



CT VILLAGE REUNION 2008

CROOKED TREE VILLAGE REUNION NEWSLETTER

January/February 2008
Volume 1, Issue 3

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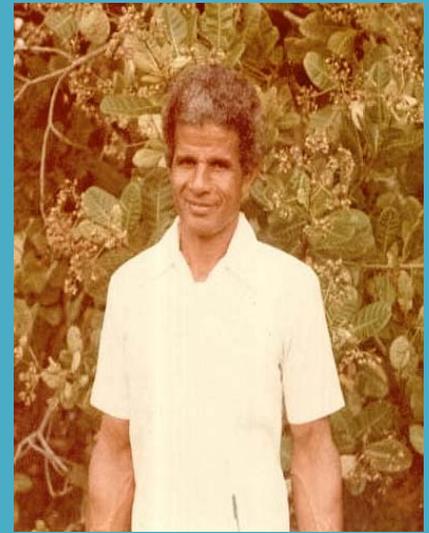
www.crookedtreevillagereunion.com

Biography of John Anthony Jex

By: Verla Crawford Jex, Linda Crawford Elul, Peggy Kerr Sanon

John Anthony Jex was born on 29th August 1935 in Scotland Half Moon Village to Miss. Evarista Estrada and Mr. Jex. When he was about fourteen years old, he came to Crooked Tree to work as a boat assistant to boating pioneers, Adalbert and Edward Dawson.

The Dawson brothers used to run passengers on their three boats, the Veronica D, the Liberty, and the Express from Crooked Tree and other villages to Belize City. John



John Anthony Jex

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Lloyd Gillett, OBE Brigadier General, Commander Belize Defense Force

By: Janine Tillett and Peggy Kerr



Lloyd Gillett, OBE Brigadier General

Even though he was not born or raised in Crooked Tree Village, Brigadier General Lloyd Gillett's loyalty to his Crooked Tree heritage is evident in the few, but significant things that he has done for the village.

Brigadier Gillett is the son of Clifford "Jurdy" Gillett, who left Crooked Tree in the late '60s to seek employment in Hill Bank. However, Brigadier Gillett and his father continued to visit Crooked Tree on a

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worked with the Dawson brothers rain or shine. During the hurricane season, Johnny was the one that would transport villagers, working or attending school in Belize City, inland to Crooked Tree by boat braving the winds and rains.

A young entrepreneur at heart, Jex quickly jump at the opportunity to start his own transportation business when the Government of Belize decided to carve out a road for Crooked Tree Village through the jungle from Sand Hill Village. Jex decided to give up working in the boating industry, and instead, bought himself an old Land Rover and an old Ford pick-up, with custom handmade bed for transporting, people, goods, and livestock.

Each Monday morning, Jex would transport many of the high school kids who were making their way to Belize City for the school-week. He would also make sure the teens come home safely each Friday evening, sometimes in spite of the heavy rains, rising waters, and mountains of mud. During those times when the weather conditions were horrible, he was known to jump out of his vehicle and would get on his hands and knees to push it through the mud to get the children home for the weekend.

Johnny learned the values of hard work and industry from the Dawson brothers; values that he exemplify daily in his many business ventures. After

the Dawson brothers retired, Johnny took over their transportation business, which he later called Jex & Sons Bus Services. He also developed an interest in retail and later branched out his business, establishing the Jex Grocery Store.

As a "Crooked Treean," Johnny fit in wonderfully. In fact, not long after his arrival to Crooked Tree, he met his destiny - - Radiance Flowers -- whom he married. After the two got married, they set up house in Crooked Tree next to Radiance's parents, Frederick and Mildred Flowers. They had several children, Rosemary, Edward, Jerry, Dale, Leah, Howard, Alex, Eva and Timothy Jex. They also became grandparents to seventeen grandchildren.

As a community activist, he was involved in a variety of projects that benefited the people of the village. These include the development of the bird-watching tourism industry in Crooked Tree, the establishment of the Cashew Festival, serving as the Village Council of Affairs, and of course, the large scale transportation of people and goods. He was also instrumental in the founding of the Crooked Tree Wesleyan Church, where he served until his death.

