

Cheddi Jagan Research Centre

Dedicated to Cheddi & Janet Jagan



The Life and Legacy of my mother, former President Janet Jagan of Guyana

This was prepared for a zoom public meeting on
The Life and Legacy of Former President Janet Jagan of Guyana
on Sunday, March 13, 2022 hosted by
the Indo-Caribbean Cultural Centre (ICC) and the Ameena Gafoor Institute (AGI).



**My mother
was born
Janet
Rosenberg
on
October 20,
1920 -
Chicago,
Illinois, USA**



My mother had a great love for the arts, which I learned began way back when she was a child of about 11. She told me that she would walk far distances and travel alone on buses to visit the art museums in Chicago and to go to the beach. Over the years she bought paintings and works of art by Guyanese artists, sometimes just because she wanted to help them along financially and to encourage them. She was instrumental in the creation of our Art Museum, Castellani House and in collecting art for it.



My mother was very athletic as a young adult. She was a speed skater, and also loved archery, target shooting and horseback riding. She even saved up money to take flying lessons. But one of her biggest passions was swimming, which she continued to do until the summer of 2008, the last year she spent with us in Canada.



“I decided to learn nursing because the war had broken out and I wanted to be a nurse in the army or navy.” JJ

When World War II broke out, my mother decided she wanted to help the war effort so she enrolled in a nursing program in Chicago. She was studying nursing when she met my father and she told me of her love for surgery and that if she had continued, she would have been a surgical nurse. She gave this dream up when she decided to get married, for in those days you could not be married and be a nurse.



