

## Dear Fred: Alfred Ramcharan and the External Aid Office<sup>1</sup>

I suppose I should begin saying how I know anything at all about Mr. Alfred Joseph Ramcharan.

I am neither a beneficiary of Mr. Ramcharan's Montreal teaching career nor am I connected to the North American branch of the Trinidadian Ramcharans, a branch founded when Alfred's famous sister, Pearl, married American anthropologist D.J. Crowley and moved to the United States.

My acquaintanceship with Alfred Ramcharan began when I learned that, on Saturday, 25 August 1962, the seven-member Gillespie family neglected to hand back their Macdonald College Brittain Hall room keys to Mr. Ramcharan.

On 30 August 1962, Mr. Ramcharan noted the Gillespie omission in a clear hand, putting fountain pen to paper at 2049 McGill College Avenue in Montreal. His note, received in the mails at the External Aid Office (EAO) in Ottawa, was read, and duly filed; spiked, top-left corner, into a buff-coloured card-stock government folder: File No. 36-8-3; Subject: Briefing Conferences For Teachers.

There, Alfred Ramcharan's note rested undisturbed until, on 28 November 2014, at a reading room table in Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa, I photographed most of the contents of file 36-8-3.

Skimming the pages as I photographed them, Mr. Ramcharan's mention of "The Gillespie Room Key Incident" made me laugh. How typical of the Gillespies! It was my in-law Gillespies I was researching, not Alfred Ramcharan. The Gillespie family, Mr. Jim, Mrs. June, daughters Anne (Mrs. Wife!), Brenda, Clare (A-B-C) and sons Jamie and Ron went on assignment to Kenya for two years, from August 1962 to August 1964. The posting of an Ottawa teacher and his family to Kenya wasn't a one-off occurrence; their African adventure was a small piece of a bigger puzzle.

To concoct the *bigger puzzle*, take one part Cold War Geo-politics; stir in crumbling British Empire; fold in Canadian foreign-aid policy; add Baby Boom to taste. In response to a bilateral request from Kenya – on the threshold of independence from Britain in 1962 – the EAO sent Jim Gillespie to train Kenyan teachers. But before the Gillespies, together with another eighty-odd teacher-families comprising the EAO "class of '62", departed for assignments in the developing world, the EAO needed to brief them in person.

This was the Briefing Conference For Teachers, held each August at Macdonald College near Montreal just days before the teacher-families flew from Montreal to their assignments.

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1 It is SO tempting to include many, many footnotes, densely packed with detailed information on the various points encapsulated herein. I am resisting this temptation. But... [sigh] there's endnotes...

## Briefing Conference For Teachers

The External Aid Office was established in November 1960 to administer Canada's foreign aid<sup>i</sup>. The EAO mandate included assuming responsibility for Canadian "Experts" assisting developing countries. Pre-EAO, the Economic and Technical Assistance Branch of the Department of Trade and Commerce ran the "Experts" programme. In August, 1960, under Trade and Commerce, a briefing conference for 14 teachers was held in Ottawa. In 1961, the EAO moved the expanded August briefing conference (for 35 teacher-families) to Macdonald College. In 1962, as noted above, and in 1963, the conference welcomed about eighty-five teacher-families. By 1964, the number had grown to one-hundred-sixty-two.

With encouragement and help from Macdonald College's education Director, Professor David Munroe<sup>ii</sup>, and Professor Wayne Hall<sup>iii</sup>, the College – its tranquil, isolated campus located not too far from Montreal's Dorval International Airport – was a natural conference venue choice.

Alfred Ramcharan happened to be a student at the Macdonald College School for Teachers, a 1961 graduate of the two-year degree programme.

And so begins our story...



### SECOND YEAR DEGREE

*Front Row, Left to Right:* Lois Riker, Mara Rudzitis, Joan Evans, Anne Yeoman, Francis Hulme, Helen Lekas, Sharon Mitchell, Peter Findlay (Pres.), Erman Montgomery, Renate Bidner, Marina Moshonas, Wendy Board, Elizabeth MacAllister, Lynn Aitken, Gail Jessop, Maureen Spencer. *Second Row:* Caryl-Anne Erickson, Barbara Birtles, Susan Travers, Martha Eardley, Marion Edmonds, Suzanne Drolet, Katherine Boyne, Heather Kilpatrick, Lois Silverson, Claire Purdy, Mary Wighton, Stacia Parsons, Carol LaBlanc, Irene Dunfield, Joan Portfors, Joan Gregory, Beryl Amy, Esther Husk, Susan LeDain, Pat Gordon. *Third Row:* Sharon Schofield, Ann Smith, Bev Steer, Jean Stuart, Carolyn Carlisle, Alfred Ramcharan, Philip Bagniet, Bruce Middleton, Peter Kreuser, Andy Talmanis, Glee Willows, Leola Caya, Beverly Thorp, Eileen Bryson, Jean Brooks. *Absent:* Karen Caplan, Susan Craig, Anneleen de Brentani, Marion Forman, Jane Larson, Sandra-May Munro, Ann Stewart, Howard Thomas, Reg. Watts.

*Clan Macdonald '61; page 49 (of the unnumbered yearbook)*

## Alfred Joseph (Kalkapersad) Ramcharan

Birth: 07 September 1923;

Circular Rd., Princes Town, Victoria,  
Trinidad and Tobago

Death: 10 March 1988;

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

On 01 September 1960, Alfred J. Ramcharan was admitted to New York City by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, with permission to stay until 08 September 1960. He had come by BOAC from Piarco Airport in Trinidad.

Nationality: British; birthplace: Trinidad.



Source: Crowley family website.

Alfred gave his permanent address as Brittain Hall, Macdonald College, Quebec, Canada.

Trinidad gained independence from Britain in 1962. If he foresaw independence, perhaps Alfred thought it would be easier to emigrate from Trinidad to Canada as a British citizen than as a citizen of the Commonwealth of Trinidad and Tobago (1962-1976). His older sister, Pearl, was educated in Canada (Toronto) and the US in the 1940s before returning to Trinidad. She returned to the US when she married American, D.J. Crowley, in 1958. She may have influenced his decision to come to Canada.

