There are many other facets of Janet Jagan’s life that can be dealt with, her internationa-

li
dism 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 Rambotar, 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 Chandrapal, 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 com-
mitt
ted 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 faith-
fully for the WPO and the Party.

I recall visiting the Mahdia Hospital in late 1992. There were patients who remem-
bered 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 asso-
ciated 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 kind-
ness, 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 clear
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 compas-
sion to the poor and her commitment to the Party and the Nation serve to energise her
continuously.