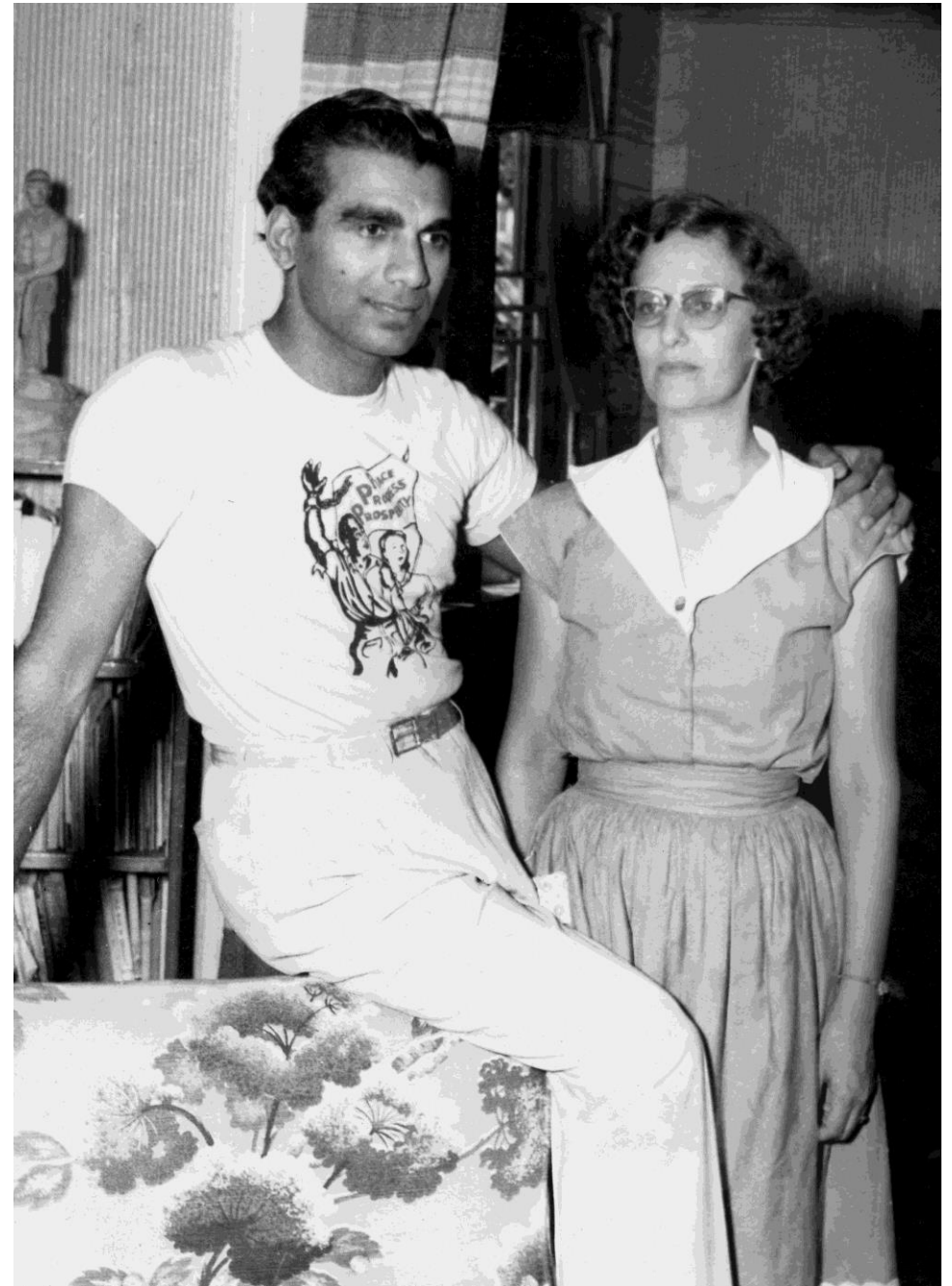


**My
beautiful
mother
married my
father,
Cheddi
Jagan on
August 5,
1943**





**Mom came
to British
Guiana in
December
1943, and
worked for
10 years as
a dental
nurse in my
father's
clinic**



She was one of the founders of the Political Affairs Committee (PAC) in 1946 and edited the PAC Bulletin. This was beginning of the struggle for Independence of British Guiana - 1940s



"In the 40's and 50's we fought for and won the right to universal adult suffrage." JJ

One of the founders of the People's Progressive Party (PPP) formed in 1950, Mom became the general secretary of the PPP, edited the party's newspaper, and was the first woman elected to the Georgetown City Council in 1950.

On May 27th 1953 the Women's Progressive Organization (WPO) was formed by Mrs. Janet Jagan, Ms. Jane Phillips Gay and Ms. Aukland.



"In 1954 many things happened and our party entered into a campaign of civil disobedience. You weren't allowed to hold meetings. We were accused of holding illegal meetings and having subversive literature, etc. I was before the courts and found guilty on all two charges. I was given a fine or imprisonment. But our policy was that we didn't pay fines; we went to prison. So, I went to prison."



Following suspension of the Constitution and the ouster of PPP in 1953 by the British, Mom was jailed for six months in 1954.

She was restricted after release to the city of Georgetown and had to report to the police weekly.

" Prison was really not that difficult. The food and conditions of course were not pleasant but it was a relief from the hurly burly of day-to-day life in British Guiana. I loved the hours of peace and quiet and the time to read, although I had to put up a fight to have books, after insisting that women, like men, should have a right to have books. My husband reacted much the same way when he was in prison. I also did handicrafts and my stuffed dolls and animals were sold outside."



This book is a collection of my mother's previously unpublished stories, letters and poems dedicated to her children, freedom fighters of Guyana and the world, and also to children in general.

In the last part of this book are handwritten notes from her 6 months in prison.

"10th week - 64 days finished; 69 more to go. 133 Days in all - just the same number of days the PPP held office. I suppose they want payment for each day." JJ

I compiled and published this book to commemorate her 1st death Anniversary in 2010.