In Trinidad, though Alfred himself had received no formal secondary school education, he taught for several years in local elementary and high schools. Because Alfred graduated from the Macdonald College two-year teaching programme in one academic year (1960-61), it's reasonable to assume the school gave him credit for his years of teaching experience in Trinidad.

Surname	Given Name	Initial	Passport Number
RAMCHARAN	ALFRED	J	104954 R
Nationality (Citizenship)	Birthplace	Birthdate	
BRITISH	TRINIDAD, TWI	7 SEPT 1923	
United States Address 10 Mrs. J. P. Brown, 1069 Hawthorne Court, Uniontown, PA 15085, A. Y.			
Permanent Address BRITAIN HALL, MACDONALD COLLEGE, QUEBEC, CANADA			
Visa Issued At		IM. & NATZ. SERVICE NEW YORK, N. Y. 221 ADMITTED SEP - 1 1960 CLASS B-2 TO Sep. 8, 1960	
Date Visa Issued			
5 AUGUST 1960			
Vessel Name or Airline and Flight No. of Arrival			
BOAC/BOAC 495			
Passenger Boarded At			
PIARCO AIRPORT			
Form I-94 B (Rev. 7-1-57) ARRIVAL - DEPARTURE RECORD			

ANY HANDWRITTEN ENTRIES MUST BE IN BLOCK CAPITAL LETTERS

Source: Ancestry.ca

## The 1961 Briefing Conference for Teachers

During discussions between the EAO and Prof. Munroe about Macdonald College hosting the briefing conference, Prof. Munroe suggested Alfred Ramcharan as someone who could help with the administration side. Alfred would have been one of the most mature education students Macdonald College had in 1961 since he was thirty-seven years old that summer. The job offered to Alfred, described in an EAO letter to him at Macdonald College, dated 15 August 1961, was this:

“We need someone who can act as a receptionist from 2 p.m. on the 24<sup>th</sup> of August at Stewart Hall. This person would be responsible for meeting the teachers as they come in and assigning their rooms to them. During the conference itself, he would help with the small administrative tasks, and on Friday afternoon and on Saturday morning he would prepare bills for the teachers and help collect the money.”

The EAO offered Alfred \$25 for the 2.5 days work.

He quickly accepted the offer, in a letter dated 17 August 1961.

*Dear Sir:*

*Thank you for your letter 36-8-3 of August 15,  
re - Help required for the Conference of Teachers at  
Macdonald College from August 24 to 26.*

*It was very kind of Prof. Munroe to mention  
my name to you. I would be most willing to  
assist in whatever there is to be done.*

*yours truly*

*Alfred J Ramcharan*

*Alfred Ramcharan to D.A.W. Judd, Thursday 17 August 1961.*

Alfred's accounts for the conference list receipts of \$1,380.50 and expenditures of \$1,377.95, a profit of \$2.55.





## The 1962 Briefing Conference for Teachers

**Dear Fred:**

**Mr. Alfred Ramcharan,  
2049 McGill College Avenue,  
Montreal, Quebec.**

During talks with Professor Wayne Hall at Macdonald College in preparation for its August 1962 briefing conference, the EAO expressed how excellent a job Fred Ramcharan had done in 1961 and how much

they hoped Fred would be available for the larger, day longer 1962 edition. The EAO job offer was mailed (with his surname spelled "Ramcharam" – not for the last time!) to Fred's McGill College Avenue rooms near McGill University in Montreal on 22 June, 1962.

On 27 June, Fred accepted the EOA offer with pleasure.

*It was very good of you to remember me again, and  
I shall be looking forward to that week of August 21-25.*

*Yours sincerely*

*Fred.*

*Alfred Ramcharan to D.A.W. Judd, Wednesday, 27 June 1962*

In early July, thirty-one-year-old Mr. Noble Power of the EAO Education Division wrote thirty-eight-year-old Fred for his phone number. Mr. Power was to be in Montreal in early August, making conference arrangements, and wanted to meet with Fred to discuss some of the details.

**Again may I say how glad I was to hear that you would be free  
to work with us during the Conference.**

**Yours sincerely**

**ORIGINAL SIGNED BY**

**N. E. POWER.**

*Noble Power to Fred Ramcharan, Thursday, 05 July 1962*

Noble Edward Charles Power of Montreal was just beginning his career with the External Aid Office in the Education Division<sup>iv</sup>, having worked in the Department of National Defence previously. Unlike Fred, who had little formal education, Noble had been educated at the Université de Montréal, Columbia University, the Universidad de Mexico, and the Sorbonne.

Embarking on what was to become a very friendly acquaintanceship, Fred replied, 14 July, that he had no phone at his McGill College Avenue rooms but could be reached where he worked, at Victor2-3241 [842-3241] Local 565<sup>v</sup>. 842-3241 was the phone number of the Simpsons department store at 977 ouest Ste-Catherine; the store was very close to Fred's rooms on McGill College Avenue. Considering his philatelic interest, perhaps he worked in the Darnell Stamp Shop in Simpsons?



LA PRESSE, 31 May 1980, Page 19.

*I have no telephone where I live, but you can reach me during the day at the office where I work — VI 2-3241, Local 565<sup>v</sup>*

*Thanks again for writing, and I shall be looking forward to meeting you sometime next month.*

*Yours sincerely*

*Fred Ramcharan*

*Fred Ramcharan to Noble Power, Saturday, 14 July 1962*

Fred's duties at the 1962 conference were these:

1. Man the registration desk in Laird Hall.  
21 August: 77 teacher-families, an expected 250 children, women, and men start arriving about 11am. Fred assigns each family a room in Laird or Brittain Hall.
2. 21-25 August: Allocation of lecture halls for the various conference sessions; the showing of films; financial aspects of the conference (expenditures & receipts); general administration.
3. 25 August: Before the teacher-families board their flights that evening at Dorval Airport, Fred must settle their room & board bills (\$8.50 per person per day), and collect back all the room keys.
4. After the conference, Fred was to furnish a financial statement.

