, Basdeo Panday, the Chief Justice - Michael de La Bastide, the Chief Magistrate, Justice James Davis - Chairman of the Police Complaints Authority, the Minister of National Security, Chairman of the Crime Commission, Director of Public Prosecutions, Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions, President of the Law Association, President of the Southern Assembly of Lawyers and various arms of the Media.

For the convenience of readers, a copy of this memorandum has been attached in its originality and entirety as it was eventually submitted by Ralph Khan, in his capacity as President of the Justices of the Peace Association of Trinidad and Tobago to the Hon. Attorney General Honourable Ramesh L. Maharaj. Also, included is a letter calling for remedial action concerning other problematic issues affecting the Association. **(Refer to Appendix 11 for Memorandum to AG etc).**

Following this, the memorandum was then discussed at Cabinet level. Cabinet unanimously approved the proposal submitted. Ralph appeared on several radio and television programmes, and in newspaper releases which gave public exposure to the corruption in the Bail system. On a particular "Sunday Edition" television programme aired on CCN Channel 6, the interviewer, Mr. Dominic Kalipersad (now Editor-in-Chief of the Trinidad Guardian) pointed out to Ralph that he was implicating the police in this matter and asked him if he did not fear for his life. Responding to this question, Ralph, fearlessly and patriotically claimed that **"from my knowledge and understanding, God is the one who gave me life and He is**

the one to take my life. Therefore, if I have to lose my life for doing something by which the entire nation stands to benefit, then so be it" since it was his firm conviction that God is the one and only giver of life and that He is the one who can and would take it away whenever He wills.

Haji Ralph D. Khan, President of the Justices of the Peace Association of Trinidad and Tobago in the company of (L-R) Prof. Ramesh Deosaran, Min. Ganga Singh and Attorney General Ramesh L. Maharaj at the JP's Installation Ceremony, Petrotrin Staff Club, Pointe a Pierre (1997). ***Photo: The Khan Family Album***

Ralph D. Khan (2nd. Rt.) – President of the Justices of the Peace Association of Trinidad and Tobago is greeted by the Ag. President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Senator The Hon. Ganase Ramdial (centre) at President's House 1998. Others in photo L-R: Yusuff Mohammed – Treasurer, Ramddath Mathura – Vice President and Roy Nathai - Secretary . ***Photo: The Khan Family Album***

Haji Ralph D. Khan, President of the Justices of the Peace Association of Trinidad and Tobago (2nd. left) introduces other officers of the Association to the Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj, Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago, Petrotrin Staff Club, Pointe a Pierre 1997 Rt. Frederick Powder and second from right Ramdath Mathura. ***Photo: The Khan Family Album***

During this time, Ralph had already served for many years as Public Relations Officer (P.R.O.) and President of the Justices of the Peace Association of Trinidad and Tobago, and having exposed the police publicly, the latter sought to vindicate themselves by arresting a so-called **"big fish"** - the mouthpiece of the Association so to speak. It is not surprising therefore, that Ralph was soon arrested by the police **for allegedly robbing a blind man of five hundred dollars ($500.00).** Regarding this spurious claim, Ralph believes that he was cleverly framed by the police and one other person whom he declines to name. Clearly, Ralph Khan, had to pay a very severe penalty, a very heavy price for doing the right thing - fighting for justice - and in the process, suffered a tremendous slur to his character. His good name and his hitherto unblemished character seemed to have vanished away in a flash he says, like lightning, even leading him to seriously contemplate suicide, a deed not only condemned but absolutely prohibited by his religion Islam, and buttressed by his implacable faith in God Almighty, his Creator, he vowed that he would never commit such a despicable act.

Eventually, after an extended period of great stress and depression, anguish and humiliation to both himself and his family, Ralph was eventually exonerated by the court after two (2) years awaiting trial. Immediately prior to his arrest however, he had submitted his letter of resignation as a Justice of the Peace and President of the Association to the then President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, A.N.R. Robinson. Soon after being exonerated by the courts however he was reinstated as a Justice of the Peace in the year 2000 but for personal reasons deliberately kept away from attending meetings of the Association for some time.

Ralph claims that the role of a Justice of the Peace in the local judicial system is a critical and demanding one, and in fact, this is what really fuelled his drive to satisfy the dire needs of the people. Justices of the Peace (JPs) according to the Summary Offences Act possess concurrent jurisdiction with Magistrates and are vested with the power and the authority to grant or deny bail to accused persons. Justices of the Peace also have the authority to issue Summons, Search and Arrest Warrants, the legal authority and responsibility to witness statements given by suspects or accused persons, and being the adjunct between the police and the accused at identification parades where proper identification of the suspect is absolutely necessary.

Murder suspects were often held by the police, and Ralph, due to his strategic locality, (just a stone-throw away from the Southern Police Headquarters) was often summoned by officers of the homicide bureau to witness statements given by accused persons. Consequently, this led to his being called out by the police at

any time of the day or night. In instances where there were several suspects in a particular murder setting, witnessing of these statements often ran into several hours even into wee hours of the morning at times. Incidentally, when such matters come up for hearing in the Magistrates' Court or even at the High Court, it is significant to note that Justices of the Peace must be present to testify, in order to substantiate their statements. Justices of the Peace therefore, play a pivotal role in the local judicial system and are generally regarded as one of the very few neutral parties involved in these judicial processes; the prime objective of which is to effectively ensure the protection of the fundamental rights and welfare of our citizens.

As a Muslim, in testimony to his belief in dispensing justice, Ralph quotes the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

> ***"O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for Justice, as witnesses to God, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: For God can best protect both. Follow not the lust (of your hearts), lest ye swerve, and if ye Distort (Justice) or decline to do Justice, verily God is well acquainted with all that ye do". (Holy Qur'an CH: 4: VS:135).***

At the time, The Justices of the Peace Association of Trinidad and Tobago was not recognised by the State, and one of Ralph's significant recommendations in his memorandum to the Attorney General was that all Justices of the Peace should be compensated for their services. As a direct result of this recommendation, Justices of the Peace for some time now have been enjoying a monthly stipend of three hundred dollars ($300.00) which he fervently hopes would be reviewed during his current and second term of office as President of the Association.

Ralph Khan, in the circumstances, has therefore done all this work voluntarily as a service to the community and the nation. Following the dictates of his conscience has always been of utmost priority to him. And so, even with his arrest, in the midst of adversity and trauma, Ralph learnt the depths of his moral/religious courage and how far it could take him. This attribute in itself he recognised is crucial to the development of character.

It is instructive to note that on the 3rd. April 2005 Ralph was unanimously re-elected President of the Justices of the Peace Association of Trinidad and Tobago, after attending just two general meetings in the capacity of an observer, a remarkable testament of the confidence and trust reposed in him by the members

of the Association regarding his ability and efficiency, his honesty, integrity and commitment to their cause.

Haji Ralph D. Khan (left) President of the Justices of the Peace Association of Trinidad and Tobago after a meeting with the Actg. President of T&T Senator The Hon. Ganase Ramdial at President's House, St. Anns, P.O.S. together with officers (l-r) Y.R. Mohammed-Treasurer, Roy Nathai-Secretary, and Ramdath Mathura-Vice President (1998)
Photo: The Khan Family Album

Haji Ralph D. Khan President of the Justices of the Peace Association of Trinidad and Tobago in deep conversation with the Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj, Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago at the JP's Installation Ceremony, Petrotrin Staff Club, Pointe - a - Pierre (1997). ***Photo: The Khan Family Album***

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Khan back as head of Jopatt

RALPH KHAN was elected unopposed as president of the Justices of the Peace Association of Trinidad and Tobago (JOPATT's) recent election of officers.

Calling on JPs to serve the public with dignity and integrity, Khan told JPs at the election held at Chaguanas Junior Secondary School that he intends to bring positive changes to Jopatt. He said that Jopatt has to rebuild its image.

RALPH KHAN

Khan said there were two botched attempts, first on August 15, 2004, and January 30, to hold election of a new executive. On April 3, Jopatt eventually succeeded and Khan, a past president, was unopposed for the position of president. In expressing gratitude for the overwhelming support, Khan told JPs present, "I will work with the present executive to bring about positive changes to the association.

Other officers elected were: "Winston Best (first vice president); Frederick Powder (second vice President (Tobago); Morrisa Singh (unopposed); Balroop Chanderjeet (public relations officer); Daniel Bisnath (assistant PRO); Ramdath Matura and Kuldipnarine Goberdhan (trustees); Ramnarine Mongroo and Daniel Baboolal (auditors).

Chief Justice of Trinidad and Tobago, Clinton Bernard (rt) greets Haji Ralph Khan at the ecumenical service held at the formal opening of the Southern Red Cross Headquarters San Fernando.
Photo: The Khan Family Album

As an endorsement of his continuing socio-religious endeavours, Haji Ralph Khan was recently appointed to serve on a panel of seven (7) international judges to adjudicate the fourth (4th) Annual International Qaseeda (Islamic Songs) competition held in Guyana on Sunday 21st. August, 2005 at the Headquarters of the Central Islamic Organisation of Guyana in the capital city Georgetown. It is interesting to note that this event attracted well over three thousand guests. Countries participating in this competition were Guyana, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States of America and Canada including a single entrant from the United Kingdom. For Trinidadians, it is particularly significant to note that both the challenge trophy and the coveted first (1st) prize for the Senior Male Singers Category were both won by Trinidad. And even as recently as April of 2006, Ralph Khan was once more appointed as an International Judge of this annual competition which took place in Surinam.

Quite interestingly, the Trinidad and Tobago contingent was led by the spiritual head and principal of the Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama'ah Institute (of Trinidad and Tobago), a Guyanese national domiciled in Trinidad. As guests of the Central Islamic Organisation of Guyana, it is noteworthy that their hospitality was indeed overwhelming, and through their generosity, "we were able via speedboats to traverse all the major rivers of Guyana including the Essequibo, Corentyne and Demerara" etc. It was here that the members of the group learnt with great awe and astonishment that the **Essequibo river is approximately twenty-twenty five and a half (25 ½) miles wide, so much so, that it resembles the ocean.** Ralph's compatriots claim that these trips across those gigantic rivers made them feel as though they were traveling on one of the great oceans of the world which prompted the following question. Compared to the rivers we have in Trinidad and Tobago, can the average Trinidadian ever really visualize or imagine seeing a river of such magnitude?

Social work therefore, provided and continues to provide the obstacles and challenges which have all helped to mould the character of the man, Ralph Khan. He is fully committed and thoroughly enjoys this kind of activity because it has forced him to become more focused and dedicated to a principle greater than himself. Social work has taught him to move beyond pain, fear, scepticism and personal distress. It has blessed him with grace and insight so that he can truly embrace the spiritual discipleship of a Haji.

Haji Ralph Khan (left) Nazimoon Mohammed, Bibi Shaddick - Minister of Human Resources (Republic of Guyana 3rd. from left) Trinidadian Siddiq Ali (winner Challenge and 1st. Prize trophies) Maulana Ali Mustafa and Group Leader Maulana Siddiq Ahmad Nasir at the 4th. International Qaseeda Competition, Guyana, in honour of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) 21st. August, 2005. ***Photo: Courtesy Aleemudeen Mohammed***

L-R. Trophy Winner, Trinidadian Siddiq Ali holding the Challenge Trophy together with Maulana Siddiq Ahmad Nasir (Group Leader) and Haji Ralph Khan holding the Trophy for Senior Male Category Singer. Photo taken at a Special Function held at the Headquarters of the Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah Institute in San Fernando. ***Photo: Aleemudeen Mohammed.***

As an example of his entrenched commitment to Social work Haji Ralph Khan single handedly coordinated the following event reflected in the flyer that follows.

The University of the West Indies
and
The National Council for Indian Culture

invites the public to a

LECTURE/DEMONSTRATION

TOPIC

HEART DISEASES & DIABETES AMONG EAST INDIANS

PRESENTERS

[1] Dr. Feroze Omardeen - Cardiology Dept., Mt. Hope Medical Sciences Complex

[2] Dr. Vivian S. Rambihar - Specialist in Cardiac Diseases and Internal Medicine, Toronto, Canada

VENUE:	Naparima Bowl
DATE:	Monday 14th August, 1995
TIME:	7:00 pm

For further information call Mr. Ralph D. Khan
Co-ordinator at 657-5088, 652-2340

N.B. ALL ADMISSION FREE

Printed Courtesy Carol's Enterprises Ltd

CHAPTER IV

RALPH – The Family Man

It is said that at every stage of a man's life he makes decisions based on the level of consciousness he has attained. Such has been the case with Ralph Khan. Having grown up in a large family with much familial support, caring, love and compassion for one another, family life remains of paramount importance to Ralph. The realities of life however, have not always allowed him the opportunity to fulfill his ideals; so that while it may not have been possible for Ralph to spend the length of time he would have desired with his family because of his vocational and social commitments, he nevertheless remains devoted to them. He loves his wife Jennifer and dotes on his children Imran and Nadeira of whom he is extremely proud. They all share an excellent relationship together.

Like many handsome men in their youth, Ralph enjoyed an inordinate share of female admirers but never seemed attracted to the notion of marriage. He himself admits that he never genuinely wanted to commit to marriage at that time because he had witnessed many broken marriages, many of which occurred when his colleagues formed liaisons with women particularly from wealthy backgrounds. Additionally, having grown up in a very large family, he shared a very close relationship with his parents and siblings, and therefore, did not feel the compulsion to commit to anyone.

When he eventually resolved to settle down at age thirty-nine, it was with the winsome, and demure Jennifer Mohammed of Williamsville, who was only twenty-two at the time and who came from a humble and respectable family background. Where Jennifer was concerned Ralph claims that it was a case of love at first sight. Driving casually down Mucurapo Street, San Fernando, one day, he glimpsed her coming from the central market and immediately fell in love with her, convinced that she was the "right mate" for him. Thereafter, they both found excuses to meet one another, sometimes at the "Winsure" office where Ralph worked as Sales Supervisor at the time.

Ralph recalls nostalgically that Jenny's parents at the time viewed his relationship with their daughter with much consternation and foreboding, based on the perceptions of other people and the prevailing view at the time that insurance salesmen were dishonest, evasive and untrustworthy. Winning his in-laws trust and confidence would take some time but Ralph persevered and his vindication unfolded in a rather peculiar manner.

