

CHAPTER 1



How It All Began

The year was 1947. The island was Andros—North Andros in particular. It was early October, and it had been rainy so far. On the morning of October 9, it had been especially rainy as little Tommy's mother welcomed him into the world.

His father, Uncle Sam as he was called, gave him the name Edison Arlington. As it happened, though, as it did on many occasions since, Uncle Sam, who was employed in the fishing business, was out to sea on one of his fishing trips when Tommy was born. His well-meaning aunts and grandmother reveling in the joy of the newborn thought it appropriate that since Uncle Sam was away, to give the baby a name; and they called him Tommy. And he was called that until the man of the house came home.

The significance surrounding the choice of the name Tommy was not discovered, nor which family member came up with the name, but it was certainly not the name intended for the infant by his father. This fact his mother, Aunty Mae, tried to point out.

Some two weeks or more passed before Uncle Sam returned from his fishing trip. Cellphones, of course, were unheard of, and there was no radio on the boat, so it was only when he arrived home that he

found out his wife had given birth to their second son and he had been given the name Tommy.

While Uncle Sam was happy that his wife and baby were doing well, he was not pleased with the fact that the child had been named in his absence. He had not had the opportunity to name their eldest son because he was born before they were married and his wife was still in her parents' home. This son was now the first son of their marriage, and his birth was important to him. He made it clear to all that from that time going forward, giving names to his children was his responsibility and his alone. He took great care to choose each name, giving attention to character and meaning, and the name *Edison* had significance for him, *Edison* is of old English origin, and it means "son of Edward." *Arlington* is also of old English origin and means "Town of Aelfred." Tommy's father was the late Samuel Harcourt Evans, and his paternal ancestors were of Welsh and Scottish origin on one side and Seminole Indians on the other. Uncle Sam undoubtedly wanted the names of his children to represent a part of his heritage. He was also speaking greatness into his new son's life by giving him the name Edison after the great inventor Thomas Edison. Ironically, even though Uncle Sam had not planned to name his son Tommy, and those well-intending members of the family did not know of his plan to name him Edison, it must have been God's plan to bring the two names together for this new infant. In the spirit of goodwill, an accord was reached for the child to be officially called Edison *Arlington* but would continue to be affectionately called Tommy.

The Evans family lived in a secluded little town called by their name, Evans Town. It was a family township. The residents were the descendants of Castleton Evans, a native of Wales in the United Kingdom who had migrated to The Bahamas in the 1800s with his young daughter Elizabeth after the passing of his wife. Castleton is said to have been granted the land situated on the outskirts of the settlement of Nicolls' Town by the property's original owner. He served as caretaker for the property and had a few slaves and one indentured servant in his employ. The indentured servant was a Seminole Indian who had fled from extinction in Florida to find refuge and had landed in Andros. He was a craftsman skilled in cloth-making and basket weaving, and he found work with Castleton on

the estate. That is how he met the lovely Elizabeth, affectionately called Eliza. He originally had an Indian name, but Castleton gave him the English name *Edwin*. It is not clear why Castleton changed his servant's name, but it could have been at Edwin's marriage to his daughter, Eliza. When Castleton died, the land passed onto Eliza's husband, Edwin, now a free man because she was her father's only child, and he gave it to them as an inheritance.

With the estate now his, Edwin, an Indian by nature, reverted to his cultural upbringing. At the time of the abolition of slavery, the other servants, now all free, had the option to take on the name of their employer. A few of them exercised that right and took on the name Evans and were allowed to remain on the property without assuming ownership. The environment was a tribal one—with a one-man leader who governed what was done in the little town. That leader was Edwin.

Edwin and Eliza's union produced several children, but in keeping with the culture that existed in their little community, only one becomes the voice of authority among them, and that was their son, Herman. At Edwin's passing, the property was bequeathed to all of his children, but Herman remained the figure of authority. All of Herman's sons also remained on the land and built their family homes. Tommy's father, Samuel, along with another brother, Simeon, built their homes on the highest point on the property referred to as the Hill.

As Tommy began to grow, he began being sick quite frequently with swollen tonsils and adenoids that also sometimes got infected. Because of this, his mother, Mable (Aunty Mae) kept him close and watched over him very carefully. Born during a time when there was no resident doctor on the island, Tommy was treated by the "Granny" most times with bush medicines, which supplemented the once-monthly visit by the doctor.

Aunty Mae hoped that Tommy would outgrow the challenges by the time he was ready for school, but that did not happen. When other kids his age were getting ready to trot off to school, Tommy was still sick, so both his parents decided to keep him at home a little while longer.

With his father having been a teacher before he took on family life, keeping Tommy at home for a while did not concern them. Uncle Sam

had already prepared teaching instruments for the two older children, and so he and Aunty Mae used them to teach Tommy at home. They taught him the subjects the other children were learning at school to ensure he was not left behind.

He was very thin, and possibly because he was always so sick, he clung to his mother, even when she was working in the yard. His little arms would be entwined around her neck as she was bent over pulling weeds in their vegetable patch, his long plaits hanging around her face. They had not even cut his hair until he was ready to go to school. Instead, she kept it in two plaits hanging down on his back.

When Tommy was about nine years old, his parents decided that he was finally strong enough to venture out away from home and begin school. His first teacher was Leo Coleby. She incidentally was also his first cousin. Her mother was Tommy's Aunt Rosa, Uncle Sam's older sister, so it was like he was still being looked after.

Maybe it was because of the delayed social integration due to Tommy beginning school so late, but it is said that he did not play much with other children when he was a little boy. He had no playmates really, and so he did not have many playing activities.

