

Tribute by Acting High Court Judge, Maureen Crane-Scott, Q.C.
delivered at a farewell function to mark the departure from the
Registration Department of Miss. Jennifer Esther Leach, Registered
Professional Reporter and Certified Manager of Reporting Services.
(The Savannah Hotel, November 24, 2007)

Honourable Chief Justice, Sir David Simmons; Justice of Appeal, Mr. Sherman Moore and Mrs. Moore, fellow High Court Judge, Madam Justice Elneth Kentish, Acting Registrar, Registration Department, Miss. Marva Clarke; Guest of Honour, Miss. Jennifer Esther Leach; staff of the Registration Department, specially invited guests, ladies and gentlemen.....a pleasant good evening to you all!!!!

First, may I say what a great pleasure it is for me to deliver this tribute to our Guest of Honour, Miss. Jennifer Esther Leach who, as we know, will be leaving the Registration Department at the end of November after a series of contractual assignments with us over the past five years.

On occasions such as these it is usual for the opportunity to be taken to examine the contribution of the Guest of Honour to her place of work, to make some observations on the character and personal attributes of the honoree and to note the positive impression which she has made on her co-workers and on the other persons with whom she has interacted.

I would like to start this tribute by observing that Miss. Leach or Jennifer, as she is familiarly known to many of us, is a citizen of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (the land of the Hummingbird). She is a Registered Professional Reporter (RPR) and also holds the designation of Certified Manager of Reporting Services (CMRS). After gaining considerable and valuable experience working as a Senior Court Reporter in the Trinidad and Tobago court system for many years, Jennifer took a bold step in April 2003, when she left her homeland and re-located to Barbados (the land of the Flying Fish) to work with the Registration Department as a Consultant/CAT Reporter under the Justice Improvement Programme (JIPS).

By the time I joined the Registration Department as the Acting Registrar in September 2005 (some 2 years and 5 months later) the impact of the work which Jennifer had been doing within the Supreme Court Registration Department was already quite evident. On my arrival, I was impressed to discover that Jennifer had been instrumental in bringing about a complete reform and restructuring of the court reporting services offered by the Registration Department. Under her continued leadership as its Consultant

Director, the CAT Unit of the Registration Department has steadily been transformed and has moved from strength to strength.

Jennifer has been able over the past five years to raise the level of competence and professionalism of staff and brought about a considerable measure of cohesion and effectiveness to the CAT Unit.

Working with the administration of the Barbados Community College, Miss. Leach took the necessary steps in the early years to ensure that the required courses were introduced and offered to students to ensure that an adequate pool of persons was trained with the requisite skills.

The entire Unit was restructured and existing posts re-designated. Four new posts of Court Reporter were created bringing the full staff complement of the Unit to fourteen persons. In 2006, these 4 posts were filled with suitably qualified persons from the batch of persons who had been trained at the Barbados Community College, ensuring that there is currently a sufficient number of reporters to cover criminal proceedings in Courts No. 3 and 4 and the Court of Appeal. Currently there is only a limited coverage of civil proceedings.

With the goal of ensuring timely delivery of transcripts particularly in criminal cases, Miss. Leach was instrumental in introducing a team approach which has seen staff of the CAT Unit being assigned in teams to cover proceedings in particular courts. The team approach relieves court reporters from having to spend the entire day in court taking evidence and ensures that reporters are given adequate time during the course of the work day to commence the necessary and all important next phase of editing their work back at the office. In this way, maximum productivity is achieved and transcripts are readied for timely delivery to the Court.

Miss. Leach was also responsible for identifying the necessary equipment, facilities and other resources which were required for the Unit. These resources, including laptop computers, transcribers, photocopiers, printers were acquired in 2006. The physical surroundings of the staff along with the image of the Unit as a whole was considerably enhanced when the Unit was re-located in 2006 to the current more comfortable surroundings in the Geddes Grant building at Whitepark. The physical infrastructure of the CAT Unit is now more than adequate. Over the past year, the Unit acquired two new paperless stenographic writers, which are the best available in the

industry. Additionally, a document center has been established, which is networked to all computers in the CAT Unit.