Ralph and his beautiful wife Jennifer, both in their original wedding outfits on their wedding day 3rd. August, 1968.
Photo: Courtesy Wong's Photo Studio

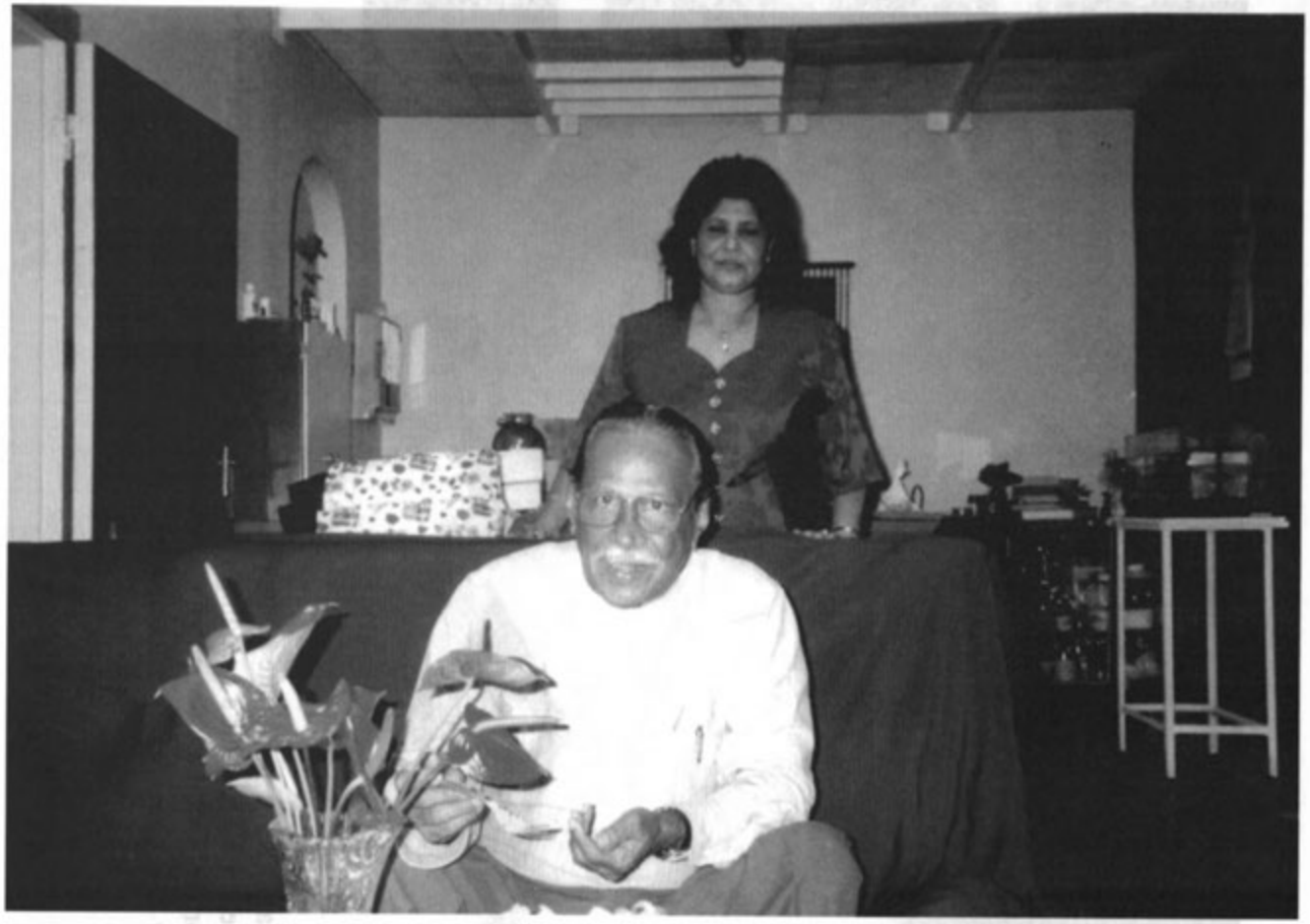
In fact, he recalls an incident when he was asked to deliver an Islamic message at his in-laws home during a prayer session. Surprisingly, at the end of it all, he personally overheard his mother-in-law singing his praises exclaiming to her children: **"I wish all my children could be like my son-in-law, Ralph."**

At the time of his marriage, one older brother Vernon was married as well as Evans, a younger brother, so Ralph was the third son in the family to tie the knot. According to him he was given a typical Muslim marriage. However, on the night prior to his marriage a very unfortunate and unnerving incident occurred. His apartment at Padmore Street, San Fernando, was broken into and thoroughly ransacked. Ironically, but fortunately, his mahr (gift of gold jewellery) intended for his bride-to-be managed to evade the intruder's grasp. Ralph's family was quite happy about his marriage and, his mother especially, who for years had been insisting that it was more than time for him to get married - as was typical amongst families of East Indian descent during that era - was particularly pleased with Jennifer. Ralph claims that their age difference was irrelevant to him and that he was not at all nervous about the marriage. Significantly, the actual wedding ceremony took place on his birthday, August 3rd. 1968 at the bride's home in Williamsville (as was customary) while the reception was held in his home district, Diamond Village, at the residence of his eldest sister on Papourie Road, Diamond Village, in close proximity to the Diamond Village Presbyterian Church.

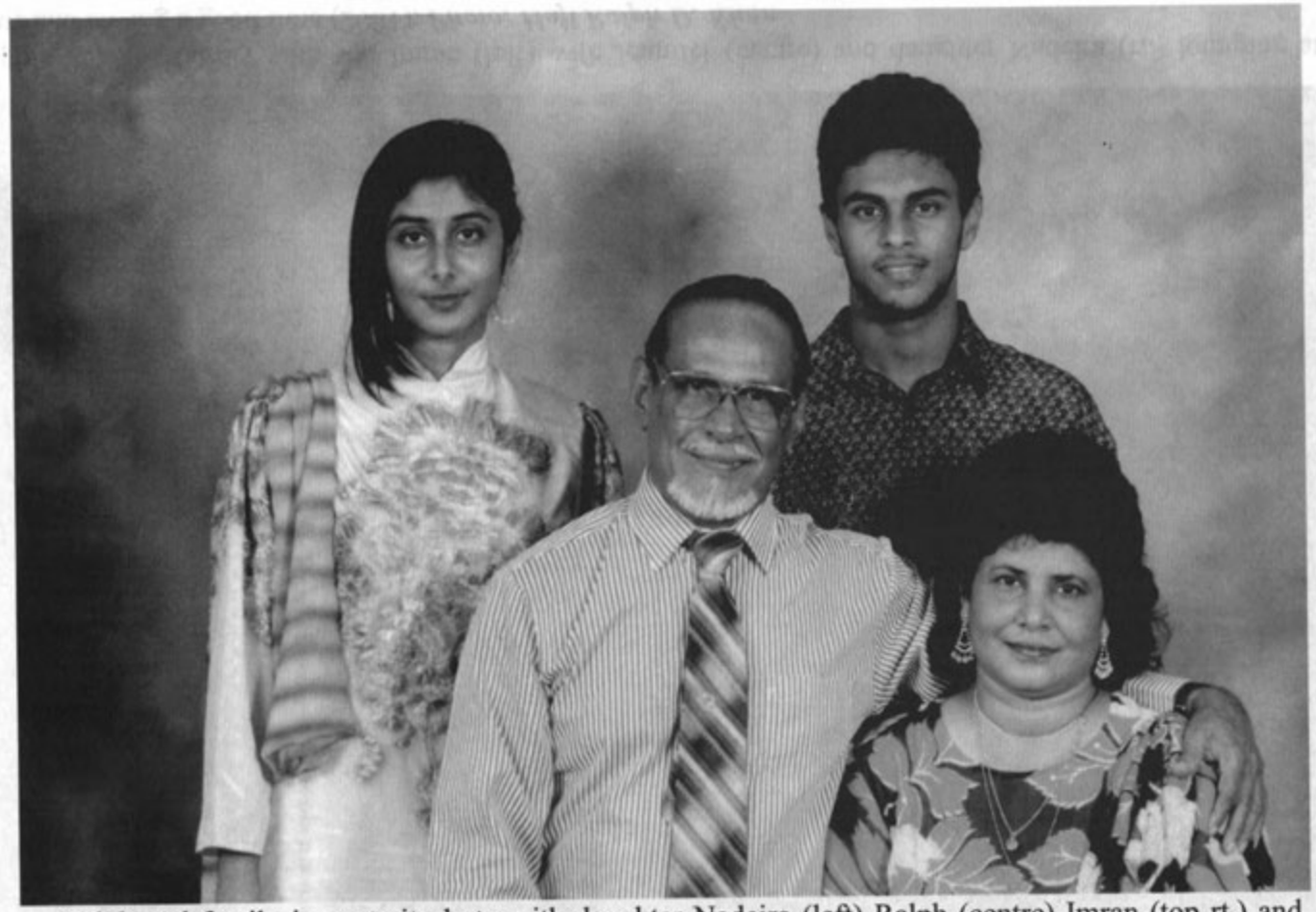
Up to the present time, "Jenny" as she is affectionately called, has been a bastion of support for Ralph. Since 1967 she was permanently employed as a Clerk Typist at the Ste. Madeleine Sugar Company and some time later as a departmental secretary at Caroni (1975) Limited) but had to quit the job in 2003 when the company shut down its operations. While juggling her roles as working mother, wife and companion to the busy Ralph, she remained unflinching in her love and dedication to her family which was and remains central to her existence. Ralph himself describes his wife as sweet, devoted and extremely hardworking; the epitome of motherhood, a dedicated woman who has always put her children's welfare first and foremost.

Jennifer Khan, the charming and beautiful wife of Haji Ralph Khan relaxing at home on Rushworth Street, San Fernando in the year 2000. A picture of pure serenity. ***Photo: Haji Ralph D. Khan***

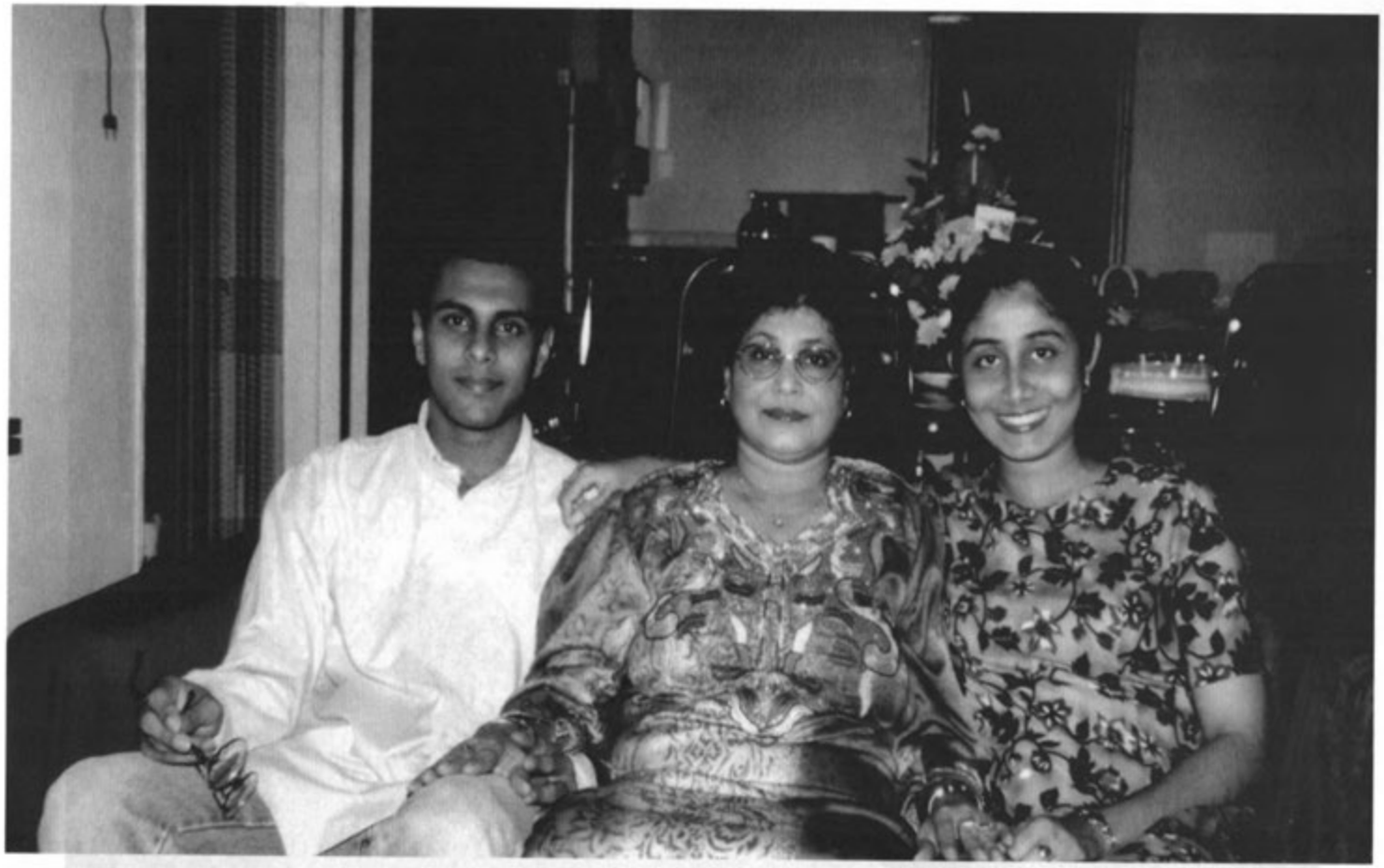
Haji Ralph Khan in private conversation with his wife Jennifer on the day of their beloved daughter's wedding reception 27th. June, 2003 at the Gulf City Auditorium, Gulf City Shopping Complex, La Romain.
Photo: The Khan family Album



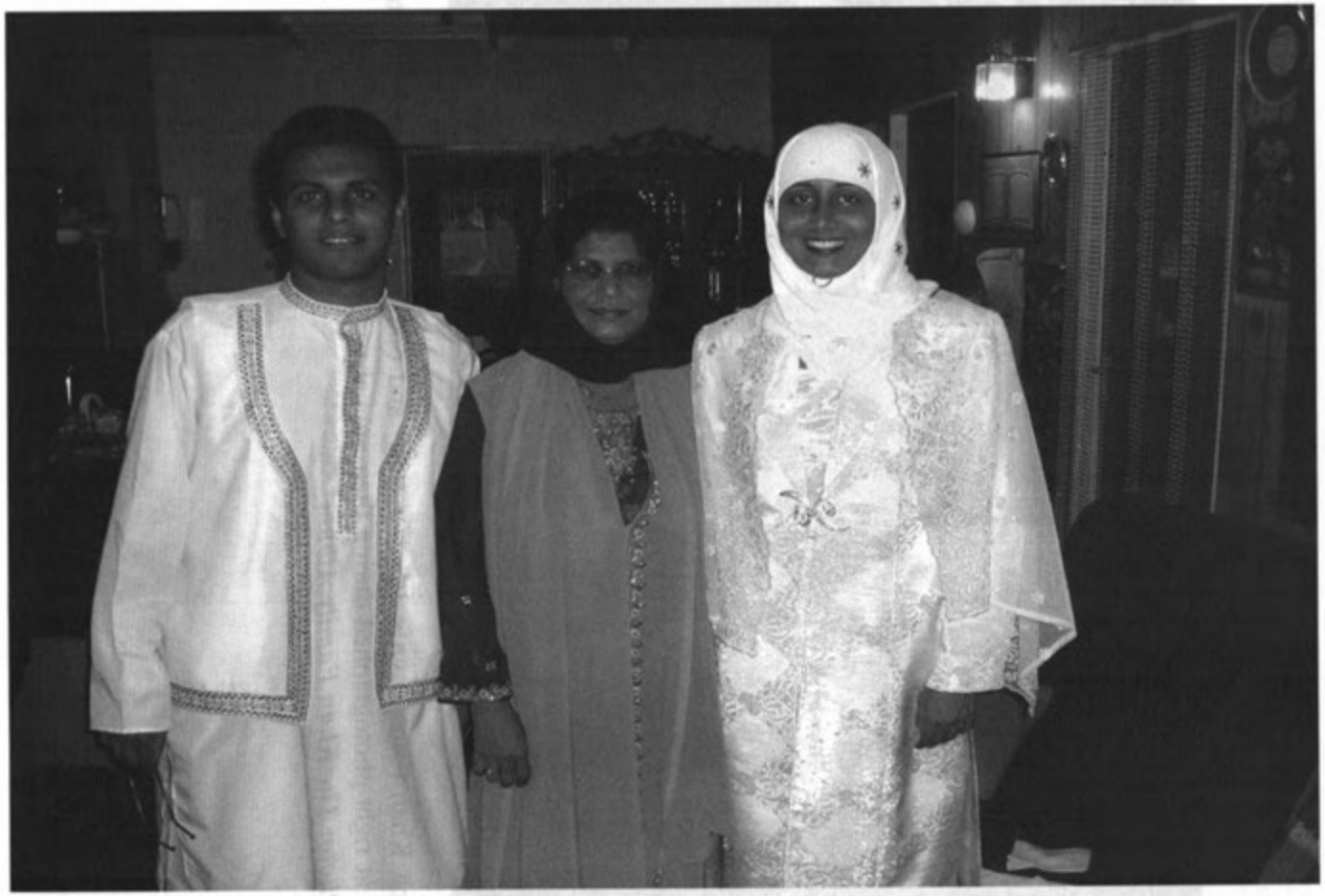
Ralph and Jennifer photographed relaxing at home on the occasion of Jennifer's Birthday with Ralph sampling her Birthday Cake (2002). ***Photo: The Khan Family Album***