Janet Jagan



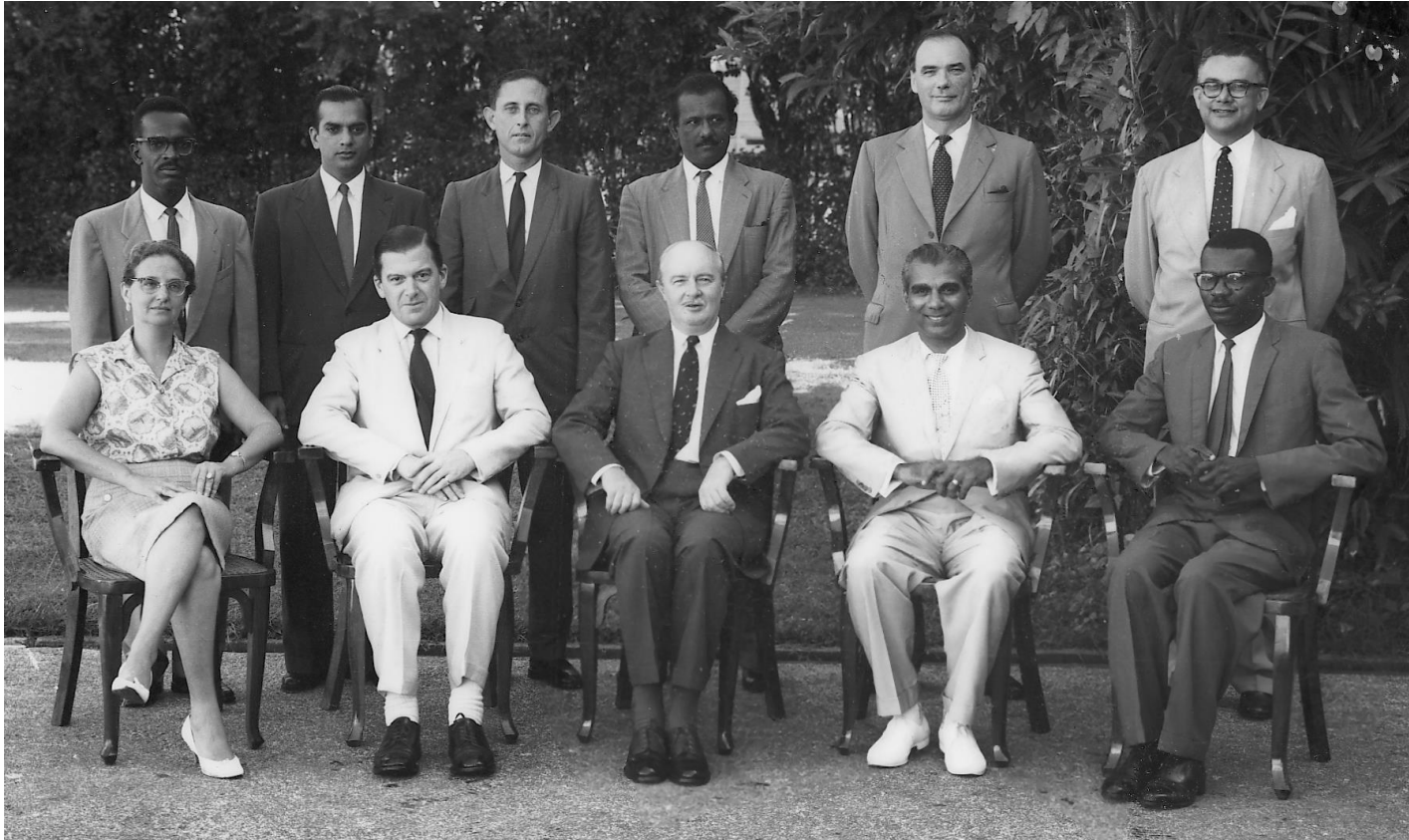
**Unpublished
Stories & Poems**

My mother with the 1953 Cabinet. She was not a member of the cabinet, because her name had been dropped because of Forbes Burnham's opportunistic machinations. She was named deputy speaker



The PPP won elections in 1953 but their government was thrown out after only 133 days in power by the British.

Following the PPP's victory at the 1957 elections, Mom became the Minister of Labour, Health and Housing.



