

CLASS OF 1968 PARAISO HIGH SCHOOL 55TH ANNIVERSARY GRADUATION CELEBRATION HELD IN PANAMA FROM FEBRUARY 10-17, 2023



Class of 1968 PHS

This *Keeping the Flame Alive* Special Edition features a report of our Class of 1968 Paraíso High School 55th Anniversary Celebration of graduation from high school. We celebrated with an enjoyable variety of activities from February 10 to 17, 2023, which included **Classmates, Family and Friends**, with a total of 49 participants. We are indeed thankful to God for providing us this special privilege.

Most of the photographs in this report were taken by Alonso Gobern.

Friday, February 10, 2023 – Meet-and-Greet

On Friday, February 10, 2023 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. we met in the Aldan Room of the Hotel Torres de Alba and handed out personalized Welcome Packets to classmates, family members and visiting friends. The packet contained the schedule of activities, a commemorative 2023 class calendar, a Panamanian Souvenir Key Chain, and a package of our “Canal Zone Days French Cookies.” It was an exciting time of meeting, greeting, laughter and sharing childhood anecdotes. There were two classmates present whom we had not seen since graduation day in 1968. These two classmates were: **Marilyn Gill and Antonio “Nursey” Nurse**



Bocadillos included a variety of Empanadas, Cane Juice & Sorrell.
Empanadas de Carne (meat), Plátano (plantain tarts), Bacalao (codfish), Pollo (chicken) y Piña (pineapple)



PERSONALIZED WELCOME PACKETS CONTAINED FRENCH COOKIES, A PANAMANIAN SOUVENIR KEY CHAIN, THE CLASS COMMEMORATIVE CALENDAR AND THE SCHEDULE OF THE CELEBRATION



Classmates who did not attend will receive a Souvenir Commemorative 2023 Calendar. The calendar was mailed out to overseas classmates from Texas on February 23, 2023.

**Classmates, Family and Friends of our celebration included the following:
(In alphabetical order by first names):**

Alonso Gobern
 Ana Todd Caton
 Annette Wallace
 Antonio Nurse
 Benicia de Beckford
 Berna de Everett
 Brenda de Valencia
 Carmela Lowe Gobern
 Carmen Grimes Eccles
 Celia Cameron
 Cletus Romney
 Deborah Romney
 Delia Beckford Lomax
 Delia Cameron
 Diana Nurse
 Eddy Morales
 Edmundo Johnson

Eleanor Johnson
 Enrique Amantine
 Erika Nurse
 Eustace Mathews
 Gloria Cameron
 Hiram Yearwood
 Ileana Clark
 Janet Griffith
 Lorene Mathews
 Luciano Valencia
 Luz Santamaría Morales
 Makeda Kamara
 Marcia Saint Hill
 Marcia Smith Williams
 Marilyn Gill
 Mario Clark
 Oscar Williams

Ozra de Beckford
 Ralph Beckford
 Raymond West
 Ricardo Everett
 Roberto Graham
 Rogelio Saint Hill
 Sharifah Taylor
 Sheila Millett
 Sheryl Amantine
 Veronica Graham
 Wendell Lomax Sr.
 Wentworth Eccles
 Yolanda Ogarrá
 Yolanda Stephens Taylor
 Zonella West

Note: The following classmates were scheduled to attend with their spouses, but had to cancel due to unforeseen circumstances: **Arturo Sealey, Carlos Gibb and Ernesto Smythe**

Saturday, February 11, 2023 – 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

We spent a day of Rest and Relaxation at Dreams Playa Bonita Resort and Spa (on the way to Veracruz). Transportation was in a comfortable, 45-passenger tourism bus with our very polite driver by the name of **Alberto**. We had a nice, sunny and enjoyable day with some of us enjoying the pool facilities, the beach, the spa (massages and manicures), the snack bar, drinks, a buffet lunch, playing games and sharing anecdotes and jokes. It was an enjoyable day indeed. This activity was coordinated by **Carlos Martinez**, Group Sales Manager and Banquets of Dreams Playa Bonita Panama.



Classmates acquired Polo Sweaters with our 55th Anniversary Logo.



We enjoyed the pool, the beach, the spa, the buffet lunch, drinks, and each other's company.

Sunday, February 12, 2023 – 10:30 a.m.