A (slightly inaccurate) typed EAO lists names about 84 teachers, 52 spouses, and 96 children who attended the conference. A separate team was employed for the challenging task of entertaining the 96 children of various ages (toddlers to teenagers) for 5 days, letting Fred concentrate on fulfilling administrative duties.

The Conference will provide an opportunity for teachers to see films on the less developed countries and participate in seminars to discuss the problems of particular areas. They will also be attending lectures given by various experts in the field of education who will discuss such topics as "The Challenge of Teaching in Developing Countries".

*1962 briefing conference press release excerpt*

*Dear Noble,*

On 30 August, Fred submitted a detailed summary of his conference experience, including a one-page financial statement. The 5-day conference cost Canadian tax-payers five-thousand dollars<sup>vi</sup>.

It was in this note that the "Gillespie Room Keys Incident" was mentioned.

*Do you know that it is only one family in Brittain Hall who did not turn in the room keys? (Gillespies).*

*Alfred Ramcharan to Noble Power, 30 August 1962*



This Briefing Conference has been quite a unique occasion for me. To summarise some of the outstanding things:

I became acquainted with about seventy teachers and their families from various parts of Canada, and have made many friends among them.

I worked with, and got to know, some of the staff of the External Aid Office — you, Fred Smith, Harry Hodder, Mrs. Bateman, Dr. Flemington. It was a real pleasure to know these persons.

I met the Minister of External Affairs, Hon. H. Green, and was amazed at his superb memory for people, names and things about them.

The many and varied experiences that I had every day of the conference made this week one of the memorable ones in my two years stay in Canada.

This week has been a complete vacation for me — it was the first week since I have been in this country that I did not read a book or a newspaper, nor write a letter. I had been with books and studies for two years without a break, and for this vacation I worked during the day and attended summer school at nights — this week at Macdonald College has been a restful one (from studies and books) for me. I feel so much better now and so much more prepared for the reopening of McGill in another two weeks.

In addition to all these, I gained financially as I had room and board for the week, and a sum of \$75 at the end.

I have been indeed, lucky, and fortunate, to be connected with this Briefing Conference, for I have gained immensely, all round.

Fred Ramcharan to Noble Power, 30 August 1962

3.

Another thing that I have just remembered. I gained some knowledge and experience in how to ~~run~~ operate a movie projector.

I hope that you are pleased with the conference and that everything turned out as you expected or even better. I know how much work and responsibility you have had, and I guess that you must have done months of planning and preparation for this important and intricate session.

It was a real pleasure to work with you, and I hope that I may again have the good fortune to be connected with any of such conferences in the future.

Please give my kind regards to Fred Smith, Harry Hodder, Mrs. Bateman, and Dr. Flemington.

Cheerio!

Sincerely  
Fred

Fred Ramcharan to Noble Power, 30 August 1962

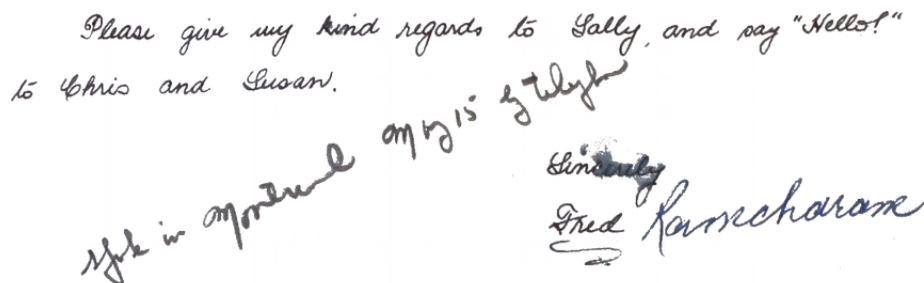
In a letter, 05 September 1962, Noble Power wrote Fred to express the EAO's official and his personal appreciation for "helping to ensure that the conference ran smoothly and according to plan." Power repeated an invitation made to Fred at the conference to visit the Power family on Aylmer Road (in Quebec, across the Ottawa River from Ottawa); Power suggested a weekend in October. Despite being Ramcharan's junior by eight years (Power was born in 1931; Ramcharan in 1923) the two of them must have hit it off over the five-day conference. Power mentioned that Fred should see Canada's capital before returning to Trinidad; in conversation at the briefing conference perhaps Fred expressed an intention to return to Trinidad after graduating from McGill, and had not yet decided to stay in Canada permanently.



## The 1963 Briefing Conference for Teachers

Did Fred Ramcharan take up Noble Power's offer to visit him and his family near Ottawa? According to their correspondence related to the 1963 briefing conference, the answer is in the affirmative.

On May 10, 1963, Power wrote to Fred at his McGill College Avenue address, asking if he'd be willing to do his usual highly satisfactory job. In particular, Power asked that Fred phone him at Professor Munroe's Macdonald College Office at 11:30 A.M. on 14 May (where Power was in discussions with Prof. Munroe about the briefing conference). However, Fred was in midst of practice teaching at Montreal high schools, and Power's letter only reached him at the end of the day on 14 May. Fred wrote back the same day that he was happy to assist again. Marginalia on Fred's letter indicate that Power managed to speak on the telephone to Fred in Montreal on 15 May. (Other marginalia continued to misspell Fred's surname as "Ramcharam".) The answer to the "Ottawa visit" question is given in Fred's last paragraph.



*Please give my kind regards to Sally, and say "Hello!"  
to Chris and Susan.*

*He is grateful my 15 telephone*

*Sincerely*  
*Fred Ramcharan*

*Fred Ramcharan to Noble Power, 14 May 1963*

Noble Power of Montreal and Long Island socialite, Sarah "Sally" Kellogg Goetchius became engaged in January 1956 while both were doing graduate work at the Sorbonne, Paris. ("Both were graduated from the School of International Affairs of Columbia University" - New York Times; 23 January 1956.) Possibly they had bilaterally negotiated to adopt an alternate meaning for "international affairs!" Christopher "Chris" Noble and his younger sister, Susannah "Susan" Morgan Noble were the couple's young children.