Ralph and family in portrait photo with daughter Nadeira (left) Ralph (centre) Imran (top rt.) and wife Jennifer right (1993). ***Photo: Candid Camera, San Fernando***



Ralph's beloved family with son Imran (left) wife Jennifer (centre) and daughter Nadeira (rt.) lounging at home and having a good time (2001). ***Photo: Haji Ralph D. Khan***



Ralph's wife Jennifer (centre) and their two children at home all dressed in typical Islamic wear with their son Imran at left and daughter Nadeira at right (2003). ***Photo: Haji Ralph D. Khan***

Haji Ralph Khan (centre) wife Jennifer (left) and one of Ralph's younger sisters Margaret at right photographed during their annual vacation in New York, U.S. A. (2000). ***Photo: The Khan Family Album***

Hajin Jennifer Khan wife of Haji Ralph D. Khan in typical Islamic attire photographed offering a prayer in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, during the Hajj (Pilgrimage) January 2006
Photo: The Khan Family Album

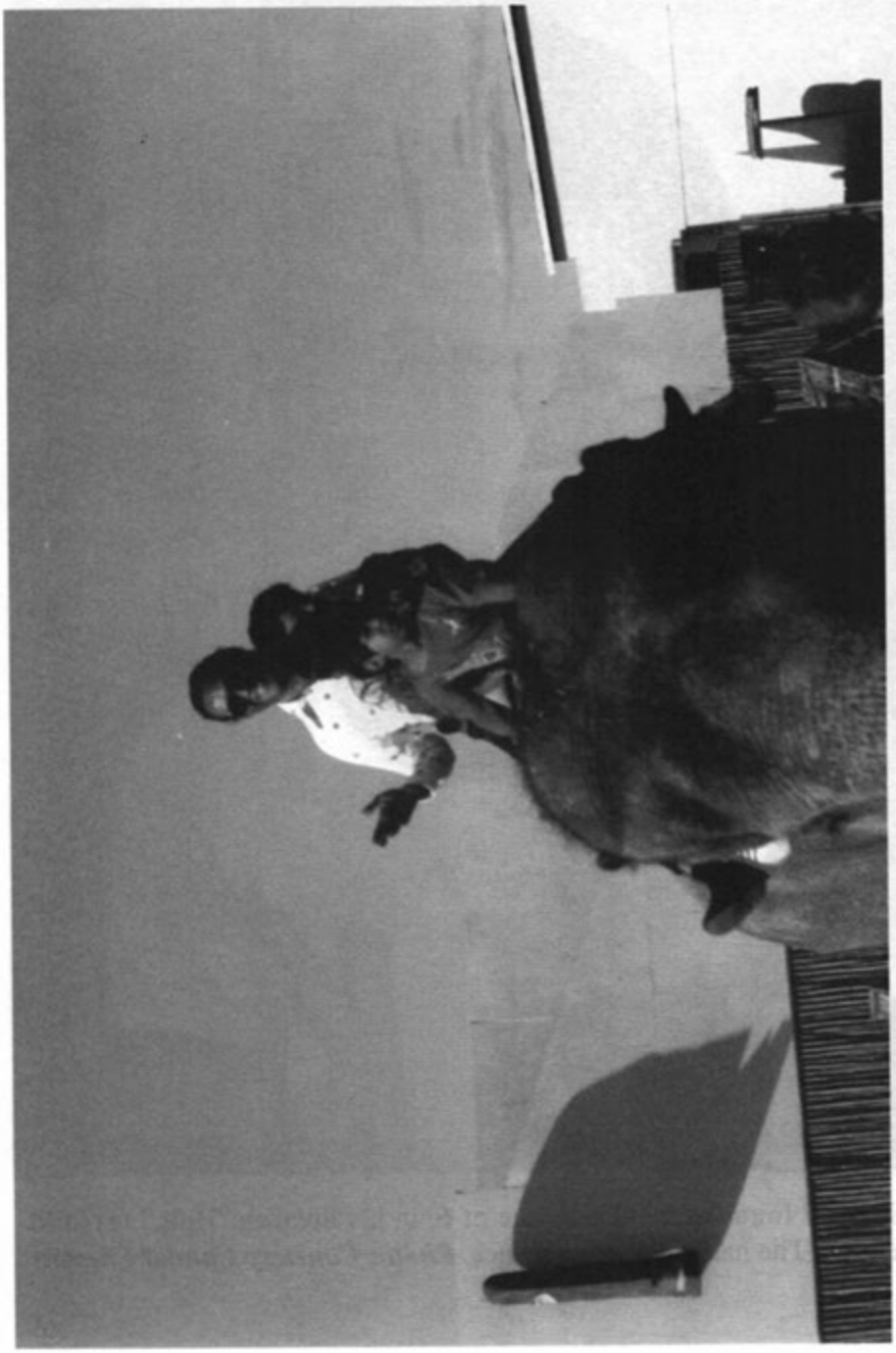
During their formative years, because of his busy schedule Ralph missed some of the special moments in his children's socialization and transition from one stage of growth to another. With his son Imran, Ralph claims to have a good relationship although the former often does not have sufficient time to bond with his father because of his demanding work and social schedule. With his only daughter Nadeira however, there is an unmistakable closeness and a deep sense of loyalty and empathy: Nadeira is business oriented, works with her father managing his business and, because of their constant association, there seems to be a symbiotic relationship between them. Ralph describes his daughter Nadeira as being a kind, loving, charitable and compassionate soul, a daughter beyond compare.

Ralph recalls that during their earlier years there seemed to have been a communication/understanding problem between his children and himself and conflict often ensued. One contentious issue seems to have been the children's desire to attend certain parties with their school peers and Ralph's reluctance or refusal to allow them this privilege. However, when he explained to them from an Islamic perspective why they could not go and, that he had a divine right as their father to protect and guide them, they eventually understood.

Ralph is proud to have played an important role in the choice of a vocation for his son Imran. When Imran completed his "A" Levels at Naparima College, Ralph had a candid, incisive and fruitful discussion with him about his future. Ralph, drawing from his own experiences, advised his son that if he entered either the public service or the oil industry and was better qualified than his peers that his progress and growth would inevitably be stultified. Also, from an economic standpoint, he would be susceptible to heavy taxation with the money being squandered by government. Regarding taxation, Ralph reminded him that as a practising Muslim he had a divine obligation to financially assist the poor, the needy and the destitute.

Ralph pointed out to his son that if he, personally, had the privilege and the opportunity to attend university that he would select a profession or a vocation which would eventually provide for him the opportunity to become a self-employed, independent individual, once he had acquired the necessary practical work experience. Imran immediately responded deducing from their discussion that in such a scenario there would only be two options open to him, that is; to study either law, or medicine. Having had a science background at college, one would normally assume that Imran would have logically chosen the field of medicine, but since he could not tolerate the sight of blood he naturally opted to

study law, taking his father's advice to become an independent self-employed professional which he has indeed succeeded in accomplishing and also relishes.



Ralph and his son Imran and grand niece Asherly having an elephant ride at the Canadian Safari while on vacation in Canada (1984). ***Photo: The Khan Family Album***

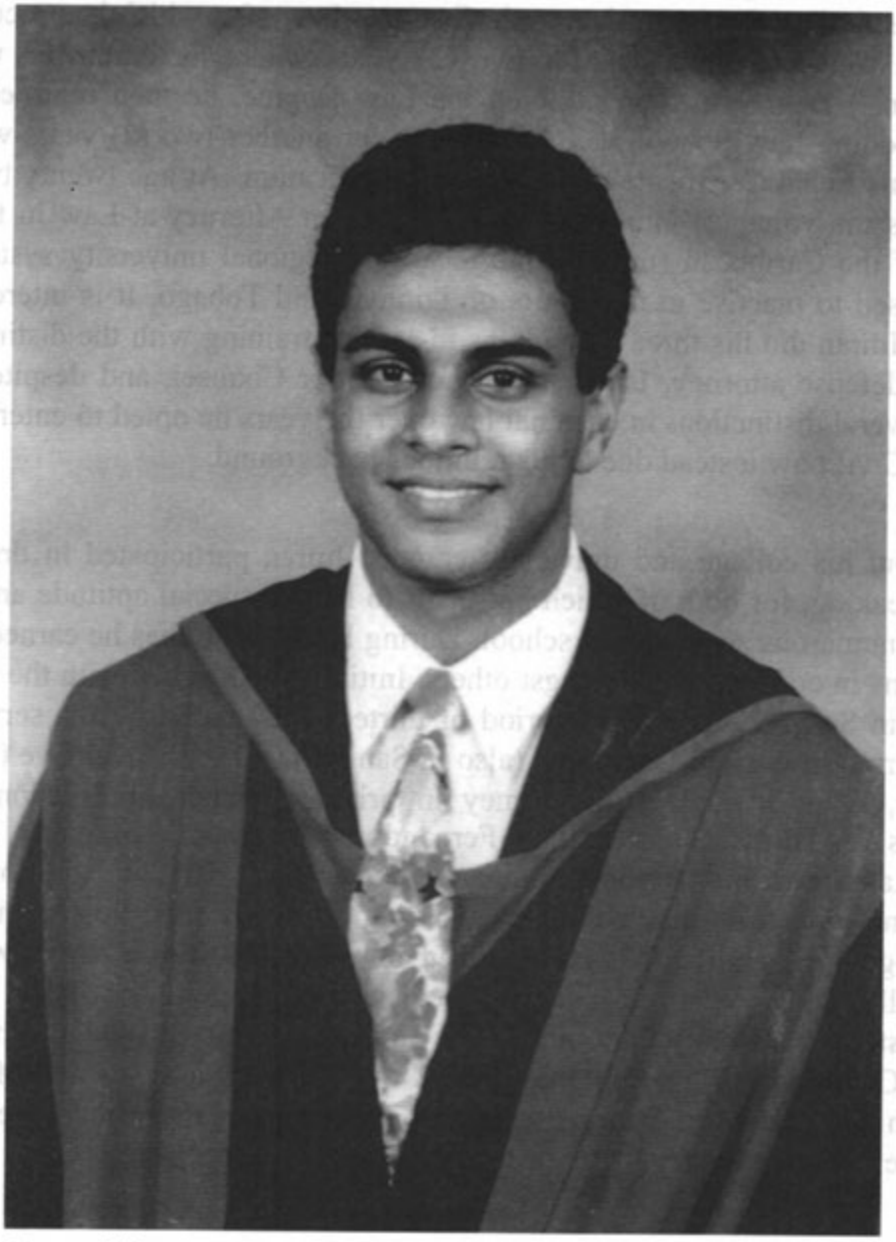
Ralph's son Imran at the tender age of 6, in his favorite "Hulk" tee-shirt at the time. The hallmark of innocence. ***Photo: Courtesy Candid Camera***

Ralph and Jennifer's son Imran (left) and daughter Nadeira (right) at the studios of Radio 90.5FM where Imran hosts the regular weekend program "Mehfil" (2001).
Photo: Haji Ralph D. Khan

Imran Khan, son of Ralph and Jennifer Khan receiving his Student's Bursary (Awarded to eligible Employee's Children) from Mr. La Croix, President of the Ste. Madeleine Credit Union Cooperative Society Limited (2001). ***Photo: Haji Ralph D. Khan***

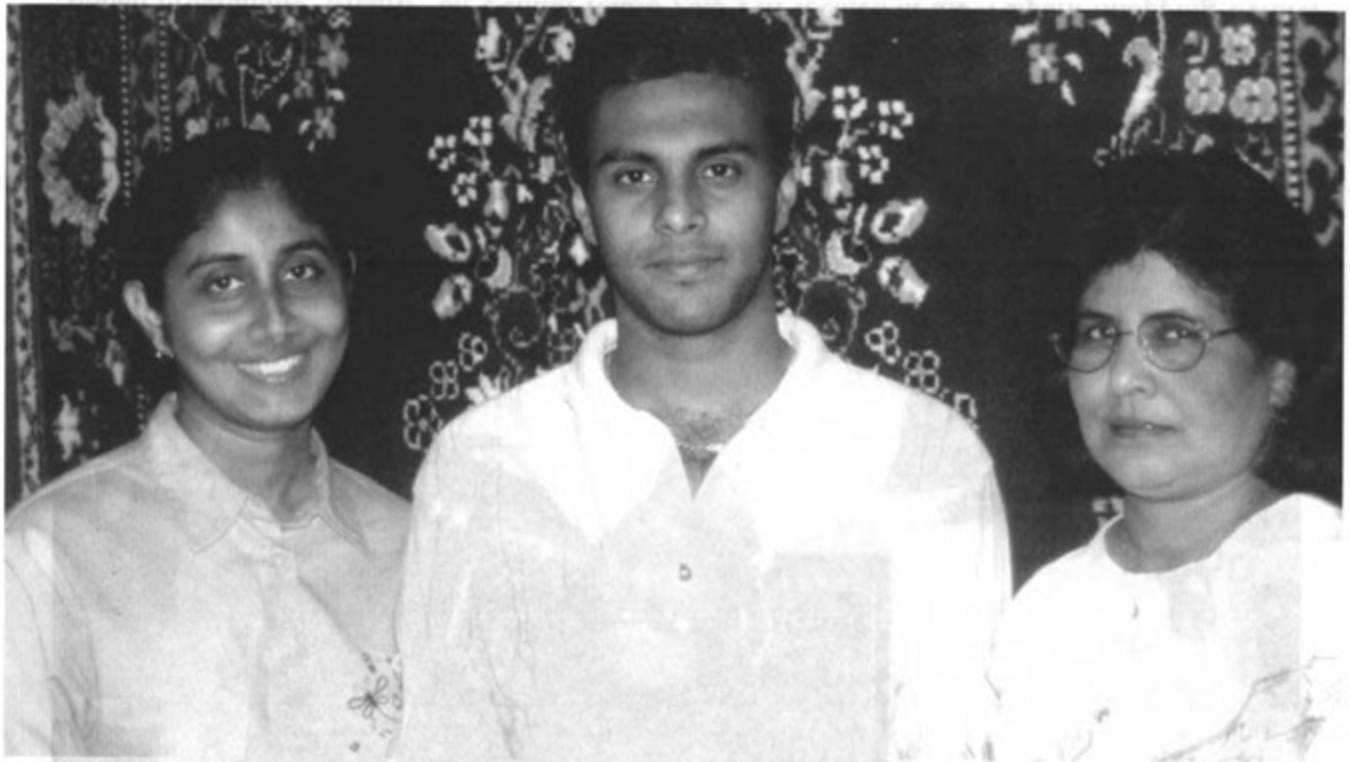
Imran Shazaban Khan attended Naparima Boys' College where he completed both his "O" and "A" levels in a record time of six (6) years, graduating with distinction. At the age of seventeen (17) he had already enrolled at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, to do first year law, after which he proceeded to Cave Hill Campus, Barbados, for two (2) years where he graduated with the LL.B.(Hons.) Degree. After attaining his Law Degree, he then returned to the Hugh Wooding Law School at St. Augustine for another two (2) years where he obtained his Legal Certificate of Education qualification. At age twenty two (22), Imran was the youngest individual to qualify as an Attorney-at-Law in the legal history of the Caribbean (through the local and regional university system) and was licensed to practise in the courts of Trinidad and Tobago. It is interesting to note that Imran did his three (3) months in-service training with the distinguished criminal defense attorney, Israel Khan, now Senior Counsel, and despite having gained several distinctions in criminal law over the years he opted to enter into the realm of Civil Law instead due to his religious background.