We attended a bilingual worship service at the Emmanuel Baptist Church in Pueblo Nuevo. The preacher for the day was **Deacon Franklyn South**. He shared an outstanding message of loving and caring for one another. **Lorna Murdock**, a member of this church and a graduate of the Class of 1970 PHS, served as the coordinator for this activity and we express our sincere thanks to the membership for receiving us in such a warm manner. Our Class of 1968 PHS gave a special offering/donation to the church in the amount of two hundred dollars (\$200).

View the worship service at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fAJRVcDm53I>



Deacon Franklyn South delivered the message.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2023 – 1:00 to 3 p.m. (cont'd.)

From church, we traveled to Balboa Avenue, Panama City, where we enjoyed a delicious buffet “Brunch Dominical” in an elegant setting at the Hotel Intercontinental Miramar. This activity was coordinated by **Eric Allen**, Hotel Restaurant Manager.



SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2023 – 1:00 to 3 p.m.

**OFFICIAL PHOTO OF OUR CLASS OF 1968 PHS AND PARTICIPANTS
TAKEN AT THE HOTEL INTERCONTINENTAL MIRAMAR**



The Panama Lottery on Sunday, February 12 played all numbers related to our celebration:
7149—Most of us were born in 1949.
1355—We were commemorating 55th Anniversary
5660—Last 2 digits of Eustace’s phone number

LATER THAT DAY WAS SUPER BOWL!



(Missing from this photo is **Classmate Antonio Nurse**)

Later in the evening there was an informal group meeting to watch the televised 57th Super Bowl at the “Oldies” Sports Bar and Restaurant, located close to Hotel Torres de Alba. **Classmates Marcia Smith and Carmen Grimes** took a photograph with the **expresident of Panama Ricardo Martinelli**, who was also watching the Super Bowl at “Oldies.”

Monday, February 13, 2023 – 9:00 a.m.

Bus Tour of Santa Cruz/Gamboa, Paraíso and Pedro Miguel

On the initiative of **Classmate Carmen Grimes Eccles**, we went on a bus tour of the three town sites where we grew up: Santa Cruz/Gamboa, Paraíso and Pedro Miguel. We also visited the Gamboa Rainforest Reserve <https://www.gamboareserve.com/> **Berta Colona** served as the tour guide. It was a fun moment of reminiscing, sharing anecdotes, laughter, remembering our neighbors, looking at some of the small houses in which we grew up, but remembering that we were always with clothing, educational opportunities, church, food, values and happy times.

Monday, February 13, 2023 – 1:00 p.m. (cont'd.)

On the way from our bus tour, we made a stop at the Orphanage *Hogar Divino Niño* located at No.6404, Los Ríos/Corozal. This initiative was coordinated by **Classmate Eustace Mathews** in memory of our **late Classmate Xenia Spencer Fareaux**, who would always initiate a campaign to collect donations for children and the less fortunate. Our donation to the orphanage was in the amount of two thousand dollars fifty dollars (\$2,050.00) and it was received by **Lic. Maritza Grifo**, director of the orphanage, who recalls our visit back in 2018 with Xenia. To date, there are a total of 27 children receiving loving care and assistance at this orphanage.



Classmates who made this donation to the orphanage a reality are as follows:
(In alphabetical order by first names)

Ana Todd Catón
Carlos Gibb
Carmela Lowe Govern
Carmen Grimes Eccles
Delia Beckford Lomax
Edmund Johnson
Eunice Thorne Johnson
Eustace Mathews
John Small
Lois Motley

Makeda Kamara
Marcia Smith Williams
Marilyn Gill
Mathilde Padmore
Rafael Evering
Raymond West
Vilma Nesfield Poyser
Yolanda Ogarra
Yolanda Stephens Taylor

Tuesday, February 14, 2023 – 7:00 p.m.

Valentine’s Day Red Top Noche Típica and Show

On the initiative of **Classmate Marcia Smith Williams**, we enjoyed a “**Red Top**” Valentine’s Day Noche Típica and Show at Las Tinajas Restaurant. Although we experienced a delay in receiving our meals, the tipico show took us on a cultural and musical journey of our native land of Panama. There was a cover charge of \$8 per person for the show. All of us dressed in our “**Red Tops**” received a **Red Rose** from **Classmate Eustace Mathews** para el ***Día del Amor y la Amistad***. This gesture was well received and appreciated by Classmates, Family and Friends.