His mother also kept him secluded a lot because of his health issues. When he was around other children and they began to cough or sneeze, she would quickly whisk him away because she knew for him to remain could mean his getting sick and having to call for Dr. George, the visiting doctor. So instead of playing with other children, he spent most of his time by himself under the large fig tree at the border of their yard and his uncle Simeon's, playing with a truck his *Tita* had bought him as a gift one Christmas.

Yes, he had siblings, an older brother, and a sister, and he had been followed by two younger sisters by this time, but there was an age gap between them all. His older sister, Rosita, whom he followed, was four years older than he was, and his sisters Derry and Maisie, who followed after him, were four and seven years younger. He was sandwiched between girls so that did not give him anyone to play boy games with. His only brother at this time was Charles, and he was seven years his senior. By the time Tommy was well enough to start school, Charles was leaving school, so they were not exactly playmates. Besides, Charles was known to be a real prankster, playing tricks on everyone,

which made him the complete opposite in personality.

There were cousins too, lots of cousins. Some lived some distance away, and others lived just next door to their house. However, the same problem with the age difference existed with the ones who lived the closest. His nearest playmate was his cousin Robert who lived a shortdistance away from him at the bottom of the hill.

As Tommy grew older, he developed a love for books like his father. His father had a collection of books, so he had a good supply. He spenta lot of time in the quiet area of the Ocean Hole or on the beach in thearea called the Wall, just him and his books.

But when he was not reading, he and Robert went fishing. The two boys had put together a flat-bottom boat in which they went fishing on Saturdays and during school breaks. Tommy could not scull or do much ofthe navigational things with boats, but he was a strong swimmer. Sometimes they went fishing in the area called Eullan Town. They would set downanchor against the shoal. When they were done fishing, Tommy was the oneto dive down to loosen the anchor, and Robert would pull it up.

When asked about his not socializing with the other children, Tommy would reply, “That is what I was told, but I can’t recall.”

He then recounted a story he was told about an incident in his early childhood. He said he believes it was some kind of family gathering that happened at his parents’ house. The adults were inside, and the children were out in the yard playing, and since children were not supposed to be in “big people company,” his mother told him to go out and play with the other children. He, in obedience to her, went outside with the children and was there for a short while when one of them did something. He saidhe could not recall what had reportedly transpired, only that he was told that he left the children, telling them that if they were not going to playlike children, he was not going to play with them.

But Tommy, despite starting formal school so late, completed work very quickly and excelled in his studies. He wrote and passed all the subjects required for the school-leaving certificate at just eleven years of age and was offered a scholarship to attend the government high school in Nassau. Unfortunately, there was no one and nowhere in the city for him to live so he remained in school in Andros.

The following year, at the age of twelve, he sat and passed his Bahamas Junior Certificate subjects. By this time, he had exhausted all that the all-age school had to offer him, and he was again offered a scholarship to attend Government High School, but because his circumstances had not changed, he was still not able to accept the offer.

With nothing else to do, he became a school monitor to assist Mr. Ivan Holder, the school's headmaster, while continuing to study for his GCE O-Levels on his own. It was Mr. Holder who asked him about his future ambitions. Until then, he had not made his aspirations public, but now, he told Mr. Holder about his dream of studying law. One of the books in his father's collection was *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare. Tommy had read it when he was ten years old and had been inspired by Portia as an advocate for her father. That was when the dream was conceived in him.

As Tommy's aspirations became known to others in the community, some people saw them as unattainable and tried to discourage his ambitions. He spoke of one gentleman in particular whom he said told him point-blank that he should consider his father's position and forget about this wild dream of becoming a lawyer because his father could not afford to pay for his studies.

Others secretly mocked his dreams as well, but Tommy had already seen how he had been able to succeed with his O-Level studies without the aid of a teacher. He had written and passed five subjects, and so he was confident that he was able to do his legal studies as well. He, however, still spoke to his father about what the man had said about his studies being a financial burden to him. His father told him simply to ignore the man's words and to stay focused on his dream.

After completing his GCE O-Levels and Mr. Holder had transferred out of Andros, Tommy began working on Saturdays at the local post office. For a brief time, things did not look very hopeful for him to pursue his legal studies as planned, and he began to wonder what else he may be able to do if he could not do law.

The thought of not being able to do law began to depress him. His mother, always very observant of her children, and still very protective of him, went to meet with the commissioner, Lester Turnquest, about Tommy's desire to study law and asked him if there

was anything he could do to assist him. Commissioner Turnquest listened to her request andmade arrangements for Tommy to work at the post office on Saturdays to do work-study and be able to ask him questions about the law. Shetold her husband and Tommy what she had done when she returned home. This seemed to be the answer they were looking for or at least thebeginning of things.

However, Commissioner Turnquest's stay in Andros was brief. He was transferred to another island just six months later. He was gone, but the dream was not over. After Commissioner Turnquest was transferred, Tommy's mother again went to speak with the new commissioner, Mr. Kendrick Williams. Commissioner Williams was happy to continue the process. He said that he was also interested in law and that he hadsome books that he and Tommy could study together. It was at this time that Tommy began correspondence classes with Wolsley Hall, Oxford, England, to study for his A-Levels. These classes were done by surface mail and were a great foundation for his future in law.

