



Sailor Dance - John Stanley Donaldson - The Story

Eleanor Joye Donaldson

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The Donaldson name was already in Trinidad and Tobago's history, placed there indelibly by three generations of Donaldson elders. And John Stanley Donaldson has made his own significant contribution to that history. Choosing the Foreign Service as a career, he became the Head of Mission (High Commissioner to Nigeria) at the relatively young age of 37. After his rapid ascent in the Foreign Service, he was drafted into political life and became a minister of government holding the portfolios of Foreign Affairs, National Security, and Labour. On completion of his public life he became a farmer and also practiced law. John Stanley Donaldson, otherwise known as 'Spinner' or the 'Spine', was not born with a gold spoon in his mouth. He was the son of John Shelford Donaldson who as a teacher made a monthly sum of \$28.00 in the late 1920's. John's mother, Eudora, also a teacher, took care of all five children, four girls and John. Economics, skin colour, and a home address - "Behind the Bridge"- would be disincentives for upward social mobility in Trinidad's colonial society. Black parents in general, and poor black families in particular, would have impressed upon their children the importance of education as the most likely, if not the only, means of upward mobility. This observation is but one of the many lessons emerging from *Sailor Dance*, and seems to be a *cri de coeur* to many black youth today who seem to be unaware of the consequences of frittering away their time on frothy things. This biography by John's daughter, a paean to her father, could not have come at a more appropriate time. Incidentally, Ms. Donaldson is the first close relative of a Trinidadian politician to put pen to paper on a politico's life. The book thus provides an insight into the family life of a political figure and sheds a light on family reaction to feedback, positive and negative, from the press and from the public.

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