Show Tipico Panameño por el Restaurante Las Tinajas



Veronica and Roberto Graham Marilyn Gill and Janet Griffith

Wendell and Delia Lomax and Diana Nurse



Marcia and Oscar Williams

Cletus and Deborah Romney

Valentine's Day **Red Top** Noche Típica & Show, Las Tinajas



Luciano & Brenda Valencia Benicia de Beckford



Raymond and Zonella West, Marcia Saint Hill and Sharifah Taylor



Makeda Kamara



Marco e Ileana Díaz



Lorene and Eustace Mathews



Eleanor and Edmund Johnson



Yolanda Stephens and Annette Wallace



Berna and Ricardo Everett



Luz and Eddy Morales



Carmela and Alonso Gobern

Eustace Mathews presented everyone with a beautiful **Red Rose!**

Wednesday, February 15, 2023 – 8:30 a.m. - City Tour

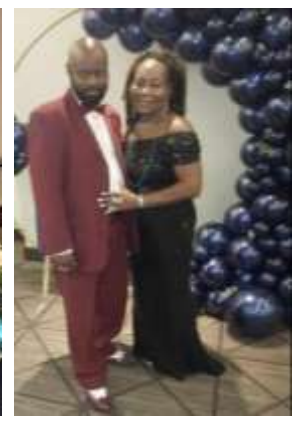
On the initiative of **Classmate Marcia Smith Williams** 11 persons enjoyed a city tour of the following places: Miraflores Locks, Amador Causeway, Casco Antiguo, shopping at the Artesanías Stores. **Felix Dandrade** served as the tour guide.

Friday, February 17, 2023 – 7:00 p.m. – 1 a.m.

We attended the Gala Dance of the Class of 1973 Rainbow City High School, held at the Marriott Hotel at Albroom Mall. There were 300 persons in attendance. Our Class of 1968 purchased a full-page ad in their brochure. Our **classmate Marcia Smith Williams** offered congratulations and a toast to the Class of '73.



Class of 1973 Rainbow City High School



Roberto and Veronica Graham Marcia Smith & Eustace Mathews Annette Wallace, Celia & Delia Cameron Eustace & Lorene Mathews



Yolanda Stephens, Eustace Mathews and Delia Beckford Lomax Ricardo Everett, Marcia and Rogelio Saint Hill Ozra and Ralph Beckford

SOME OF THE PLEASANT HAPPENINGS THAT TRANSPIRED DURING OUR CELEBRATION:

Processing of Cédulas and Passports:

- **Classmate Marilyn Gill** was able to renew her cédula.
- **Classmate Antonio Nurse** received his cédula for the first time.
- **Classmate Yolanda Stephens Taylor** received her cédula for the first time (photo):



From our Family and Friends Group:

- **Rogelio Saint Hill** was able to renew his cédula and obtain a Panamanian passport.
- **Marcia Saint Hill** was able to obtain a Panamanian passport.
- **Luz Santamaría Morales** was able to renew her cédula.

Retrieving of CEPADEMS:

- **Classmate Marcia Smith** was able to retrieve her cepadem.
- **Zonella West, wife of Classmate Raymond West,** was able to retrieve her cepadem.

Meeting and Visiting with Relatives and Friends:

Classmate Marilyn Gill met her (half) brother **Marcos Gill** and her 10-year old nephew **Luis Gill** for the first time. Her brother resides in Paraíso in the home where Marilyn's father was residing over 55 years ago. This encounter was an emotional moment for these siblings.



Report by Classmate Carmen Grimes Eccles:

The Committee coordinated a day at a 5-star resort along the Pacific Ocean, church service that served up a meaningful message of *"leaving your footprints behind"*, the amazing brunch on Sunday with the best tasting hojaldres and tortillas. From our hotel view we witnessed blazing fireworks when the Carnaval flag was raised. Looking forward to Keeping the Flame Alive.

As soon as we met, all Classmates were generous with hugs and sharing love. Panama is forever modern and beautiful. We noted the newly constructed two-lane bridge in Gamboa (the old one lane bridge is no longer in use). Highlights of our visit included the following:

- Visits to family for smiles.
- Visits to the grandparents gravesites to honor those who sacrificed for us.
- Friends took us to dinner and drove us to the Marcus J. Garvey Statue in Amador
- We attended a folkloric dinner and dance show with a small group.

Especially noteworthy are the following Memorials:

- Paraíso - Honoring Panamanians who served in the Vietnam War
- Pedro Miguel - honoring Samuel Whyte, union activist and civic leader
- Amador – Marcus J. Garvey Statue representing African descendants in Panama
- Corozal – Corozal Cemetery



Paraíso



Pedro Miguel



Amador



Corozal

Reuniting of Friendship by Classmate Marcia Smith Williams:

Oscar and Marcia Williams reunited with **Xiomara Edwards**, a Major in the Panamanian Police Force, whom they met while Xiomara studied English at the Defense Language Institute at Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas from 2017-2018. They remained in touch via WhatsApp and reunited during this celebration. Photo also features Xiomara's grandson, **Jonathan**.