Throughout his college and university careers, Imran participated in drama and public speaking, for both of which he seems to have a special aptitude and which won him numerous accolades at school. During his legal studies he earned several distinctions in criminal law amongst others. Initially, he worked with the law firm Dalton's in San Fernando for a period of thirteen (13) months, then served with the law firm Girwar and Deonarine (also in San Fernando) for over five (5) years. Currently, he is a successful attorney in private practice at Freedom House Chambers on Harris Street in San Fernando from where prominent Attorney Anand Ramlogan and Associates operate. Over the years, in addition to his professional duties, he has continued working as a part time host of an Indian radio programme entitled **MEHFIL aired on 90.5 FM Radio every weekend**. Incidentally, he is also host to a television programme on **IBN (Islamic Broadcasting Network) Channel 8 on Sundays** entitled "Who's Who in the Muslim Community." During the writing of this biography he was forced to relinquish his prolonged stint as a bachelor when he married the lovely Hafsa Khan, nee Rahman, on the 7th.August, 2005.



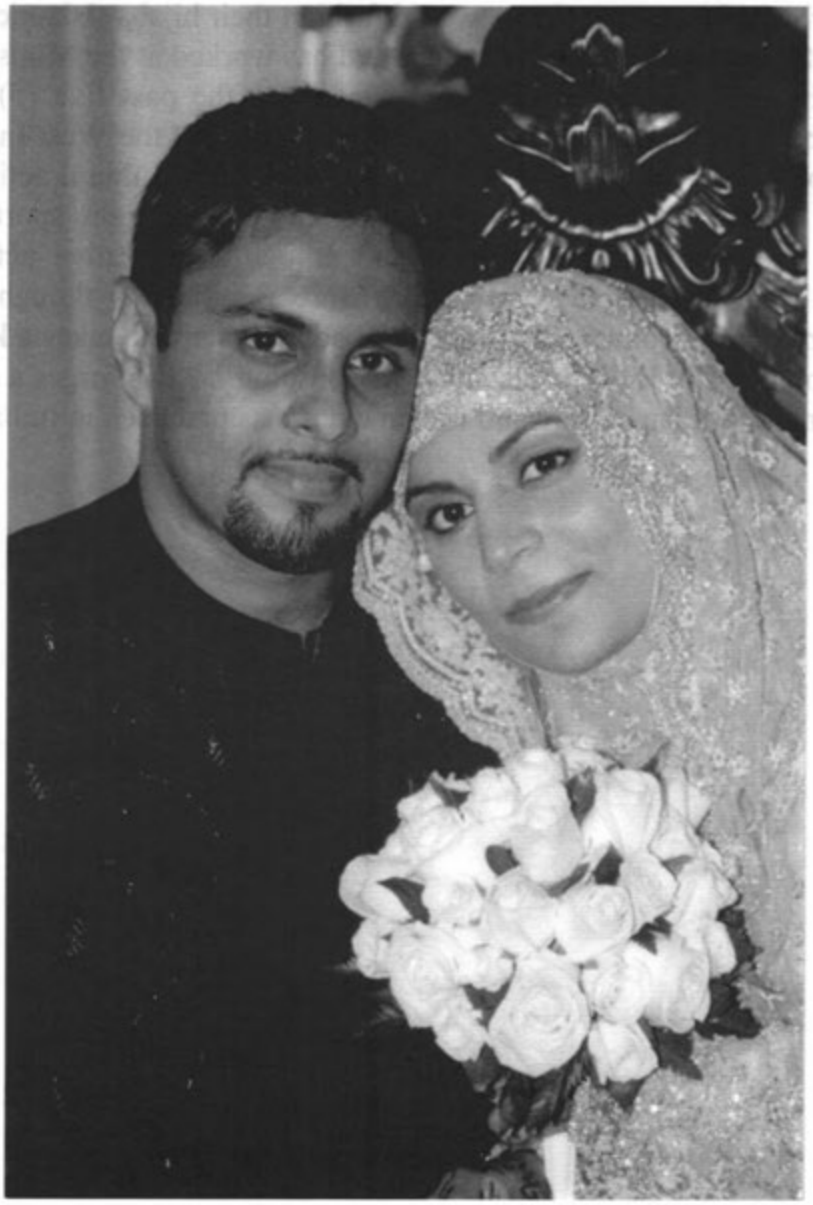
Imran Khan youngest graduate of Hugh Wooding Law School and son of Haji Ralph and Mrs. Jennifer Khan in his University (UWI) Graduation outfit (1996) ***Photo: Courtesy Candid Camera***

Imran Khan, son of Ralph and Mrs. Jennifer Khan, smiles while steadfastly at work as host of the Indian programme 'Mehfil" on Central Radio 90.5 FM located at the Valpark Shopping Centre, Valsayn (2001). ***Photo: Haji Ralph D. Khan***



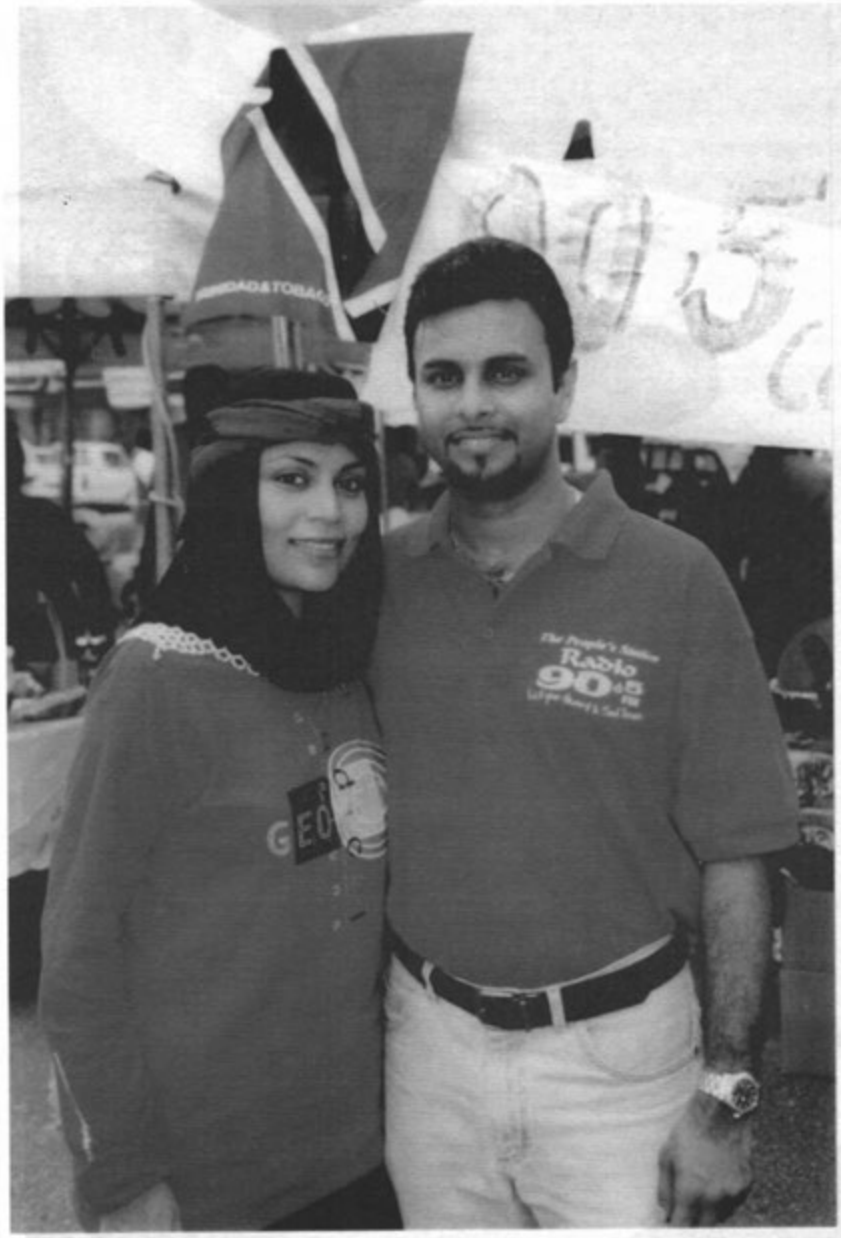
Ralph's daughter Nadeira, son Imran and wife Jennifer take time off for a photograph at the Headquarters of Central Radio 90.5FM, Valpark Shopping Plaza, Valsayn, where Imran hosts the programme, Mehfil, on weekends (2001). ***Photo: Haji Ralph D. Khan***

Originally from Woodbrook, Port of Spain, Hafsa (Imran's wife) recalls being singled out by the public from the tender age of fourteen (14) for the oriental manner in which she and her sisters would fashion their hijabs (Islamic headwear). She has a B.Sc. and an M. Phil in Physics, and has worked at the Ministry of Legal Affairs in the Intellectual Property Department for the past five (5) years after having taught at the Department of Physics, University of the West Indies for one (1) year prior to this. She enjoys participating in Islamic cultural activities, has a passion for baking, is very family oriented and enjoys light sports including badminton. She is an original thinker and enjoys any creative activity, loves reading and writing and is a good orator. More significantly though, like many contemporary Indian women, she is a Bollywood fanatic who takes a keen interest in the developments in Bollywood, since subconsciously, this forges a cultural link between Trinidad-Indian culture and Indian culture as practised in India.



Imran Khan, Attorney-at-Law, son of Haji Ralph Khan and Mrs. Jennifer Khan with his charming bride Hafsa, on their wedding day 7th August, 2005 at the Gulf City Auditorium, Gulf View, La Romain. ***Photo: Courtesy Haseeb Majid***

Family Photo: Left to Right Nadeira (daughter) Ashmead Ali (son in Law, Haji Ralph Khan and Mrs. Jennifer Khan. Seated Front Row: Imran Khan (son) and Hafsa Khan (daughter in Law) August 2005.
Photo: The Rahman Family Album



Haji Ralph and Jennifer Khan's son Imran and his lovely wife Hafsa at the Central Radio 90.5FM Family Day and Cookout, at the Centre Point Mall, Chaguanas (2005)
Photo: Courtesy Central Radio 90.5FM

Haji Ralph Khan's daughter Nadeira, is literally the "apple of his eye." After leaving Grant Memorial Presbyterian School, she attended ASJA Girls' College, San Fernando, where she did her "O" levels. She claims to have enjoyed doing Principles of Business and English in particular. She later successfully completed a one year intensive course in Basic Computer Programming at St. Kevin's College. In addition to this, she also completed a course in journalism with The Association of Freelance Writers in London in 1996. She contributed articles regularly to the daily newspapers at one time; has been a freelance writer for ESSE Magazine (a woman's quarterly publication) and also did courses in international travel and computing and, is legally registered and licensed by the State to market General Insurance products.

Following is a sample of the genuine love and admiration expressed by his children Imran and Nadeira for their father Ralph on the occasion of Father's Day. Although he may not have been physically present as much as they would have liked, both children understood their father's sacrifices for them and shared his dreams and vision. Note that some were done by hand in their earlier years on the father's instruction in order to foster a spirit of creativity and industry.

SORRY ABOUT THE PRICE BUT THAT ITSELF IS PRICELESS!

(Like you always say:)
Our present is — Our Love

To:
Our dad
(The BEST)
(even if he doesn't know it)

One day at a time -
this is enough.
Do not look back and grieve over the past,
for it is gone;
and do not be troubled about the future,
for it has not yet come.
Live in the present
and make it so beautiful that it
will be worth remembering.

We appreciate you and
your efforts and we are and will be
forever greatful.

We honestly (by Allah)
need you - for keeps.

From:
Nadira & Imran

(19th June, 1988)

Although you think that we do not care,
Nevertheless, we will always be here.
If only you knew how much we love you,
Then you would eventually say - you do too.
We know you do and we care so deeply for you, your life, your interests and your dreams - we respect them and you and hope that one day we will all be a happy, loveable family - the way it should be, since we are already unique and special: Thanks to you!

May Allah:
Bless you, help you (with everything) protect you, guide you and be with you always - like He has been, in the past.

Dad, I never dreamed I'd ever do this,
but today I really want to tell you thanks
for the things you wouldn't let me get away with,
the silly alibis and foolish pranks.
And thanks for having rules and sticking to them,
regardless if I claimed they were too tough.
And thanks for always making me hang in there
when you knew I wasn't trying hard enough...

To: Daddy

You know sometimes I thought you were too strict, Dad,
I thought you were too "old" and out of touch,
but these days I just think I'm really lucky
to have a dad who's always cared so much.

Happy Father's Day

With All My Love
and Thanks

Love Lady

19.06.09

A dad's love
doesn't end with our childhood
but grows deeper each year
as we travel through life...
for a dad's love
is unshaken by distance
and untouched by the passing of time.

B.J. Hoff

(August 2000)

Happy "71st. Jetley Boy"

Because today's your Birthday
And you're such a wonderful Dad
This comes to hope that it will be
The best you've ever had;
It also brings a word of thanks
And one of praise, as well,
To tell you you're the kind of Dad
Who's absolutely swell!

Happy Birthday

May Allah grant you many many many more healthy birthdays in future, along with all things good.

Love Hadiy & Imran

Daddy

WHY GOD MADE FATHERS

For everyone upon this earth
God made a father who
Would watch with tender, loving care
His family as it grew . . .

A father to protect his child
From goblins in the night,
With comforting assurances
And hugs so very tight . . .

To teach his child what's right and wrong
And work that must be done,
To share each great adventure
With laughter, tears and fun . . .

Yes, God, in His great wisdom,
Looked down from heaven above
And made a father for each child
To cherish and to love.

This very special greeting, Dad,
Is sent most lovingly
To hope you're just as happy
As you deserve to be...
To tell you you're more wonderful
Than words can ever say,
And wish you every happiness
That comes with Father's Day!

Nadeira & Imran

(14th June 1990)

Ralph and Jennifer Khan's daughter Nadeira, Administrative Manager of Ralico Insurance Services Limited at her desk taking one of the numerous daily calls (1994).
Photo: Haji Ralph D. Khan

Nadeira Yasmin Khan, daughter of Haji Ralph and Mrs. Jennifer Khan photographed at her Wedding Reception - Gulf City Auditorium, Gulf View, La Romain, 27th June, 2003.
Photo: Courtesy Tony Howell

As an individual with a keen interest in business, she has worked competently with her father Ralph as his associate both in his Travel and Insurance Agencies at 24 Rushworth Street West, San Fernando, over the past sixteen (16) years. Although her job can be tiring at times Nadeira derives tremendous fulfillment from her work, is a workaholic like her father and takes an active role in social and Islamic functions and charities. She is a former Executive member of the San Fernando Young Women's Muslim Association. In 2003, she married Ashmead Jamil Ali and continues to assist in his multiple charitable ventures as well.

Ralph's son-in-law, Ashmead, spent some time in England and returned to Trinidad as a qualified Chartered Accountant. At present though, he has distinguished himself as a general contractor supplying individuals and groups with different kinds of equipment including backhoes, trucks, trailers, and more particularly, he supplies building materials comprising sand and gravel to the major contractors in Trinidad and Tobago. He does very extensive charity work by providing both physical and financial resources; contributing building materials and cash for the erection of churches, temples and mosques particularly. Recently, he erected his private mosque on Cipero Road, Jordan Hill (on the outskirts of San Fernando) which is becoming very popular for hosting open air Islamic functions and is currently in the process of constructing an Islamic Medical Centre. He loves Indian culture and once sponsored an Indian Music Band. He lives with his wife Nadeira at Palmiste, South Trinidad. Ralph Khan has therefore ensured that both his children are comfortably settled for the future, with individuals both compatible and complementary to their own dispositions.

Haji Ralph Khan stands proudly with his daughter Nadeira on the occasion of her Wedding Reception at the Gulf City Auditorium, Gulf City, La Romain, on the 27th June, 2003.