**Photo of the PPP side
of Legislative Council
1957-1961**

**By April 1997 she
was the longest
serving member of
Parliament.**

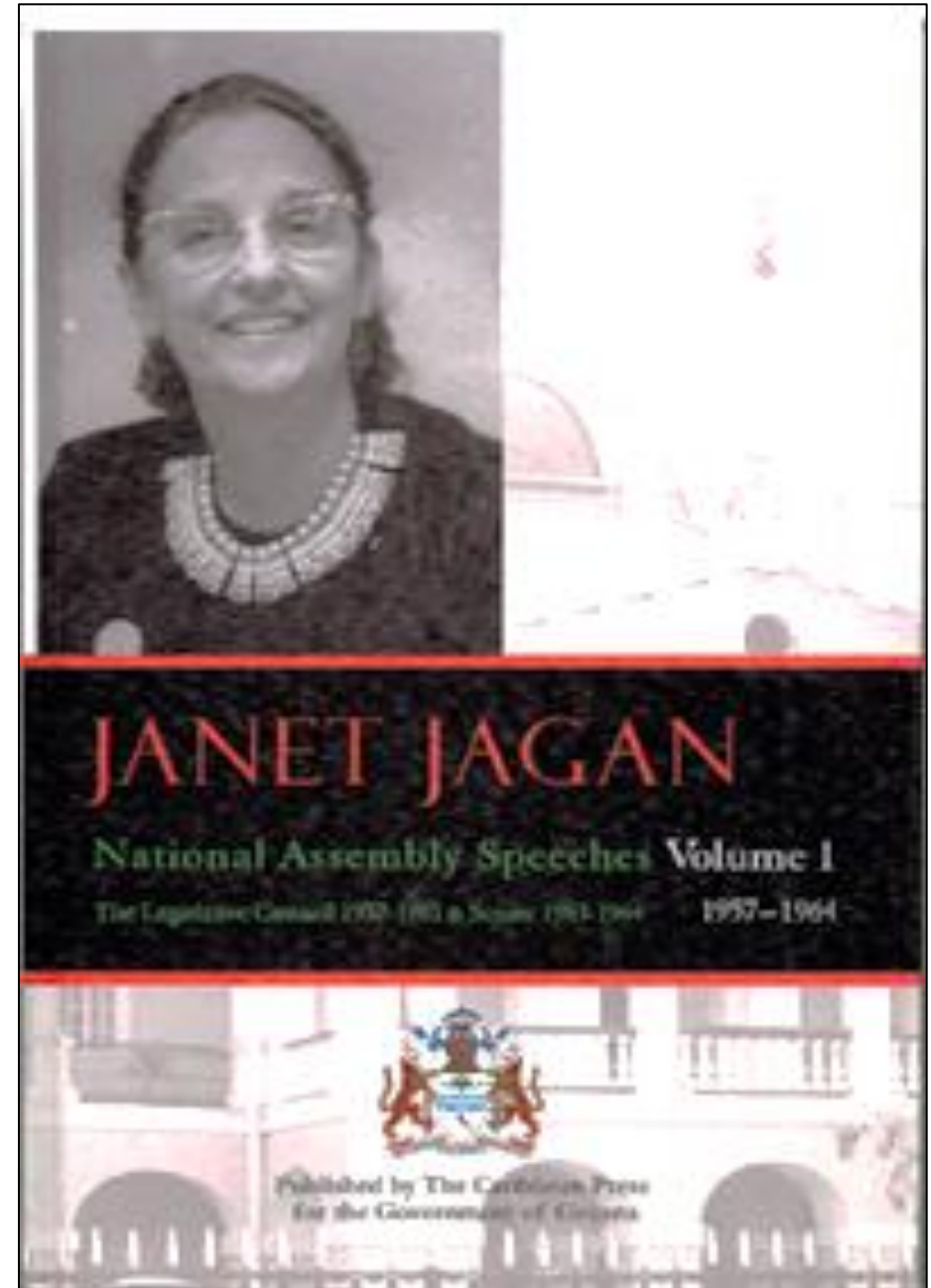


National Assembly Speeches

2 volumes contain Mrs. Jagan's speeches made in Legislative Assembly/Parliament during her long career there.

Between September 1957 and June 1964 while in the Legislative Council, 1957-1961 and in the Senate, 1963-1964 and November 1976 and February 1998.

Unfortunately it is not a complete set of speeches since there are still some years missing.



The PPP won elections again in 1961 Election.

“We (PPP) attained power by the valid ballot and proved our worth by winning in three successive elections - without benefit of a daily press or foreign finances. We did not attempt to grab power by bloodshed.” JJ



**In 1964 on the death of the Minister of Home Affairs,
Claude Christian, she became Minister of Home Affairs and
a member of the Senate.**





"Even when I was stoned it didn't bother me.

I've been in jail, I've had a rough life.

Its part of the struggle." JJ

"You're never beaten as long as you go on fighting." JJ



“Looking back to the days when I attended Wayne University, I believe my later involvement in the anti-colonial struggle in the then British Guiana was greatly influenced by two factors: the prejudices and discrimination I met as a Jew and the radicalism I met and participated in at Wayne University were decisive in molding my character into a person who despised discrimination and injustice and joined the long struggle as a freedom fighter in the world oppressed by imperialism and all its tentacles.” April 2007

