

Tribute to Sir Paul Scoon by Honourable Sir K Dwight Venner

I am greatly honored by the request of the family of Sir Paul to make a few remarks on this occasion. I deeply regret that I am not able to do so in person. However, modern technology has stepped into the breach, for which I am truly thankful, given my great respect and affection for him.

I first met Sir Paul when I entered Form 3 at our beloved alma mater, the Grenada Boys Secondary School (GBSS). The GBSS was always a great school both before and after my time. However, the galaxy of outstanding teachers and the institutions of the school made it stand out as an excellent public school. As I have grown and matured and encountered the many challenges in my career, I look back at my time at the GBSS with great fondness and tremendous gratitude. I can say with confidence that it was a life changer for me. The names of the teachers at the time are a virtual roll call of outstanding individuals and personalities. K. I. Smith, the Headmaster, Otto George, H.D. Baptiste, Devere Pitt, Archie Callender, Val Francis, Lincoln St Louis, Terry Lucas, and of course Sir Paul.

Sir Paul Scoon was, as I reflected many years after, a lot of things to us given his various roles in the school. He was Lord of the Hostel, Commander of the Sea Scouts, owner of the Library, a superb teacher of history and geography, a dramatist of distinction in the classroom, and possessed a wicked wit and mischievous sense of humor. With these

attributes he epitomized what I consider to be the virtues of our school. It was about service, contribution, leadership and guidance. In saying this I must freely confess that many of us became fanatics about our school, drawing a very close connection between what it taught us in so many areas and what we could contribute, not only to our own communities but to the West Indies as a region.

We became close from that first year in Form 3 and thus began a lifelong friendship. He christened me Dr Venner and was a constant source of encouragement. At every step of my career I have thought of this kind and thoughtful man who always had inspiring and encouraging things to say to us as growing boys and always had time to discuss serious matters.

It was a long way from Gouyave in those days to being a distinguished teacher at a prestigious school, Cabinet Secretary, a senior official at the Commonwealth Foundation, and Governor General of your country. It speaks to the perseverance, discipline and vision of the man, his confidence in himself and his patriotism in providing service to his country and his people, that he ascended to the heights that he did.

The life of Sir Paul reminds me of a famous quotation of the financier JP Morgan, "the first step towards getting somewhere is to decide that you are not going to stay where you are". This is something that the people of the region in general and particularly us in the OECS must take seriously at this time. Change is the order of the Universe and, in the

face of the tremendous challenges which face us, we must decide to show the fortitude and discipline displayed by Sir Paul throughout his life in order to survive and progress.

Of all the passions of Sir Paul, I know the one that takes pride of place, that is, the Grenada Boys Secondary School. I remember visiting him at Government House and his wife saying to us, "I am going to leave you both alone now because I know what you are going to be talking about for the next few hours". It was that subject but it was also connected to the region and the point of departure was the school song.

I know it is going to be sung this evening and that is another of my regrets for not being there in the flesh to pay my last respects to my teacher in the only way that a GBSS boy can understand. I will therefore take the liberty of reciting the final verse in his honour.

“And when boyhood days are over

Our motto will still remain

For it's only by earnest endeavor

The highest we will attain

A truly great West Indies

Be this our constant aim

Surmounting insular boundaries

A people in more than name”.

Farewell my friend.