Photo: Courtesy Tony Howell

Ralph and Jennifer's son-in-law Ashmead Ali, shares something of personal interest with his beautiful and adorable wife, Nadeira Khan, at their Wedding Reception, the Gulf City Auditorium, Gulf City, La Romain, 27th June, 2003.
Photo: Courtesy Tony Howell

Nadeira (daughter of Haji Ralph and Mrs. Jennifer Khan) and Ashmead Ali (son of Haji and Hajin Tahir Ali) stand together as man and wife at their Wedding Reception, Gulf City Auditorium, Gulf City, La Romain, on the 27th June, 2003
Photo: Courtesy Tony Howell

As mentioned before, Ralph has spent much time away from his family, much to his regret. His vocational and social commitments took a heavy toll on the length and quality of time he spent with his family. During his career in the insurance industry for instance, he spent lengthy periods on business; visiting relatives abroad or fulfilling commitments to various social groups and organisations with which he was associated be it in an executive capacity, or otherwise. Following his attendance at the Canada Life's 1961 Convention in Canada, on account of his remarkable success with his new company, Maritime Life (Caribbean) Limited, in the year 1975, Ralph was offered a one-month all expenses paid vacation trip to the United States of America sponsored by his company's South Agency managed by Farouj Wihby. In 1976 he qualified for and attended the Maritime Life's Biennial Convention at the Intercontinental Hotel, in Rose Hall, Montego Bay, Jamaica. In the year 1982, Ralph also attended the Maritime Life's Biennial Convention held at the Sonesta Beach Resort and Tennis Club, in Key Biscayne, Miami.

The majority of these international conventions lasted a maximum of a week or so with Ralph extending some of them on vacation incorporating visits to siblings many of whom live abroad. In 1984, Ralph also qualified for and attended the prestigious Million Dollar Round Table Conference held at the Radio City Hall (New York). And, it was also in the year 1984 that Ralph, in his capacity as Public Relations Officer of the Trinidad and Tobago All Fours League {which then comprised one hundred and two (102) clubs throughout the country}, was instrumental in taking along a group of thirty six (36) local players to visit the cities of Toronto and Montreal (Canada) for an entire month participating in competitive All Fours matches eventually emerging victorious in all games played in these two Canadian cities.

In the year 1985 Ralph also qualified and participated in the prestigious Million Dollar Round Table Conference held in San Francisco, United States of America. And, as recently as 2004, Ralph once more attended the Maritime Financial Group's Biennial Convention held at the Sunset Beach Resort and Spa in Montego Bay, Jamaica. His next company sponsored business trip will hopefully occur in 2006 when the insurance fraternity of the Maritime Financial Group will assemble in Cuba.

Ralph Khan (2nd. Lt. middle row) with other Maritime Qualifiers and Management photographed during the company's Biennial Convention at the popular Sonesta Beach Resort and Tennis Club, Key Biscayne, Miami (1982). ***Photo: Courtesy Maritime Financial Group***

Jennifer Khan, wife of Haji Ralph Khan with buggy handlers at the scenic Niagara Falls grounds during their vacation in Canada, in the year 2000. ***Photo: Haji Ralph D. Khan***

Jennifer (left) Ralph Khan (centre) and their lovely daughter Nadeira (right) enjoying the scenic views and sites in the City of Brockville, Canada, 2000.
Photo: the Khan Familyy Album

Jennifer and her husband Ralph Khan enjoying a peaceful and loving moment together while vacationing in Canada, 2000. ***Photo: the Khan Family Album***

Ralph Khan (2nd row 3rd. from Rt.) at Maritime Life's Biennial Convention at the Aruba Hilton in company of his Branch Manager Farouj Wihby (top row extreme rt.) Managing Director Mervyn de Souza (back row 7th. Rt.) and other Maritimers – 1984.
Photo: Courtesy Maritime Financial Group

Haji Ralph Khan (centre, front row) with other Maritimers including the company's CEO/Managing Director John H. Smith (top row 2nd. from Rt.) at the Maritime Financial Group's Biennial Convention at the Sunset Beach Resort and Spa, Montego Bay, Jamaica, 2004.
Photo: Courtesy Maritime Financial Group

In retrospect, Ralph feels that there is nothing he could really change as an insurance agent; he socialized much; worked extremely hard even on weekends and public holidays. Sometimes, his work day did not end until 8 or 9 o'clock at night, or even much later, which made him realize that the hours were too long and his family life was suffering. Interestingly though, he claims to have had much fun as well. He felt that he needed to re-align his family life and bring back a sense of balance between what he wanted to do and what he needed to do. He realized that being busy was like flying and the further one went, the more was left behind.

The year 1988 marked a significant watershed in Ralph Khan's life. Having considered the toll his job and social commitments were having on his family, he then decided to re-arrange his priorities. He therefore made a complete turnaround in life totally abandoning the use of all ingredients/materials prohibited by his religion Islam and started devoting himself more freely to his family. Therefore, as part and parcel of this new self-image, Ralph Khan decided to shed his old habits and re-orient his life in a completely different way. He realised that by having socialized with many individuals on a professional level, he had cultivated many strategic alliances; he had encountered many friendly opponents and a few genuine friends. Consequently, in an effort to cultivate more genuine and lasting relationships, Ralph decided to perform the Hajj (Pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Saudi Arabia) in the year 1988.

The Hajj Pilgrimage is one of the five pillars and fundamentals of Islam. It is regarded as the journey of a lifetime, the seal of consummation, the completion of man's complete surrender to the will of God Almighty, and the perfection of religion. It is recorded in the Holy Qur'an that it was during the Holy Pilgrimage that God sent down his revelation to the Holy Prophet Muhammad. Additionally, the Prophet Muhammad (u.w.b.p.) said: ***"He who makes Pilgrimage to the House - avoiding indecent and immoral behaviour - emerges from his sins like a newborn babe."*** Needless to say, this visit held some salient features for Ralph and made many lasting impressions on him.

While in Mecca for the thirty-day period Ralph claims that he was surrounded by a mosaic of the world's population. As a socially conscious individual, he significantly observed that in spite of their varying status in their different and respective communities and countries, here all men were similarly draped in the ihram (two sheets of unsewn white cloth). This garment indeed acted as a leveller or a medium of equality for the meek and the wealthy alike - kings, princes and paupers were similarly adorned according to divine law. This garment rendered it impossible to determine the status of anyone. Women, on the other hand, were

fully clothed. To him, this was an unparalleled phenomenon which vividly lingers on in his memory to this day. Ralph claims this to be a most fascinating exhibition of the oneness of mankind and an unparalleled display of the equality of man regardless of his or her social or economic status in life.

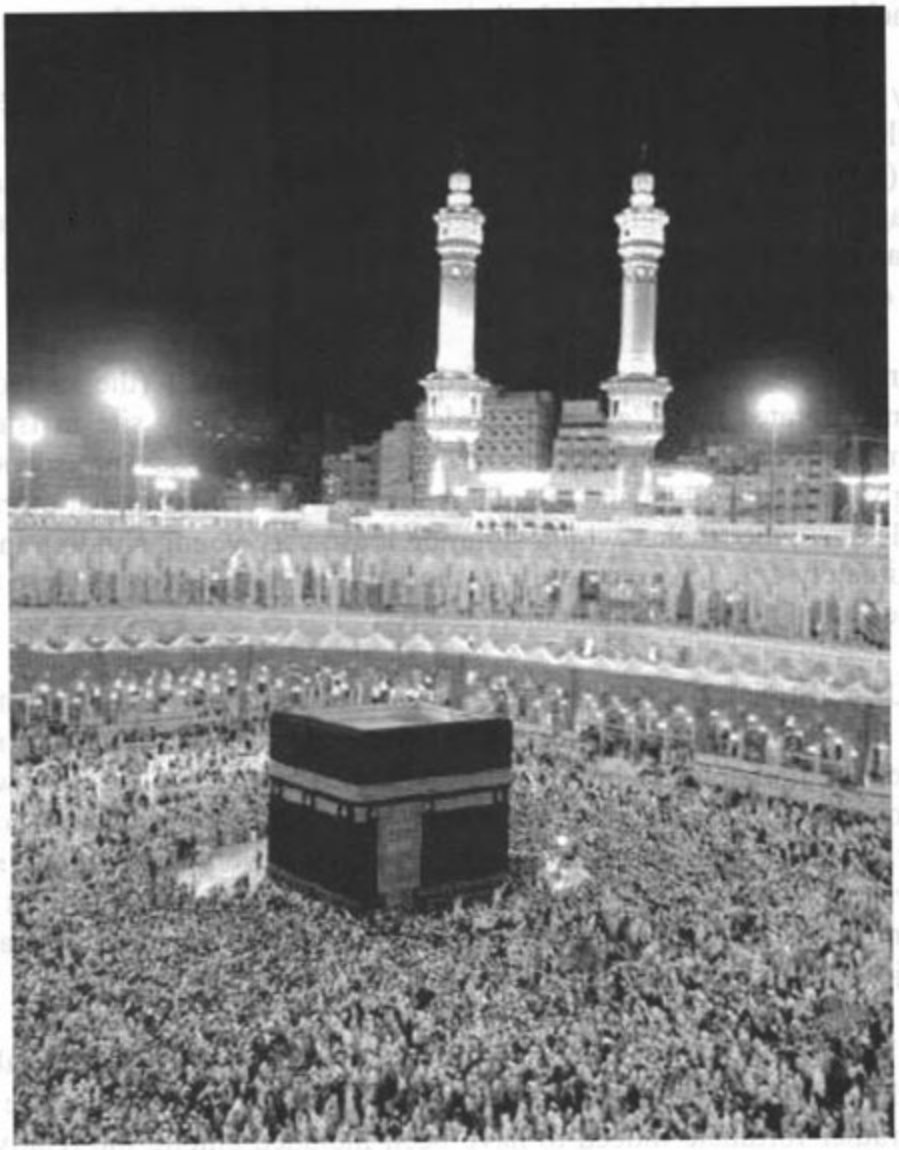
(L-R back Row) Haji Sahid Iqbal Mohammed (dec), Haji Dr. Aleem Mohammed, Haji Ralph Khan, Haji Dr. Nazir Abdool (dec.), and seated at front are Haji Latiff Mohammed (dec.) and Imam Tayab Hosein **in Ihram** during the Hajj Pilgrimage, Saudi Arabia (1988). ***Photo: The Khan Family Album***

According to their itinerary, participants were to visit Mecca for ten (10) days, followed by Medina, then return to Mecca before making their journey back home. While in Mecca, Ralph had to routinely perform prayers five times daily. These episodes were interspersed with some shopping, then pilgrims returned to their respective hotels. In Medina, different rites were performed and Ralph visited the Prophet's (u.w.b.p.) tomb. It is on the plains of "Arafat" though that the actual Hajj (Pilgrimage) takes place. Ralph recalls with great interest having had the unique privilege of visiting the cave at Mount Hira where the Prophet Muhammad (u.w.b.p.) reportedly received his first revelations.

According to Professor Syed Ali Ashraf, '**Arafaat/Arafat** means: "The Valley of recognition" and is situated twelve (12) miles from the City of Makkah, the spot where the pilgrims stay on the 9th. day of the Hajj Pilgrimage. Among others, Ralph recalls the following rituals being performed during the Hajj:

1) Putting on the ***Ihram***
2) Circumambulating (going around) the K'abah seven (7) times
3) A brisk walk between the two hills, al-Safa and al-Marwah near the K'abah
4) Visiting and spending three (3) days at Mina (a wish - so called because Prophet Adam wished for Paradise in this valley), 'Arafat and Muzdalifah.
5) Throwing pebbles at three (3) places in Mina (where Satan unsuccessfully tried to mislead Ismaal and Ibraham who drove him away by throwing stones at him)
6) Having one's hair cut short or shaven
7) Sacrifice of an animal; cow, goat, sheep or camel (specially selected, i.e.without defects)

For Ralph Khan, apart from its spiritual aspect, Hajj was very significant because it allowed him to mingle with people from across the globe. He noted also that despite the fact that the Western media portrays the Middle East as backward and downtrodden, and the abode of fundamentalists and terrorists, he discovered that the region is wealthy and prosperous, bustling with activity, with all the amenities of modern day living; huge roadways; palatial buildings and modern American style cars and clothing. He indicated that Saudi Arabia is a tax-free state where commodity prices are very affordable including the latest gents' wear originating mainly from the United States of America.



The Holy K'abah located at the centre of the Haram Shareef (the Sacred Mosque in Mecca) illuminated with millions of people in circumambulation (photo taken at night).

Source: ***http://members.virtualtourist.com/m/67ebe/1b91ac/***

The K'abah is the first place of worship in the world, originally built by Prophet Adam (p.b.u.h.), and later renovated by Prophet Abraham (p.b.u.h.). The Black Stone, held as a sacred object, is built into the wall of the K'abah.

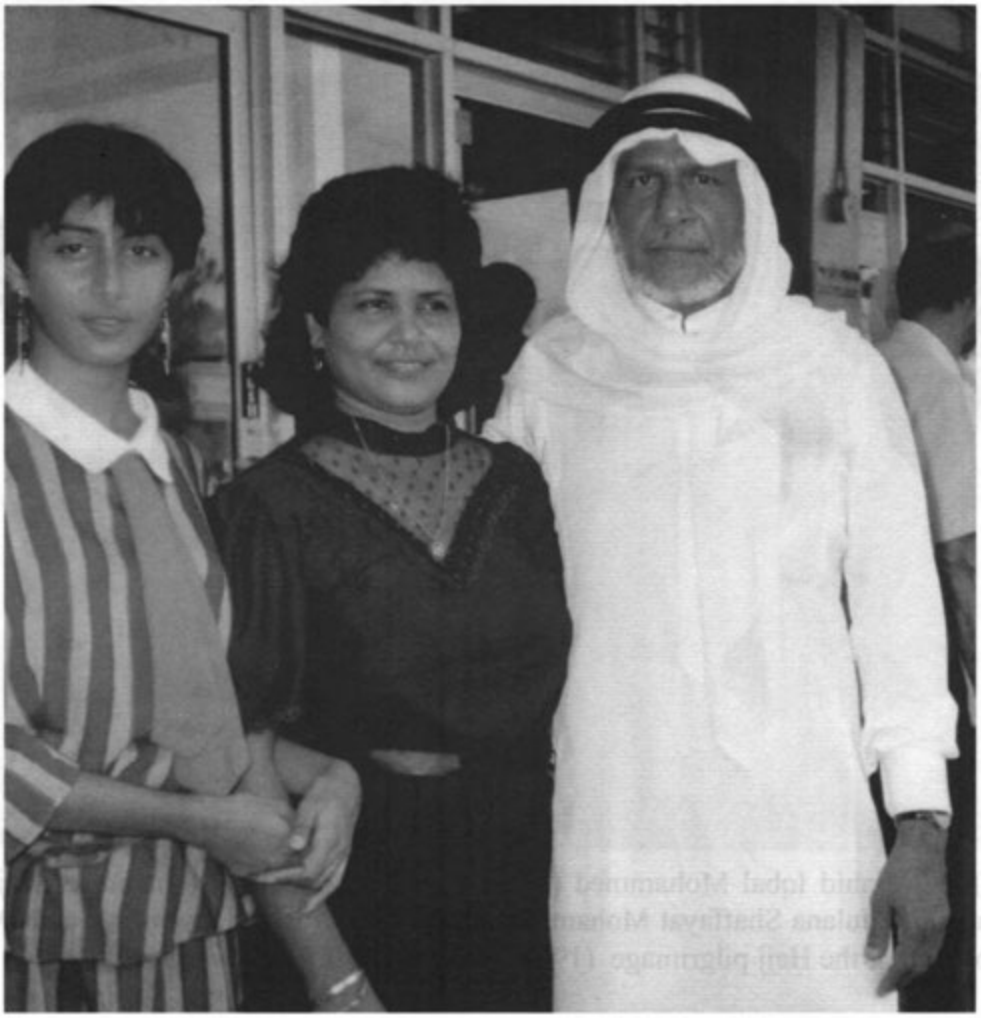
The city which is closed to non-Muslims is the spiritual capital for the 200 million plus followers of Muhammad (peace be upon him). As many as two and a half million (2,500,000) pilgrims, or even more, visit the city during the annual Hajj, or pilgrimage. One of the greater distinguishing features of the pilgrimage to the Holy Land is the diversity of peoples consisting of every single hue, race and country on planet earth.