John Anthony Jex is remembered by friends and family for his jovial spirit, his generosity, and for his outstanding contributions to the development of Crooked Tree Village. He showed this dedication to his very end, when in July 1997, he suffered a severe heart attack, while assisting in the construction of a board walk. The board walk was later named the "John Jex Boardwalk," in his memory.

Continued on page 4

About Us

By: Cordelia Pinks Diaz

As we start out the New Year, the Planning Committees has much to reflect on. We began this project in 2007, and we have been hard at work planning and preparing for the big event that will soon be upon us. This has been a labor of love for us. The one dark cloud that came over us was the untimely loss of one of our Committee Member, Sam Tillett. As we say our goodbyes to Sam, we remain determined to continue working together to make this reunion the great success that he was working for.

We thank everyone for visiting our Website's Guest Book to express their kind words in memory of Sam. His Family and the Planning Committees members are forever grateful.....

Since our last Newsletter entry, The Crooked Tree Planning Committee held a Village Council meeting to keep locals informed of the changes and planning the reunion will require and to hear their concerns. They are excited about the clean-up campaign, and we assured them that, although this Reunion is by no means a profit making event, whatever proceeds remaining after Reunion expenses-will be put toward the Crooked Tree Library or a Computer Lab, and the CT Health Center. The Belize Cancer Society will also have a separate booth for their fundraising.

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We addressed the Village Council's concerns regarding the issue of crowd control, security & parking. These are very important issues that we have been working towards resolving.

The US Planning committee conducted its monthly Meetings to discuss new plans and status of open items from the previous meetings. We would like to update you on some progress we have made in this regard.

- 1) The Planning committee contacted the Ministry of Works Office and spoke with Chief Engineer, Colwin Flowers, regarding improving the Crooked Tree road in time for the Reunion.

We are pleased to report that we were told that the Crooked Tree road is already in the budget for 2008.

On or before Feb 15th, they will start to grade the road and elevate the Causeway. He assured us that the Crooked Tree road should be paved by the end of this June.

- 2) We contacted the Superintendent of Police Department in Belmopan to discuss the security concerns. We requested a number of Police officers to be on site for the three days. We need these officers in addition to our Planning Committee

Security Team to assure that everything runs smoothly. The Superintendent will forward our request to the Commissioner, who will review our written request and get back to us with his proposal.

- 3) The Planning committee spoke with Jerry Jex about the JEX Bus Company providing reasonable round-trip fares for transportation from Belize to Crooked Tree for the three days. He agreed, with the condition that the Planning Committee arrange to have his service advertised on the radio. The bus schedules, pick-up time and location will be announced.
- 4) We checked into a few options for a Parking Area near the Cashew fest grounds. The Nina Pond area seems to be the best choice.
- 5) The committee has reached an agreement with the local churches to participate in the Sunday morning Worship at the fair-grounds. The Offering will be shared equally between the participating churches. Dr. Elmer Gillett will be the Guest Speaker.

The Planning Committee has decided on a theme for the reunion-- "Celebrating Our Heritage!"

- 6) The decorations will reflect the theme.

- 7) The planning Committee discussed all the other items that are still on the table: Bar service, food catering, daily grounds clean-up, tents, table & chairs rentals, porter potties etc.

Registration Deadline is Feb. 15th, 2008.

The Committee would like to encourage everyone to Register and send in their Payments now, so that we can:

- 1) Have a better idea of how many people we must prepare for.
- 2) Start paying for some of the goods and services that we will need to make this Reunion a great success!

THE CT PLANNING COMMITTEE WOULD LIKE TO THANK

Mr. Paulino Quiros

FOR THE SHOW GROUNDS PICTURES THAT WILL HELP THE PLANNING COMMITTEE PREPARE FOR THE EVENT

&

THE PICTURE FOR ALBUM COVER #5!!

