

## What our Readers say... What our Readers say...



# She has stayed the course

**I HAVE been a friend of Janet Jagan's for 53 years.**

She has, as politician, journalist, author and humanitarian, been a target for the venom of opposing politicians.

Janet Jagan is a very private person who ignores their vitriol and continues on with her work.

I met Dr Cheddi Jagan's wife, the beautiful American woman in early 1944. She came from Chicago to the backwater of a British colony. An extreme contrast in lifestyle which she took in her stride.

Her mother-in-law and father-in-law were worried about Cheddi marrying before he returned to Guyana but in later years her mother-in-law said to me "Janet is a goddess. She see all me children get education." This is the Prime Minister's idea for all Guyanese children.

Janet Jagan is not acquisitive. She enjoys giving and rarely keeps what is given to her. Books are her favoured possessions. Reading the classics her preferred form of relaxation.

She is a romantic and discerning in art, music and theatre. She admires jewellery but has little. Precious pieces to her are those designed, made and

given to her by her daughter Nadira. The only diamond she has ever had was the most brilliant and finest diamond found in Guyana - Cheddi Jagan. Janet was his 24 carat gold charm.

Janet Jagan is irrevocably committed to Guyana and its people.

Sentenced to six months imprisonment in 1959, for her beliefs left her pale and very thin but her spirit was undaunted. She continued her work in the People's Progressive Party and for the welfare of women and children. She has said that her motivation is to relieve misery, for people must be able to have the basic necessities of life to be able to enjoy life.

Ostentation and the trappings of office are of no interest to her. She was probably, if not for all First Ladies, at least for Guyana, the only First Lady who travelled with the President, or on her own attending and working at conferences, without a secretary, hairdresser or maid. She is competent, organised and self-sufficient and does not need symbols of status to give her stature.

There are those who say she should go back to where she

came from. The voices of envy and racism also say she was not born in Guyana and should not be Prime Minister. Is there only one race in Guyana? Janet gave up American citizenship to be a naturalised Guyanese. She has stayed the course alongside Cheddi Jagan and shown her love for Guyana and Guyanese as no other Guyanese woman has done.

After three stressful weeks of keeping vigil through her husband's illness, she spent many hours for four days taking her turn to stand by his coffin. With kindness and compassion she received those who came to comfort her in their mutual loss.

I went to Guyana for the President's funeral. The morning after we returned from Port Mourant, Janet said to me, "Be my secretary." For the following week of my stay I opened the torrent of condolence mail. It was a heart rending and unforgettable experience. Many, many letters, including those from Jesuits and an order of Catholic nuns, asked her to carry on the good work of her husband.

Recently I phoned Janet Jagan. She related this happening while shopping at Guyana

Stores. There were three men at the door when she entered. They were there when she was leaving. One said to her, "Let me hug you." She complied.

He then said, "You are the only Prime Minister that don't walk with a guard or other people with you. Don't be afraid. We will protect you."

The men were of African ancestry...this is what the opposition fears...unity.

Janet and Cheddi were married in Chicago City Hall. I do not know what vows they took but I do believe Janet's must have been... 'Where thou goest there will I go. Where thou lodgest there will I lodge. Thy people shall be my people...from prison to presidency.'

**This is a small effort to let Guyanese know something of the quality of their Prime Minister Janet Jagan and some things she has done and can do for the advancement of all Guyanese and Guyana.**



**EVELYNE  
RAYMAN  
TORONTO  
CANADA**