Obituary

Emanuel Jesus Faria (Editor, The Star): 1912–2004

Emanuel Faria was born in British Guiana on Christmas Day, 1912. His mother, originally from Portugal, clearly hoped for great things for her son on whom she had bestowed such a powerful name—Emanuel Jesus. However, like so many others whose dreams have been cut short by a diagnosis of leprosy, Emanuel’s life was to take turns that no one could have foreseen.

In 1927, at the age of 15, Emanuel was admitted to the Mahaica Leprosy Hospital outside of Georgetown, British Guiana, and spent the next 5 years of his life there. After being treated with a compound of chaulmoogra oil and creosote, he was discharged and returned home to work in his father’s business. However, after a period of years, he returned to Mahaica due to increasing problems with his hands.

In 1968, Emanuel felt the need to leave what was then Guyana for political reasons and also hoped to have reconstructive surgery at Carville, where he arrived that same year. He already knew about The Star from correspondence with Stanley Stein and in 1969 started to work as a proofreader. He would later say: ‘My philosophy of life is that we all have to contribute to the pool of good. We cannot expect others to contribute while we just go and draw from it and don’t put anything into it. When I was given the opportunity to work at The Star, I felt I was contributing something.’

At Carville, Emanuel had the opportunity to meet recognized authorities in the field of leprosy from different countries and developed the feeling that The Star, which had previously focused largely on social and human rights issues, needed to have a medical component. He undoubtedly also saw this as a way in which to increase the readership of The Star which, by 1990, was sent to more than 120 countries throughout the world.

Adding a medical component to The Star also enabled Emanuel to fulfill, in a small way, a part of his life that had been taken from him. He would later say: ‘If I didn’t come down with this disease, I would be in England. I believe I would have studied medicine. I would have tried to win the Guyana Scholarship and either gone to Oxford or Cambridge.’

Emanuel served on the Board of Directors of American Leprosy Missions for three terms, a total of 9 years. He became the Editor of The Star in the mid-1990s and worked diligently to keep it alive through periods of major uncertainty, change and the ultimate decline in the population of Carville. Yet, despite uncertainties about his own future that weighed heavily on his mind in his final years, Emanuel always put The Star first. Indeed, this man of extreme intelligence who read ancient Greek history and poetry by Percy Bysshe Shelley in his spare time, knew that the voice of The STAR and what it represents to so many individuals throughout the world, must continue.

News of his death on March 17, 2004, brought many tributes, including one from Miyoji
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Morimoto in Japan: ‘His consistent appeal for the actualization of a society without discrimination and prejudice against persons who have been affected by Hansen’s Disease and the restoration of their dignity, has reached out to the world. His teaching will abide. May his soul rest in peace.’

Anwei Skinsnes Law
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