“Jex” continued from page 2

He was a very dear friend to many including Clarence and Abigail Tillett, Rudy Crawford and trusted family friend, Sonia Wade, and many more. He will be remembered by all the residents and descendants of Crooked Tree.

“Gen. Gillett” continued from page 1

regular basis where some of their family, in particular Mrs. “Oga” Gillett Crawford still resides.

Over the years, Brigadier Gillett has generously offered the services of the Belize Defense Force (BDF) to Crooked Tree residents. For instance, during the last flood, he was instrumental in enlisting the services of the BDF to transport villagers, who were stranded across the causeway for a record long time. He was also influential and very much involved with the U.S. military’s humanitarian effort in constructing a two-classroom school building for the village in May 2007. Brigadier Gillett and the U.S. military were just as proud as the villagers to hold the ceremony for the opening of the new school building in Crooked Tree.

Since then, he has assisted the Crooked Tree Government School by providing furniture, and other miscellaneous items such as school supplies. He is currently working on a project to provide a Computer Lab to the Crooked Tree Government School as well. His contributions to the school, and hence the village itself, is greatly appreciated. Brigadier General Lloyd Gillett is the

Commander of the BDF headquartered at Price Barracks, Ladyville, Belize. The BDF is a brigade size organization with two infantry battalions, a Support and Services Battalion (an Air Wing, a Special Boat Unit, and Special Assignment group), and a Volunteer Battalion.

General Gillett assumed command of the Belize Defense Force on the 29th of January 2005. He was commissioned as an Officer in the Belize Defense Force on 3 August 1984. His initial tour of duty was as a Rifle Platoon Commander in Echo Company followed by an assignment as Training Subaltern in Training Company. He was later assigned as Second in Command of Alpha Company.

In 1986, he was posted to the Air Wing as Line Pilot after successfully completing the Basic Fixed Wing Course at Portage La Prairie, Canada. He quickly became qualified as a Captain for the BN2B Defender Aircraft.

In 1991, after completing the Qualified Flying Instructor Course in Lincoln, United Kingdom he was appointed Training Captain for the Air Wing. Late in 1991, he assumed the post of Commanding Officer of the Air Wing.

In 1998, General Gillett left the Air Wing and was assigned as Staff Officer Logistics in Force Headquarters where he was responsible for managing the BDF budget. Next, he went on to take up the appointment of Executive Officer in the Second Infantry Battalion. In 2000, he

took up the appointment of Commander Land Command North. Following his command he was posted as the Military Attaché in the Embassy of Belize in Guatemala City.

In 2003, General Gillett assumed the appointment of Deputy Commander of the Belize Defense Force and in January 2005 he was appointed to the helm of the Force as Commander.

General Gillett has attended numerous courses both locally and overseas. He holds a Master of Arts Degree in International Studies from the University of London and a Bachelors of Science in Business Administration from the University of Belize. His decorations include the Best Overseas Cadet Award from Royal Military Academy Sand Hurst, Long Service and Good Conduct Medal, Fifteen Year Anniversary Medal and a Certificate of Distinguished Service.

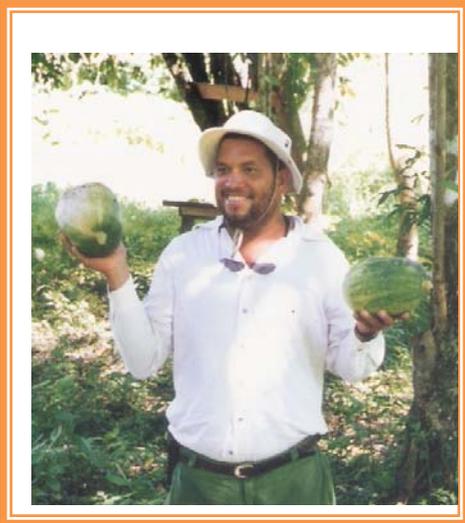
On the 1st of January 2008, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II honored General Gillett as an Ordinary Officer of the Civil Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. Crooked Tree is proud to have a son of our soil hold such an esteemed position in the public service of Belize and proud of the contributions he has made to the village.