But again, as faith would have it, Mr. Williams was also transferredafter a short period. It could have been discouraging, but the Lord was continuing to open doors. After Commissioner Williams, Mr. James Campbell came to the island as the new commissioner, and henot only continued the process, but he also took things even further. Mr. Campbell opened his residence to Tommy, which allowed him tohave access to electricity and other amenities that did not exist at home. These things helped to create an environment conducive to get Tommy'sstudies done and prepare him for law school. His father was grateful, of course, for the advantage this arrangement offered to Tommy, but he wasimultaneously not happy that it was an advantage that he had not beenable to provide for his son. It was a blow to his pride, but he bore it sothat Tommy could have a better chance of fulfilling his dream.



Parents: Mable and Samuel Evans

Photos: (Mable) by The Late Keith Dawkins and (Samuel) by Maisie Evans.



**Believed to be a photo of the old homestead of
great-grandfather Edwin**



The remains of the old Nicoll's Town All-Age School

Photo by Patrice Evans

Registry of births showing Tommy's birth record
Courtesy of Public Records.

CHAPTER 2



The Young Days

Studies were not the only part of Tommy's young life. Church played a major role. In their home, the Word of God was important, and his mother ensured that everyone was out to church every Sunday unless they were not well. And going to church meant going to Sunday school as well. Just as it happened with the academic classroom, as he grew older in his Sunday school class, he advanced into a teaching position.

Additionally, Tommy was a member of a local gospel singing group. When asked how the group got started or how he came to be a part, he said that the group came out of another group or organization that got started by a fellow young man at the Brethren Church that he attended named Timothy Wallace.

"Looking back now, I realize that in Andros, and I supposed it was the same in every family island because there was a lack of productive things for young people to do, they were hungry for and grasp anything that was offered to them."

Timothy, he said, came up with the idea to create an organization that would offer something for the young people in the area to do...not babies but teens to young adults.

“When Timothy presented the idea, the other young people and I at the church, thought it was good, and so it took off, and the organization was formed. It was given the name the Young People Fund.”

The organization was not just for the young people of the Nicolls’ Town Gospel Chapel but for young people in the Nicolls’ Town community and the neighboring settlements as well. He recalled that young people from Conch Sound and some from Mastic Point did come to participate in the activities, but not many, if any from the community of Lowe Sound.

The meetings of the Young People Fund were held on Sundays after church. These meetings were mainly discussions among the organizers about ideas of what was to be done.

“Activities were also held, and of course, among them was an annual parade. The young people dressed up, and there was music and they marched through the streets. Afterward, there was food. Everyone chipped in on the cost, and the food was prepared by the young ladies who were a part of the organization.”

While the organization was in operation, Timothy again, along with Erskine Woods, came up with the idea of a singing group as a part of the activities. Erskine and his younger brother, Gerry Woods, played music, and Froswell and Tommy sang tenor.

“I was not involved in the initial stages of the group’s formation, but I became a member soon after. I did not play any instruments, but I was brought on for my singing.”

The group lasted for quite some years and was still in existence when Tommy left Andros. It was comprised of three families: the Wallace brothers, Timothy and Froswell; the Woods brothers, Erskine and Gerry; and the Evans boys, Robert and Tommy, who were cousins but lived like brothers. The group’s name was derived from the amalgamation of all their last names and was called the WalWoodEvaneers.

The WalWoodEvaneers became a sought-after group in the churches. They opened every performance with the song “We’ve Come This Far by Faith,” and it became their theme song.

After the opening verse of the song, Timothy would introduce the group by saying, “We are the WalWoodEvaneers.”

Then he would introduce each member and the part they played and outline what the group was planning to do in their performance that night. Tommy sang a portion of the lead on the hymn “Like a Woman at the Well.” This one in particular was a crowd-pleaser and was often requested whenever the group performed. Their performances were not weekly occurrences but reserved for holidays and special occasions.

Outside of his church affiliation, Tommy was very involved with the Boys Scouts. A small company of Scouts had been previously started under the leadership of Rev. Nehemiah Wilson from the local Methodist church, but it did not survive. When Mr. Ivan Holder came to Andros as a teacher, he began another company. He met with parents to discuss them letting their boys join the company and told them what the Boys Scouts had to offer their sons and outlined what would be involved. Uncle Sam and Aunty Mae were among the parents Mr. Holder met with, and they agreed for Tommy to join the company.

The time with the Boys Scouts was very exciting for Tommy. He was a patrol leader, and there were many activities to keep the boys engaged. Other patrol leaders during his time were Keith Bowleg and Herman Coleby. When Mr. Holder was preparing to leave Andros, he made Tommy a troop leader. In addition to the regular activities they did locally, the company also did camping in Central Andros and in New Providence at the Scout’s ground in Adelaide.

Before leaving Andros for Nassau, Mr. Holder persuaded Tommy to do a Wood Badge course. The course began in Andros, and they traveled to Nassau by boat. In Nassau, they had to swim across the Seabreeze Canal and camped out at the campsite in Adelaide. The course then took them to Eleuthera where they camped out in Tarpum Bay and traveled through Preacher’s Cave where the water was high, and so they had to swim.

When they returned to Andros, they swam across the waters in Morgan’s Bluff.

“If you have been to Morgan’s Bluff, you would know that it was a challenge.”

Tommy completed the course and received his Wood Badge. He was not quite sixteen years old at the time and still holds the record as the only person to earn the Wood Badge before the age of sixteen. He traveled to Nassau to receive his badge from the royal

governor who was the representative of Prince Philip. The prince had been unable to attend the ceremony.

When it was Tommy's turn to leave Andros, Huntley Christie assumed the position of troop leader. Tommy still has an affiliation with the organization to this day.