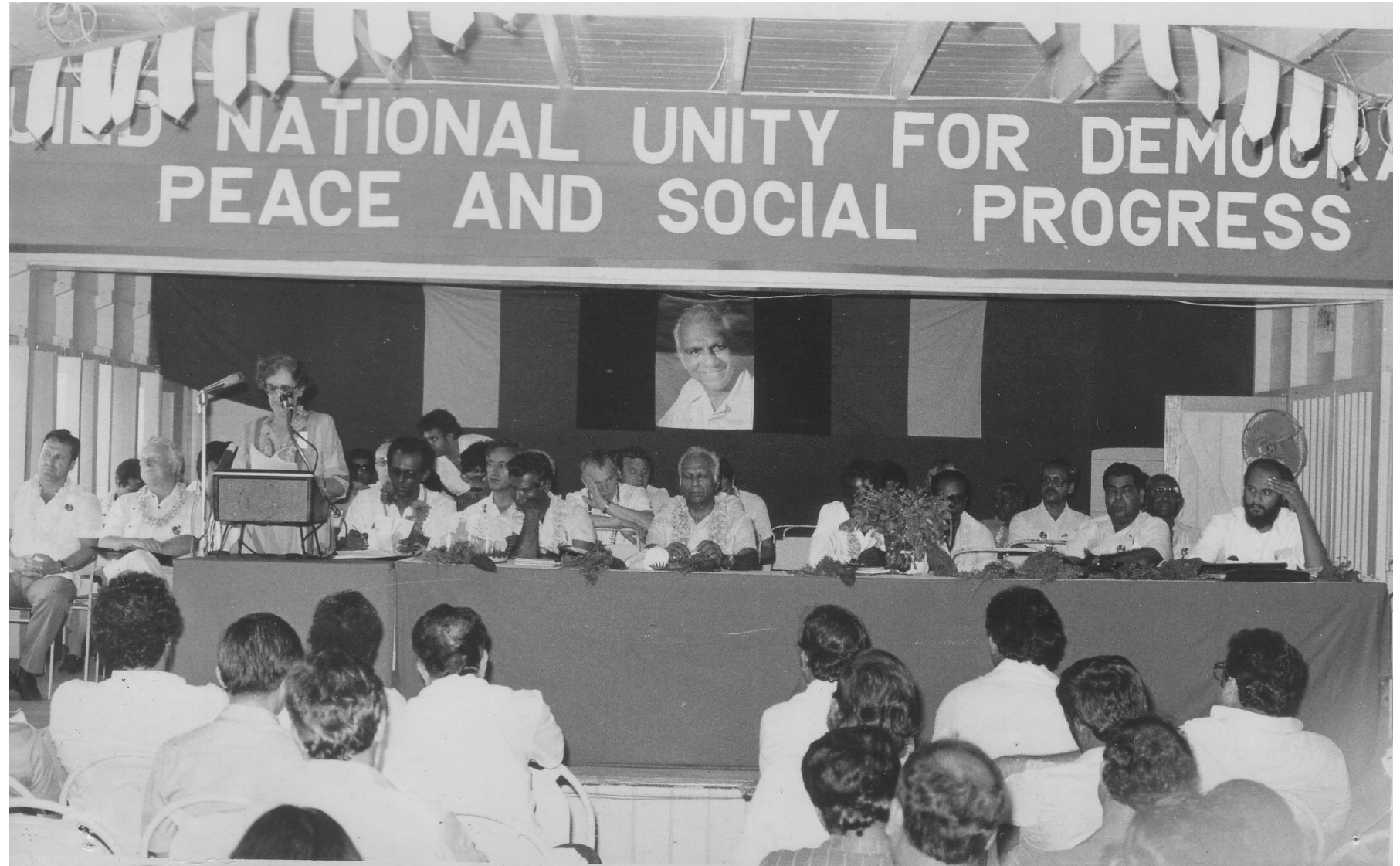


She was passionate about everything that she did. She certainly was a woman of great courage.





“With the strength of the sun above us, the strength of the earth beneath us, the strength of the ocean before us and the strength of the people behind us, our fight against injustice will be won.” JJ 1964 at Enmore beach



“The PPP’s sound foundation in the masses of working people and farmers, have kept it alive and vigorous.” JJ





My mother loved animals. We always had dogs and even a monkey. She also enjoyed taking my brother and I and later all her grandchildren to see the animals of Guyana at the Georgetown zoo.

Along with writing and her poetry my mother also had many artistic talents, and loved making things with her hands. She used to make small art sculptors using driftwood and shells she picked up on the beach at Bee Hive.



Our house was designed by my father and built during 1966.

This was our 1st owned home, as up to that time we had lived in rented houses since my parents returned to British Guiana in 1943.

My parents lived here until 1992 when they moved to State House after my father was democratically elected President of Guyana. My mother returned home in 1997 after my father passed away and lived here until her death on March 28, 2009. She also lived here while she was President from 1997-1999.



Sundays– the only day off if they did not have meetings in the countryside – were spent quietly at home. The mornings would begin with my father in the yard and my mother cleaning the house. For lunch - Sunday meal of roast chicken, baked potatoes, stuffing and lots of fruits. After lunch they would both have a nap then they would sit together on the veranda or go to the sea walls for a walk. Later in the evening Mom would sit and read a book. Dad would end up at his desk. This was their life together, a loving couple who together made so many positive changes to the lives of so many in Guyana.



This quote by my father gives great insight into who my mother was.

"My wife, Janet influenced me with a deep and abiding faith and caring for the poor, the disadvantaged and the handicapped, the oppressed and the marginalized, and she has a very deep commitment to honesty in politics. As a result, I do not worry about anything. I work together with her very closely, we debate soundly without anything to worry about or anything to hide. She has given me peace of mind." CJ



My mother took care of all the finances, the general running of the house, so my father never had to bother with such things. She remembered everyone's birthday or anniversary, sent out cards and gifts. My parents complemented each other and even though their opinions may have differed sometimes, they had a common cause and commitment. I never heard my parents argue about personal things, only about politics.



My mother was a very private and humble person; she did not demand or expect anything for herself or for her family from anyone. She did not care about possessions and had always been willing to go out of her way to help others. She and my father had the highest moral and ethic values I have ever seen in any one. *“You must remember I came here when I was 23, I'm now 78. I have been living and working here for 55 years. I feel Guyanese.”* JJ 1998





Mom with my brother Joey, myself and her mother. My mother was a very kind, loving and generous mother who even though she had a very busy political life while I was still very young, managed to spend her spare time with my brother, Joey and I. She took us to the Georgetown Zoo and the botanical gardens which always held a very dear place in her heart. She also really loved taking us to the sea wall.



