

FROM: JAMAICA

Jamaica Tourist Board / A Department of the Government of Jamaica / 80 Harbour Street, Kingston, Jamaica.

/N Anthony Abrahams

ERIC ANTHONY ABRAHAMS

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KINGSTON, Jamaica. April 23, 1975. Mr. Abrahams was the youngest Jamaican ever to have been appointed Director of Tourism (April 1970, one month before his thirtieth birthday). A graduate of the University of the West Indies (1961) where he studied Economics, History and English, he later read Jurisprudence at Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar.

He as one of only two Jamaicans to become President of the Oxford Union Society, which he had also previously served as Secretary.

After leaving Oxford, he worked as a reporter and producer for the BBC/TV.

Mr. Abrahams joined the Jamaica Tourist Board in 1967 as Administrative Assistant to the then Director of Tourism, Mr. John Pringle. Mr. Abrahams served in the same capacity under Mr. Pringle's successor, Mr. Stuart Sharpe. During this period, Mr. Abrahams was responsible, amongst other things, for the establishment of the Jamaica Association of Villas and Apartments.

In 1969, he was appointed Assistant Director of Tourism, with special responsibility for the Board's Development Department, and the initiation of a convention hotel system in the island.

During his tenure as Director of Tourism, Mr. Abrahams expanded the activities of the Jamaica Tourist Board which had hitherto been strictly those of a public relations and promotional organisation, developing it into a modern marketing instrument.

In effecting this development, Mr. Abrahams created within the Board two new departments: a Planning, Research and Statistics Department, and a Special Projects Department. These made possible the coordinated planning, development and monitoring of marketing policies and of attractions programmes based on the evaluation of visitor demands and area needs.

Among the attractions established under his administration were Rafting on the Martha Brae, An Evening on the Great River, An Evening on the White River, The Tropic Gardens at Irwin, the Ocho Rios Boonoonoonoos Programme, and the Kingston Talawah Programme.

Mr. Abrahams was also responsible for introducing a programme to educate the Jamaican public regarding tourism, and to give Jamaicans a sense of involvement in an industry from which they had hitherto felt excluded and alienated. He also devised special marketing strategies (the Inns of Jamaica Programme) to assist small Jamaican-owned hotels.

Extremely aware of the importance of training in the industry, Mr. Abrahams held the post of Chairman of the Jamaica Hotel Training School up to 1974. He also established the Pringle Scholarship, and got the number of overseas scholarships in hotel administration increased.

During the five-year period of Mr. Abrahams' responsibility for Jamaica's tourism, air and cruise ship tourist arrivals rose 40.4% -- from 374,306 at the end of 1969 to 525,662 at the end of 1974; foreign travel receipts rose 55.5% -- from \$77.9 million to \$121.2 million. Over the same period, the number of guest rooms in Jamaica's resort areas nearly doubled -- rising from 5,655 to 11,091.

The period has also been a critical one for the industry. The late 1960's and early 1970's were characterised by Europe's rapid expansion as the world's principal tourism destination, and a consequent decline in the Caribbean's share of the North American tourism market. During the past 18 months, the fuel crisis and the escalation of travel costs have resulted in drastic shifts in world tourism, a phenomenon that has been compounded by the recession in the United States and most major markets.

Jamaica's performance as a tourist destination in these circumstances has, nevertheless, maintained an upward growth curve. In fact, Jamaica is one of the very few countries in the world of which this has been true over the past two years.