As you are beginning to see, Tommy was a well-rounded young man. While still a student in the all-age school, before he became a teacher, he used to play volleyball with the rest of the boys. He continued to play with them even after he began to teach. After all, he was just thirteen years old, much the same age as the other boys and even younger than some, and he didn't think of himself as a teacher.

One day, Mr. Holder called him in and told him he had to discontinue playing with the boys because he was now their teacher. Mr. Holder had obtained the permission of Tommy's parents to give him students to teach because, as he told them, there was nothing more that he could teach him, and he felt that Tommy could be useful in helping to teach the other students.

Tommy also played baseball while in school and continued even after he finished school. There was a bit of local interest in the sport among the young men, and they had two teams and even wore uniforms. They used to play in an area along the beach called Over the Wall. This was on the way below Evans Town and just before you got into Coleby Town. It was an area that had the remains of a wall—probably the remains of an old house.

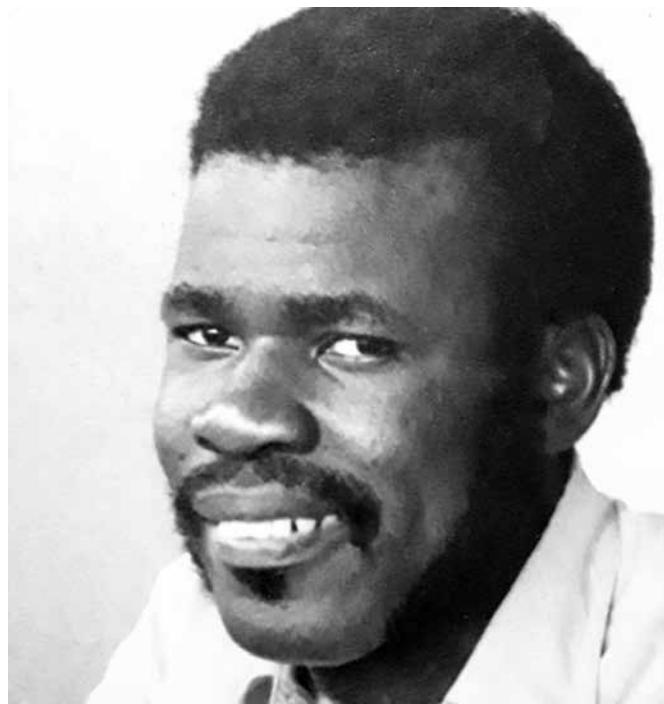
Tommy usually played the pitcher position, and when he was not pitching he played first base. However, one day, he was playing center field. He was out of his zone, but he was playing that position that day to make up the numbers. Jared Burrows, a young police officer stationed in Nicoll's Town, was playing with them, and he was up for bat. He hit the ball into center field. It was a bright, sunny day, and Tommy lost sight of the ball in the air amid the glare of the sun as he tried to catch it. He did not see it coming down, and it hit him smack in the face.

His lower lip was split open with the impact. Burrows had driven the police jeep to the game, and he immediately ushered Tommy into it and sped off up into town in search of medical assistance.

Nurse Neilla Dames was the local nurse. She was a native of Nicoll's Town and a steady and dependable figure. She was off duty that afternoon, but word about the incident had already traveled up to her, and she was outside at the local clinic waiting for them to arrive.

The great challenge for Tommy other than having his lip split into two was the fact, as she told him, that his lip was going to require stitches, but there was no anesthetic. She told him he was going to have to tough it out and bear with it while she did the stitching because it had to be done for it to heal properly.

Tommy was out of school and working at the commissioner's office by this time, so he was a little older, yet it was still a challenge. But he endured it. When talking about it, he said that it hurt like hell to have the stitching done that way, but Nurse Dames had done a very good job, and his lip healed with little or no scarring.



Young Tommy

Photos from Family Collection

CHAPTER 3



On His Way

Tommy's father, Samuel Evans, was a very strong, independent, and proud man; and Tommy modeled his life after him. But God had also put three other men in his life to help Tommy beyond what his father was able, to accomplish the dream that He had placed in his heart. Those men were Ivan Holder, Kendrick Williams, and James Campbell.

Mr. Holder saw the brightness and the depth of his intelligence and gave him the start by prompting him at every turn to stretch himself out to his full potential. It was also he who was instrumental in Tommy's official name change.

By this time, Tommy had officially become Thomas. He had the change made while he was still teaching. He had grown accustomed to the nickname Tommy and truthfully favored it more than Edison. Mr. Holder, along with his cousin Herman Coleby, used to call him Edy, which he did not like. Mr. Holder told him that Edy was the nickname that people named Edison are usually called and that Tommy is the nickname for people with the name Thomas. He told him that if he wanted to, he could have his name changed altogether.

Tommy was happy to learn about this and told him that he did not want to change it completely, but he would like to adjust it. Mr. Holder

told him what it was he had to do and the name change was made by way of a deed poll done by the local commissioner. It was in that way that he officially became Thomas Arlington Edison. He was, of course, still affectionately called Tommy by all but was now properly referred to as Thomas.

Kendrick Williams helped him to gain momentum to get started with his A-Level studies. James Campbell helped him on the anchor leg to get to the finish line. In 1969, he wrote two subjects and passed with the required grades for university admission. This allowed him to be accepted into the London School of Economics and Political Science of the University of London to study law. He was to begin in October of 1970; however, he did not have the funds to allow him to embrace the opportunity.

Commissioner James Campbell was still stationed in Andros and made his regular weekend trips home to Nassau to be with his family. Upon his return from one of those trips, he told Tommy that his son, Sam, had also expressed an interest in studying law and was preparing to leave for school. He promised Tommy that he was going to see what he could do to assist him to be able to do the same. The first step was to apply for a scholarship.

