

A BRIEF HISTORY

THE BEGINNINGS:

It was 1986 in Atlanta, Georgia, the game of cricket was being played on a limited scale, but the West Indies community was growing, and there was a definite need to expand the game in the Atlanta area. Two members of the Atlanta Cricket Club, Junior Williams, former Jamaica national player, and Lascelles Buchanan, saw this opportunity and decided that it was time to act. They set about to get things in place, men and ideas, to serve as the basis of a new club.

Lascelles Buchanan authored the name Tropical and gave it to this embryonic group. They knew that more people with the same vision and purpose was needed to launch this body into the cricketing and social strata. They contacted the former Jamaica national and West Indies wicket-keeper/batsman Desmond Lewis, who was now living in Atlanta and Everett Johnson. Together these four gentlemen began serious discussions as to the club's would-be objectives and structure. During all this the group swelled to include Rueben Miller, Sam McDonald, Mervin Gayle, Godfrey Simms, Milton Williams George Watt and Neville Reynolds. From the meetings of these minds emerged what is now known as the **TROPICAL SPORTS CLUB**.

The new club held its first elections in 1987, when they elected Ruben Miller as their first President, Denise Buchanan was elected first female Secretary and her husband Lascelles Buchanan, Treasurer. These pioneers were resolute in their determination to make the club grow and succeed not only at cricket but in community relationships as well. Their only drawback was the lack of a clubhouse of their own to hold meetings, but; they did not for one moment let this shortcoming put a damper on their spirits or desire to press forward. They leaped over this hurdle by convening meetings at the homes of cooperative members and supportive business establishments. The Redd Inn in Decatur, Auburn Avenue, in downtown Atlanta, 920 Michael Drive in College Park, 1719 Austin Drive, 2341 Snapfinger Road Emerald Estate North, 2942 Ember drive, Decatur, Memorial Drive and Hairston Road in Stone Mountain, all provided assistance in the form of facility for meetings.

The club quickly established its cricketing prowess, and under the Captaincy of Junior Williams, and the Vice Captaincy of Desmond Lewis they rocketed to be among the top teams of the existing cricket League, and was narrowly beaten in the final of the Norman Bowen (League) Trophy by the same team (Atlanta Cricket Club) from which it was formed. This was in 1987, but; they returned the following year, 1988, to win the League Championship. The word got out, and their great cricketing performances drew the attention of other good intentioned clubites. The membership swelled to almost thirty by the end of 1988, with men like Conroy Reid and Dorrel Allen signing on. Both men were to significantly impact on the Club, Allen served as Treasurer, and Reid later became Club Manager, and the man who played a very significant role in acquiring our very own Clubhouse.

THE DOCUMENT:

In 1989 the Tropical Sports Club became incorporated with President Sam McDonald as The Registered Agent, and address at 6645 Kimberly Mill Drive, College Park. The Board of Directors listed on the instrument of incorporation are Sam McDonald, George Watt, Neville Reynolds, Dorrel Allen and Mervyn Gayle. With this deed, the club shall hence hereafter be referred to officially as TROPICAL SPORTS CLUB, INC., licensed by the state of Georgia as a non-profit organization.

SPORTS—CRICKET, GOLF:

The Club first played competitively in the Atlantic Georgia Cricket Association, winning the championship for thirteen (13) consecutive years 1988 through 2001. before leaving to join the Atlanta Georgia Cricket Conference in 2002 annexing that championship that very year, and again in 2003. It lost a chance at a third straight crown in this new League, when it went down in defeat to the Stone Mountain Young Guns in 2004. Sweet revenge in 2005 when Tropical defeated this same team, Stone Mountain Young Guns, to recapture the League championship. The Club lost in the semi-finals to CSC, eventual champions, in 2006. In 2007 the Club broke away from the Atlanta Georgia Cricket Conference to play in The newly formed Georgia Supreme Cricket League. Even as I write, Tropical has already won the 45 over, and 20/20 Knock-out Trophies. We won the 40 over regular season final also. Achieving the almost impossible 'Triple Crown of Cricket Championships' in 2007.

Tropical's adventures in the friendly cricket arena saw them playing in Florida, Tennessee, Maryland/Washington, New York, they have played in Windsor, Canada, and have toured Jamaica, West Indies several times. Tropical has reciprocated by playing hosts to teams from all the above mentioned areas. This cricket intra-relationship has helped the Club to forge lasting links of friendship and strong sporting alliances. Besides Junior Williams, William Cole, Delroy Bisnott and Patrick Harris have served as Captain of Tropical. Harris currently leads the team, and has for the last five years.

