

MR MOHINDER PURI

(-2016)

Mr Mohinder Puri served in the Commonwealth Secretariat from 1973 to 2001 in a variety of divisions: Economic Affairs, Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP), Food Production and Rural Development, the CYP Centre in Chandigarh (India), and with the General Technical Assistance Division which eventually became the Governance and Institutional Development Division (GIDD) where he was Chief Programme Officer.

- *I am very sad about this. Mohinder and I shared an office for a year and he was the most caring colleague, with a wealth of knowledge from the foundation days of the IDS in Sussex. I still have his gift to me when I left to work in Africa. He was a gentleman and a scholar. **Stephen Chan***
- *Thank you -- and also to Ved -- for conveying this very sad news. I know that Mohinder had been keeping poor health for some time, but never expected that he would leave us so soon. I had the pleasure of knowing him, as a professional colleague and as a friend, ever since I came to the Commonwealth Secretariat in 1990. He was a thorough gentleman and an erudite person who took interest in many things, including the spiritual and metaphysical. He will be greatly missed. My deepest sympathies also to the bereaved family. **Amitav Banerji***
- *Shocked and sorry indeed to hear of Mohinder's passing. Though we both served in the CYP, our times did not coincide and my contact with him was therefore as a colleague working in other Divisions of the Secretariat.*

*I shall remember him as a kind-hearted friend who fitted Cardinal Newman's definition of a gentleman - he never inflicted pain on anyone. Rest in peace, Mohinder. **Raja Gomez***

- *I am shocked and saddened by this news. Mohinder was a former GTASD/GIDD colleague who loved the organisation that gave him his career and remained optimistic for its future despite having experienced most of the "trials and tribulations" that the organisation faced over the years. Mohinder's loyalty to the Commonwealth cause and ComSec was unwavering and it troubled him that it had not, as yet, regained the status that it enjoyed in its heyday. He was always coming up with ideas to enhance its reputation in what remains, even to this today, a hostile operating environment. It was a great pleasure to work with him as he was always even tempered and a team player. He remained essentially, if one is permitted to say so, the quintessential "Indian gentleman". We kept in contact after he left ComSec at his great watering hole, the RAC Club, where he was accorded the same reverence and respect as the Hinduja brothers. As we waxed lyrically over a bottle of red, he would try to persuade me to work with him on his latest project whether a book on the history of Indian cuisine or some*

publication that he thought would enjoy Commonwealth support and promote the reputation of the organisation.

He can be proud of his contribution to the development of Commonwealth member states. I will always associate Mohinder with the Pacific region which was his responsibility at GTASD. I am sure that across the Pacific region there will be many a civil servant and politician who, in the coming weeks to come, will be recalling (perhaps over a bowl of Kava) the valuable work that Mohinder did in support of the region and will be deeply saddened by his passing. Please convey my deepest condolences to his family. **Roy Rodriguez**

- This is indeed very sad news and for me most unexpected. We worked together for well over a decade in GTASD and shared many work trips together especially to the Pacific where he was a most popular representative of ComSec. In these trips and indeed back in St James' we had a common interest in sharing a glass or 3 of red wine at the end of the day, or in especially taxing circumstances even during the day (perhaps only 2). The latter may have been due to his unease with the advent of computer technology, which was never his strong suit!

He was a scholar of Indian culture and literature, as his wife too, and I suspect his daughters will have inherited that from them both. I last saw him purely by accident in Chiswick High Road about 5 years ago, characteristically both of us in the same wine bar, and enjoyed our chat. At that time he seemed pretty fit and well, I am sorry to hear he had poor health later.

