

There are many other facets of Janet Jagan's life that can be dealt with, her internationalism for instance. But all cannot be told in a short article.

Today, I wish Comrade Janet best of health and a very Happy Birthday!



Former President Janet Jagan with PPP Gen. Secretary Donald Ramotar, former Information Minister Moses Nagamootoo, Public Relations Secretary Robert Persaud and others, at the PPP 50th Anniversary "Big Birthday Bash", at Freedom House on Old Years night, 1999.

The JJ we know

by Indra Chandarpal, General Secretary, WPO

JJ, as we normally call her, has been a great role model to the women in Guyana, especially the members of the WPO and the PPP. She is a person who is totally committed to the cause of improving the lives of Guyanese and demonstrated this in all aspects of her life.

I recall JJ from 1970's when she was invited to speak to a group of women in Enmore. A number of us had heard of her but we never had an opportunity to see her in such close proximity. It was only natural therefore, for us to be anxious and we did all that was required of us in preparing the meeting. When she arrived and smiled at us we responded immediately. Before she left that day, we had all promised to work faithfully for the WPO and the Party.

I recall visiting the Mahaica Hospital in late 1992. There were patients who remembered her when she was the Minister of Health in the 1957 - 1961 period. They recalled how she used to be sympathetic and never treated them any different to other people. There was one particular man who used to visit Freedom House regularly and will ask to see his "bowgie". He never left empty handed.

The poor and destitute have been coming to her frequently. It has been the same for her while in government and in opposition. They will come to see her every week once she is available and she will always render assistance often giving them her own pocket money.

She has always carried herself with dignity and simplicity. No one can accuse her of immorality and impropriety.

She has been a source of inspiration to us as women and she often rebuked us for not paying enough attention to the older comrades who had made contributions in one way or the other.

There are people with very fond memories of her. The women who have associated with her will always remember her skills in dealing with problems. She was not afraid to speak frankly and will tell us as it is.

Collectively, we recount instances when we would go to speak to her on issues of concern. Because of her astuteness she will quickly assess the situation and advise accordingly.

For the women in the WPO, she has always been the maternal figure, the friend, the disciplinarian and the teacher. JJ is never afraid to teach women what she knows. As a matter of fact, she is an excellent teacher, always sharing her skills with others. Many women in the Party and the WPO have memories of her giving advice, remembering their birthdays and anniversaries. Many will recall many acts of kindness, which she did not have to do but did nonetheless because she cared. No matter how busy she is, she always finds time to look into the welfare of comrades around her.

Her organisational capacity and discipline are indeed worthy of emulation. I have worked with her for 20 years, starting as a young woman and I have many fond memories of her because it was possible to see her at work constantly and learn from her. She is a great organiser and is able to manage her time efficiently which is perhaps one of the many reasons why she is so successful in doing so many things in a day. She can extract without hesitation articles filed away for a very long time and recalled most events in the Party and the WPO.

While her opponents may not like her for what she believes in and what they consider her to be, they cannot ignore the fact that her contribution to Guyana politics and development has been a gigantic one. From 1943 up to the present time she is a force to be reckoned with and that by itself indicates the strength of personality and character.

When Cheddi Jagan, her partner in life and comrade in arms passed away, she demonstrated great courage and dignity. She was the tower of strength that provided comfort to the strong and the weak alike who could not deal with the death of a dear leader. She wiped our tears and offered good counsel and encouraged us to keep the faith. Never in our country's history has there been a woman standing so tall among friends and foes alike.

She touches the lives of many by her countless acts of kindness. Her compassion to the poor and her commitment to the Party and the Nation serve to energise her continuously.