



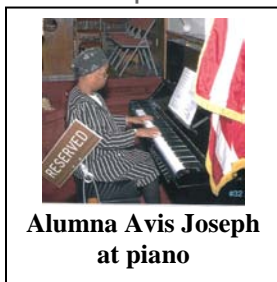
McKenzie High School and Christ Church School . Messages of support and encouragement were read from the various groups.



**NY Tri-state Commemorative Choir**

The President of the Borough of Brooklyn, Marty Markowitz, issued a proclamation to mark the occasion. Reverend Peter Bramble, Rector of St. Mark 's Church, led us in worship and was very insightful in his comments regarding the traditions of BHS. He exhorted alumni to continue to stay true to these traditions which have served us well. He also congratulated members of the alumni on their contributions to the community.

As we kept time to the joyous rhythms of



**Alumna Avis Joseph at piano**

the Calypso Lord's Prayer and sang the familiar school hymns, a wave of emotion took the assembly back to the past and forward to the future.

This movement in time was clearly and vigorously enunciated in the moving and inspirational address of our founding member and Past President, Mrs. Paula Hazelwood. She described the alumni as planters of seeds. In this way she effectively showed how they could continue in their efforts, reaching out and

flourishing, not only as alumni, but as citizens in a collaborative world community bringing about meaningful change. She heartily congratulated the alumni on what they had achieved, impressing upon them the awesome power of education.

After the service there was a gathering of a different kind. Here the green and red of the decor, the tempting pastry, the abundance of fruit, the



**Camaraderie after the service**

easy camaraderie, allowed our senses a taste of that glorious past. This event marked a wonderful milestone in the growth of the New York Tri-State Chapter. Everyone was moved in a different way, but the consensus was that the occasion inspired a strong feeling of community spirit, a sense of fulfillment at what had been achieved over the years, and a renewed enthusiasm to live our motto: " Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." ☺

*At Sea*  
**By Patricia Green**

How Glorious!  
How awesome!  
How wonderful!

To see the rising of the sun  
    over the placid Pacific ocean,  
The rippling of the waves,  
    The dotting of the clouds,  
    And the refreshing breeze on my face.  
Thank God for life.  
Thank God for health.



Thank God for the beauty of His world. ☺

### *BHS supports St. Mark's Food Pantry* **by Anzie Fraser**

When our President Ms. Gillian Sue asked us to identify recipients for charitable contributions from the chapter, I wasted no time in naming The St Mark's Pantry as a worthy recipient. The gesture came at the right time, since it was on the previous Sunday that an appeal was made for increased support for the pantry.

The pantry has been in operation for more than five years. It receives funding from The United Way, The Food Bank, The City of New York and the parishioners of the Church of St. Mark. In 2009, the pantry distributed more than 7,000 bags of food, but in recent times, the need for food has increased as more and more clients line up for help each Monday.



**Our President Gillian Sue & Fr. Hinds at Pantry**

It was decided that we would collect a different item each month. In March, we collected more than 100 pounds of pasta, in April a similar quantity of peas and beans and in May several dozen cans of evaporated milk. For the month of June, the food item is canned meat and fish. The items are brought to the meeting and

when necessary will be transported to the Church.

At the May meeting, Fr. Denzil Hinds, the Executive Director, dropped by. He conducted a brief tour of the pantry and expressed deep gratitude for our contributions. We suggested that he should let us know where the greatest need is, as this would help us in our decision making.



**Alumni present pantry donations to Fr. Hinds**

Our response to this ministry has been significant and as I write this I am reminded of the address delivered on our 10th Anniversary by the Rev Hyacinth Grannum, when she asked us to consider what is in our hands, and more recently at our 30th Anniversary by our founding President Paula Hazelwood who urged us to work collaboratively to bring about meaningful change in our community.

In both addresses we were asked to reflect on the opportunities provided by our alma mater and to consider what our response should be, as we live out our motto "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." ☺

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*My experience*  
**By Gillian Sue**

I recently experienced a very sad time in my family's life, the cremation of a very close family member. I was discussing this event with a dear friend of mine who suggested that I write this article because she felt that my description was very informative and should be shared with other people.

