

*B/N Bennett, Louise*  
NEWSLETTER  
— OF THE —  
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# JIST



A Tribute To Miss Lou

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## Letters to the Editor

Durham  
North Carolina

December 1991

The Editor  
JIST Newsletter

Dear Editor,

I was at your organization's television studio one day recently, when I happened to see a copy of the "JIST" Newsletter. "Well," I thought, "I have a little time to kill while waiting, so I might as well read this."

I must confess I ended up 'stealing' the magazine, since I had not finished reading it by the time my friend was ready to leave. "JIST" is indeed one of the most interesting newsletters that I have come across – right from the exquisite cover photograph (which I subsequently ordered from your photographic department for my personal collection), right on through the drug abuse story (pity I missed Part One) on the back cover.

In all, a well put together and touching magazine.

I, too, mourned your slain colleague, even as I felt the excitement of the Mandelas' visit (and, if truth be told, I even tried to make cocoa oatmeal cookies).

Please continue to put out this most entertaining little newsletter, not only throughout the new year of 1992, but for a long time to come.

I. Liebermann

October 28, 1991

The Editor  
JIST Newsletter

Dear Editor,

Congratulations on a very good issue of JIST. Keep up the good work.

Daphne Innerarity  
Executive Director

### JIST Team

Rachel Mordecai	Editor
Owen Shand	Writer
Sophia Smith	Writer
Tracey Simms	Writer
Andrine West	Writer/Typesetter
Karlene Dewar	Typesetter
Peter Cameron	Illustrator
Daydra Williams	Artist

### Editorial

Welcome to the New Year, and to another issue of "JIST". Let us hope that 1992 proves a happy and peaceful year for everyone.

In this issue, "JIST" welcomes Mrs. Daphne Innerarity, our new Executive Director, and says farewell to Festus Richards and Ken Williams, two members of staff who retired last year. We also feature the Hon. Louise Bennett-Coverly, beloved Jamaican theatre personality.

This issue of "JIST" has suffered from a lack of participation of JIS staff members. "JIST" belongs to all of us, and should reflect the ideas and opinions of everyone at JIS. So, as in the past, we encourage you to submit articles, stories, poems, jokes, puzzles, drawings – anything you would like to see in *your* newsletter.

# Hon. Louise Bennett-Coverley

**T**he name "Miss Lou" is synonymous with the development of Jamaican theatre and poetry. Through her performances in the National LTM Pantomime and her publications, poems, songs and Anancy stories, the Hon. Louise Bennett-Coverley O.J. has helped to create an archive of Jamaican traditions.

A pioneer in the Jamaican performing arts, Miss Lou often combined her dramatic skills with other aspects of the performing arts, working with such noted artistes as Hazel Baxter.

Naturally an outgoing person, Miss Lou has few inhibitions when it comes to performing for audiences of any size. Many of her performances took place at the Ward Theatre, a popular venue for major cultural events.

Miss Lou, the social chronicler, is a versatile woman. She is equally at home on television and radio as in the theatre. For many years she hosted an entertainment feature on radio with her long-standing partner, comedian Ranny Williams – "Mas Ran". This, added to the fact that they often worked together in pantomimes, earned them the reputation of being "inseparable".

She has written extensively, conducted lectures and demonstrations, and performed throughout the Caribbean, North America and in Europe, always with the aim of spreading the culture of her people.

Some of her works include:

- *Anancy and Miss Lou*
- *Humorous Verse in Dialect*
- *Jamaican Verses*
- *Jamaica Labrish*

In 1990 Miss Lou was appointed Ambassador for Culture, or Special

Envoy of the Jamaican Government.

In recognition of her invaluable contribution and dedication to cultural development, Miss Lou has been presented with many awards.

Madam Serena, and Marjorie Whyllie played her assistant.

Sen. the Hon. Dr. Paul Robertson, then Minister of Information and Culture, brought greetings



She holds the Silver and Gold Musgrave Medals, 1964 and 1974 respectively. In 1972 she received the Norman Manley Award for Excellence in Folklore and Art.

In April of 1990, tribute was paid to Miss Lou on World Theatre Day. She returned to her homeland to give a stunning performance in a production called *Miss Lou and Friends*. Hundreds of theatre-goers turned out to see Miss Lou's return to the Jamaican stage, and to hear many veteran actors pay tribute to the "Mother of Jamaican Theatre".

"An Evening of Dinner-Theatre", in honour of Miss Lou, was held on October 5, 1991 in the Concert Hall of the Royal York Hotel, Toronto.

The event in itself was a grand reunion, as old stage friends met and greeted and also re-enacted scenes from some of their productions.

The performers included Maud Fuller, who played Liza in *The Lou and Ranny Show*, and Charles Hyatt.