Tommy applied for the scholarship and traveled to Nassau for an interview.

"The interview was with T. G. Glover. He had retired from teaching by this time and was serving on the scholarship board."

Mr. Glover, however, was not alone. The interview panel also consisted of three other men. A woman was also there, but Tommy was unclear about her role there. He did recall, however, that she was openly opposed to his application. Her reason, based on a comment she made, was rooted in discrimination. She felt that the scholarship would be wasted on a fisherman's son.

The woman's comment was her personal view, and it did not affect whether he was afforded the interview or not.

"Mr. Glover asked me, 'Do you understand that if you are successful today, you will receive a scholarship to go away to school?'"

"I replied to him that yes, I did understand."

He then asked, 'Not only if you are successful to go to school, but, also successful in your studies and return home, what are you

prepared to do with the education?"

"My response to Mr. Glover was that if I am granted the scholarship for law school, I would like to contribute to the young people in Andros who had ambitions just as I did.

"He asked me just what I was thinking I could give to these young people.

"My response was if I could be granted a full In-service Award, which would pay my tuition fees and accommodations as well as my salary while at school, I wanted the salary to be used to assist the students in my hometown of Andros."

Tommy did not receive the In-Service Award, however. He was granted a regular scholarship instead, which paid his school fees and accommodations at school. But it did not come in time for London. Nor was he going to get the opportunity to assist his fellow young people. He was disappointed about that. Nevertheless, he was still on course. He applied and was later offered a place in the law faculty of the University of the West Indies for October 1971 for which he could use his scholarship.

In August of 1970, Tommy made the move to Nassau in preparation for law school. By this time, Commissioner Campbell had received Tommy into his family as an adopted son. His whole family had embraced him as a part of their unit. That relationship still exists today.

Before Tommy's move, Commissioner Campbell made inquiries with the Attorney General's office for employment for him, as he felt that this was the best place for Tommy to familiarize himself with the law to prepare for law school. However, there was no position available. Commissioner Campbell did not give up on having Tommy placed, though. He inquired at the Department of Lands and Survey and was able to secure a space for Tommy in that department. Tommy moved to the city in August and began work in the Department of Lands and Survey in September. But he was not there very long.

Once in Nassau, things began happening at a rapid pace. In January of the following year, 1971, Tommy transferred to the Attorney General's office from Lands and Survey with the understanding that he would be going on study leave that September. His post was to

supervise the clerical staff.

When he arrived in Nassau, Tommy had no car and, at first, had to walk to work. He used to live in an upstairs apartment building directly across from East Street Gospel Chapel. The Department of Lands and Survey was on East Bay Street. He used to walk to work dressed in his work pants and singlet, carrying his shirt pressed and on a hanger over his shoulder.

One morning, a small car pulled up, and the young lady driver asked if he would like a ride. He accepted the offer. As it was that she would be traveling the same route each day, she offered to continue giving him a ride. He again accepted.

During their trips to work, he discovered that she was studying law in Nassau, and she told him about the local program and what was happening with it. At that time, there was no university in the Bahamas that taught law. Those studying got together to study, and a group of lawyers wrote up exam papers for the students to take. The problem was that there was no structured curriculum for them to follow, so the exams were not a true measure. Mr. T. G. Glover had told Tommy that CARICOM had agreed to establish some structured training for students in the Bahamas, but that was still forthcoming.

CHAPTER 4



University Life

Tommy left for Barbados that September of 1971 as scheduled. His first year of studies was at the Cave Hill campus in Barbados. When he arrived in Barbados, it was a strange kind of feeling. He was happy; over the moon that he had arrived at University.

“I was twenty-three years old...not the oldest student on campus, some others were much older, but my presence seemed to attract a lot of attention.

“There was a thing they called grubbing where the senior students set up tasks for the junior students to do. For some reason, the seniors thought that I was an older student and did not realize that I was a junior until sometime later.”

Tommy said that when they did realize it, they accused him of trying to sneak through without having to go through the grubbing; therefore, he would have to do it twice over. They set out to give him tasks they thought he would be opposed to. The first was to get water for the seniors. They expected him to object, but he did not. He just went and did it, and that surprised them.

The next grubbing task was to put him on the spot to sing. Again, their antics did not faze him because we know that, by now, Tommy loved singing. They used to gather in the Potters’ Lodge, a place where the students all hung out for recreation. You are not

compelled to go, but everyone went just for some relaxation.

They were gathered in there one evening, and the seniors shouted out to let Tommy sing. He told them that, sure, he would sing. He stood for a bit, thinking of what song to sing, and then he started singing a hymn he knew from home. During the first few lines of the hymn, the room went quiet. Then another voice in the crowd called out, grub pigeon. Carl Miller, a Jamaican student, called out that grub pigeon was no fun anymore.

None of the tasks they had given to Tommy had resulted in the desired effect of making him uncomfortable. Carl called for election among their grubbing committee, and they voted that Tommy would not have to go through the grubbing anymore. Mainly because he was passing every task. From then, they referred to him as the *singing grub*, and the name given to him was Grub Pigeon. Tommy's approach to it was that it was just university fun.

The one thing that did upset him, however, was one night, when he returned to his dorm room after coming from the library where he spent most of his time, he found his bed soaking wet. Tommy went down to the Potter's Lodge and raised his complaint with the dorm leader. He told him that while he understood the concept, the action was very juvenile.