While in Mecca, on the top floor of the **Haram Shareef** (the sacred mosque) which incorporates the **K'abah** (regarded as the most holy site in Islam) Ralph and some of his companions also visited the Madrassa (pre-school). Quite amazingly, to Ralph Khan and the others, was the revelation that at a certain point in their lessons, the teacher would summon these very young children individually {approximately five (5) years old} to the front of the class who were all able to recite the Holy Qur'an from memory.

Ralph Khan also noted with great awe the low level of crime which exists in Saudi Arabia. In a region where offenders would have their hands severed for stealing, it was indeed remarkable for him to witness and to experience the ease with which proprietors would advertise and trade their high quality jewellery without fear of banditry. Saudi Arabia is a tax free republic so it was very profitable to shop there (gold was especially cheap) and because of the prevailing law, it is rather interesting to witness the spectacle of just one or two individuals managing their various jewellery stores without incident.

In 1992, Ralph was again called away from his family as he was specially invited to visit the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a special guest of the State. He considers himself rather fortunate indeed to have been included among the relatively small number of twenty (20) persons specially selected from different countries of the world to perform the **Umrah,** (the smaller of the two pilgrimages) which involves performing fewer rituals than the real Hajj itself. This visit took place during the holy and blessed month of Ramad?n (fasting) in March of 1992.

(L-R) Haji Sahid Iqbal Mohammed (dec.), Haji Dr. Aleem A.Mohammed, Haji Ralph Khan, and Maulana Shaffayat Mohammed all dressed in Islamic wear in Saudi Arabia on completion of the Hajj pilgrimage (1988). ***Photo: The Khan Family Album***



Haji Ralph Khan (right) in Middle Eastern outfit meets his daughter Nadeira (left) and wife Jennifer (centre) at the Piarco International Airport on his return to Trinidad having completed the Hajj Pilgrimage (1988). ***Photo: The Khan Family Album***

Haji Ralph Khan claims that just before one lands in the Holy Land, Saudi Arabia, the question of everyday living goes into oblivion and one becomes completely suffused by an extremely spiritual aura. During his three-week visit Ralph recalls that the Public Relations Officer of the government of Saudi Arabia had a pre-planned itinerary for the "chosen few." Among others, they visited the vast compound where the Holy Qur'an was being reproduced along with other Islamic items such as video cassettes and tapes; had audience with the Saudi Royalty; met with several dignitaries and officials, and visited many sites and places of interest there. Being able to witness for the first time the unusually large mounds of dates (fruits of the date palm) put out for sale, and harvested from desert land proved to be an unforgettable experience

He also recalls significantly that in the main centre, the Haram Shareef (Holy Shrine) in Mecca, when the time came to break the fast, (for this visit was during the month of Ramadan - the month of fasting) quite surprisingly, individuals were not allowed to take in provisions to break the day's fast. He said they were made to return outside the premises and distribute these provisions to the poor and needy in a bid to promote and cultivate a climate of charity, as well as for security reasons. He remarked however that such action not only constituted a perfect "security measure" but more importantly, pilgrims eventually were more than adequately provided for with an abundance of foodstuff and other provisions at the time of breaking the fast, courtesy of the state. Photography within the precincts of the main masajid (mosques) in the cities of Mecca and Medina is strictly forbidden, he noted.

Having performed the Hajj (Pilgrimage), Ralph Khan has devoted his remaining years to the building and perpetuation of a strong spiritual foundation for both his immediate family, and also by contributing and sharing his knowledge and services generously to the members of the mosque in his area and to the Muslim community and others in general In this way, it is hoped he would have made a significant contribution to posterity.

CHAPTER V

RALPH KHAN – The Man, His Ideas and His Contribution

If one were to describe Ralph Khan's philosophy of life in one sentence he would most probably say that "his trust in himself has taught him how to live." When one enters his office on 24 Rushworth Street West, San Fernando, one is immediately struck by the extent to which his versatile personality is reflected in its décor. A series of Dale Carnegie's self help writings adorn his bookshelf, side by side with copies of the Holy Qur'an and several texts on psychology and insurance. The walls are all adorned/draped with his various awards and certificates both local and international, while memorabilia and souvenirs from his extensive travels serve as a natural divider between his Insurance business and his Travel Agency.

By nature Ralph Khan is both charming and amusing, and has a very amiable manner. He has a wonderful sense of humour, is conscientious and reliable in his work, and approaches every endeavour in a level-headed and sensible way. He takes his time in making decisions and usually gets his way. He has many genuine friends and is very supportive towards the members of his family. A deep thinker, Ralph likes to meditate and reflect. He is always looking for ways to channel his various skills. Always one to accept a challenge, he is a skilful organizer, has considerable business acumen and is a shrewd investor. He almost always relies on his own judgment and hates being hurried into making a quick decision. And although he has a good sense of humour, he can sometimes appear solitary and reserved. Ralph is thorough in all that he does and is confident and quick thinking.

Ralph firmly believes in setting standards in anything he embarks upon. Once given sufficient freedom to develop his own ideas and plans he performs well, for instance, apart from being articulate and a gifted orator he is a prolific writer and has contributed various well-researched papers and letters to both Parliament and to the various local newspapers as well. He appreciates the finer things in life; enjoys good food, and often takes a keen interest in the arts. Recently, Ralph compiled a "CD" with a variety of Islamic Songs which are currently being aired on radio stations in Canada, the USA, Guyana, Suriname, and Trinidad as well. He enjoys reading immensely and is invariably drawn to subjects such as philosophy, political thought, religion, photography and Indian culture.

He is an original thinker and relies heavily on intuition. He prefers to proceed at his own pace and to do what he wants. He is very much his own master and throughout his life he has fed his versatile nature by experimenting with many things. Justice, fair play and integrity, have been the recurring concerns which appear in many of Ralph Khan's contributions; whether they have been delivered orally in Parliament or through the pages of local newspapers.

Haji Ralph Khan in typical business attire about to leave for a meeting of Agents Emeritus at the Maritime Financial Group's Headquarters, #29 Tenth Street, Barataria, 2001. ***Photo: The Khan Family Album***

Senator The Hon. Haji Ralph Khan (left) H. E. The U.S. Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago Ms. Sally Cowal, Mrs. Jennifer Khan, Sen. The Hon. Sahadeo Basdeo-Minister of External Affairs and External Trade and Mrs. Basdeo at Ambassador's residence, Flagstaff Hill (1991). ***Photo: The Khan Family Album***

Senator The Hon. Haji Ralph D. Khan in conversation with the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago H.E. Noor Hassanali, the Min. of Education Gloria Henry and others at the Secondary School's Art Festival, Naparima Bowl, San Fernando (1991). ***Photo: The Khan Family Album***

To fully appreciate the depth of his ideas and his offerings a synopsis initially of his Parliamentary debates is presented hereunder.

Summary of Contribution in the Senate
Re: National Trust Bill – June, 11th 1990

Haji Ralph Khan opined that the Government's attempt to preserve landmarks of historical significance and national heritage should receive unanimous support, a fully nationalistic and "universal" type of support.

He felt that the timing of the Bill was inopportune and came as an anti-climax within a context of continuous neglect, erosion, and physical destruction of our historical heritage especially in the post-independence era.

In his contribution Ralph confined his comments to places of interest, particularly in the southern districts, since as a Southerner, he had witnessed the contempt and neglect with which southerners had been treated for years.

The first historical area of our national heritage to be mentioned was the Palmiste Estate, consisting of forty acres. For Ralph, this was significant since it constituted a part of the rich heritage involving experiments with a history of three generations of Scottish aristocracy, slave labour and indentured Indians for whom the "barrack system" formed an important feature of their very existence. Ralph suggested that this pasture could be converted into a national park, having a rich history of sports and culture for it was there the cricket field witnessed the emergence of world famous players like Sonny Ramadhin and Learie Constantine, Oscar Roach, Sonny Beekhee, "Shortie," Samaroo and many other outstanding cricketing stars.

Summary of Contribution in the Senate
Re: Land Acquisition – Tuesday, February 05, 1991

Government usually expropriated land (agricultural and deployed land) taking many years, sometimes seven to ten (7-10) years to compensate the respective owners with a sum way below the real market value. In debating the issue of land acquisition, Ralph Khan regarded this as a perennial problem which needed to be addressed. In spite of the paucity of funds which may have been available at that time, he suggested that since in its budget preparations governments normally

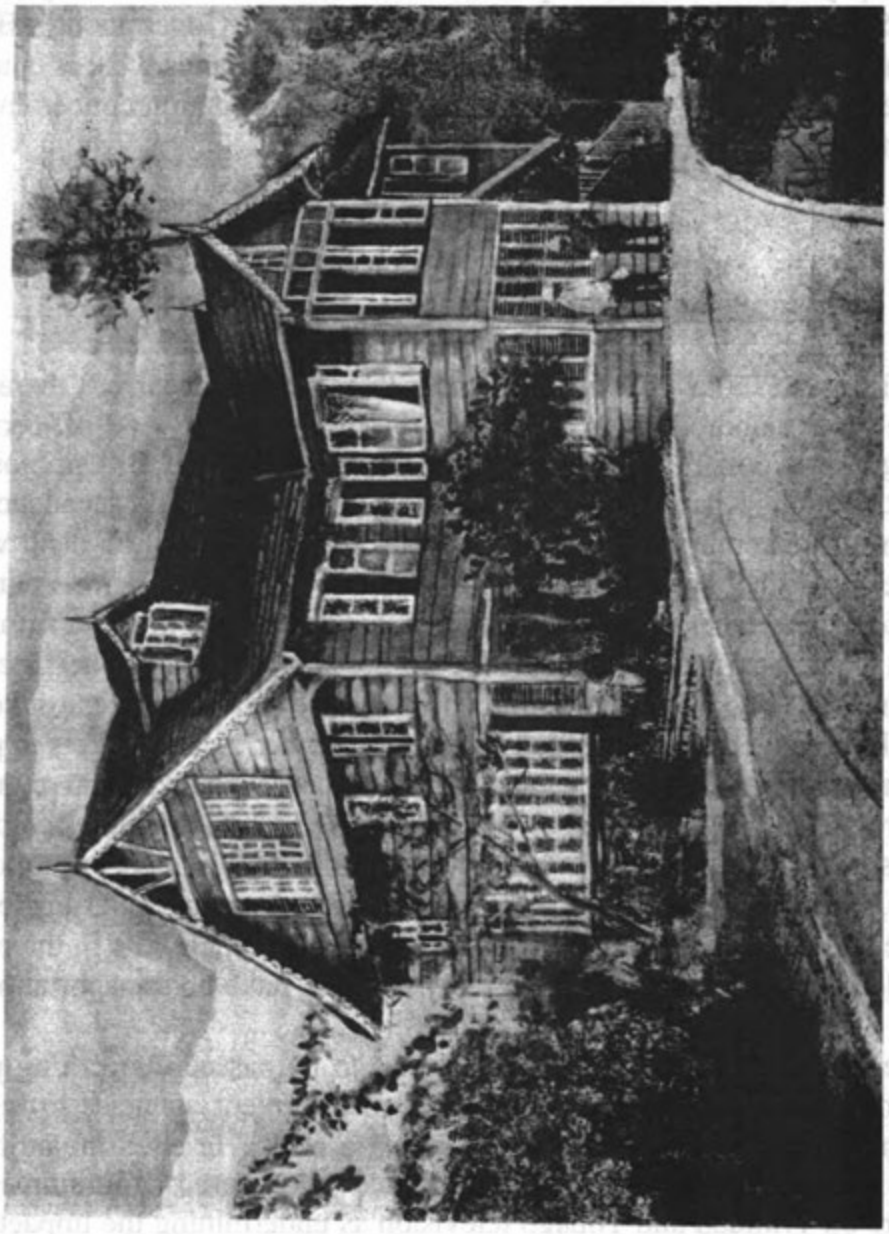
allocated funds for different contingencies, then in that context that some meaningful mechanism or policy should be established for future land acquisition by government. Ralph's view was endorsed by Senator Motilal Moonan who suggested that Government should make the necessary arrangements to immediately pay citizens and companies whose lands had been acquired. As Opposition Senators, they reiterated their support for the Government's Bill but persisted that monies be paid within six months after such lands were acquired. It is instructive to note however, that since this debate, the situation concerning land acquisition by government has changed drastically.

Summary of Contribution in Senate
Re: Security Firms – Tuesday, May 21, 1991

It is significant to note that at the time this debate occurred there were approximately one hundred (100) security firms in the country and officers were paid a meager two dollars ($2.00) per hour. In supporting a Bill proposed by Government, Ralph Khan felt that in view of the general decadence and degeneration in the country the issue of security firms could not be dealt with in isolation. He suggested that corruption existed not only in security firms but that it had permeated every facet of society and since many workers in these firms were treated with contempt and acrimony they could not perform at their best. He contended that the issue had to be examined within the broader context of security which must be managed and controlled by the Government, that workers in private security firms, the police service and defence force as well, sought redress in different forms and that the problem of indiscipline was rampant. According to him, while some of the complaints and shortcomings highlighted by policemen, for example, were genuine, they were often used as a ruse or cover-up for non-performance. He cited one common example of when a vehicle was in the process of being stolen, the police were quick to reply that "we have no transportation."

Ralph suggested that it would be futile for laws to be passed concerning private security firms without the proper authority or management agencies to regulate, control, manage, and monitor the affairs of such a body. He cited the attitude of the foreign media in particular which portrayed uncensored programmes of a violent nature on Trinidad and Tobago television as undermining the impact of the Government's motion. He felt that teenagers who had left school seeking guidance were vulnerable to movies which promoted a life of crime as the panacea to all of one's problems and suggested that the administration had a more crucial

role to play in managing and controlling the operations of these private security firms.



The original Great House at Palmiste Estate in earlier times, occupied by Sir Norman Lamont – owner of the Palmiste estate. ***Photo: Courtesy Camp-Campins***

Dr. S. Rambachan, a government minister at the time, informed Ralph that Palmiste Estate was in fact mortgaged to the National Insurance Property Development Company by the developers. He further added that he had approached this Company and they had given permission to allow the development of the forty acres into a botanical garden. The Ministry of Environment and National Service had pledged to have a national service programme put into place in order to develop the pasture. Of course, not being on the Government's side, Ralph was not privy to such information and suggested that time alone would tell what progress would be made, if any at all.

The second historical landmark highlighted by Ralph which he felt should be revisited: was the famous "Sagrado Tomb" in San Fernando, once visited by people from all over the island. Built by the Spaniards before the end of the twentieth century, it was thoroughly neglected, then abandoned and, eventually was gradually washed away into the sea. Ralph suggested that in the absence of money, a tombstone with a plaque might suffice to commemorate this legend.

Haji Ralph then focused on the third historical landmark: the Point-a-Pierre Bridge in Marabella which was the site of duels between slaves and their masters; it was at the Guaracara River that the slaves used to come up for their "vital supplies". He suggested that this site should be recognized and become a permanent part of the emancipation struggle.

The fourth landmark of historical significance cited by Haji Ralph was "Strikers Village" in Point Fortin. He felt that this area represented the struggle of labour which is an integral part of our history and the name change for the area which the Government was contemplating at that time was unfair, unpatriotic and irrational. He claimed that a name change was ironical and illogical if we were seeking to preserve our national heritage.

Haji Ralph Khan then highlighted the need for the construction of a museum in San Fernando. He explained that there was a building in San Fernando called the Norwegian Building, built by the Norwegians who often visited the country, equipped and outfitted their own building with furniture; which they handed over to the city fathers of San Fernando. He lamented that instead of converting this historic building into a museum, the authorities transformed it into a civic centre, the Paradise Civic Centre. In the process, the unique history of the building was destroyed and curiously all the antique furniture donated to the authorities at that

time was unaccounted for, not that he was imputing dishonesty on the part of anyone.