Largely due to Miss. Leach's vision and efforts, opportunities for the continuous training of the Department's court reporters were also identified. For the third consecutive year officers of the CAT Unit traveled to the USA in August this year to attend the court reporting organization's annual conference. At this conference, all aspects of the profession are discussed, the latest equipment is showcased and professional improvement facilitated. Doubtless these training opportunities have provided a measure of motivation to the Department's staff and instilled a renewed spirit of pride in the court reporting profession as a respected and indispensable career within the justice system.

From a personal standpoint, it has been a pleasure to have worked with Jennifer over the 2 years 5 months since I joined the Department as its Department Head. She is a pleasant person, mild mannered and gentle and not easily ruffled. I learned a great deal from her about the role and functions of the Court Reporter and the valuable support services which these professionals provide to the Court system and the administration of justice as

a whole. She was always willing to share with me her vision for the Unit and her wish to ensure that the momentum which has thus far been achieved is maintained and sustained. She has recently completed a report on the feasibility of introducing audio-digital court reporting in the Barbados court system. I wish to assure her that every effort will be made to persuade the relevant authorities to implement the several recommendations of the report within the near future.

Ladies and gentlemen, in preparing this tribute, I sought and obtained the views and contributions of the staff of the CAT Unit on their impressions of Miss. Leach. With your leave, I would like to share with you some of the comments which members of the CAT Unit have submitted which will paint for you a picture of the positive impression which Jennifer has made on the staff whom she was required to supervise over the past five years.

In the words of **Mrs. Waple Nessfield** – *“Jennifer joined the Department approximately five years ago and brought with her an air of freshness and new ideas, which were critical to achieving her goal of making the department more effectively functional. She has an unselfish approach to work, in that she shares every iota of her vast knowledge with staff or any*

other person with whom she has had to interact. She is a treasure that you want to keep once found. Thanks Jennifer, for being you and for all that you've done!"

Mrs. Venta Cumberbatch put it this way – *“Although she may not have known it, this is to say that she has been watched very keenly, and this is all because of the fact that she is a stickler for excellence, so no doubt I can join and say that whatever she has asked of the department, she herself, has been willing to make a sacrifice. Setting high standards and maintaining them for the department has always been in the forefront, and therefore, it is our intention to see that those standards are maintained, and if possible surpassed.”*

Miss. Carolyn Philips says of Jennifer – *“She is always willing to assist in whatever way possible. Her kindness and gentle mannerisms, along with her friendliness make her a very pleasant person to be associated with. She treats everyone equally and for these qualities, I have greatly admired her and pray that God will continue to bless and guide her in her future endeavours.”*

Finally, when asked to pay tribute to Jennifer, **Mrs. Marguerret Stuart** was compelled to display her considerable talents as a poet by penning the following verse –

“There are no words to match my gratitude

Above all else, you’ve shaped my attitude

Nurturing me with discipline and light

Urging me never to give up the fight

Keep practicing, gain knowledge are the key words you taught

Out of your heart I’ve learnt the things I ought

Yet, that at least prepared my head

Often underscoring words you never said!”

Jennifer, it is clear that you have made a considerable impact on the staff of the CAT Unit who obviously respect and admire you for being yourself, for leading by example and sharing your vast knowledge with them. You will be missed, but you will doubtless, be pleased to learn that there are some who have been motivated to maintain and if possible surpass the standards which you leave behind. It is very obvious that the Department is the richer for your efforts with us over the past five years. For this, I thank you most sincerely.

Ladies and gentlemen, in closing, I cannot help but observe that Jennifer's attachment with the Department over the past five years, is what I would consider a fine example of what is both possible and intended under the Caribbean Single Market and Economy arrangements which are now in place throughout CARICOM States under the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas.

Here, ladies and gentlemen, is Jennifer Leach, a living, breathing example of a skilled citizen of one CARICOM State having the ability to move freely into another CARICOM State (without the hindrance of a work permit) to provide services. Jennifer brought with her years of training, expertise and scarce skills which were not readily available here in the receiving state. She has, above all, made a positive impact and a sterling contribution to the development of the justice system in Barbados before moving on to provide her services elsewhere. This, Ladies and gentlemen, is about freedom of movement within CARICOM and the essence of what the CSME is about.

Jennifer, we thank you for your service to the Registration Department and for your valuable contribution to the development of Barbados. We wish you continued success in all your future endeavours.

Good bye, Good luck and may God's richest Blessings be with you now and
always!!!