The Sport of Golf became increasingly popular among club members, and the Club has staged a few very successful Invitational Golf Tournaments. Golfing enthusiasts include Barry Bennet, Desmond Lewis, Godfrey Simms, John Williams, Denys Williams, and Basil (Cap) Williams.

PRESIDENTS:

Rueben Miller.....1986
Sam McDonald.....1987 – 1992
Barry Bennett.....1993 – 1997
Sam McDonald.....1998 - 1999
Waine Gray.....2000 - 2004
Barry Bennett.....2005 - present

THE EARLY YEARS:

The 1987-89 period were difficult first years for the club, what with no Clubhouse. Sam McDonald was President, and his Vice President was George Watt. Dorrel Allen was Treasurer, Neville Reynolds Secretary and Mervyn Gayle, Club Manager. With one accord the membership chartered a path of success, from which they pledged not to stray. Following the Incorporation a core of young men came on board that included Ian O'Shea, Patrick Harris, Barry Bennett and Lloyd Campbell, with all four later serving as Vice-President, Club Manager, Cricket Captain, Vice President/President and Secretary respectively. Later came Waine Gray, William Cole, John Slocombe, Ken Johnston, Val Jones, Melvin Griffin and Delroy Bissnott. Waine Gray later served as Vice President and President. William Cole succeeded Everett Johnson as Treasurer in 1995, and has served in that position ever since. Bissnott led the cricket team for a short time. A building fund was started which grew slowly mainly because of the lack of a facility to stage Fund Raisers as often as they would like. They never stopped looking.

THE SEARCH ENDS—CLUBHOUSE AT LAST:

In 1996, during the Presidency of Barry Bennett, Tropical found a temporary home for their first ever Clubhouse, when they rented space at 1659 South Indian Creek in Stone Mountain.

This place, they thought, was to serve as the launching pad for bigger and better things, like a ***place of their very own.***

Lloyd Campbell, undoubtedly the hardest working Secretary the Club ever had, and Club Manager, Mervyn Gayle working just as tirelessly spared very little effort in trying to raise the Club to another level, even as the membership grew and cricket championships piled up.

Glen Atkins, Tony Smart, William Earle, Dudley White, Jennifer and Carl Miles, and Wendell Morris are some of the people who joined the club during this period. In 1998 Sam McDonald again became the President, and the dream of ownership took on a new meaning, it became a burning desire fueled by the accessibility of a clubhouse. Alas, just when things seem to be going well, the Club had to vacate the premises at 1659 S. Indian Creek Drive early in 2002. Temporary housing was found at Flat Shoals road, College Park, space the club was forced to give up even before they had quite settled in. The search for a clubhouse never let up and almost two years went by without success. Back to members homes for meetings, yet the championships mounted, and membership grew. Alford Givance, Basil (Cap) Williams, Ken Williams and Brian King, swelled our ranks of talented cricketers, and Beth Powell-Jackson, Allan Dawkins, Garvet DaCosta, Brenda Daniels, John Williams, Noel Williams, Rupert Rainford, Melvin Ramsay, and Richard Ruddock joined the diversified group of members.

HOME AT LAST:

It is now 2004, Waine Gray, occupied the Presidency, and a piece of good luck befell the Club.

John Slocombe, and Ken Williams had acquired a piece of residentially zoned property at 1943 S. Hairston Road, Stone Mountain as an investment. These two club members saw the possibilities the property offered as a probable clubhouse and contacted Junior Williams, who in turn contacted Conroy Reid, then Club Manager, and the rest is history. Conroy Reid seized the opportunity right away, and with the Club's blessings and a team of several key members started negotiations to try and acquire the property on behalf of the Club. The tremendous possibilities offered by the property's topography served as a driving force. There was enough land behind the building to facilitate a cricket practice field, added to that the location was easily reached from interstates 20 and 285. Their energy and zeal was rewarded, they succeeded in acquiring the property, and began work in earnest to make the location usable. Quite a bit of landscaping was done, and areas cleared to facilitate parking. The building itself needed a lot of repairs, but; this did not deter the members. They pitched in, Junior Williams, Ian O'Shea, Barry Bennett, Patrick Harris, Conroy Reid, William Cole, Desmond Lewis and Leroy Wallace all gave tirelessly of their time and service without pecuniary rewards in the effort to make the location habitable. All the work is not yet done, but; enough was accomplished to allow for the official opening on April 23, 2005. We have come a long way, the dream was only partially realized, but; this was a long way from where we were only months before, and where we really want to go – wide open spaces, a cricket field, a multi-purpose Clubhouse, tennis Courts, and mini golf course—impossible dream!! Far from it---***You Just Wait and See***---