Roy's words are a fine tribute to him and I endorse them completely. My condolences to his family, and also from my wife Estelle who enjoyed his company too. **Chris Bowman**

- I am shocked to hear that Mohinder Puri has passed away. I knew him well both professionally and as a friend. We used to meet quite frequently for lunch in the Secretariat Canteen and I had been to the Royal Automobile Club with him a few times at his invitation. I used to meet him even after both of us had retired from the Secretariat. He was kind, very helpful and always offered sound advice. I would be grateful if you could convey my heartfelt condolences to his family. **Gurudas Bailur**
- I am very sorry to hear this. I've known Mohinder since first joining the Secretariat in 1977. He was always very helpful and courteous. After I left Comsec he entertained me several times for lunch or drinks at the RAC club and we passed some pleasant afternoons. My deepest sympathy to his wife and family. **Roy Chalmers**
- I am shocked and sad to hear that Mohinder passed away, so young sixties being our new forties now. Mohinder and I worked together in GTA/GTASD/GIDD for many years. Unlike my other colleagues, I did not share Bacchus glasses with him but we did exchange notes on culinary delights and tips about restaurants. Mohinder was also a foodie. I fully share Chris and Roy homage to him. My deepest condolences to all members of his family. **Francoise Chapman**

- *Deeply saddened to hear news of Mohinder's death. He was warm, kind and gentle and like the proverbial Englishman always understated his achievements and contributions to the CW in whose service he devoted the best part of his adult life. He was one of the earlier students of the famous economist Hans Singer at Sussex University and helped to co-author a book with him on development economics. As a caring economist he believed in a multi-disciplinary approach to development - an approach that must have served him well in his advisory role in the Pacific, mentioned by Roy in his endearing eulogy of Mohinder. He often talked to me about his work and time spent in the Economic Affairs Division with a sense of nostalgia but felt that he was happiest when he was dealing with practical issues at the country level directly with people. I last met him about 18 months back in a wine bar in south-west London on my way to the airport. He told me that he was writing a book on Hinduism and would share a draft. He looked reasonably fit at the time and so this news of his passing comes as a total surprise. I would like to extend my heartfelt condolences to his wife and family. **Rumman Faruqi***
- *I was very sad to hear of Mohinder's death. Slightly diffident, always courteous and quietly persuasive, Mohinder was at the heart of the Secretariat for many years and contributed much to its work and professional reputation. Like others, I kept in touch with Mohinder in the years after ComSec and Roy has captured perfectly the character and content of those social (cum business?) exchanges. I salute him and treasure his memory. **Stuart Mole** (Deputy Chair, The Commonwealth Association, 2001-2020)*
- *I am sorry to hear of the passing of Mohinder Puri. Whilst our areas of work did not directly cross Mohinder always showed an interest in that work and was often ready to engage in informed discussion re: the politics of the Commonwealth. He clearly had an insatiable thirst for knowledge and was always a courteous, optimistic and warm personality. His commitment to the Commonwealth was constantly reflected as was his commitment to contribute to a creative development process for what was then called 'the developing World'. I join with all the others in sending condolences to his family. **Neville Linton***
- *Mr Puri was a good man, a true professional and a gentleman. May his soul rest in peace. I join in the condolences to his family. **Trudi Coleman***
- *Very sorry to get this sad news about Mohinder Puri. He was a kind, gentle and considerate colleague. My sincere condolences to his family. **Shobhna Rattansi***

MS ELMIN BOYCE

(-2016)

Ms Elmin Boyce worked as a switchboard operator. Her Bajan lilt always filled a room, especially the Friday night bar.

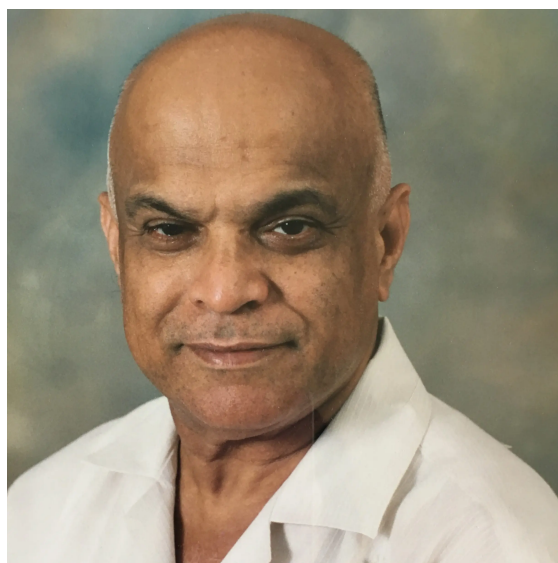
- *May her soul rest in perfect peace. **Sallay Williams***
- *I am saddened by Elmin's death. There was a special affinity between us because I lived in Barbados for four years and we had mutual friends there. Condolences to her and the rest of the family.*