The leader of the seniors' grubbing squad was notified. She was contrite about it, and she went and found bedding. She removed the wet linen and prepared a dry bed for him.

A lot was going through Tommy's mind at the same time. One thing was that he was away from home. While he was working on settling in at school, he was also getting to know new people. It did not take him long to form good relationships with some of them, mostly the older students on campus, but a few younger ones as well. There was a young man from the British Virgin Islands who was younger. He met Burton Hall and Hartman Longley, as well as Malcolm Adderley, who was in his second year. Jethro Miller was also there, whom he had met before he left Nassau. He also made friends with the young woman who was the leader of the grubbing crew.

He met several other Bahamian students as well. There were many faculties on the campuses and there were Bahamians in each group.

This was a whole new environment for all of them, and some of them were enjoying their newfound freedom. Tommy, however, made the resolve to stick to what he had been taught at home and not be swayed by any of the antics of others.

Growing up, Tommy had always loved the beach and his early morning swim. Where there was water, he found it. Barbados was no different. He used to go to the beach at 5:00 a.m. to swim each morning. People warned him that he was taking a chance doing this, but this was a part of him, and it connected him to home.

One morning, a male Trinidadian student was on the second floor of the dorm shouting stuff at him, telling him to get out of there because he was an ordinary man and not God.

"I was not clear on what it was about, but I supposed that it was because I was holding to the standards taught to me by his parents. I guess that in a way, I seemed out of place among them, and it probably made some of them uncomfortable."

Tommy's perspective was that he knew the reason he was in Barbados, and he was going to do it. He had a rough beginning with his studies, but he soon worked through the hurdles.

One night, while sitting in his room after the library closed, five male Jamaican students Carl Harrison among them paid a visit to him. One of the guys said that at this time in the development of the program, they wanted to know if he was interested in offering as the representative of the first year of the law faculty on the university board. He told them he was there to study and not to get mixed up in other things. A guy named Steve Shelton told him the other students were there looking to get help, and they needed someone on the board to help them along. Shelton said that the other students were saying he was the one for the job.

"I said to them that I would think about it and they left."

Malcolm Adderley, somehow aware of the mission of the other students, came to Tommy's room after they left and advised him against taking it on. Tommy told Malcolm he had only told the guys that he would think about it and nothing more at that time.

The following day, although Tommy had only told the guys that he would think about it, the daughter of the deputy prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago came and congratulated him on being

approached to serve because, as she said, it was a big deal to be invited to serve on the board.

Her words stayed with him throughout the morning. He began to appreciate just how the position could serve to benefit not only him but the other students as well, particularly Bahamian students.

Later that day, Malcolm came to him, wanting to know what he had decided to do. Tommy told him that he had decided that it would be best for him to be put in a position to learn more at the early stage of his time at the university and that he had agreed to accept the nomination.

Tommy spoke to a few more of his friends about the nomination. Some of them were cautious and warned him that there was a very real possibility that he would not win. His opponent was a young woman by the name of Dawn Robinson. One of his friends who also knew his opponent told him that he needed to appreciate that Dawn was not only Jamaican but also a very popular and gifted student on campus. She warned him not to feel bad if she voted for Dawn. But Tommy told her it was fine with him because if he had been able to vote, Dawn would be the person he would vote for as well.

The election date arrived, and the students went to the poll, and Tommy won by a very narrow margin. The very first person who congratulated him was Dawn, his opponent. He did not feel or perceive the support of Bahamian students in the election except for Jethro and, possibly, Vincent Wallace Whitfield. His main support came from students from Jamaica and the other islands.

The board was called the Guild of Undergraduates. Tommy's post was as a student representative for the Law faculty. He represented the primary group, which was the group of the youngest students. Not all of them were *young* in terms of years as there was a mixture of ages among the students, but young in terms of the time of their study.

Meetings of the Guild were held monthly or more frequently depending on what was happening. Tommy recalls that he was called to meetings but was asked to leave when the members of the Guild were discussing things relating to the students. He protested this action as it negated the purpose that he had been elected to serve. Eventually, he was allowed to remain in the meetings. As a result, he as a student representative got access to everything the Guild was

doing. This was nota normal situation.

We talked about some of his experiences as a student representative. He narrated how one day, as he left class, he met a large gathering of students. As he approached, the group of students began to move toward him. He learned that they had approached his second in command, Dorcas White, while they were waiting to speak with him.

"The situation or problem was that it was nearing exams, and the faculty had changed the examination date. The students protested that they were prepared for a set date, but they met a note on the notice board, stating the exam date had been changed to a day later."

Tommy listened as they voiced their complaint and then he addressed them. He asked if they did not realize that the situation was actually to their advantage. He pointed out that they now had an extra day to study. He asked them if they had not considered that point. After he spoke, the heated atmosphere began to subside as realization began to dawn upon them, and the crowd began to disperse.

He spoke of another situation involving one of the professors, Alexander Frane, an Englishman by nationality and a professor of the Law of Tort. Mr. Frane was brought to Tommy's class one day by a faculty member and introduced to the students then left there with them.

Nothing at all happened that day.

On his second day, he showed up to class dressed only in his bathing suit and came in, dripping with water. The students all looked at each other in disbelief as Mr. Frane stood up in the class to begin his lecture. He pulled a few sheets of paper from the back pocket of his bathing suit. These seemed to have been his lecture notes. The students found it offensive and disrespectful for him to come to hold class in that manner, and they looked to Tommy to voice their complaints and for representation.

"I spoke to Mr. Frane, telling him that the students felt that his behavior was unacceptable and disrespectful, but he did not appear to be fazed by what I said."