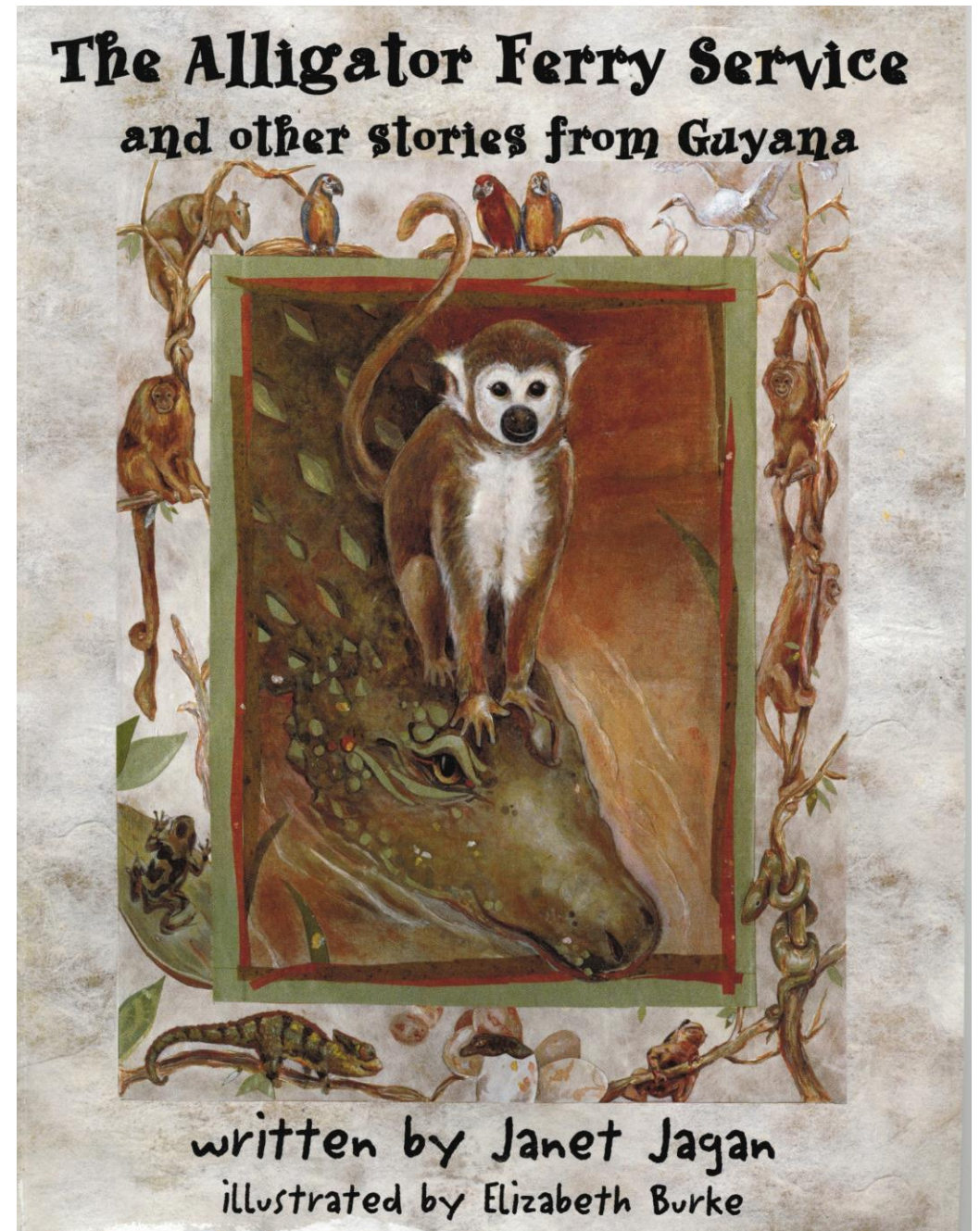
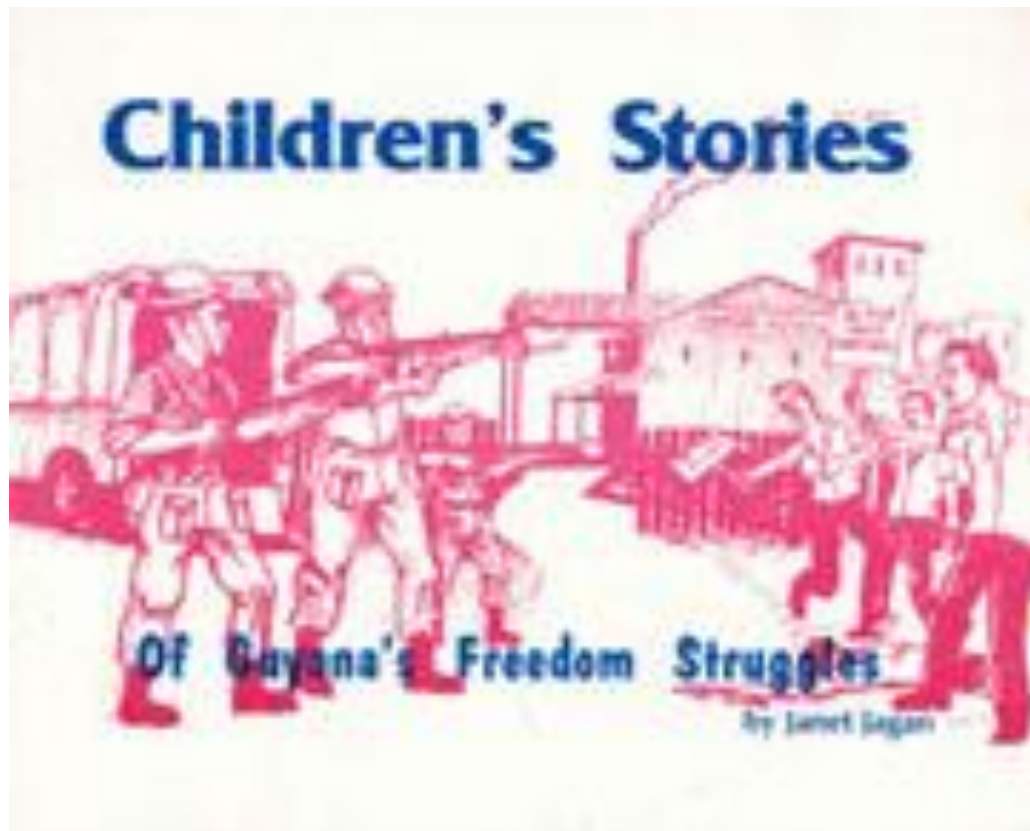