*I also remember Elmin for the dall pourie roti she ordered for some of us. May her soul rest in peace. **Yusuff Ali***

- *I knew Elmin from the first day she walked into Marlborough House and considered her a dear friend until the day she left. She was such fun and she brightened our lives with her tales of all the men who had fallen for her. For that and other reasons we gave her the nickname BB, aka black beauty, which she loved. She was an integral part of efforts to make the Secretariat what it was in those days which was a family. She brought in food, could whip up a mean rum punch and was always up for running the bar at the many parties we then held in the Blenheim and for any chance of fun and games which might be available.*
- *After she left we kept in touch, until after an illness, Dharani and I visited her at home and we realised that her memory was failing. Soon we were told that she would need special care and our lovely BB was no more. I am sad that she has gone but hope that she will set up a bar wherever she ends up and brighten the lives of those who come into her orbit. I shall be going to her funeral tomorrow where I know I will meet many of the old family and I am sure we will all be smiling as we remember this lovely, vibrant Bajan and bid her farewell. **Patsy Robertson** (Chair, The Commonwealth Association, 2001-2020)*

PROFESSOR BISHNODAT (VISHNU) PERSAUD

(1933-2016)



Professor Bishnodat Persaud, Director, Economic Affairs Division, and Chief Economic Adviser to the Commonwealth Secretary-General from 1982-92. Professor Persaud worked at the Commonwealth Secretariat from 1974 before he was appointed Director.

- *Deeply saddened to learn about the passing away of Vishnu. I never had a chance to work during his period of employment with the ComSec but I had heard lots of good things about him. Please convey my condolences to his family. And God's courage to bear the loss. May his soul rest in peace. **Ved Goel***
- *What can one really say upon the receipt of such news? I met Prof. Persaud long after he left the ComSec. I remember him fondly as a real gentleman who was a fountain of knowledge and experience. The entire Commonwealth, particularly the Caribbean, is poorer without him. **Nirad Tewarie***
- *I'm deeply saddened at the passing of Vishnu who was my colleague and friend when we served together at the ComSec in the late Eighties and early Nineties. As Director of the Economic Affairs Division, he was always supportive of the work of the WDP.*

After we had both left the Secretariat, I caught up with him again in late 1994 when I was in Kingston, Jamaica for a UN meeting. He had then taken up the position of Alcan Professor of Sustainable Development at the University of the West Indies, Jamaica Campus.

*We had a great time reminiscing about our time at the ComSec over dinner. Unfortunately, we did not manage to stay in touch after that due to our busy schedules. Please convey my heartfelt condolences to his family. My thoughts and prayers are with them during this difficult time. **Farida Ariffin***

- *I am very sad to hear this news though I knew that Vishnu had been ill for some months. He was at the Secretariat for the whole period of my service there but perhaps it was after we went our separate ways that we got to know each other better.*

A group of four of us had lunch together about a year ago and sometime after, the first news filtered to me of his illness. I wrote to Vishnu about three months ago expressing the hope that perhaps we could meet again but that was not to happen of course.

The Commonwealth has lost a faithful associate and the Caribbean a distinguished son. Rosanne and I send our deepest sympathies to Lakshmi and the family.

