



Paul Bernard Altman,

BCA, BCh, JP

Chancellor, when Moses Altman fled the Nazi threat to Jews in Poland in 1931, he set his sights on the new world – Venezuela to be precise. Luckily, his ship docked at Bridgetown, and Moses Altman liked what he saw. A victim of history, he could hardly have guessed that two generations later his grandson, Paul Bernard Altman, would be both **making history and preserving history in his new world.**

The first Jewish community of Barbados, Sephardic Jews, fled Portuguese persecution in Recife, three hundred and fifty years ago, and settled in Barbados via Holland. They built their synagogue by 1654 and established a community eventually of some 600. But the economic problems of the 19th century forced them on to greener pastures. The Ashkenazi community of today, led by Moses Altman, has made a massive contribution to the development of Barbados, and Paul Altman's contribution to his community and to Barbados is cause for celebration today.

Paul was educated at the School of Thomas Harrison, founded in the historic building known for more than a century as the Masonic Lodge – one of the icons of Historic Bridgetown, and a stone's throw from the Central Bank ... a symbolic link between our rich heritage and our country's coffers, and a symbol of Paul Altman's efforts to build Barbados through preservation and promotion of our heritage.

After graduating with a BA at the University of Miami, Paul married Rachelle, an artist, returned home, and entered the real estate business. Thirty years later he is the established leader in the luxury residential market, with so many villa rentals that he says he runs the biggest luxury hotel in the Caribbean.

He was instrumental in the development of the Royal Westmoreland golf and villa development, the spectacular Sugar Hill, and his latest baby, Lemon Grove.

He has set the tone for resort developments in the Eastern Caribbean and is highly treasured as a director of regional and offshore companies. And no doubt some of these business deals are settled while Paul bangs and batters balls around the green, green grass of home

But Paul's passion and personal mission is the preservation of Barbados's rich built and natural heritage and Jewish heritage. He is the only person I know who has not only led the conservation of several of the nation's historic sites, as President of the Barbados National Trust, but has also, almost single-handedly, developed two splendid museums and restored our treasured Jewish Synagogue.

His efforts are beyond belief, and his achievements a source of pride and appreciation for all of us and for thousands of visitors. The Nidhe Israel Synagogue was restored and refurbished by his heroic efforts. The old Jewish school room has become the Nidhe Israel Museum; and the historic single house of Speightstown, Arlington, has become the Arlington House Museum – the splendid Museum of Speightstown.

Paul's ability to bond with benefactors of Barbados is now legendary, and not surprisingly, he himself is both a benefactor to the UWI and Chairman of our Endowment Fund, member of Campus Council and Chairman of our Faculty of Medical Sciences Development Fund at Cave Hill, targeting critical needs for training our young doctors. For his efforts he was presented with the Caribbean Luminary Award and inducted into the UWI Chancellor's Circle last year.

Paul is President Emeritus of the Barbados National Trust and Chairman of the Barbados Community Foundation. He was awarded the Gold Crown of Merit in 2007 in recognition of his contribution to tourism development and heritage conservation. In fact his only vice is beating up defenceless little white balls!

Paul's passion and ideas are unceasing, and the splendid complex of the Synagogue, the Museum and the Jewish Cemetery in historic Bridgetown are precious, polished gems in the nomination of Historic Bridgetown and its Garrison as a World Heritage site. They have been greatly enriched by the recent discovery of the ancient mitveh – the bath of purification – on the site ... a marble bath, excavated this year, 10 feet below the car park, and with a still fresh spring of pure water, evoking world wide excitement.

Chancellor, it may well embarrass Paul to be praised for both evoking, preserving and creating history, but I make no apology for embarrassing him, and I humbly ask that you recognise this youthful visionary, one of our youngest ever Honorary graduands – this conservationist, realtor and tourism expert for his impressive contribution to the heritage, tourism and heritage tourism of Barbados and the Caribbean, and confer on him the degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*.