

**TRIBUTE TO MADAM JUSTICE CRANE SCOTT,
FORMER REGISTRAR OF SUPREME COURT**

By Laurie-ann Smith-Bovell, Deputy Registrar

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On behalf of the Registration Department I am pleased to offer this tribute to our former Registrar, now Madam Justice Crane-Scott.

I met Ms. Crane-Scott once before coming to the Registration Department. At that time I was at the Solicitor General's Chambers and had gone over to Corporate Affairs for something. At that time there was a vacancy for Deputy Registrar there and Mr. Birch suggested that I talk to the Registrar about the position. I remember speaking to her, she was pleasant enough, but I knew that on leaving her office there was no way I was going there. My impression of her was that she was a very serious and no nonsense individual. I remember saying to myself better the devil you know than the devil you don't.

So June 2006 a number of years later, I find myself in the same situation I had earlier avoided, Ms. Crane-Scott was my Registrar and I her Deputy.

It became clear as I worked with her on a daily basis that that my initial perception of Ms. Crane Scott was correct. Ms. Crane-Scott's management style was different. She was not a micro manager. She issued her instructions and she expected staff members to go about doing what they were required to do without her having to be breathing down their neck. She expected staff to use their initiative to try to resolve issues and challenges before coming to her. By doing this she allowed staff to build confidence in their own abilities and make them feel that they were making a contribution to their working environment.

Ms. Crane-Scott was always willing to listen and try new ideas to improve the functioning and efficiency of the Department. She was always adamant that the public should not be disadvantaged by poor operating procedures within the Registry. She was always looking at ways to improve the functioning of the Registry. I remember when we decided to implement the new procedure with respect to having orders approved, there was some disquiet from members of the Bar. Ms. Crane-Scott held to her position, and from my observations the turn over rate for orders has increased remarkably though no yet perfect.

People were of the view that Ms. Crane-Scott did not have an open door policy, she herself would say that, but I would disagree, if any staff member had a genuine problem they could go and knock on her door, discuss the problem and feel secure that the issue would be dealt with in the strictest of confidence.

What Ms. Crane-Scott did not encourage was the bringing of news or gossip as she was ever mindful of the fact that such behaviour led to the breakdown of staff morale and the development of cliques which then affected the performance of the office plus the fact that there was simply too much work to be done in the Registry to get involved in such matters.

Ms. Crane-Scott recognised that for the Department to efficiently function and be prepared for the implementation of the pending Supreme Court Rules, that training of staff was key to its success and therefore put measures in place to ensure that staff would be adequately trained.

Additionally, after speaking with Mrs. Christie Morris-Alleyne of the Caribbean Court of Justice, Ms. Crane-Scott implemented a suggestion made that would ensure that all the Registry staff become familiar and comfortable with the use of computers

which is an integral part of the functioning of the new rules and case management software to be implemented in the court.

One of the things I appreciated about Ms. Crane-Scott, was that like me, she always wanted to know the legal basis for the way things were done in the Registry. From my experience the Registration Department functions on a great deal of practice. When you ask a staff member why they were doing something a particular way, the response usually is “we were doing it so from the time Mr. Roachford was here” or “I come and find it so”.

This at times was very frustrating especially when one could find no legal basis. I found that when approached Ms. Crane-Scott, once provided with the legislation to support a change of practice was prepared to go against long held practice and tradition and implement new policies to ensure complicity with the law. Needless to say this would have unsettled and ruffled many staff members who were comfortable with their routine but that did not deter Ms. Crane-Scott.

Ms. Crane-Scott though serious is really a mild mannered person who is not easily ruffled. I know that there were times when things would have happened which would have caused her some distress, but at no time did the challenges she face reflect in how she did her work or dealt with the public or staff.

Ms. Crane-Scott it has been a pleasure working with you and on behalf of the Registration Department I wish to congratulate you on your elevation to the bench and wish you God’s blessing in your new role.

Thank you