Power's invitation to Fred may have been to see Ottawa but Fred might have been just as rightly impressed by Aylmer Road. In October 1962, with the trees showing their fall finery, Aylmer Road was still home to the wealthy of the Ottawa Valley<sup>vii</sup>. The mansions of lumber baron and industrialist families intermingled with diplomatic residences, prosperous dairy and thoroughbred horse farms; numerous golf courses offered world-class nightclub acts at night; harness racing featured at Connaught Park.

In spring, 1963, at the mature age of thirty-nine, Fred was graduated (to use New York Times phraseology) from the Institute of Education of McGill University with a Bachelors of Education degree.

## education



**JACKSON, MARY ELLEN**  
*"Let us, then, be up and doing, with a heart for any fate."*  
 —Longfellow  
 Activities: Macdonald; Student Teachers' Executive; Cercle Francais, Valedictorian '54-'55.



**LOGIE, RILLA WARD**  
 Born July 29, 1942 in Vancouver, British Columbia. Attended High School of Montreal. Entered McGill 1960.



**McDONALD, GLENNALD, GLENNALD, GLENNALD**  
 Born Feb. 27, 1940 in Montreal, Quebec. Entered McGill 1957. Activities: Cosmopolitan Club; Fencing.



**NEEDHAM, HAROLD GEORGE**  
*"Ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt."*  
 Born June 12, 1942 in Bowmanville, Ontario. Activities: Macdonald; Class President '59-'60; Failt-Ye Times; News Editor '60-'61; Curling Club '59-'61; Major "M", Trainer '60-'61. McGill: C.O.T.-C. '59-'62; Curling Club '62-'63.



**PORTER, SUSAN GLORIA**  
 Born March 31, 1942 in Granby, Quebec. Attended Macdonald College. Entered McGill 1961. Degrees: Diploma B.Ed., P.E., Macdonald College '61. Activities: Intercollegiate Basketball, Hockey, Soccer, Tennis, Swimming.



**RAMCHARAN, ALFRED J.**  
 Born Sept. 7, 1933 in Trinidad, W.I. Attended Macdonald College. Entered McGill 1961.



**JARVIS, FREYA ADRIENNE**  
*"...for the eyes are blind, only the heart sees rightly."*  
 Born Feb. 7, 1942 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. Entered McGill 1959. Activities: Film Society; Debating Union, Intercollegiate Team; Stage Make-up for English Department, Players' Club; Red and White; McGill Outing Club.



**LOVE, MARGARET HEATHER**  
*"We attract hearts by the qualities we display: We return them by the qualities we possess."*  
 Born May 8, 1942 in Montreal, Quebec. Activities: Macdonald College; Intramural Sports, McGill; Alpha Gamma Delta Fraternity; Convocation '62; Chairman Baccalaureate Service.



**McKELVEY, LORNA PERSIS**  
*"We learn so little and forget so much."*  
 Born Aug. 13, 1941 in Masog, Quebec. Entered McGill 1961. Activities: Macdonald College; Interclass Sports; Failt-Ye Times, Associate Editor; Green and Gold Review; Class Play; Drama Club, McGill; Radio McGill.



**PARSONS, STATIA FRANCES**  
 Born Sept. 23, 1942 in Shawinigan, Quebec. Activities: Macdonald College '59-'61; Glee Club; Interfaculties Volley Ball, Basketball; Synchronized Swimming, McGill '61-'63; Choral Society; Synchronized Swimming; Modern Dancing; Combined Charities.



**PORTFORS, JOAN ELIZABETH**  
*"A minute is time for decisions and revisions that a minute will reverse."*  
 Born May 15, 1943 in Edmonton, Alberta. Activities: Macdonald; Green and Gold; Alan Macdonald; Graduation Banquet, McGill; Choral Society; Open House; Alpha Omicron Pi Fraternity.



**RICHARDSON, JOHN F.**  
*"Man's best possession is a sympathetic wife."*  
 —Euripides  
 Born Sept. 4, 1940 in New Barnet, Hertfordshire, England. Attended West Hill High School. Entered McGill 1961. Degrees: Class II Diploma, Macdonald College 1960. Activities: Open House '62; Philatelic Society '61-'62.



**KACHANOFF, WEISBORD MERRILY**  
*"The bird of time has but a little way to fly — and lo! the bird is on the wing."*  
 Born Nov. 11, 1942 in Montreal, Quebec. Attended High School for Girls. Entered McGill 1958.



**MacALLISTER, ELIZABETH LORRAINE**  
 Born April 30, 1942 in Montreal, Quebec. Attended Montreal West High School. Entered McGill 1959. Activities: Macdonald College '59-'61; Community Chest, Chairman; Winter Carnival; Green and Gold Revue; Macdonald Royal McGill '61-'63; Choral Society; Combined Charities.



**MITCHELL, SHARON RUTHE**  
*"The fear of God is the beginning of knowledge."*  
 Proverbs 1:7  
 Activities: Macdonald; I.V.C.F.; House Committee; W.A.A. Vice-president, Class Representative; Intercollegiate Volley Ball; Interclass Badminton, Hockey, Basketball, McGill; I.V.C.F.; Interclass Volley Ball.



**PEPPER, EARLAND HAROLD**  
 Born May 29, 1938 in Simcoe, Ontario. Activities: Macdonald College; Intercollegiate Football; Intercollegiate Basketball; Class President '59-'61; Macula; Intramural Sports, McGill; Redmen Basketball '61-'63; S.I.R.C. Executive; M.S.E.P.E. Executive; Intramural Sports; Phi Gamma Delta.



**PURDIE, ELLEN-ANNE**  
*"A friend in need is worth two in the bush."*  
 Born Feb. 15, 1942 in Montreal, Quebec. Attended John Rennie High School. Activities: Intercollegiate Synchronized Swimming; Intercollegiate Diving; Swimming Club President; Intramural Volley Ball; Modern Dance Club.