From the pantomime *Queenie's Daughter*, Lois Kelly-Miller played

on behalf of the Prime Minister and the people of Jamaica.

Miss Lou, although no longer living in Jamaica, continues to do her part in waving the Jamaican flag on the international scene.

Hon. Louise Bennett-Coverly, writer, poet, dramatist extraordinaire has done her country proud, and is a living legend in Jamaica's rich and vibrant culture.

Owen Shand



(Photo reproduced from programme for "An Evening of Dinner-Theatre". Our JIS Information Officer in Toronto, Barbara Theobalds, was on the Organizing Committee, and the Publications and Advertising Department designed and helped produce the souvenir magazine.)

# The Promise

I was sitting with Stacy in the solitude of our backyard. It was a pleasant August afternoon, and a gentle breeze was swaying the limbs of the giant oak trees, causing them to creak. This was the first opportunity I'd had in two weeks to spend time with my daughter.

It had been a hard day at the office. The latest stock had come in, but the selections were not what I had ordered. To top it all, the store clerk had chosen an outfit for the Governor-General's wife which clashed with the colour of her hair. The Lady was most upset and demanded to see the manager, so I had had to rectify the situation. Pushing aside the hassles of that day, I directed her attention to Stacy, who was tugging at my skirt.

"Mommy, Mommy!" Stacy shrieked, "Let's play catch!" Her face lit up in glee as her dark brown eyes reflected the irresistible plea.

"Alright, dear," I said. "You throw to Mom and I'll throw back."

"You first," Stacy said.

We were having a delightful time when, suddenly, I found myself overcome by memories.

"Stacy, Mommy's feeling a bit tired. Play by yourself for a while and I'll join you again soon." As I spoke, I slowly made my way to sit by the trunk of the big oak tree.

"Oh, Mommy!" Stacy protested, her mouth all twisted in defiance and her eyes darkening. The angelic face lost its appeal. Smiling to myself, I thought, Stacy is so much like her father. His piercing eyes and strong personality are deeply a part of the child's make-up. Stacy even has her father's height.

It has been four painful years, I thought, as tears gently rolled down my cheeks. Unable to get ahold of myself, I gave way to the memories of the sweet past, when Donavon was very much a part of my life.

Donavon and I met during his final year in college. He was a year ahead of me. We had our first conversation when he came to my class to make a

speech. I asked a lot of questions, interrupting him every second. Somehow he found me interesting. Soon he began inviting me to school functions and elsewhere. We became close.

Donavon had the most fascinating eyes, that pierced me with such power. His beautiful lips, his height, his athletic body, were truly gifts from God. He was the most attractive person I had ever seen, and he had a splendid personality to accompany his looks.

I graduated a year after he did. Donavon's parents and I became very close, so I was free to go and visit him without being pressured by them. I remember one occasion especially, when I visited him. After greeting his parents, I



ran up to his room and quietly opened his door; he was lying on the bed with his back turned. I stood there for some seconds admiring him before I went over.

"Hi there," I said, greeting him with the usual kiss on the cheek.

"What's up?" he asked, as he turned around to face me.

"Same ol' stuff, Donavon; I am tired, lonely, and you know the rest."

"Is there anything I can do to help you?"

"You can start by telling me about your day." And he did.

As the weeks went by, Donavon and I were busy making wedding plans, so we had a limited amount of time to spend with each other. Our parents played an important role in helping us to get

things prepared. The night before the wedding, I went over to visit him.

"Have you come to tell me that you have changed your mind?" he queried.

"No, I came to tell you how much I love you."

We started talking about the future, how many kids we were planning to have, where we would live and so on. Steve and Carl, Donavon's friends, came and interrupted, saying that it was bad luck for us to see each other the night before the wedding. They had come to take Donavon to a bachelor party they were having for him.

Carl and Steve had been Donavon's closest friends since high school. The three of them were always together.

"Donavon, I thought you were going to stay with me tonight," I said disappointedly.

"Steph, we're just borrowing him for tonight, then you can have him for the rest of your life," Carl said.

"Besides, I won't be staying very long; I'm just going to show my face and turn back." Donavon promised.

"Yeah, right."

"Please, Mommy," Donavon teased.

"Fine, but if I don't see you at the church on time I'm going to go ahead without you," I joked.

"Don't worry Steph, I'll make sure he's back on time," Steve said. "Now come on, Donavon, before the others think we've changed our minds."

"Wait." I could hear the sighs of annoyance but I ignored them. "Before you go I want you to promise me you won't drink any alcohol and you won't drive too fast."

"I promise, darling. I promise," he said, kissing me on the cheek. Then he ran off with his friends. Somehow I knew I shouldn't have allowed him to go, but I didn't want to deprive him of having fun with his friends.

To be continued

Tracey Simms (a HEART trainee attached to the Publications and Advertising Dept.)