Raja Gomez

- *Vishnu was a real friend and colleague, always encouraging, never pompous. This is very sad news.* **Stephen Chan**
- *Very sad. Vishnu was an exceptional person who made an outstanding contribution to the Commonwealth.* **Stuart Mole** (Deputy Chair, The Commonwealth Association, 2001-2020)
- *I have just received your sad news about Vishnu Persaud. Professor Bishnodat (Vishnu) Persaud was a great and devoted servant of the Commonwealth. I first met Vishnu in 1970 when we worked together in the Caribbean in the Commonwealth Commission on Anguilla. He was a humane economist who rendered outstanding service to the cause of sustainable development including especially, the economic development of the developing countries. I am sure that my predecessor in office, Sonny Ramphal, will have a lot more to say about Vishnu's remarkable contributions to global economic dialogue and the work of the Commonwealth Secretariat during the eight of the ten years he served as the Director of Economic Affairs Division and Chief Economic Adviser to the Commonwealth Secretary-General. Suffice it for me to say as a colleague of eighteen years at Marlborough House that the passing of Vishnu Persaud represents a huge loss to the coterie of truly outstanding advocates of more equitable international economic relationships.*
- *I regret that being in Nigeria, I will not be able to attend his funeral; so please convey my condolences to his family.* **Emeka Anyaoku** (Chief Emeka Anyaoku, Commonwealth Secretary-General, 1990-2000)
- *Vishnu was both an inspiration and a mentor for me personally and was the person who really introduced me to the Secretariat before I joined as Assistant Director in 1988. Prior to that, I had the privilege of serving on two of his Commonwealth expert groups on youth employment and new technology, which were a number of high profile groups through which Vishnu ensured that the Commonwealth contributed significantly to state of the art international economic policies. I always found him highly professional, open to new ideas and above all unassuming and dedicated to our Commonwealth ideals- in fact the very model of an international civil servant. I had been in touch with him only relatively recently when he- humble as always- expressed his regrets at being unable to join me at an event I had organised because of his serious illness, He will be greatly missed – please pass on my most sincere condolences to the family.* **Carl Wright**
- *I am very saddened at the news about Vishnu. He was not only a colleague but also a friend and it doesn't seem that long ago that I had lunch with him at the RAC. Lunch ended way after 5pm and, even so, we hardly made a dent into the many reminiscences we shared. Among the countless social conversations we have had over the years, the one thing that struck me more than anything else was how much he loved Lakshmi. Not a conversation went by without him saying something nice about her. Even after so many years into their marriage, he remained very much in love with her. I can only imagine how devastated she must*

be. I would be most grateful if you could convey my heartfelt condolences to her and the rest of the family. **Yusuff Ali**

- *This is immensely sad news. I worked with him in 1991-2 as an economic adviser, taking forward the Iwokrama Rainforest Programme, and with Chief Anyaoku attended the Rio Earth Summit where we promoted the project. As an economist he helped move governments away from a statist model, and he advised me at the Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit, and was an early trustee for the Ramphal Institute. His dedication to the Commonwealth was second to none. **Richard Bourne***
- *Deeply saddened to know of Vishnu's passing away. He joined the Secretariat a year before I did and left two years before me and this gave us a large span of time together at the Secretariat. His achievements before, during and after his work for the Secretariat were indeed signal. He argued passionately for equity in global economic relationships and sustainability in development. I wonder whether there was his unseen hand in the recent switch over by the UN from "Millennium Development Goals" to "Sustainable Development Goals". As a human being, what marked him out was his ability to combine rich erudition with utter humility and affability. May his Soul rest in eternal peace. **P P Kanthan***
- *Thank you so much for conveying not only the very sad news of Vishnu's death but the admirable Wikipedia biography.*

Emeka Anyaoku has summarised comprehensively and eloquently Vishnu's outstanding contribution to international economic relationships and the development imperative, both during his long stint in the Commonwealth Secretariat, and subsequently.

*I have good reason to know how highly he was regarded in the World Bank Group and in the ECOSOC side of the UN. I am very glad that so much of his work is preserved not only in his own writings, but also in the stream of Secretariat expert reports published while he was at Marlborough House, as well as in the reports of the International Commissions of which Sonny Ramphal was a member. As the French say, "he was not like the others". I join warmly with fellow members of the Association in expressing our deep sympathy to the family. **Peter Marshall***

Selected links:

- [Article on Wikipedia](#)
- [Discussion paper by Persaud for the Commonwealth Oral History Project witness seminar](#)
- [Article by Patsy Robertson: Bishnodat \(Vishnu\) Persaud, the Ramphal years and the Caribbean](#)