

Memories

# Fatima at fifty fetes its finest

By MARLON MILLER

**FAMOUS PAST PUPILS** Brian Lara, Ato Boldon and Everald "Gally" Cummings were among those honoured at the Fatima College Golden Jubilee Dinner last Thursday at the Trinidad Hilton.

But President Noor Hassanali, in his capacity as a guest "player", and former principal Clive Pantin stole the show from the luminaries.

Pantin, principal from 1973 to 1981, was given a standing ovation as he made his way to the podium to raise a toast to the Holy Ghost Fathers, founders of Fatima.

Displaying his great sense of humour as he faced the packed ballroom of applauding old boys, he began his response, "Sit please!"

In a tone that recalled a master entering a Fatima classroom, his words drew laughter from the more than 400 past and present students, teachers, wives and special invitees, including the President and Mrs Hassanali.

**PANTIN RECALLED** that the new college was started in December 1945 as a "subsidiary" of St Mary's College which "kept the best and sent the rest" to Fatima. Little did St Mary's realise, he added, that "the rest then became the best... (and the) subsidiary company would one day become the holding company".

He paid tribute to the late Fr James Ryan, who preceded him as principal.

Pantin also took time to recount the misadventures of one of the "most extraordinary students in history, Gerry Hadeed (today a successful businessman)," for whom Fatima was his fourth school in five years.

He told of the exchange between pupil Hadeed and teacher Mr Cuthbert. The latter claimed that he had more brains in his big toe than Hadeed had in his whole head. To which Hadeed retorted that he had more hair on his big toe than Mr Cuthbert had on his whole head.

Then he mentioned sporting heroes Alvin Corneal and Joey Carew. They were, he said, "my most outstanding students. Both were in 5B, I think for about four years. I nearly said I taught them French."

"I called them outstanding (because) when I came into class, I would say, 'You, Corneal, stand out there, and Carew on the other side.' No wonder they opened for Trinidad."

**IN RAISING** the toast, Pantin commended the Holy Ghost Fathers for the inspiration to open Fatima. He said the Mucurapo college has become the "leading education institute, and I say education in the true sense of the word".

President Hassanali, a past pupil of Naparima College, later got his share of good-natured picong from Ian Benjamin, president of Fatima Old Boys' Association, organisers of the event. Another special guest, Frank Barsotti, president of Queen's Royal College Old Boys' Association, replied on behalf of the guests, before the awards presentation began.

In his turn at the microphone, President Hassanali began by citing a previous speaker who said that his parents had "made a mistake" in sending him to Naparima instead of Fatima.

He also responded to Barsotti, who had earlier said that he could not go to Fatima because when he was entering college there were only two colleges in Trinidad — St Mary's and QRC.

"Either Mr Barsotti went to school somewhere around 1896 before the establishment of Naparima College, or he deliberately insulted me!" the President said.

Despite the "insults in front my face," the President added: "My wife and I thank you for a very delightful



**PRESIDENT Noor and Mrs Hassanali** are escorted into the Hilton Ballroom for last Thursday's Golden Jubilee dinner by Ian Benjamin far right, president of the Fatima Old Boys' Association, Mervyn Moore principal of the College, centre and William Aughton, Hilton general manager, himself a Fatima old boy.

Photo: STEPHENSON WESTFIELD

evening."

But he could not help putting down the three north-based colleges, St Mary's, QRC and Fatima. Referring to their respective geographic locations he asked who would want to go to a school that is "by the jail", or "around the Savannah", or "by the cemetery. Who would want to send their sons to those schools?"

**ON THE** serious side, President Hassanali complimented the Old Boys for "fulfilling an obligation" and praised denominational schools which are "especially distinguished by their values."

"Fatima boys do so well in society, I congratulate you for all you have done," stressing that it was "important to support your college," especially in these times of "confused values and in the absence of values...society needs your help."

Benjamin presented the President with a Fatima College tie but the

honoured guest said in jest that he could not put it on because he was already wearing a Naparima College tie.

A great cheer rose at the end of the evening, however, when Benjamin announced that President Hassanali had indeed put on the Fatima tie.

Another highlight of the function was the presentation of the Golden Jubilee Awards of Distinction. Old boy Derek Johnson informed the audience that the organising committee started with a tentative line-up of over 150 from a computerised list of 7,000, narrowed it down to 50 and then found it "extremely hard to get it to 14". Apart from the first recipient, teacher John Romero, a St Mary's old boy, the other recipients are products of Fatima (see box).

The list, of course included Brian Lara, double world record-holder who also got a standing ovation and was still signing autographs long after the formal part of the proceedings.

## Golden Jubilee honour roll

**Melville Baird**, High Court Judge  
**Lawrence Duprey**, chairman of Colonial Life;

**Alvin Corneal**, all-round sportsman  
**Jules Bernard**, Police Commissioner  
**Ato Boldon**, World Championship bronze-medallist

**Naz Ahamad**, prominent businessman and avid turfite  
**Joey Carew**, former Trinidad and Tobago skipper and West Indies opener and selector

**Mario Sabga-Aboud**, Pizza Boys entrepreneur

**Everald Gally Cummings**, national footballer and coach

**Dr George Khan**, eminent physician  
**Desmond Waithe**, accomplished musician

**Christopher Thomas**, OAS Assistant Secretary General

**Brian Lara**, double world record-holder