**Eulogy for
Samuel Frank Tillett**

By: Delia Tillett

Samuel Frank Tillett, Sam as we all know him, was such a big person that in his absence we need all of you together to make his full presence felt because each and every one of our memories of him is what makes him come to life and live on forever.

If one asks “Who is Sam?” so many images would come flooding to us... so many that one could talk forever about



Samuel Frank Tillett

him as he was bigger than life. But what makes Sam, SAM? His ability to leave a mark...a lasting impression on every single person that passes his way...be it a child, a teenager, an adult or the old... the rich or the poor...there was no one who crossed his path untouched. He had

this ability to unnerve you and to make you love him for it. He inherited a certain quality that I call the Bertha-Archibald- Hubert Gillett syndrome (his grand-mother and grand-uncles). This quality is Sam’s ability to perceive and know people for who they really are, and his brutal honesty and love for the truth. Sam never hesitates to tell you what he thinks and often one would get angry with him but they kept going back to him because what comes out Sam’s mouth is NEVER meanness, but truth and one can never be angry too long with the truth.

Sam is also imprinted in our minds for his love to tease or to try to get on your nerves. He bothered everyone...from the tiny to the very old, even the sick does not get spared from his teasing, for his teasing was one of his ways of showing he cared. He always carried this mischievous smile, bursting with life, with intentions...ready to perk someone up. Each of you know how Sam harasses each of you...he knew to turn the right knob in each of us. Sometimes in his teasing he would succeed in getting someone angry but then he wouldn’t let too much time pass before trying to make-up...to make you smile again. Even though he appeared big and tough he suffered a lot whenever anyone was angry with him. And so he always tried to make peace somehow.

Sam also had another rare quality -- he gives without measuring, without

calculating, without reason. Sam gave with only his heart. He gave because he felt like giving at that moment and that’s all. Something particular about his giving is that often he would give to those who appear to have no merit at all and sometimes he would be criticized for it. But only he knew, he knew something more about giving that most of us don’t. You don’t give only because someone merits receiving.

Another huge value that Sam cultured was hard work. He believed that one should work for what they need and want. While he gave a lot, he never liked when people begged. He believed that anyone could achieve almost anything with determination and hard work. He was an example of his belief. Sam was a self-made man. His professional achievements and success he earned through hard work.

Sam achieved a lot in his short life. Baby Sam was delivered by the late Nurse Smiling in his parent’s home around 10p.m. on November 11, forth-seven years ago, He attended the Crooked Tree Government Primary school and left at the age of twelve. Since then he started to contribute to the family. He had a passion for hunting from an early age. Often, he would steal his father’s gun and go hunting, bringing back game meat for the family table. His

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“Sam” continued from page 5

desire to contribute more led him to find work outside the village. He got a job as a surveyor’s assistant working in the field surveying government land all over the country. He worked in his job for almost 15 years, from 1975 to 1989 when decided to retire and dedicate himself to tourism.

Sam’s first experience in tourism started out doing sporadic tours on his weekends off from work. He would take tourists on lagoon tours in a little dugout wooden canoe. He became the first Crooked Tree Village Tour Guide. In 1989 he opened the splendid “Crooked Tree Village Resort” together with four lifelong friends. A tragic fire destroyed the business after only a few years, but not Sam’s dreams. Almost immediately he started to rebuild. He made one step at a time, first two rooms, then four, and so he progressed in his business. He started out with a wheelbarrow to transport his boat engine to the lagoon, he bought a trooper, then a van and then a bigger one and so on. His tours were first limited to Crooked Tree Village, and then he started to venture out to nearby areas like Altun Ha, Lamanai and eventually all over the country and outside the country to Tikal in Guatemala. He even did an expedition as a guide in Kenya, Africa.