**RUDZITIS, MARA**  
 Born April 21, 1942 in Valmiera, Latvia. Attended Macdonald College. Entered McGill 1961. Activities: Macdonald College; Green and Gold, Publicity; Winter Carnival, Publicity; McGill; Ski School; Film Society; Franklin Society, Publicity; Gamma Phi Beta Sorority.

### "Old McGill" 1963

Fred's birth year should be 1923. These are not all Education graduates; I emailed Ms. Jarvis (top-middle; still practising law in New Jersey) seeking Ramcharan reminiscences but she was an Arts grad and didn't know why she was on the Education page! Weisbord Merrily (top-right) is a successful nonfiction author.

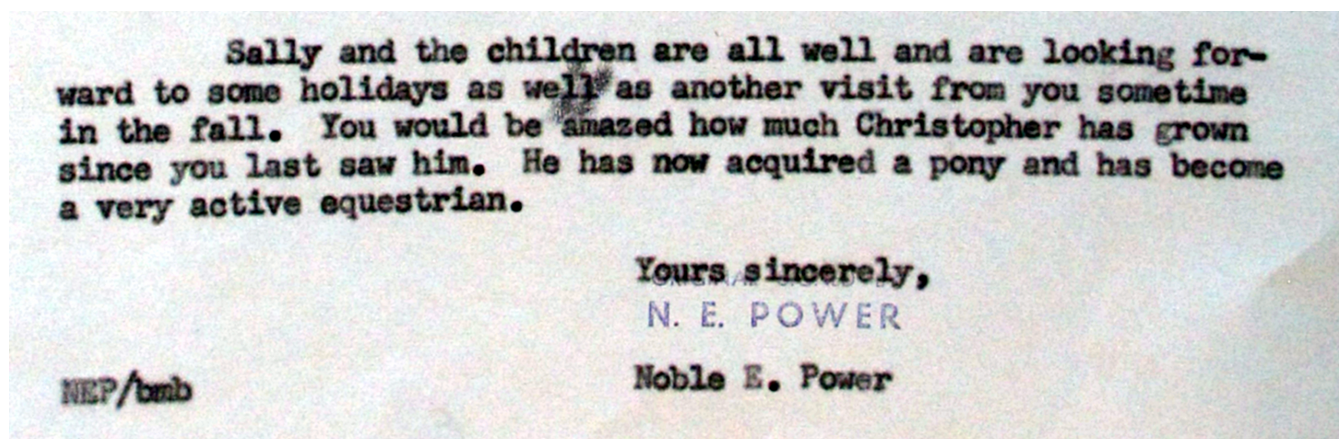
It appears that Noble Power delegated some additional responsibility to Fred for the 1963 conference. In a 10 July letter to Noble Power, Ted Wall, the student who had directed the recreational activities (childcare!) at previous briefing conferences, wrote that Fred had come to Macdonald College to recruit him for the current conference.

Fred moved at the beginning of July from McGill College Avenue to 2188 St-Luc Street<sup>viii</sup> (St-Luc Street became part of Boulevard de Maisonneuve Ouest in 1966), just steps from the old Montreal Forum.



*2188 St-Luc Street / 2188 Boulevard de Maisonneuve Ouest (Google Maps)*

Noble Power updated Fred on the preparations for the August conference in a letter on 25 July 1963. In it he extended another invitation to Fred to visit the Power family that fall.



*Noble Power, EAO, to Fred Ramcharan, 25 July 1963.*



The August Macdonald College briefing conference was another success, with Fred manning the registration desk, and helping with the administration. Eighty-five teacher-families were briefed for five days and then the EAO class of 1963 boarded planes at Dorval Airport to set out for their assignments in twenty-two developing countries of the world.

# Teachers Off To Foreign Postings

By FRED BRUEMMER

"Yours is one of the most challenging assignments that could be given to any Canadian," External Affairs Minister Paul Martin told 85 Canadian teachers yesterday. These teachers, assigned to 22 developing countries in South-East Asia, Africa and the Caribbean area, left last night for their far-flung posts. This brings to 180 the number of teachers sent abroad in the past three years by the External Aid Office, a federal agency.

"In spite of the shortcomings of our external aid program, we have some reason to be proud of the contributions we have made," Mr. Martin told the teachers at Macdonald College.

While less dramatic than many capital projects, such as dams or hydro-electric power stations, educational assistance to developing nations is at least as vital, Mr. Martin emphasized.

"The success of the whole program of capital technical assistance of the United Nations and of the various donor countries, including Canada, depends directly on the level of education of the people," Mr. Martin said.

More than half of the teachers will teach in secondary schools. The others will be assigned to teacher training colleges. Most of the Quebec teachers will serve in the French-speaking countries of Africa. The Canadian educational assistance program for these nations began in 1961.

In addition to sending teachers abroad, a program which, Mr. Martin said "I hope we will enlarge during the coming years," much of Canada's foreign aid will continue to take the form of capital project, such as power stations and other basic requirements for economic development.

Referring to a recently made announcement in the Commons, the external affairs minister said the Government would step up its wheat give-aways to reach eventually \$40,000,000 worth annually.

All reports about the first contingents of Canadian teachers sent abroad during the last two years have been most favorable, Mr. Martin said.

Mr. Martin also announced the donation of 17 cinema vans and other audio-visual equipment to eight African nations.

Eleven of these trucks, one for Morocco and 10 for Tanganyika, are already reaching their destination. The others, destined for Senegal, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Dahomey, Niger, and Congo (Brazzaville), are leaving Montreal today.

The cinema vans, which were built under the supervision of the technical operations branch of the National Film Board, are fitted with all equipment necessary to show motion pictures in almost any location.

On hand to accept one of the trucks on behalf of his country from Mr. Martin was Moustapha Allassane of Niger who is the first student to receive a scholarship under the aid program for French speaking states in Africa.