Mom with my brother and I, and her 5 grandkids. She enjoyed taking all the grandchildren to the zoo. My parents would also take them to the sea wall and for long walks on the beach. She loved reading books to them. She wrote stories for her 5 grand children as birthday gifts for each of them.



5 children's books by Mom were published. These stories were written for her 5 grandchildren as birthday gifts for each of them.

Set in Guyana, these stories of brave, ingenious, kindly and sometimes playful animals and children use humour, mystery and excitement to provide a strong framework of positive human values.



My mother's office at Freedom House

“Throughout my political career which began in 1946, I became, off and on, engaged in journalist activities and gradually developed into a journalist, by experience. During 1950-57, I edited the PPP's official organ "Thunder", a monthly, then a weekly and later a quarterly. In 1973 and up to the time I became Prime Minister, I wrote for and edited "Mirror" Newspaper - a weekly, a daily and now a bi-weekly.” JJ

She was still writing articles every week for Mirror, up until her death.



A loving couple who together made so many positive changes to the lives of so many in Guyana.

Receiving Guyana's highest Honour - Order of Excellence (O.E.) from my father on May 26, 1993

"We were husband and wife, father and mother. He inspired me to do what I'm doing now. I wouldn't have done it if it were not for him." JJ



On the 1997
campaign trail.

*"No one knows the
future. Whatever I
have to do, I'll do
until the time
comes when I can't
do it." JJ 1997*



My mother loved reading, sometimes several books at the same time.

“By taking me to the library when I was a little girl, my father gave me one of the greatest blessings I have ever had – a love of books. Reading has been one of the great joys of my life and one, which I recognise, has carried me through periods when life was not always what I had hoped for.” JJ 2002



On December 19, 1997 my mother was sworn in as the first woman President of the Republic of Guyana and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. She resigned on August 8, 1999 due to ill health.

After my father died, Mom was more vulnerable - being alone and missing my father tremendously. But she carried on with her work as President. You wouldn't know this, but several times as President she was very ill, but she insisted on going to whatever meeting or function she had to. Even during the last week of her life, when she was in pain and discomfort from a broken shoulder, she attended two functions to remember my father.



I am happy that during her last years when Mom was no longer deeply involved in politics, she was able to spend longer periods of time when she visited me and my family. I got to do things with her that in earlier years we could not. I would take her out shopping, especially to the grocery store where she spent a long time – the choices were many, compared to back home - to plays and museums in Toronto, out for dinners and just sitting around and talking about life in general.



My mother was instrumental in getting the Cheddi Jagan Research Centre set up after my father passed away in 1997. Located at Red House, it was officially opened on March 22, 2000, to commemorate the 82nd Birth Anniversary of my father. Our family also lived here from 1961 to 1964 when Dad was Premier of British Guiana.

Before she passed away, we spoke about renaming the CJRC in the future and adding her name to it. She refused. She did not want the name changed. After my mother passed away in 2009, the name of the Centre was not changed, but its since been dedicated to both my parents.

Cheddi Jagan Research Centre - Dedicated to Cheddi & Janet Jagan.



In 1999 I created and have since maintained the Cheddi Jagan Research Centre Website.

The website is divided into several parts pertaining to parents.

There are biographies, written articles, quotations, tributes and dedications made to them along with a gallery of photos and videos, and links to other website pertaining to their lives and the history of Guyana.

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Selected Articles by Janet Jagan

Below is a small collection of articles by Mrs. Janet Jagan. View the entire collection: [Listing of All Current Documents by Mrs. Janet Jagan in CJRC Archives](#)

A collection of articles written by Dr. & Mrs. Jagan on the Independence issues of [British Guiana](#)

Early Articles

- [The Psychology of Race Prejudice - Sept 2, 1942](#) (1st known written paper)
- [Letter to her Father](#)
- [Historical Development of Women - 1945](#)
- [Canadian Seamen in Guyana - 1949](#)



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Articles by Janet Jagan

Early Articles

Minister of Health

1961-1964

1964-1997

President of Guyana

2000-2009

Remembering Cheddi

The most important addition in 2018 to the site is the **Archives** page, to commemorate my fathers' 100th birth anniversary. Here are located almost the entire collection of documents written by my parents that have been digitalized and are at the Centre. There are over 500 documents written by my mother and over 1900 by my father. Still much more to be added.