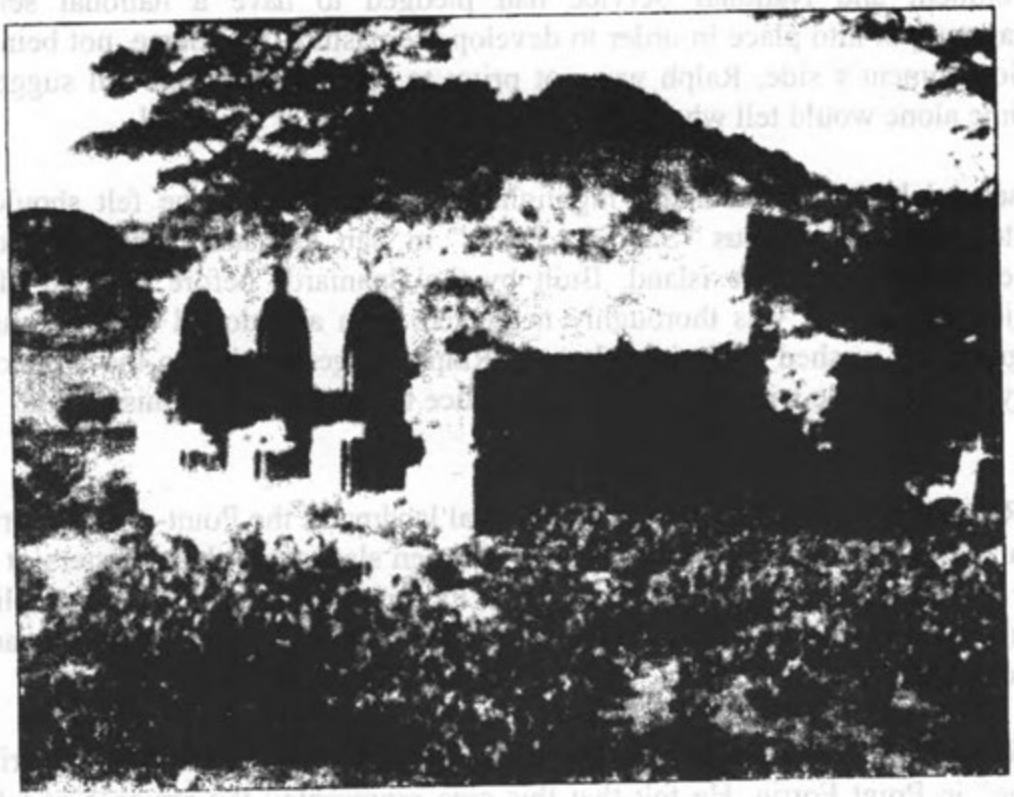


Photo of the famous Sagrado Tomb in Paradise Pasture, San Fernando (many years ago) washed into the Gulf of Paria due to constant erosion. The Roodal Cemetery now stands adjacent to its former site.
Photo: The Trinidad Guardian 24th October 1994

Ralph's next major concern was Farallon/Farellon Island, a small island off the sea coast of San Fernando at King's wharf in the Gulf of Paria,. He explained that a beautiful house was left there generations ago and he recollected that as a high school student over forty years ago, there were private entrepreneurs who made the island a thriving business, by taking people there for boat rides. The island facilitated outings, excursions, and weddings and served as a famous resort, a venture he felt could be resuscitated `because it had potential for generating local and foreign income.

Ralph then shifted his focus to the "Moruga fete." He noted that for twenty five (25) years, the people of Moruga preserved the event with great pomp, pageantry and drama. He felt that the event should be restored and an appropriate fixture be erected to commemorate this historical landmark.

Ralph continued to highlight the importance of the establishment of a Transportation Museum. According to him, at that time, the Public Transport Service Corporation had built a new terminal building at King's Wharf in San Fernando and therefore the old Trinidad Government Railway Building with its strong foundation could have been converted into a Transportation Museum. He argued that if this was done it could have brought back the legend of what was known as the Cipero Tramway. He felt that the recreation of such a system would be a tremendous money spinner; since contemporary youth, motivated by sheer curiosity to see a tramcar would flock to see the system because of its novelty.

The San Fernando Hill was Ralph's next focal point. He noted that in recent years, there had been a tremendous transformation of the Hill. He felt that the Government should spare no effort in capitalizing on the wide variety of indigenous orchids found on the San Fernando Hill; which had been discovered by Professor Julian Kenny during his jaunts there in 1988 and 1989. These rare species of orchids had been in existence for years and Ralph argued that their upkeep and protection would not require spending large sums of money - the crucial question he felt was in the interest of preserving our national heritage, and who would assume the responsibility for such an undertaking.

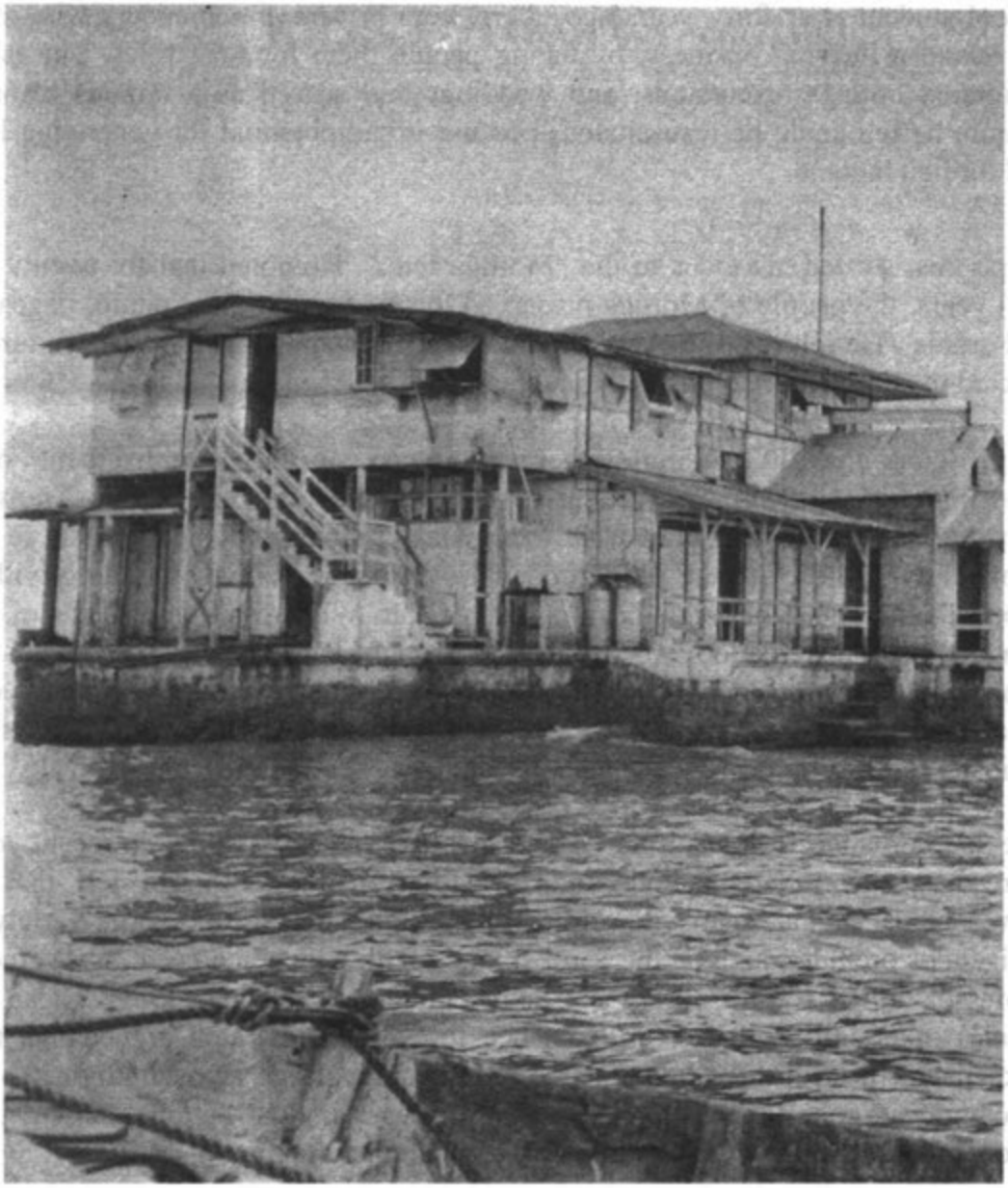


Photo of Farallon Island off the western coastline of the City of San Fernando in the Gulf of Paria as it stood many years ago. **Photo:** ***Courtesy Rahaman Printery Limited.***

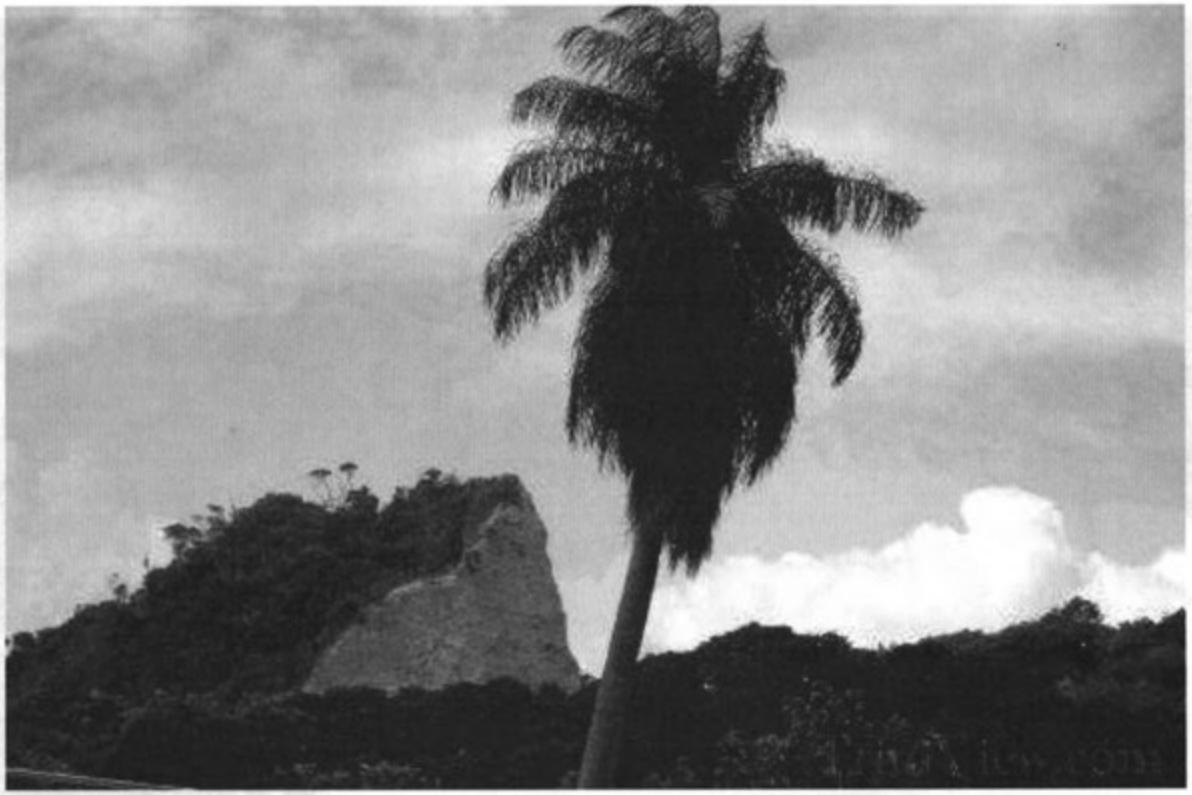


Photo of the popular San Fernando Hill in it's relatively early years being indiscriminately cut away by miners. ***Source: http://triniview.com/album/SF-Hill/sf3112054826***

Current view of the San Fernando Hill as it appears nowadays with its well paved driveway, play park and other recreational facilities.
Source: ***http://triniview.com/album/SF-Hill/sf3112054843***

Ralph's next major concern was the establishment of a permanent exhibition site at Union Park. He felt that Union Park Estate should be acquired by Government and made into a permanent exhibition site. Furthermore, Ralph proposed that the site be subdivided into four quadrants: **(a)** Historical - to cater for a museum reflecting our operations in the production of sugar, oil, asphalt, cement and other basic products, **(b)** Economic - displaying our locally available and marketable manufactured goods and services, **(c)** Human - which exemplifies our national heroes e.g. Adrian Cola Rienzi and Tubal Uriah "Buzz" Butler as a source of inspiration to posterity and **(d)** Production - the establishment of cottage industries to display local handicrafts which would attract a great degree of foreign exchange.

Ralph's final proposal was that "Merikin Village" in Moruga be developed. "Merikin Village" in Moruga was/is the origin of the Baptist movement established by the American soldiers who had been settled after the Anglo-American War of 1812-1815, establishing the companies, numbers one (1) to six (6) with the exception of company number two (2). Ralph argued that this was an integral part of our history and that something should be done to recreate that aspect of our history and so preserve our national heritage.

Summary of Contribution in the Senate
Re: Dangerous Drugs – Wednesday, August 28, 1991

Ralph claimed that many of the present day crimes were drug related, so there was an urgent need for such a bill in a decadent society like ours. Indiscipline and corruption were now rampant in society, and a fair day's work for a fair day's pay - was a thing of the past. The quest for material gain, get-rich-quick syndrome among drug dealers and drug traffickers demonized humans who would exterminate anyone or anything or getting in their way.

The illegal use and abuse of drugs locally and money laundering were part of the spread of this scourge internationally. Denouncing the use of alcohol, Ralph quoted R.G. Smart - World Health Forum: vol.12p. 99-103 (1991) as saying: "The ugliest thing in creation is a drunkard, a repulsive being, the sight of whom makes one ashamed to belong to the same living species."

Ralph explained that alcohol was not a stimulant but it provided calories and dulled the consciousness of fatigue. In government hospitals, one out of every two patients occupied a bed because of alcohol-related problems and accidents at

work, in homes, and during sporting events, were very frequently related to alcohol consumption. Death due to traffic accidents was/is the single largest health hazard of the youth.

Peer pressure, advertisement on the media and, poor parenting, were all identified as influencing a young person to drink. Ralph explained that alcohol at first depresses the higher brain centres called the neo-cortex (new brain) found in human beings, which controls judgment and other learned inhibitions so the intoxicated person may become garrulous and anti-social. With continued use, alcohol produced disease in virtually each and every organ of the body e.g. liver, heart, brain, pancreas, sex glands, immune systems etc. Ultimately, the drinker was/is afflicted with social problems, physical injuries, drunkenness, financial problems, mental problems and chronic illness.

Ralph proffered that the roots of violence are in ourselves who comprise the society, and that the cause of violence in most cases, is alcohol. He contended that it was unethical for the government to sell/promote addiction no matter what excuses or rationalisations they offered. In recommending that the counteraction of alcohol be resolutely pursued, Ralph suggested the following:

(i) That government agencies, the private sector, and voluntary organisations make a concerted effort in campaigning against the use of alcohol.
(ii) Encourage the development of coffee and tea shops, soft drink industry as alternatives to alcohol.
(iii) Increase the price of alcohol, ban the advertising of alcohol in the press, radio, sporting events and television.
(iv) End all tax deductions for advertisements on alcohol.
(v) Insist that leaders in every discipline act as role models to juniors by refraining from alcohol, (doctors and pharmacists) in particular.

Having discussed the causes, nature and effects as well as recommendations to curb alcohol addiction, Ralph then moved on to highlight other mind-bending drugs. He quoted reputable sources initially who argued that both adults and children could use drugs in a reasonable and responsible fashion since he wished to show that this erroneous thinking contributed to the development of drug abuse. Two professors of psychiatry for instance wrote in 1983 that cocaine was more addictive than peanuts -
C. Van Dyke and R. Byck. Cocaine. Scientific American, April 1983.

Ralph argued that the consequences of drug addiction extended beyond the health effects of substance abuse, they damaged families and society, effected changes in

farming practices and generated crime and violence by the economic interest in illegal drug traffic. He also felt that this new type of slavery to drugs and the drug lords, introduced many of our children to a religion of transcendence when ego, time and space are transcended, giving rise to peace and tranquility, expanded consciousness and feelings, and increased knowledge of self. Other drugs promised "cosmic consciousness," a state of one-ness with the universe, with the Supreme Being and also with other creatures.

