

## TRIBUTE TO PETER ABRAHAMS

There are some of us who have been fortunate to share some time and some beautiful memories, in person, with Peter. I am proud to be able to stand representing Radio Jamaica Limited, the parent company in the **RJRGLEANER** Communications Group, where Peter remains a living voice and an encouraging spirit for excellence in journalism, media and as an author.

We at **RJRGLEANER** have over 40 years of simple, straightforward, incisive, analytical journalism still to read, re-read, listened, re-listened and to ponder - all produced by this 5ft seven inch "giant".

Peter came to Jamaica from South Africa via England in 1956 and his journalism among other things, helped cement Radio Jamaica's consistently credible news and current affairs personality on things in Jamaica, the Caribbean and the World – he had a true World View.

Peter was also that business-savvy director, come Chairman of the Radio Jamaica Board. He was appointed Chairman on September 23, 1977 and served until June 25, 1980.

Present Chairman, Lester Spaulding, whom Peter appointed Managing Director in 1978, from time to time still draws on some things from the era when Peter was Chairman.

The RJR Family members are saddened by Peter's death not because he did not have a long, rewarding and impactful life, but because of how he died and what it says about a society where he spent decades trying to help build and uplift a people. Since his death I cannot get out of my head the opening lines of another writer, Jamaican poet Claude McKay – "If we must die, let it not be like hogs, hunted and penned..."

I was fortunate to have shared many hours of many days with Peter and Daphne in the last few years and then with Peter in the last several months.

This gave me many perspectives on them both. In one conversation Peter described Daphne as his girl, his woman, his conscience, his motivator, his burden. He then said, "she was mine from she was 18 and I was hers – we were inseparable".

Daphne who was sitting across the table simply responded: "Ha!"

Peter was upset when she died on Good Friday last year and as only he could be so profound in simplicity – when it hit home to him that morning, he asked – "Gary, how can this be a Good Friday?"

But Peter bounced back, changed his doctor, changed diet, tried to exercise, from his wheelchair and stopped complaining that Daphne

had cheated him, because he was supposed to die first. He developed greater interest in the technologies – participating in chat rooms and in new media fora, constantly pulling apart his computers and TV sets to try new things with the sound and pictures to enjoy himself.

On Christmas Eve when I visited him he had his computer and radio strung up on the verandah and declared he would be having a Christmas Party for a man and a dog (Feebie).

Peter started writing things again. He was talking about writing a few pieces for the Gleaner and actually had an article published on the day he died.

Peter told me he thought he had one more book in him – his 13<sup>th</sup> – but that was not to be.

Peter was committed to media and to RJR in particular. He still owned RJR shares. And last year on one occasion when I suggested he may have to sell some of the shares he declared: “I will not sell my RJR shares ever...I bought them as a commitment to people based ownership of media....” He said.

Indeed, on many of my visits Peter would spend the first half hour or so interrogating me about what’s happening at RJR, asking about the proposed merger and subsequently about how the amalgamation was

coming on. He always said “...give me something to do to help you...I can still do something”!

We talked politics too! Peter declared his political position but did not allow that to affect his insight and analysis. He told me before it happened that the government would change in Jamaica, as it actually did last year. He also predicted that Britain would vote to leave the European Union; and he laughed and said “racist America” will vote for Donald Trump to be president.

At 97, he was still getting it right.

Perhaps our most consistent discussions were about Jamaica’s struggle with crime and violence. Peter felt that the root causes of crime were not being addressed and even as he was robbed eight times in six months, he was reluctant to get the police too involved, asking instead if the robbers couldn’t be caught so he could talk with them.

Peter always said, as Jamaicans we do not talk through our problems enough.

It is that love for Jamaica that drove him and Daphne to decide that they would like their home at Coyaba, to be left to Jamaica, because Jamaica has been their refuge for more than half a century.

Peter's mark on Jamaica, through Public Opinion, the Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation and Radio Jamaica Limited are indelible. His one dozen books are precious gifts; but his best gift was his heart for humanity.

Peter and Daphne on the few occasions they were apart would part with three simple words – Peace and Love. So on behalf of the RJR Family and all of us, Peace and Love my friend, 1994 Musgrave Gold Medal Winner, National Honouree with as Commander of the Order of Distinction - **Peace and Love - Peter.**

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