

## **Nostalgia: Henry Street. Werk-en-Rust**

By Peter Halder

Henry Street in Werk-en-Rust is a short street. It is only one block long. It extends from Princess Street on the south to Durban Street on the north. It is sandwiched between George Street on the east and Smyth Street on the west.

A denizen of Non Pareil Street, Albouystown (vide my Nostalgia: The Street Where I lived: Non Pareil Street, Albouystown), I became familiar with Henry Street in the late 1940s when I met and became a close and lasting friend of Carl Agard. I joined him in Scholarship Class at St. Stephen's Church of Scotland School at the junction of St. Stephen, Princess and Adelaide Streets, Charlestown. We would go swimming often at clay, the parloff or other parts of the Punt Trench or explore the mangrove area on the bank of Demerara River at Ruimveldt, next to Art Williams Transport offices.

Carl, who often referred to himself as Carl Nigel Stanislaus Yohann Divioli Agard, lived in a large, old house in a spacious "yard" near the southern end of the eastern side Henry Street. The bottom of the house was enclosed but there was no flat/apartment. The principal occupants of the bottom house at night were crapauds of the large, black, ugly variety with lumpy backs.

There was also a small cottage at the back of the yard which was rented.

South of Carl's placed and towards the southern end of Henry Street was the Corinthian Lodge. The Lodge was a huge white building in the expansive grounds, both of which were always well kept. The caretaker of the Lodge lived in the cottage in Carl's backyard. South of Corinthian Lodge and the end of street was a wide lawn which bordered the Princess Street trench. We played cricket or bat and ball on the lawn (as we called it) from time to time, using green starapples as balls and wood bats. We also played at St. Phillips playground from time to time.

In the front of the yard was a tall starapple tree. Apart from using the green fruit to play cricket, we would play Tarzan on it especially when we had seen a Tarzan movie at the Cinema.

I had never known Carl's parents, and in keeping with my home training, never asked.

I was told by Carl that the property was owned by his Uncle, one Mr. Hart who was a Chemist and Druggist at Croal's Drug Store at Norton and John Streets. I can't recall if he said that his uncle owned it but I know that in later years, the Drug Store was owned by Dr Joseph Prayag Latchmansingh who also owned Drug Stores in Stabroek, Bourda and Kitty Markets and the Regent Pharmacy and Farmer's Dairy on Regent Street. I believe that Mr. R.B.O Hart, Principal of Enterprise High School, on Camp Street next to London Cinema, later Plaza, was a relative of the old Mr. Hart. Enterprise later moved to Hadfield Street near Louisa Row.

Carl had one brother, the elder, John Leslie Agard, whom we all called Leslie or "Fishy". They were taken care of by an Aunt whom we all called Auntie but I believe her name was Mrs. Gilead. Also living in the same house was Auntie's daughter whom we called Sister. She got

married to a Mr. Roland Patterson who lived in a cottage further up on Henry Street. Sister was a teacher at the Anglican School on Durban and High Streets. She had one daughter whose name I believe was Ann.

In later years, the family was joined by the Small family comprising Auntie's sister, her husband Bertie, and children Lynette, Elin and one other girl and the boys were Berkeley and Jocelyn (whom we called Governor Bassool). We called Jocelyn "Governor Bassool" because he always had an answer, whether or not it was relevant. I recall that one night; we had a discussion about sight. Leslie posited that you do not see with your eyes and it is your brain, memory section, that filters the image from the eyes and tells you what you see. Governor Bassool promptly replied: Well if you don't see with your eyes, how come some people are cock-eyed? His response brought down the house, metaphorically. Lynette migrated to U.K. and became an SRN, SCM. Berkeley joined the Georgetown Town Council's Buildings Division and Jocelyn later became the Head of the Records (Music) Library at Radio Demerara. Elin I was told migrated to the USA.

Carl moved from one job to another until he joined the Kitty Village Council whose offices were above the Kitty Market. He subsequently worked at the Demerara Bauxite Company. Mackenzie and them relocated to Lethem, got married and settled there.

Leslie was a senior officer in the Licence Revenue Department on Brickdam, obliquely opposite the Police Station. I joined him there after being transferred from the District Administration Office, Christianburg. We both resigned and went to England to pursue tertiary education. We stayed in close touch in London. Leslie improved the property on Henry Street on his return to Guyana.

On the northern side of Carl's yard was a large, white house owned by a Portuguese family.

Next to that, proceeding north was a cottage and after that a two-storeyed house with a tower. It had an "unsavoury" reputation as I recall. I can't recall what was at the north-eastern corner of Henry and Durban Streets at that time but it later became a cloth and dry goods store. South of it was a cottage which was modernized and became the popular El Globo Liquor Restaurant in later years. Carl, Leslie and I patronized the place from time to time.

On the western side of Henry Street, the first house next to Durban Street was a cottage. A former friend of mine from Christianburg, "Doc" Deo Narine, the Government Dispenser for the Upper Demerara River, upon retirement, bought the property and moved there with his family.

Next to the Narines, going south, was another well-appointed cottage which was owned by the Cunha family. The cottage was later acquired by the Walks family. Mrs. Walks was the former Erma Alexander from Non Pareil and James Streets, Albouystown.

There was another cottage after that and it was where Sister's husband Roland Patterson lived.

Next was a large tenement building in which lived many families. Earl, also called "Red Earl" because he was red-skinned, was a friend of Carl and I. He lived there with his family. We made

it a habit of walking through St. Phillips Churchyard some nights to tease couples "making out" there. On one such night, we spied a couple in deep embrace against a mahogany tree. Earl shouted some advice and a female voice called out "Earl?" We ran like the wind from the locus in quo.

Further down was another large, two-storeyed building. In the top flat lived another close friend of ours Cyril Agostini. The Agostini family was from Golden Grove on the East Coast. Cyril joined our group. He pursued higher education in London and held top positions in Guyana and at the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank in Washington D.C.

In the bottom flat lived the Young family. I recall two Chinese-douglas (chigra) girls, one of whom was Mignon. She was a nurse.

At the end of the street was a cottage owned by a Chinese family. They lived a very close, private life and very little was known of them and they were rarely seen. Their yard was completely fenced and on the gate was a large sign "Beware of The Dogs." I was told the couple owned and operated a Chinese Restaurant in downtown Georgetown.

Our group met outside Carl's home regularly. The group included Carl, myself, Cyril, Geoff Sampson, Clairmont "Bandit" Moore, Colin King, Joe "Dubbie" Shields, Courtney Coltress, George Munroe, Mike Isaacs, Reggie Wilkinson, Ronnie "Skins" Gaskin, "Squeekie" Hinds, Neville Valz, G.C. Fraser, Clive "Rucca" Thomas, 'Reds' Rodrigues, "Fatboy" Phillips, "Bull" Burnett (who later lived on Henry Street), Dudley Thomas and Stephen Choo Wing, among others.

I recall, immediately north of Henry Street, across Durban Street, in a small cottage, lived the outstanding Guyanese footballer, Victoria Football Club player and Guyanese centre-forward, Dillon Marks. And at the corner of Smyth and Durban Streets was a bakery and above it Haley's Dance Hall. Opposite, on the southern side was a Cake Shop.

Henry Street to me was just like my home street. I spent many days and early evenings there. I came to know almost everyone that lived on the street. It is a pleasure to recall it.

End