He became a Tour Operator for the Wildlands group in the USA, conducting Belizean Adventure Tour Expeditions. A tour with Sam was a sure success. Sam was the “BEST BIRDER” in Crooked Tree and the Country of Belize. What made Sam “The Best” were not only his knowledge, but his passion and charisma. He totally loved what he did; he enjoyed great satisfaction out of showing people the marvels of nature, of seeing people amazed and touched by the perfect beauty of what surrounds them: The Pigmy, The Kingfisher, The Agami Heron, The Renowned Jabiru, an exotic flower, a camouflaged insect, the sound of waterfalls or the timeless sound of silence. His charisma captivated his audience and kept them mesmerized as he guided them on his expeditions. When someone got a tour guide like Sam, they got The Best. Whoever went on tour with Sam was awarded an unforgettable experience, an enjoyable and beautiful experience which creates a happy memory where people can refuge when they go back to the real world.

While Sam developed and matured in his professional life, he remained a step behind in his intimate relationships. It was not until his last few years that Sam had acquired the intelligence and understanding necessary to attempt a successful intimate relationship. Sam’s first love was Rita. They met while Sam was

working Survey in Guinea Grass in the late 1980’s. Rita was only sixteen years and Sam just twenty-one. They fell in love exchanging glances at a distance and when they eventually got a chance to speak, they were sure it was love and they got married on the 25th of April 1981.

Rita gave Sam four beautiful children, a first baby boy who died four days after a pre-mature birth, Perr Andy, Natasha Karina, and Clifford Amos Tillet. Rita and Sam worked hard together to build up their life, business and home. They started out very young and like the inexperienced young; they had a lot yet to learn. They were a team for twenty years until divorce in 2003, but they had a friendship that would never end. Their separation was a difficult time for Sam. In this period, Sam was searching to learn and discover something new about life.

He met Esparanza who had given him two priceless things; she loved and accepted Sam unconditionally for the person he was and she gave Sam a little girl, Samantha, now only two years old. With Samantha, Sam had more time to enjoy the joys of fatherhood and this brought him great happiness. In these last few years, Sam

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"Sam" continued from page 6

learned a lot about intimate relationship and he acquired a new value. He acquired the value of love and family, which made him become very humble.

Sam never remained static. He always had lots of ideas and projects for the future. He was always on the move. Apart from when he was sprawled out in Gloria's old dirty hammock by the shop, he would spend time teasing and harassing Gloria, Charro and Judy and her children. Whenever it was "eat time" at Gloria's house you would hear him coming and everyone would cover their plates, except Gloria, his beloved mother. He had this habit of circling the table and eating from everyone's plate and drinking from everyone's cup! But his favorite plate was his mom's plate, as if the food tasted better there. Although Gloria would complain, she loved him sharing her food, but everyone secretly did. There were no leftovers in his parent's home when he was around.

More than anything else was Sam's insatiable passion for hunting. He had a hunger for hunting that could not be satisfied. This was his first passion. He was lucky to have something extra that could give him such immense happiness. Not all of us are blessed to have a passion. Sam hunted whenever

he could; he filled all his free-time with hunting. He was an excited child at Christmastime whenever he was getting ready to go on a hunt. He was energized and his spirits soared when he was in the middle of the bush. Hunting was the thing he loved most of all and he did it to the very end; he took his passion with him and he left happy and contented.

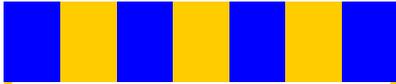
We need to remember Sam with joy because the good memories we keep will give us positive energy and preserve that person inside us forever. So, to keep Sam alive we ask each one of you to take a few seconds and close your eyes for a moment in silence and go back to a good memory with him. SAM lives!

Celebrating our Heritagell!

One of the many goals of this reunion is to encourage descendants abroad and locally to give back to the village!

We encourage all who could assist in this endeavor to also bring along small medical supplies for the Maria Crawford Health Center.

(e.g.: bandages; band-aids, individual packets of Tylenol, Advil, Aleve, etc.)



BRING YOUR FAMILY TREE POSTER BOARD TO THE REUNION AND ENTER IT FOR A CHANCE TO WIN A PRIZE!