Tommy then left the classroom, asking his classmates to come with him. They went to see the dean of Schools and spoke to him about the situation. As a result of their complaint, Mr. Frane was placed

on probation for about three weeks. When he returned to class, he was properly dressed and prepared for his lecture.

“I remember the students gave him a round of applause.”

In his final year, Tommy was still a student representative. He was a senior living off-campus at this time. He arrived at class one day and noticed on the board that the Company Law lectures were going to be presented on a new Company Law book. Some of the students came and spoke to him about the book. They complained that the book was new and was not used at the university in London, which the faculty always used as their yardstick. Tommy told his classmates that once they were not saying that exams were being done the following day on the book, he had no problems with the book.

The lecturer came and announced the use of the new textbook and began the lecture. Tommy chuckled a little as he recalled the events.

“Well, actually, he stood up and began to read the book. I listened, waiting for the lecture to begin, but when he just continued to read, I go this attention and asked where the lecture was.”

The professor replied that this was the lecture.

Tommy was surprised.

“Reading the book to us is the lecture?” Tommy asked him.

“He replied yes, and this was his class and he would conduct his class in the manner he wanted to. I said to him that I could easily go to my room and read the book for myself.”

The lecturer threatened Tommy with a failing grade when he wrote the exam. He stated that as he was the one who wrote the exams and marked them, he would fail Tommy.

But Tommy was not perturbed at this prospect. He told the lecturer that he could not fail him.

“I said to him that if I wrote an A paper, the faculty of law would not fail me.”

Tommy left the class after the exchange, and the other students followed. He never returned to the class that semester. Whenever it was time for the Company Law class, he went to the library and did his studies there. He spent a lot of time in the library in between classes. Sometimes he and some of the other students formed small study groups. One day near the end of the semester, Tommy went down to the university’s business office to inquire about a matter

relating to his fees. He met the Company Law lecturer just outside. The lecturer paused and Tommy greeted him politely, to which he gave an unexpected response.

He told Tommy that he understood what he had said, and he saw now that Tommy was a man to his word.

Surprised by the remarks, Tommy asked him what was he talking about, but he got no further response. Instead, the lecturer smiled and walked away.

During that same visit to the business office, Tommy also met another of his lecturers.

This one said to him, "I understand you put my colleague to the test, and he failed."

The comment, Tommy concluded, was about the Company Law lecturer he had met a short time earlier.

Tommy replied, "I don't know if he failed or not because he's the one who marked the papers."

The man said to him, "Yes, he marked the papers and you got an A." He continued, "You are a man to your word. You told him you weren't going to fail, and you didn't!"

Tommy knew that he had applied himself to his studies, but until that moment, he had thought his fate was in the hands of the lecturer, and he had not been convinced that he would have passed him. It was a relief to know that he had.

For Tommy, the whole experience of university was both challenging and exhilarating at the same time. The reason for this complexity of emotions was centered on the circumstances of his background. Transitioning from the island of Andros, where he was considered by some to have lived in the bushes; the roads leading into and through Evans' Town where he was born and grew up were no more than an unpaved dirt road, he went to university in Barbados. That was a huge leap, and it explained why he fought so hard to succeed. He was not going to come from so far and not succeed.

The first year was completed, and he was happy, but he was not going to slacken the pace. The journey had just begun. Upon his return for the second year in Barbados, he and his fellow students found themselves without housing. When they arrived in Barbados, they

were informed that they had to find housing for themselves as the accommodations at the university had to be disseminated among first-year foreign students. The news was unsettling because the Bahamian students in particular had not been informed of the change before leaving The Bahamas; therefore, they were not prepared. Additionally, the English spoken was not straightforward, making communication between the students and members of the faculty a matter of interpretation.

This heightened the challenge of finding accommodations. Thankfully, Codrington College's first-year students shared some subjects with the first-year Law students. They did Law, Social Studies, and the Use of English. Because of this, Tommy and the others knew a student by the name of James Palacious who was studying for the priesthood. James came to their rescue.

James took Tommy and the others to see Archbishop Gomez who was Bahamian and stationed in Barbados at the time to see what he could do to assist them. The archbishop made calls and got accommodations for them for the night but the next day they were on their own. They spent the entire next day looking around in search of accommodations. Tommy and the others went out on foot.

"Paul Knowles was with us as well. We searched all day and reported back to the bishop in the evening after looking at the different places to tell him what we had seen."

The archbishop then narrowed down the prospects for them and they went out the second day to look at the places he had selected for them.

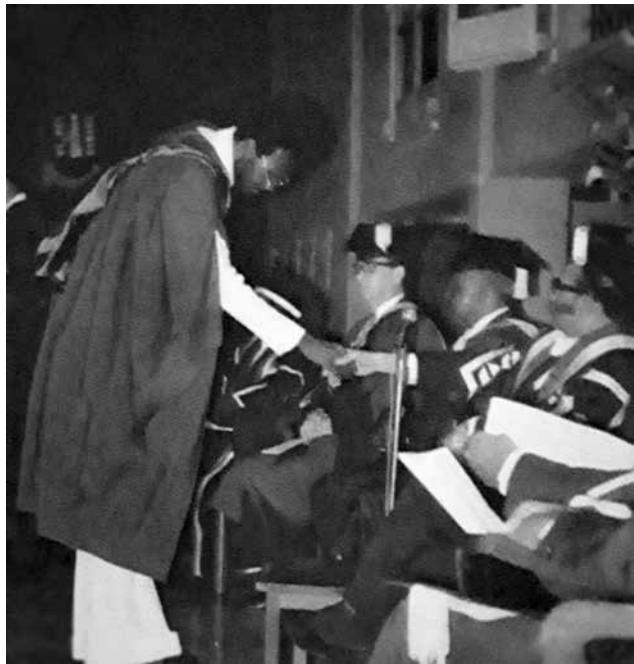
Eventually, they found a place not far from the school in Stanmore Crescent. The setup was similar to a campus dormitory with four houses in the yard. All the guys were in one section and the girls in the other, but there were more males than females. There were three houses for guys and one for girls.