With Xiomara in 2023 and at her graduation in 2018

Visiting Classmates who are ill:



Classmate **Edmund Johnson** visited Classmate **Gregor Alfred** at a home.



Classmate **Eustace Mathews** visited Classmate **Rafael Gordon** at a home.

Transiting the Panama Canal:

Classmate **Yolanda Stephens Taylor** and her daughter **Sharifah Taylor** made a partial transit of the Panama Canal on Sunday, February 19. Photo below Yolanda (left) was on her way to check in at the Pacific Queen.



SEVERAL CLASSMATES, FAMILY AND FRIENDS ATTENDED THE **GRAN FERIA AFROANTILLANA SPONSORED BY SAMAAP** AT THE ATLAPA CONVENTION CENTER ON SATURDAY, FEB. 18 AND SUNDAY, FEB. 19.





Yolanda and Sharifah Taylor

Comments received on our celebration:

Our celebration was great. The energy was very good and the camaraderie was excellent. My daughter **Sharifah** was very impressed with that and the love and respect that she saw among us. The partial transit of the Canal was very interesting and informative as well as educational. This was my best reunion. Thanks for all that you do.

Yolanda Stephens Taylor

Again Carmela, thank you for your hospitality and kindness. Thank you for allowing Eddy and me to hang out with the class reunion, we were treated like classmates. Hugs all the way from Pennsylvania.

Luz Santamaría-Morales

The celebration that Carmela, Marcia and Eustace put together was magnificent. It was nice to see the class members and get to fellowship with them. All the activities were well thought out and planned. All has been much appreciated. Thank you and stay blessed.

Marilyn Gill

Thumbs up for the organizing committee. Wonderful week of activities. Thank God and the team.

Ana Todd Catón

Dear Carmela: We had such a wonderful time with the Class of 1968 55th Anniversary celebration that we couldn't bear to go back to our regular lives, without letting you know. Thank you and God bless all of you.

The Cameron Sisters: Gloria, Celia and Delia

To Carmela, Eustace and Marcia, my Sincere Thanks and Appreciation for the work you did allowing us to collaborate with the Rainbow City Class celebrating a wonderful time together. I'll especially smile at our Breakfast Times. Love to you Class of '68 and Family. God Bless.

Yolanda Ogarra

Congratulations to the Class of 1968 Paraíso High School. It was a joy to socialize with all of you...everyone was so amicable. Thanks to Eustace, Marcia and Carmela. Blessings with Love.

Annette Wallace

Special Appreciation to the following sponsors who made our Class Commemorative 2023 Calendar a reality (in alphabetical order):

Balboa Dental Clinic	Breasia Productions
Bishop Dr. Stanley Webb	Clínica Hospital del Atlántico
Cooperativa de Ahorro y Crédito Gamboa, R.L.	
Corozal-Gatun-Mt. Hope Cemetery Preservation Foundation	
Generoso y Eira Nicolás	Panama Canal Zone Travel and Tours
Hotel Torres de Alba	Restaurante Mi Ranchito
J&G Turismo en Panamá	Restaurante Pencas
Justice Lodge 832 I.B.P.O. Elks of the World	Rio Abajo Methodist Church
Licda. Marta Córdova de Yearwood	Roman Foster DVD Diggers
Mailboxes, Etc. Plaza Albrook	Servicios Profesionales Médicos Dialysis Ctr.
Medical Provider Billing Services	Spay Panama
Melva Lowe de Goodin	Tax Service
Moses Bike Rentals	The American Society of Panama
Pan Caribbean SANKOFA	

In Appreciation from the Committee Members:

THANKS TO **DEREK LASHLEY** FOR THE COORDINATION AND RESERVATIONS AT THE HOTEL TORRES DE ALBA (Photo right).



THANKS ALSO TO **FELIX DANDRADE** FOR HIS EFFICIENT TRANSPORTATION SERVICE WITH AIRPORT PICK UPS AND ALSO CITY TOURS.

LUNCHEON WITH COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND SPOUSES



The members of the coordinating committee for this celebration (**Eustace Mathews, Marcia Smith Williams and Carmela Lowe Gobern**) express appreciation to all our classmates, family and friends who participated in our 55th Anniversary Celebration. It was a pleasure putting it together and seeing the response and support received from so many of you. **Thank you!**



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