IF YOU HAVE A GOOD "HERITAGE" STORY THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO NOMINATE FOR THE NEWSLETTER, PLEASE SUBMIT IN PUBLISH-READY FORMAT!

REGISTER EARLY

**PAID REGISTRANTS WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO
SUBMIT 2 PHOTOS FOR THE ALBUM. DUE TO SPACE, ONLY
THE FIRST 1,000 PHOTOS WILL BE ADDED.**

PAYMENT DUE FEBRUARY 15, 2008

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To Come!!

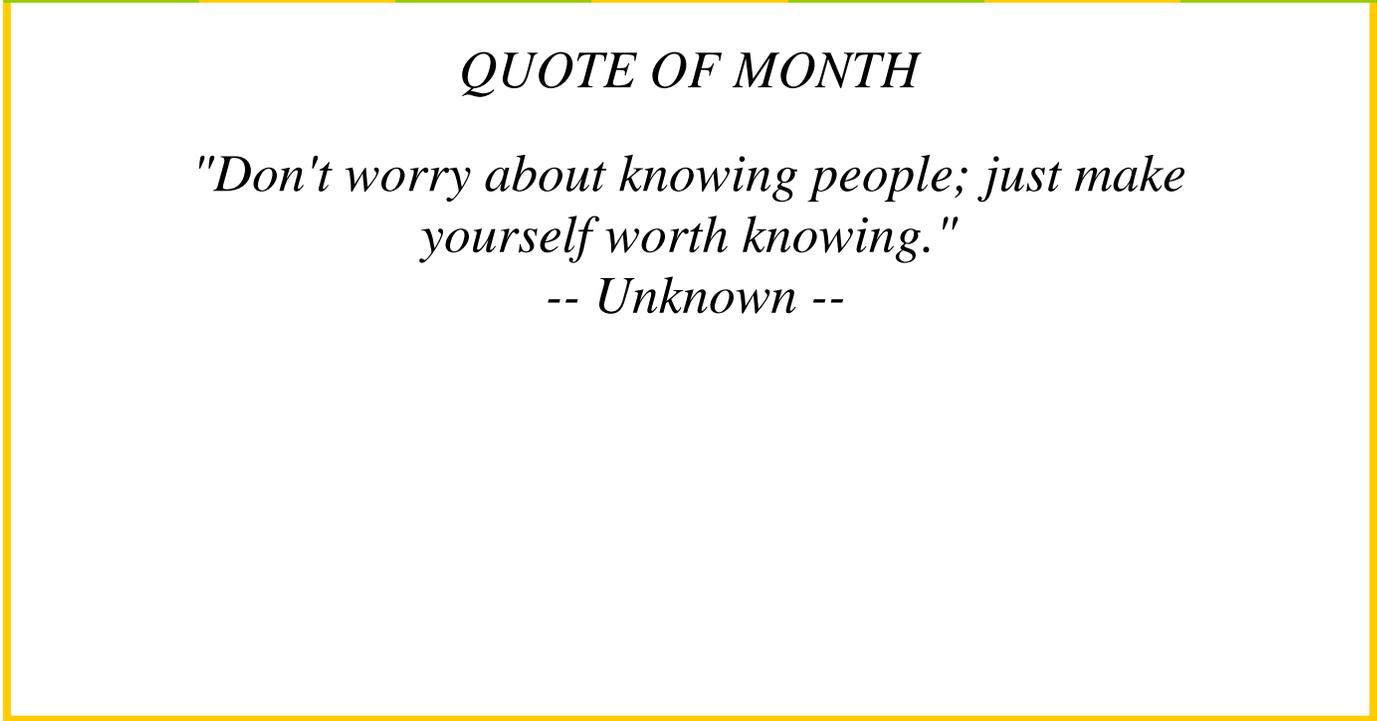
*Look out for an
email with a list
of the different
categories of
books that would
best meet the
needs of the
Crooked Tree
Village Library and
the community!!*



QUOTE OF MONTH

"Don't worry about knowing people; just make yourself worth knowing."

-- Unknown --



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