Ralph then continued to enumerate a list of illegal drugs familiar to consumers, citing their origin, their potency and their negative effects on the human body. Included amongst these were marijuana, L.S.D., mescaline, psilocybin, D.M.T., PCP, amphetamines, Khat, STP, MOMA (ecstasy), cocaine, opium and heroin.

Summary of Contribution in Senate
Re: Children Amendment Bill- Tuesday Sept 17, 1991

Ralph Khan viewed the Bill as crucial since he opined that we seemed to have lost a generation, living in an immoral, decadent, and degenerate society. He felt that education was important to address people's attitudinal problems. The social services, he felt were overburdened, especially more so, since our open-door policy allowed thousands of illegal immigrants to take up residence here and place greater demands on our social services.

He claimed that the question of the rampant abuse of children was/is very worrisome and very difficult for any government to counteract. He voiced the irony that affluent families have two to three children whereas the less privileged are the ones with much larger families.

He claimed that if a child or a young person has been abandoned, neglected or ill-treated by his parents and has been placed with foster parents, the person reporting such incidents to the police/competent authority should have the guarantee (of anonymity) that such matters will be treated with the strictest confidence and that their names are not published. It was important to address these matters within the context of passing social legislation to improve social conditions in the country.

Normally, but especially more so, during festive seasons like Carnival for example, children are either abandoned or neglected. Periodically, the media plays a commendable role in identifying lost and forgotten children (usually four, five, six years old). He further contended that in cases where they go to school with

both parents working, it might be an excusable situation but that it was totally remiss of parents whose children went astray because of lack of supervision during festive occasions. To exacerbate the situation there was no deterrent/punishment to serve as a deterrent for such parents. The records also revealed that many children, over the years, had been accidentally burnt to death because of parental neglect and since there are no deterrents then consequently there will be a continuation of such problems in the country.

The Bill, according to Ralph sought to provide and to remove a child to a place of safety. However he felt that sometimes the very people entrusted to care for these children would use those children to their advantage, which itself is a form of abuse. Therefore it was very difficult to monitor every situation that developed where a child was given in custody of another body/guardian. He questioned how far the provisions outlined by the Bill could reach.

Ralph referred to orphanages and the Boys' Industrial School as places of safety for children within the context of the Bill. He drew to the Government's attention however that they could not ignore the malpractices especially sodomy going on in these places and suggested that when referring to a place of safety, they must think in terms of upgrading the facilities being provided to minimize such risks.

He reiterated that the objective of the Bill was laudable but the management structure was gigantic in such a situation because if the management structure was fragile then the legislation passed would not serve the needs for which it was intended.

He digressed to note another social problem which we have had since the colonial days; the number of children (of school age) who for various reasons did not attend school. He further argued that in those days the law made it mandatory for children to attend school because parents were charged for keeping their children away from school, irrespective of the reasons. The same statute that existed then still exists today, with the fundamental difference being that the law was then enforced.

Ralph recommended in closing, that if the Bill was to enjoy long term success, religion, in its broadest context should be taught in all state assisted schools; because the church assisted schools produced individuals of a more sober-minded caliber than the others. Secondly, the new Telecommunications Authority with the media opened up was a most wonderful opportunity to use their influence to enlighten students via audio/visual education in all schools.

Finally he suggested that offending parents should be made accountable because it is a God-given right and a duty for parents to take care of their children.

Summary of Contribution in Senate
Re: Rent Restriction Bill-Tuesday October 8, 1991

In making his contribution Ralph noted that he spoke neither in the capacity of a landlord nor a tenant. In debating the Bill he felt that both tenant and landlord merited consideration. He explained firstly that the Land Tenants (Security of Tenure Act) was passed in 1981 and when this piece of legislation was implemented, the attendant regulations were not published and therefore, it was impossible for the rent assessment boards to arbitrate in matters/grievances arising from agreements between tenants and landlords.

He claimed that it was a misconception to believe that every landlord was wealthy and lived in luxurious circumstances and, that in fact, given the realities of life, many were retired and invested in property to subsidize their income and meet everyday expenses. Many of them were simply ekeing out a livelihood. With the Rent Restriction Act in force, rentals remained static while the landlords were forced to face increased taxes for water rates, housing and other expenses. In cases where smaller landlords were economically dependent on that particular line of investments, the hardships/constraints were greater.

Ralph commended previous Governments for developing housing estates for citizens but felt that it was useless to allocate them to people in the urban areas of the country who have not personally toiled or laboured for such achievement and therefore, ultimately, such facilities were either neglected and "brutalized". Referring to the Land Tenants (Security of Tenure Act), the regulations for which were missing, Ralph questioned the validity of enacting legislation for the nation when guidelines had not been provided and urged the present Government to correct this omission.

Ralph posed several questions in closing his contribution. He asked whether given the fact that the Act which the Government sought to validate had expired and since the Government had the prerogative to pass legislation retroactively whether all the matters which took place during the Act's expiration, were not contentious matters. Due to the dynamism of times and situations, and the antiquated nature of

the legislation the Government was dealing with, Ralph questioned whether any substantial revision had been made by the previous Government to enhance that legislation which already appeared on the statute books. This was important in Ralph's view since he believed that in revising legislation, we not only address present situations but focus also on the future so we can obviate the need for certain problems which may arise.

Summary of Contribution in Senate
Re: National Agricultural Corporation Bill –
Tuesday July 2, 1996

Ralph initially indicates his disappointment with the provisions of this Bill since he felt that crucial areas of concern regarding the development of agriculture on a more scientific and productive scale had either been overlooked or precluded from the Bill. He voiced the opinion that, in its present form it would only make the rich richer and, the poor but willing poorer, citing the poultry industry as a classic example. He felt within the context of the governing party's policy on agriculture, the Bill, in its present state would relegate the small planter, farmer and upcoming agriculturists to a state of abject poverty.

He also felt that the bill's focus on the marketing aspect of agriculture would raise certain concerns because:

1) Marketing is a specialized field which requires a certain degree of initiative, self-motivation, skill and expertise to compete successfully with big business (the conglomerates) and he questioned whether our marketing strategies were compatible with theirs
2) Given the experiences of the Central Marketing Agency, coupled with the general public service attitude, Ralph questioned whether the Government was satisfied that such a scenario would help to provide meaningful success in this area of stiff competition - (marketing)
3) Any meaningful agricultural policy must involve mass production, a greater emphasis on cultivation, increased production and husbandry if we were to become self-sufficient or produce for export

Ralph felt that the present Government like the previous one failed to provide an atmosphere conducive to the promotion and growth of agriculture to any worthwhile degree. He felt that in order to address the unemployment problem, such legislation should place greater emphasis on the areas of land-ownership,

land-distribution, the purposes of leases and land allocation by Government, land-use, divestment, subsidies, acquisition, surveys, etc.

Regarding land-distribution, he felt that the varying policies of different governments, with no clearly defined criteria for the leasing of lands facilitated and promoted political patronage hence the perennial problem of squatting. In the past he noted not enough effort was made to match development with land capability. Consequently, most of the land distribution programmes were failures with a few enjoying marginal success in relation to the input of labour and capital.

A classic ecological disaster, he cited agricultural holdings and dairy farms located at Carlsen Field and Wallerfield as being over-exploited for land-quarrying capability rather than housing, industrial and common usage for which they were better suited. Diametrically opposed to this were the housing estates in Diamond Vale and Curepe which had been ruined and rendered sterile - furthermore, in the absence of proper surveys, the lands had been ruthlessly stripped of the vegetation and the surface mined on a trial-and-error basis, leaving behind a very eerie looking unproductive and disfigured landscape.

Regarding housing estates Ralph felt that many of the housing estates in the country portrayed very poor land use. In many instances houses had been constructed on land more suitable for agriculture. Moreover, the sameness of the buildings, the occupants, the income and education level of its occupants reflected a kind of dullness that demotivated and degenerated their level of aspiration.

Returning to the poultry industry, Ralph noted that at the time there were approximately 100 medium-sized poultry farmers who, with the passage of the Bill, would eventually either be swallowed up wholesale by large businesses or completely wiped out.

Touching on the Oropouche Lagoon, he claimed that it had been one of the main food baskets of the country but since its destruction by the previous Government, nothing had been done to restore the area to its former glory. Under the P.N.M. government, dredging works had been haphazardly carried out to the Oropouche River allowing salt water from the sea to flow inwards into the land, creating a serious setback for agricultural production. by that mainly agricultural community

Ralph then shifted his focus to Caroni (1975) Limited which he felt had been a recurring decimal in the economic development of the country. Regarding the question of land distribution, he indicated that these lands were not being

distributed to the people who had the know-how and expertise to cultivate the land. This, he claimed, was a direct result of the inept and inefficient management from the Human Resources Department down. Too many malpractices and other gross white collar crimes existed there, in particular favoritism and nepotism. Ralph felt that if the Government was serious about national development, management issues at Caroni (1975) Limited. should be addressed in order to assess the viability of the company. Furthermore, the Company had a redundancy policy which operated to its own detriment, since positions which had already been declared redundant with full benefits having been paid out to such persons, other personnel had not only already been appointed soon after this to fill such positions, but ironically, they were also confirmed in those positions. Ralph therefore suggested that Government should set up an independent commission of enquiry to enquire into the day-to-day operations of Caroni (1975) Limited with the aim of salvaging the fortunes of the company.

For the convenience of readers copies of the original papers presented in the Senate by Ralph Khan have been enclosed as **Appendix 111** at the back of the text.

RALPH KHAN-
COMMUNICATION WITH FOREIGN/LOCAL DIGNITARIES AND PRESS

Within the context of globalization, Ralph fully appreciates the crucial role which communication plays in harnessing human resource for the purpose of progress and development. As such, he has maintained very cordial relations with reputable local, regional, as well as international diplomats and politicians. The following samples provided represents a cross-section of the communication shared between himself and such individuals, including Professor Chintamani Lakshmanna, former Indian High Commissioner to Trinidad and Tobago, the C.E.O. of the San Fernando City Corporation, Prime Minister of St. Kitts and Nevis - Denzil Douglas (1995), Prime Minister of Grenada - Keith Mitchell (1995), Prime Minister of Canada - Jean Chretien (1993), as well as President elect of the United States of America - Bill Clinton (1993).

Ralph Khan has written a multitude of letters to the various arms of the press on a wide range of issues. Underlying the majority of his contributions is the quest for truth, justice and fairplay. Where there is need for improvement, he offers recommendations, as easily as he proffers compliments on those individuals and

organizations deserving praise. He writes with a candour and objectivity which some individuals may find too direct or open to tolerate/accept. Nevertheless, his letters are always mentally stimulating, informative and intriguing.

For the benefit of the readers therefore, a selection of letters categorised as **Social, Political, JPs and Justice** are highlighted as well as specimens of his personal communication with dignitaries and diplomats, both local and foreign.

Professor C. LAKSHMANNA
M.P. (Ex.)
Former Indian High Commissioner
Trinidad & Tobago and other West Indies
Professor of Sociology (Retd.)
Osmania University.

Phone : Res. 671180
Off. 851639
" Madhulika "
9 New Found Land Colony,
Street No. 7, Habsiguda,
HYDERABAD-500 007.

Date Oct 14, 1996

My dear Ralph Khan Sahib,

Trust this letter finds you and your family in best of health and happiness.

I am sorry for the belated letter. I had received your letter in March 96. Thank you very much for your kind sentiments. On our part, children, Mamata and I miss Trinidad & Tobago very much. We always cherish our memories of our stay in Trinidad. We had been, however, very fortunate to have one friend or the other from Trinidad visiting us. These visits and the correspondence with several friends from T&T keep us fresh with news and memories of Trinidad & Tobago. It was, indeed, our good fortune that we had good friends like you during our stay there. Your family and you enriched our sojourn in Caribbean. We thank you for the same.

Life has been as usual busy with me and keeps me occupied. On my return I had rejoined the University and to retirement from my position of Professor recently. My future plan

are fluid at present. I will keep you posted with future developments.

I am requesting Dr. Sarvas Kumar to meet you. He is the new Professor of Hindi at the Univ of West Indies, St. Augustine. I hope he will have a fruitful and meaningful stay in Trinidad.

Kindly convey our regards to all friends.

With warm personal regards,

Yours

14/10/96

SAN FERNANDO CITY CORPORATION

CITY HALL, HARR'S PROMENADE SAN FERNANDO
TRINIDAD, W.I.

TEL 652-2543-47

Ms. M. Coudray
CITY CLERK

5th May 1997

Mr Haji Ralpj D. Khan J.P.
Managing Director
Ralico Insurance Services Ltd
24 Rushworth Street
SAN FERNANDO

Dear Sir,

With reference to your correspondence dated 14th October 1996, please be advised that Council discussed the issue at its Committee Meeting of 7th November 1997 and issued instructions for a thorough investigation into the matter.

Council in its deliberations recognised your astute civic-mindedness and through this medium wishes to commend you for your sense of responsibility and community spirit.

We look forward to your continued commitment to the City

Yours faithfully,

CITY CLERK

PRIME MINISTER

ST. KITTS AND NEVIS

GOVERNMENT HEADQUARTERS,
P. O. BOX 186,
ST. KITTS, W. I.

Ref. No FA/E14/002

23 October 1995

Mr Haji Ralph D Khan - J.P.
Justice of the Peace - Commissioner of Affidavits
24 Rushworth Street West
San Fernando
Trinidad

Dear Sir

The Government of St Kitts and Nevis wishes to express sincere thanks and appreciation for your card/letter of congratulations on our being elected to office on 3 July, 1995.

The Government is committed to serving its people and wishes to assure you that full dedication will be given to the social and economic advancement of our Federation.

Thanks for your support and confidence in the Team.

Sincerely

Denzil L Douglas
Prime Minister and
Minister of Foreign Affairs

11/12/95

PRIME MINISTER

GRENADA

August 22, 1995

BOTANICAL GARDENS
ST GEORGE'S, GRENADA

Mr. Haji Ralph D. Khan - J.P.
24 Rushworth Street
San Fernando
TRINIDAD. W.I.

Dear Mr. Khan,

Thank you for your letter of congratulation and for your good wishes extended to me, my family and my party.

I am encouraged by your support and for the high esteem in which you hold me.

Your appreciation of the awesome task before my government and the empathy which you feel for me is truely heartening.

Again thank you for your words of encouragement and for your prayers.

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Keith C. Mitchell
PRIME MINISTER

CANADA

PRIME MINISTER · PREMIER MINISTRE

November 17, 1993

Dear Mr. Khan,

I would like to thank you for the kind words of congratulation and encouragement you offered me in your recent letter.

It is with great pride and a deep sense of responsibility that I assume the duties of Prime Minister. Canada was founded upon the fundamental values of tolerance and justice, and you may be assured that I will always strive to uphold these principles to the best of my ability.

I am committed to building a Canada that not only respects its history and traditions, but also looks to the future with renewed hope and confidence. Once again, please accept my heartfelt thanks for your support.

Yours sincerely,

Jean Chrétien

Mr. Haji Ralph D. Khan
24 Rushworth Street
San Fernando, Trinidad
WEST INDIES

Office of the President-elect
and Vice President-elect

January 19, 1993

Haji Ralph D. Kahn
Chief Exectutive Officer
Ralico Group of Companies
#24 Rushworth Street
San Fernando
TRINIDAD

Dear Haji:

I was so very pleased to receive your warm message of congratulations. I've been humbled and also thrilled by the tremendous outpouring of support and enthusiasm from around the world.

The next four years will pose many critical challenges. Al Gore and I look forward to doing all we can to help make the future better for everyone.

Sincerely,

Bill Clinton

Bill Clinton

1120 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20270-0001 202-973-2600

Senator Haji Ralph D. Khan is greeted by Charles Gargano, the U.S. Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago at his office, Queen's Park West, P.O.S. 1991. ***Photo: The Khan Family Album***