**TRAVELLING TEACHERS:** Last night 85 Canadian teachers left Montreal for destinations in 22 countries from Sarawak to Senegal. They are the third contingent of Canadian teachers sent to developing countries by the External Aid Office. Before they left Canada, External Affairs Minister Paul Martin spoke to them at Macdonald College. Talking together are, from left to right, Mr. Martin, Mrs. Allen Wells, of Welland, Ont., bound for Sierra Leone, and David Friesen, of Morden, Man., who will teach in Ghana.

*The Gazette, Thursday 29 August 1963.*

That fall, Fred secured a teaching position at a Montreal school<sup>ix</sup> and devoted himself to it; he took night classes<sup>x</sup>; his parents<sup>xi</sup> visited him from Trinidad for six weeks, adding their entertainment to his other responsibilities. So busy was he that Noble Power had to write him on 25 November, reminding him to send in the accounts for the summer briefing conference. Fred responded on 01 December, enclosing the accounts and explaining his tardiness<sup>xii</sup>.

I'm very sorry not to have sent before the receipts from Macdonald College and the statement of the expenses incurred during the Briefing Conference. Since the Conference ended, I have been so very busy with school work and routine, meetings and extra-curricular activities, and attending lectures at nights, that I seem to have very little, if any, free time for myself. Then, too, my parents were with me for six weeks and they left about two weeks ago.

*Fred Ramcharan to Noble Power, 01 December 1963.*

## The 1964 Briefing Conference for Teachers

Each year, the EAO considered moving the briefing conference back to Ottawa (last held there in 1960). The convenience of hosting it in the same city as the EAO offices<sup>xiii</sup> was alluring because speakers and briefing officers were readily available but the Macdonald College venue carried a certain amount of administrative inertia in its favour. The college staff knew how the conference ran; Fred Ramcharan and Ted Hall (who ran the childcare program) were in Montreal; and Dorval International Airport was close by.

In the event, the decision was made for the EAO. Both Carleton University (in Ottawa) and Macdonald College were already booked by other groups for the preferred briefing conference dates (25-28 August), but Macdonald College was available Saturday 29 August to Tuesday 01 September.

By 22 May 1964, Noble Power had written to Fred, inviting him to fill his usual administrative role at the conference. Fred, however, had made tentative plans to visit Trinidad during the summer, and replied to Power (02 June 1964) that he was uncertain of his availability. In his next letter to Fred (05 June 1964), Noble wrote that a new addition to the Power family was imminent<sup>xiv</sup>. On 29 June, Fred wrote to Noble that he had decided not to visit Trinidad that summer, and was available after all. Power replied that he was delighted to have Fred back again (07 July 1964).

By the time Power wrote to Fred on 24 August, the final administrative arrangements had been put in place. The EAO would be paying all teacher expenses directly so the cumbersome need to collect money from each teacher-family was done away with. Presumably the need for a financial statement from Fred was also obviated.

The 1964 conference enjoyed good media coverage<sup>xv</sup>. The CBC filmed the teacher registration; perhaps Fred was captured on film at his registration desk. Noble Power was interviewed by CJAD (AM-800 radio). Even my father-in-law, James Gillespie, author of the 1962 room keys episode, just returned to Canada after two years in Kenya, and asked to brief teachers at the 1964 conference, was interviewed for local Montreal radio.

And that is where their paths diverge...

## ...Afterword

### **Fred Joseph (Kalkapersad) Ramcharan**

In the fall of 1964, just turning 41 years old, Fred Ramcharan joined the mathematics department at Malcolm Campbell High School of the Montreal Protestant School Board.

Fred's brief EAO career was ended. His name does not appear on EAO distribution lists of planning documents for the 1965 briefing conference for teachers. Perhaps he made a trip back to Trinidad that summer? Perhaps he no longer needed the money the one-week gig paid? Perhaps he decided the job should go to a cash-strapped young student?

His students nicknamed him "Freddie the Whip"<sup>xvi</sup>, maths wizard and teacher par excellence. Posts by former students on Jaan Pill's [preservedstories.com](http://preservedstories.com) website testify to Fred's quality and commitment.

There are but a few more details of Fred's life in the public record. When St-Luc Street was gobbled up by Boul. Maisonneuve West in 1966 his address became 2188 Boul. Maisonneuve West<sup>xvii</sup>. For 1973-74 Lovell's Directory placed him at 2254 Noel (St. Laurent), where he stayed until 1980. When Fred moved to 2254 Noel, a Mr. Ken C Ramcharan<sup>xviii</sup> moved into Fred's old place at 2188 Maisonneuve (from close by at 1186 St. Matthew). It's hard to believe Mr. Ken Ramcharan was not a relative of Fred's. I lose track of Fred's address after 1979<sup>xix</sup>.

When Malcolm Campbell High School was closed after the 1986-87 school year, Fred joined the staff at Sir Winston Churchill High School but died of a heart attack at age 64, in March 1988<sup>xx</sup>.



### **Noble Edward Charles Power**

Noble Power continued his career in international development and the diplomatic corps. “He was Canadian High Commissioner to Ghana and Ambassador to Togo and Benin (1971-1974) and High Commissioner to Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean (1983-1987). He served as Vice-President of CIDA from 1977 to 1983, and again from 1987 to 1991, when he was also Assistant Deputy Minister. Following his retirement to Barbados in 1991, he lectured at Oxford on the subject of foreign aid.”<sup>xxi</sup>

Mr. Power died 16 October 2002.

### **Jim Gillespie, Mrs. Wife, ...and Me**

The Gillespies pass through Fred’s EAO story on their way to Africa in 1962 and on their return in 1964. Jim Gillespie was a transplanted Scotsman, who found love in Canada while doing World War Two flight training in London, Ontario. In the 1950s he settled the family in Ottawa, teaching at University of Ottawa High School, where he taught the likes of Paul Martin Jr. And Alex Trebek. Wanting to get away from the “rat race”, he volunteered for an EAO assignment in 1962 and took his wife and five children off to Kenya for two years. It is Mr. Gillespie’s Kenya Journal that is the backbone of my research. On returning from Kenya, Mr. Gillespie taught in and was principal of various Ottawa high schools. He returned to Africa several times with the Canadian Teachers Federation, CUSO and WUSC. Jim died 12 January 2011.