The day the Hon. Consul General of Jamaica in Atlanta, Vin Martin declared the building open, there was pride and a sense of satisfaction on the faces of members present; and the cheers that went up as Ms. Joyce Tomlinson (JD) cut the ribbon was evidence indeed of the tremendous emotion and degree of satisfaction that permeated the atmosphere. Tropical was finally really launched, this was indeed a proud moment in our history. We could now concentrate on doing the things we long wanted to do, foster a congenial facility for our members and to reach out positively to the community in which we thrived, to wit, create a "Neighborhood Recreation Center" for which a land use permit has already been filed, and to assist in offering scholarship awards to worthy students.

EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP AWARD PROGRAM:

That same year, 2005, we partnered with the Atlanta Jamaica Association, and offered an Educational Scholarship Award valued at Two Thousand (\$2000.00) Dollars to Ms. Shaday Azure-Dee Gallimore, to help her attend the Agnes Scott College. This gesture was always a desire of the Club, and one can imagine how proud we were to finally accomplish it, with a promise to the Atlanta Jamaica Association to do this on a yearly basis. Year 2006, saw the Scholarship Award going to Mr Bradston Henry, bound for Georgia Tech, and in 2007 the Award went to Mr. Craig Montague who is bound for the Howard University School of Engineering.

THE MILLINEUM YEARS:

The Club continued to dominate the cricket competitions in the Atlanta area, and it's Community outreach programs intensified. The fact that we now were proud owners of our own Clubhouse drew a significant number of new members, Lloyd Thompson, Owen Dunkley (who had previously given up membership because of relocation) Clive Nelson, Alphanso Ferguson, Basil Campbell, Steve Archer, Allan Stewart, Evan Robinson and Denys Williams. New female members included, Leila Hardy, Morgan Charity, Sonia Forbes, Marcia Gregory, Donna Fung, Diana Effatt, Julia Edwards, Sylvia Ricketts, Marcia Mitchell, Ora D. Williams and Joan Washington. Several of these Ladies work in the Health Care field which helped with our Health Fairs. The cricket team was boosted by new and talented players like David Hoilette, Cameron Davis, a young Australian, Richard Holilette, Charles Lawrence, Errol Brown, Jermaine Lindo, Ryan Young, Derron Ebanks, Michael Sutton, Eli Campbell, Basil Williams and Lyndon Johnson. These members brought a diversity of talents to the organization and contributes immensely to the continuity of it's growth.

Tropical held it's first ever Banquet and Awards Ceremony at the Omega Psi Phi World Center, Snapfinger Woods Drive, Decatur in November of 2000, and this has been an annual event ever since. Two of our major accomplishments during this period was our partnership with the Fulton County Parks and Recreation in the introductory Youth Cricket Program, and our discussions with the Ronald E. McNair Middle School in College Park, to explore the possibility of establishing a similar program. All of this in an effort to ensure forever the continuity of a very popular segment of the West Indian Culture, the sport of cricket, in this alien American environment.

VISION:

The Tropical Sports Club, Inc., although started by a group of Jamaicans, and remains mostly Jamaican, it's membership today stands at almost sixty and includes people from various parts of the Caribbean, Barbados, St. Kitts, Trinidad, Guiana , United States of America, and from far off Australia. We frequently partner with the Atlanta Jamaica Association to answer needs of help from Jamaica, and we consistently join with the Union of Jamaica Associations in Atlanta, in it's planning of the Jamaica Independence week, a testament of our support for organizations working together. Tropical has plans on the drawing Board to launch it's Youth Program , which comprise many and varied activities. We will continue to hold our Health Fair and Seminars, expanding as we go along the scope and content. This is but a small part of our plans for positive community involvement and participation, a very noble idea indeed, demanding of time, finances and personal commitments, but; we will always hold fast to desire to **"GIVE BACK"** .

IN MEMORIAN:

- Lloyd Campbell.....(1999).....3/11/39 to 3/29/1999
- Mervin Gayle.....(2004).....2/17/40 to 6/14/2004
- Leroy Wallace.....(2010)..... to 3/2/2010

NOTE: My sincere thanks to Junior Williams, William Cole, Sam McDonald, Desmond Lewis, Waine Gray, Ian O'Shea, Godfrey Simms, Barry Bennett and Patrick Harris, without whose valuable contributions, the compilation of this Document would not be possible.

.....LloydF.Thompson