



Sir Clyde Leopold Walcott

Chancellor, what conjunction of the stars can explain the birth of three of cricket's greatest stars - the game's greatest threesome and the West Indies' holy trinity - all within 18 months of each other, all within shouting distance of Kensington Oval, and all with names beginning with W? All of the "Three Ws" were cricket child prodigies - together they brought West Indian cricket from its uncertain adolescence to maturity and covered our name with glory.

Clyde Leopold Walcott was the youngest of the three Ws and the youngest of the cricket playing Walcott sons - at six feet three he was still known as "Baby", but he must have been the biggest baby in Barbados. He was born on January 17, 1926, on the corner of Baxters Road, the street that never sleeps, and Westbury Road, hard by Westbury Cemetery, the place of eternal sleep. His father Frank was an engineer at the Barbados Advocate, and a lover of cricket; his Uncle Ernest was a founder of Empire Cricket Club, his Uncle Harold a famous Test umpire, and his brother Keith played for Barbados at 17. Cricket was in his blood, in his genes, and in the Walcott backyard, where the game never stopped until the sun set. No wonder he made his debut in the BCA at 11, the youngest player ever in BCA first division cricket, playing first for Combermere, and his debut for Barbados at 16, another record. He succeeded Keith as captain of that school on Crumpton Street.

Cricket left no time for books. He does confess, though, to reading one book as a boy - a book about Don Bradman, which he and Keith devoured. His mother, Ruth, was overjoyed - she told the assembled family "They're reading a book, at last". And he finally wrote one. In his own autobiography, *"Sixty Years on the Back Foot"*, he tells the story of the famous maths teacher Mr. Queree's rebuke: "You will have to do better at your school work, young man, because you can't make a living out of cricket". Sir Clyde claims he did not pass a single exam at school, but, with his typical modesty and Bajan understatement, he says "...but I became a useful cricketer". How useful, Chancellor, let us judge by the figures - he may not have got the right numbers at school, but he certainly did on the cricket field: 44 tests, 3,798 runs, 15 centuries

with an average of 57, a century in each innings of a Test twice in one tour, against the then mighty Australians in 1955; 11,800 first class runs, with 40 centuries and an average, again, of 57; and 314 against Trinidad at the age of 20.

Twenty of his records still stand - the highest score against Trinidad, most runs ever in a Test series in the West Indies - 827 against Australia in '55; 5 centuries in a single Test series, separate centuries in a Test match twice in the same series; the most stumpings by a West Indian keeper in Test cricket; the record for any partnership for Barbados - 574 with Sir Frank Worrell against Trinidad; and the most Test centuries ever scored at Kingston, five, shared with our National Hero, Sir Garfield Sobers. He shared in 17 century partnerships in Tests - five with Worrell, four with Weekes and three with Sobers. And the "Three Ws" came, together, to embody all our dreams. What does the great scribe, CLR James, say of this giant of men? He answers his own question: "What is art? Walcott on the back foot through the covers."

Throughout the fifties, Clyde Walcott was literally a tower of strength for the West Indies. But he brought to the game more than brilliant batting and wicket keeping, more than his genius on the back foot, more than his share dependability to "pull it off"; he brought to the game the true spirit of the game - imbibed in the bosom of his cricketing family - a spirit of absolute honesty, integrity and respect - a spirit that said when you're out, you walk; that when your opponent is not out, you don't appeal; that you always do the best you can; and that however tough things are you keep smiling for the sake of the team.

And it was those personal skills which brought him the offer, in 1954, to go to Guyana to work for the Sugar Producers Association, to develop cricket on the plantations and improve the quality of Guyanese cricket. His job was to organize the clubs and competitions, develop facilities, guide the players - indeed everything needed to transform and promote cricket in Guyana. He not only did that, but he led Guyana to victory against Barbados in 1963! He was Chairman of the National Sports Council and President of the Guyana Cricket Board. He came home in 1970 to the job of personnel officer at Barbados Shipping and Trading, where he became an experienced industrial relations expert. His preparation for the challenging (and successful) posts of West Indies Manager, a West Indies selector, and for the pinnacle of his career, Chairman of ICC, was thus earned at the BBC - the bastion of Barbadian commerce. And his views on cricket's needs and cricket's future are both insightful and optimistic - they are the fruits of 60 years on the back foot, from forty years at the crease, and from six feet three above the crease. He has been the gentle giant of world cricket.

Honours have been showered on Sir Clyde for his contribution to cricket, in the Caribbean and internationally - the OBE in 1966, the Golden Arrow of Achievement of Guyana in 1970, the Gold Crown of Merit of Barbados in '91 and a Knighthood in '93. Cricket has taken him from the backyard to Lords, from a stone wrapped in cloth and bound with string, to the Chairmanship of the ICC. With Sir Frank Worrell and Sir Everton Weekes he blazed the trail of West Indian cricketing heroes for Sobers and Kanhai, Richards and Roberts, Lloyd and Lara to follow. And in so doing, paved the way, through the self-confidence and self-assertiveness that these achievements created in us as a people, for our psychological and political independence.

Chancellor, all men - and women - need heroes. Our heritage perhaps makes us, in the Caribbean, even more mindful of the merits of those whose skills stand out above the rest. But for some of our heroes success spoils - as the neighbours say "it gone to he head". But not Sir Clyde. As Kipling said "If you can walk with kings, and not lose the common touch", that is a man. On and off the cricket field, with the support of his wonderful wife Muriel and a talented, successful family, he tries to put in as much as he has gained in sixty years on the back foot, but in his modest way he says: "I can never do more for cricket than cricket has done for me"..

And so Chancellor, for his heroic role in West Indian cricket, and his outstanding service to the people of the Caribbean and the world, I present to you Sir Clyde Leopold Walcott, of Kensington Oval, Bourda, Sabina Park, Queens Park and Lords, of every pasture and cricket ground on God's wonderful planet Earth where the Game is played, and I ask you by the power vested in you by the Council and Senate of our University to confer on him the degree of Doctor of Laws, *Honoris causa*.