Mrs. Wife, Anne, youngest of the Gillespie children didn’t make up her mind finally to marry me until I returned from a months long 1985 rugby tour to Kenya in one piece and smelling of that country’s red murram soil (and Tusker beer). Her love of Africa took her back there to teach and to build houses with Habitat for Humanity. Anne taught in and was principal of various Ottawa high schools. She died 10 May 2013.

Me! I was a software developer at the Bank of Canada for 30 years (less a day, for good behaviour). I worked with economists... people who’d stare off into space until they had an econometric vision; they would then invite me to come and sit with them, both of us staring into their space until I had the same vision they did; then I’d go back to my office and stare into my own space until I had a vision of how to turn their vision into software. Before that I was at Queen’s University (for beer drinking), Carleton University (for math and logic), and Algonquin College (for computer science & a job!).

## More Exciting Ramcharans!

During research for these notes, your humble scribe learned of the unlikely union of two interesting characters, Fred's older sister, Pearl Ramcharan Crowley, and American anthropologist Daniel J. Crowley. Rather than try to summarize their story (the topic for another lengthy note?) I will simply present excerpts from their obituaries.

### **Pearl Ramcharan Crowley<sup>xxii</sup>**

Pearl Ramcharan Crowley, who passed away at age 95 on December 29, 2016, was an early childhood educator, intrepid world traveler, fledgling anthropologist, selfless wife, mother and grandmother, and natural champion of women's rights, access for the physically challenged, and ethnic and racial equality.

Pearl was born in 1921 in Balmain, Trinidad. She helped her parents, Rose Bhagmania Teelucksingh and Joseph Motilal Ramcharan, raise and educate her seven younger siblings. Pearl attended Naparima Teaching College and then studied Early Childhood Education at Toronto Normal School Teacher's College in Canada before completing a Bachelors of Education on an Honorary Scholarship from National College of Education in Evanston, Illinois in 1948 (from which she subsequently received a Distinguished Alumna Award). She returned to Trinidad where she helped to found one of the island's first kindergartens, Naparima Girl's Preparatory School in San Fernando, and eventually served as its Principal.

In 1955, she met anthropologist and art historian, Daniel John Crowley (confined to a wheelchair since contracting polio as a Naval officer during WWII), while he was writing his doctoral dissertation in Trinidad. Despite their differences in culture (she was a teetotaling, Trinidadian East Indian Presbyterian and he was a rum- and calypso-loving, Irish-Alsatian American Catholic), they were married on 4 February 1958 in Roxborough, Grenada. She turned down an offer to attend Stanford University's PhD program in anthropology to settle with their 3 children in Davis, California, where Dan was a professor at the University of California, Davis. She spent the next 30 years feeding, packing and transporting the family to over 100 countries while continuing to publish scholarly articles.

Pearl was a trailblazer. Among her many adventures, while 7 months pregnant in 1960, and with an infant son and disabled husband in tow, she fled the Belgian Congo as civil war erupted to search for a hospital where she could deliver her bi-racial daughter in apartheid-controlled Southern Africa. During the height of the Cold War, she drove the family in a camper van 13,000 miles from London to Moscow and Tbilisi to Barcelona across the iron curtain and back.

She visited every continent and actively engaged with many cultures at a time when dark skinned women were not openly welcome. She never saw the limits in herself or others and never liked to see others treated unfairly or have limitations placed on them because of physical ability, social status, race or gender. She will be fondly remembered for her resilience, impish sense of humor, stubbornness (particularly while defending the underdog), and levelheadedness during crises.

## **Daniel J. Crowley<sup>xxiii</sup>**

Daniel J. Crowley, an anthropologist who loved parties so much that he devoted his life to attending carnivals, festivals and other folk celebrations in every corner of the globe, died on Feb. 24 [1998] while in Oruro, Bolivia, for a Mardi Gras carnival.

He was 76 and had been professor of anthropology and art history at the University of California at Davis.

For someone who used a wheelchair, Dr. Crowley got around. A man who circled the globe nine times in various directions, he claimed to have visited 295 of the 311 political and geographic entities listed by Travelers' Century Club, including every state in the union and every nation except Iraq, generally finding a party at each stop.

The trips earned him recognition in the Guinness Book of World Records as "the most traveled disabled person," but the quest for records was not his motivating force.

"Overcompensation," Dr. Crowley once explained. "I fly everywhere because I can't walk."

For Dr. Crowley, a Northwestern University graduate who was paralyzed after contracting polio in the Navy in World War II, and who used the G.I. Bill to get a master's degree in art history from Bradley University and a doctorate in anthropology from Northwestern, there was another reason: he was born in Peoria, Ill.

As the product of what he considered a painfully conventional family in a drab, hidebound community, he defined his entire career as escape from Peoria and cheerfully rubbed it in every December with what his family called his "notorious Christmas letter."

Sent to hundreds of friends, including those who had derided his boyhood dreams of life beyond Peoria, the letter detailed his previous year of travel stop by exotic stop with frequent references to his exotic wife, Pearl Ramcharan, a sixth-generation Trinidadian of pure Indian extraction.

By the time he joined the Davis faculty in 1960, Dr. Crowley had fathered a son in London and a daughter in Tanzania and spent a year living in the Belgian Congo, now the Democratic Republic of Congo, while making frequent side trips throughout Africa.

As a scholar, his specialty was the arts and culture of Africa and African outposts in the New World, with an emphasis on Mardi Gras and other eruptions of annual excess in the Caribbean and South America.

Dr. Crowley, who helped develop the field of African studies and won numerous honors for his work, had only limited use of his arms. He typed with one finger in turning out more than 350 papers and several books, including "Creativity in Bahamian Folklore." But his real forte was the field trip.