Cheddi Jagan Research Centre

Dedicated to Cheddi & Janet Jagan



Archives of the Cheddi Jagan Research Centre

The Cheddi Jagan Research Centre is the largest repository of primary source materials on Dr. and Mrs. Jagan in the world. Significant records which document the social, cultural, economic and political history of Guyana and the fight for independence are housed here. These records are available for historical research, and were added to our website to commemorate the 100th Birth Anniversary of Dr. Cheddi Jagan, on March 22, 2018.

 [Archives of the Cheddi Jagan Research Centre](#)

Archives have recently been updated so you may need to refresh the page - press Ctrl+r, or Ctrl+F5

To access the document you would like to read, copy/paste the # - call number

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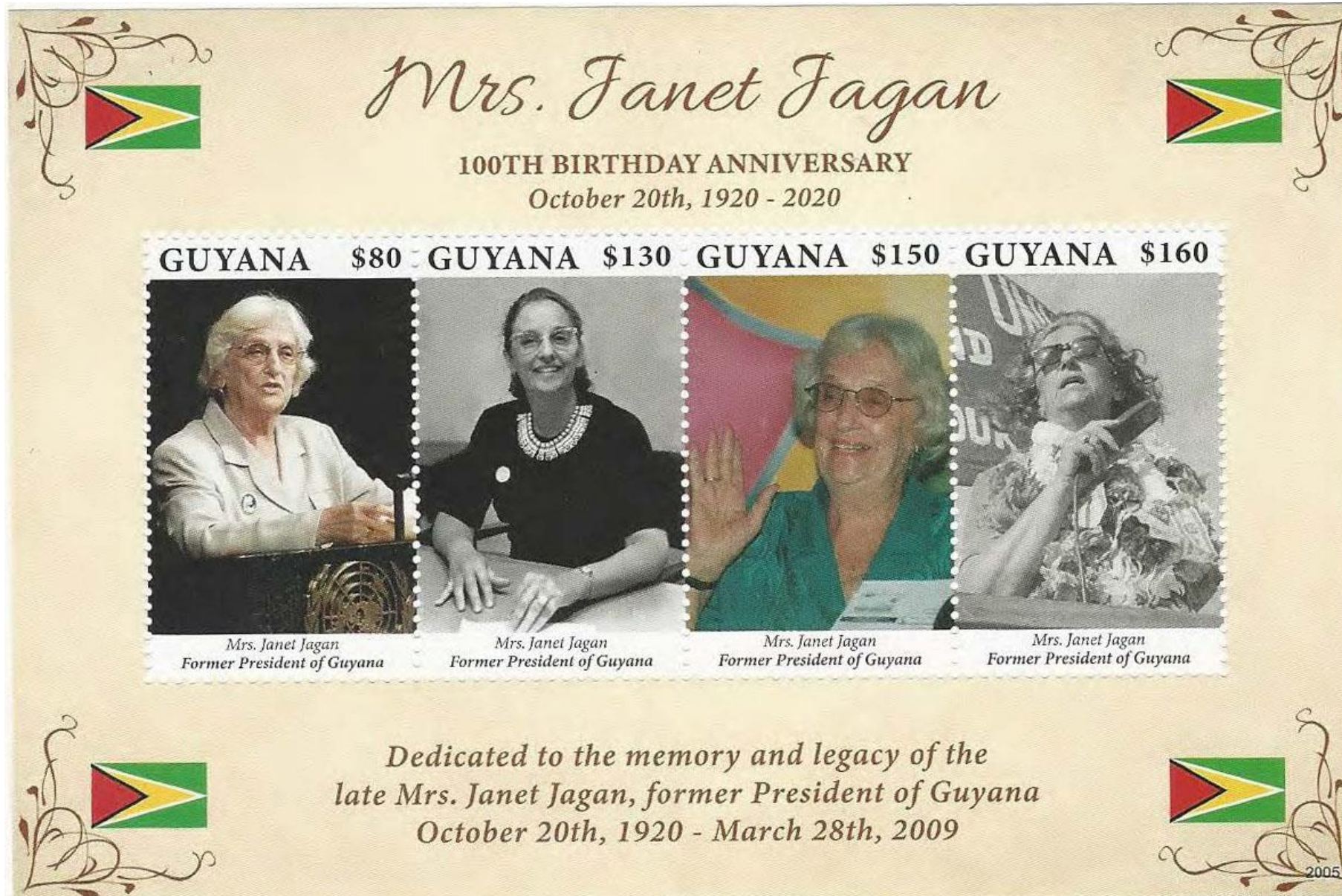
Celebrating
100th
Birth Anniversary
of Mrs. Janet Jagan

Janet Jagan - Freedom Fighter

October 20, 1920 - October 20, 2020



1st Day cover stamps to mark my Mom's 100th Birth Anniversary



Cheddi Jagan Research Centre
We invite you to visit our
website at

<https://jagan.org>

It is my hope that through the CJRC, the web site, reading their books, and meetings such as this one - more people around the world, will come to know about these great but humble people, my parents, who have made such an impact on so many lives. I would like to thank you all for coming out today, to pay homage and show your love and for remembering my dearest mother – the Mother of our Nation.