I had never seen a cremation in all my days of growing up in Georgetown Guyana, but I did know of its existence, and in the Guyanese cultural setting it was a practice usually performed by the Hindu religion. The word cremation comes from the Latin word *Crema* which means to burn, particularly the burning of the dead. Cremation generally involves an application of intense heat to a wooden box or casket which contains a dead body. It is believed that cremations were invented during the Stone Age and first used in Europe and the Near East. It was not traditionally approved by the Christian religions in the past because of the thought that it was associated with paganism.

During the years this has certainly changed and in Guyana it has become increasingly popular with Christian religions because of finances, and concerns with the safety and vandalism in the cemeteries.

I was filled with much trepidation because of the old wives' tales and horror stories which were associated with this activity, but was assured that everything would be fine.

There is no crematorium in Guyana and cremations are usually performed in a cremation ground set aside for this

activity. There are two main cremation areas on the East Coast of Demerara and one on the West Coast of Demerara.

These grounds are maintained by Hindu organizations. One has to contact the organization which controls this ground to make all arrangements. I was told that when the arrangements are made it must be immediately communicated that it is a Christian as opposed to a Hindu cremation. This information is necessary because the way in which the pyre is built is different. The elders and organizers are very helpful and guide you through this process in a very dignified manner and advise as to how the lining of the coffin should be made as well as little hints which we would never have thought of. Of course there is the traditional gift of high wine or some form of alcohol to the principal pyre builders.

What is the pyre? This is the "heap" of combustible material which is used for burning the dead body.

The pyre is built by these experienced elders, who are very humble people but who seem to use a scientific formula for building the structure which is erected on a flat concrete stage. A particular type of fire wood is used as well as dried coconut shells which we were told enable the maintenance of the heat. The structure is built in such a way that the heat does not cause collapse of the structure until the whole coffin and body are consumed and disappears.

Other important elements are the use of Ghee to maintain combustion (this is spread over areas of the pyre) and Camphor which is used as incense.

Family members then lift the body supported in a cotton lining out of the coffin and rest it on top of the pyre. The



family is then asked to light the pyre beginning with an eldest son or eldest child. This is done by lighting a stick covered with cotton which was covered with ghee at its end. The elders gently guide you through this process speaking quietly and are very respectful in their demeanor while reassuring you that it is important for family members to participate for the process to be spiritual. This to me was extremely reassuring and enabled one to deal with what was happening. Gone were the myths of morbidity- just a sad dignified rite of passage. The coffin which is usually made of wood is gently positioned over the body helping to provide cover and maintain dignity.

The family is then guided to a covered viewing area which is situated at the side of the platform and can choose to remain until there is no evidence of the body. This process actually takes approximately one hour and during this the elders remain quiet allowing the family to grieve. One of the observations that I made was that there was no movement of ash by the wind and this I surmise was because of the scientific manner in which this process was done

The family is advised before leaving to return on the following morning and to bring cotton and an urn or vials for the ashes if required.

On returning the following day at the appointed time, one was able to observe that even though the fire was out the ash was still hot and there was the observation that the ashes from the body appeared different from the other ashes. Once again the elders advised quietly in the usual dignified manner what should be done in the gathering of the ashes and advised that family should do it and ensure that all

ashes were picked up to prevent division of the body because this was not good spiritually. Advice was also given as to how the ashes could be spread over the water as planned. Their last piece of advice was to send a coin along to ensure that the person did not go empty handed. There were also several quiet teaching aspects to this part of the process, including descriptions of different types of ash and the significance.

My trepidation had long evaporated and was replaced with extreme awe for this religious tradition steeped in Hindu culture which was converted to allow people of Christian faith to embrace it and feel comfortable about using this funeral rite. The last observation that I made before leaving that ground was that there was another pyre built in preparation for another cremation. This pyre was placed at right angles to ours because it was for someone of Hindu religion and so the body was positioned in a different direction.

Of course because I have an inquiring mind I asked why in this age of technology traditional pyres were still being used rather than ovens and why a crematorium had not been built. I was told that feasibility studies were done and the people of the Hindu faith who were still the principal users of this funeral rite felt that this tradition must remain as it was originally because it was important to maintain the culture. I thought about it and I totally agree. ☺

### **Alumni, Please Join Us**

Tri-state Chapter Alumni meet the  
Third Saturday each month  
**at 5:00pm**

See venues at:

<http://www.hsenytristate.org/calendar.cfm>



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