Once he got to the Davis campus he rarely stayed put. Over the years he wangled temporary teaching assignments at a dozen other colleges, including posts in Trinidad, Australia and India, and was forever flying off to join one folk celebration or another, in the interest of scholarship, of course.

Needing someone to push him around, Dr. Crowley, who wore out more than a dozen wheelchairs supplied by the Veterans Administration, hit upon an ingenious scheme to attract assistants. For more

than 20 years, he ran a program for the University of California at Berkeley under University Research Expedition Projects, or high-spirited trips to blowouts around the world.

It was a tribute to his dedication that he once attended carnival in Iceland. The special beer helped, but the scholar who spent much of his time surrounded by writhing naked and near naked bodies in warmer climes had trouble relating to revelers in parkas.

For all his disability, Dr. Crowley managed to take notes in a laborious scrawl and never had trouble lifting a glass. A man who relished good food and good drink of virtually every extant cuisine, he was forever inventing exotic new cocktails.

And for all his travels, his Davis neighbors knew when he was home: there would be a party at the Crowley house.

Because of his disability, Dr. Crowley preferred a second-floor window or balcony at festival time, partly because of his experiences at ground level revelry.

"When they come at you in Rio de Janerio after snorting amyl nitrite and drinking quantities of liquor," he once said, "you'd better get out of the way. They have left footprints on my forehead."

Dr. Crowley once predicted that his obituary would say, "He died as he lived: crushed by 50,000 Brazilians doing the samba." Alas. His family said he had died peacefully of a heart attack in his sleep in a hotel room on Mardi Gras morning.

Note: Anyone interested in pursuing further research into the life of Fred Ramcharan should please note that in the University of California, Davis, Special Collections, are the Daniel J. Crowley Papers<sup>xxiv</sup>. In Box 85, folder 17 is entitled, "Alfred Ramcharan". A nice winter trip to California, treasure hunting among the archives of one of America's great universities – that sounds enticing!

- i Order-in-Council 1960-1476, 28 October 1960. The External Aid Office was created by the Diefenbaker Conservative government. On 29 May 1968, Pierre Trudeau announced the Liberal government was renaming the EAO the Canadian International Development Agency.
- ii **David Munroe**. M.A. in Economics from McGill, 1930, under Stephen Leacock!
- iii Secretary of Education at Macdonald College, **C. Wayne Hall** was part of the 1960 teacher group assigned to developing countries. He was at the Teachers' College at Lagos, Nigeria.
- iv Mr. Power was fortunate during his early international development career to fall in with colleagues **Harry Hodder**, a future vice-president of CIDA Policy Branch, and **Ross Flemington**, past president of Mount Allison University and chief Protestant Chaplain with the Canadian Army overseas from 1942 to 1945.
- v The discrepancies in the locals, '565' in Fred's 1962 letter versus '321' in the La Presse advert of 1980, might be due to phone system changes over the years. (Or perhaps Fred didn't work in the stamp shop after all!)
- vi From the 1961 financial statement, we see that Fred was given a raise of five dollars, earning thirty dollars instead of twenty-five. In 1962 and 1963, Fred's assistance was worth seventy-five dollars to the EAO, more than the fifty-dollars paid to the doctor on-call for the 1963 conference!
- vii Aylmer Road, domain of rural gentry, was doomed to be urbanized. Real estate developers had purchased large land parcels and it wasn't long before housing developments started appearing, giving a more urban ethos to the sector. Car traffic jammed the road. The sophisticated nightclubs started booking rock n roll acts, catering to a younger demographic.

viii



*St-Luc Street. From a 1950 Shell Montreal road map.  
David Rumsey Historical Map Collection.*

- ix Lovell's Directory; 1963; Page 1098. The directory lists "Ramcharan A tchr Mtl Protestant School Board h 2188 St Luke".
- x Night School. Further research required. If the Quebec teaching profession resembled its Ontario counterpart (with which I am familiar), Fred may have been taking night school to earn specialist qualifications to develop professional knowledge and teaching practice in a particular subject – mathematics in Fred's case.
- xi Father: **Joseph Motilal Ramcharan**;  
Birth: March 31, 1898 — Princes Town, Victoria, Trinidad and Tobago;  
Death: December 10, 1970 — San Fernando, Victoria, Trinidad and Tobago.  
Mother: **Rose Bhagmanian Teelucksingh**;  
Birth: July 23, 1902 — California, Couva, Trinidad and Tobago;  
Death: May 31, 1967 — San Fernando, Victoria, Trinidad and Tobago.  
Source: [Ramcharan-Crowley genealogy website](#).
- xii Did Fred's busy life prevent him from visiting the Power family on Aylmer Road during the fall of 1963?
- xiii 75 Albert Street; the Fuller Building; "Ottawa's first completely air-conditioned office building";
- xiv Alexandra Kay Power, born 15 June 1964, in Ottawa.
- xv EAO file 36-8-3; EAO internal memorandum; Ross Willmot to H.O. Moran; 03 September 1964; "Publicity on Teachers Briefing Conference."
- xvi One MCHS student hypothesizes his nickname came from the whip-like sound his sharply creased pants made as he prowled the school corridors.
- xvii Montreal 25 – who remembers the old postal zones?
- xviii A brother?... see [the full obituary for Pearl Ramcharan Crowley](#).



*Fred's Mom & Dad.*

- xix Lovell's Directory changed its format in 1978-79, sorting its listings by address rather than by surname as had been its practice previously. Fred was at 2254 Noel for 1978-79 but not for 1980.
- xx Reported by a former student on the preservedstories website. Fred Ramcharan is buried in Mount Royal Cemetery, 1297, chemin de la Foret, Outremont , Montreal, Montreal Region, Quebec, H2V 2P9 Canada. ([findagrave.com](http://findagrave.com))
- xxi Obituary; The Globe and Mail; 19 October 2002.
- xxii Published in The Sacramento Bee on Jan. 8, 2017.
- xxiii By ROBERT MCG. THOMAS JR. MARCH 5, 1998; published in the New York Times.
- xxiv [Full Inventory of the Daniel J. Crowley Papers](#)