"Rhonda Bain was the only Bahamian girl—not in the class, but our particular group."

With the housing situation rectified, Tommy again got down to the business of his studies. He continued to apply himself and take advantage of every opportunity to learn.

On August 1, 1974, he received his Bachelor of Laws degree

from the University of the West Indies with Second Class Honors Upper Division. He graduated in October of that same year. His mother and three of his younger sisters traveled to Jamaica to attend the ceremony. Tommy was one step closer to realizing his dream.



Graduation, Jamaica, 1974
Photos from Family Collection

CHAPTER 5



Living the Dream

With his law degree, Tommy was now qualified to begin his studies for his Legal Education Certificate. I asked Tommy about the significance of the certificate, seeing that it came after the law degree. He explained that while the bachelor of law degree was the most important of the two, the degree alone did not certify him to practice law. The Certificate of Legal Education was the one he was required to have to be certified by the Bar Association to be called to The Bahamas Bar to be able to practice law.

In September 1976, he received his certificate from the Council of Legal Education after completing his studies. He was finally going home. For good.

On October 6, 1976, Tommy was admitted to The Bahamas Bar. Sir Leonard Knowles was chief justice and presided over the session. The ceremony was held in the Supreme Court in Bank Lane. Six new brilliant and aspiring minds were added to the register of lawyers in the country. Called along with Tommy that day were several of his classmates from university. Among them were Rhonda Bain, Hartman Longley, Paul Knowles, and Burton Hall. His mother and the majority of his siblings were there to witness him take his oath.

The seemingly impossible dream of a barefoot boy of ten was being fulfilled.

Tommy's father was not there, however. He had stayed in Andros with the two youngest members of their family, Elizabeth and Anthony. His absence from the ceremony did not mean, however, that he was not proud of his son's accomplishment. The older Mr. Evans was extremely proud of his son, but he had an aversion to flying and only did so when he had no other choice than to fly. He was instead, waiting at home for his wife to return, when they would have a grand celebration with their community in honor of their son's great achievement. That was important because this was the community that had once laughed at the audacity of that dream.

Now that Tommy had completed his studies, he was required to return to the Attorney General's office to serve out his scholarship Bond to The Bahamas Government. He remained with the Attorney General's office for four years. His initial posting was on the civil side and lasted for a year. Mrs. Joan Sawyer was head of the Civil Department at the time.

During his time on the civil side, the work he received was not challenging enough to fully occupy him.

“George Griffeth, a Barbadian who was a senior officer, asked me how I was finding the work, so I told him the situation.

“Because the work was not challenging, I was usually finished with my work by noon each day, and so I would stroll out of my office, sometimes to relieve the boredom and sometimes because my room was too cold. If I met other attorneys on my stroll, I would stop and talk to them about what they were doing.”

Neville Smith who was in charge of legal affairs noted Tommy's leisure time and took it for idleness and addressed him on it.

“I told him that I was not being idle but the work given to me was not challenging enough to keep me busy.”

Smith's response to this was to give Tommy more work. However, the increased number of files was still not a challenge, and he completed those as well and still had time to spare.

Mr. Smith, still noticing the leisure time, spoke to him a second

time and said that since they are not able to give him enough work on the civil side, they would transfer him to the criminal side. The next day, Tommy received fourteen cases—four to five of them were rape cases that involved foreign complainants.

“I had to make contact with the complainants, contact witnesses, and prepare for the trials. In the afternoons after coming back from court, my colleagues from law school, Hartman Longley, Berton Hall, and Jethro Miller, sometimes met in the conference room and discussed their cases. I spoke to them about the cases I had and as they had been working on the criminal side since they came to the Attorney General’s office, they were able to give me advice on preparing my cases for trial.” The court sessions began in October, and by the time the Christmas break came, Tommy had cleared twelve of the fourteen cases. The two remaining cases that he was not able to clear dealt with foreign nationals; one stated that she was not interested in pursuing the matter, and the other did not respond to his contacts. This was a kind of record, and Paul Adderley, who was the Attorney General at the time, commended him for it.

For Tommy, his time at the Attorney General’s office was where he began to put all that he had learned in law school into practice, and where he learned some things that he was not taught, as some things are only learned through experience. From the very first case, he found it was a learning experience. He served as Crown Counsel (prosecutor) and taught the Law of Tort and Law of Contract classes. He taught the classes after coming in from court each day.

When Tommy returned from law school, the young lady who had assisted him with a ride to work before he went away, asked him to assist her and her fellow students to advance in their studies. Cleare Hepburn, Lyn Hallowesko, Andrew Bowe, Michael Barnette, Earl Cash, and Ferron Bethel were among some of the persons in the group studying law. He eventually agreed to assist them and that is how he got his start teaching the law.

Also while at the Attorney General’s office, Tommy was a part of the last drug case held in the Supreme Court. During the trial, he made a recommendation to the judge that it was not financially beneficial to The Bahamas for the drug cases to continue to be held here. Instead, the accused persons should be extradited to stand trial