



North Pacific Surgical Association Presidential Address 2017- From Cayman to Vancouver: One surgeon's journey

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 23 November 2017
Received in revised form
31 December 2017
Accepted 2 January 2018

Keywords:

Cayman
Vancouver
Surgeon
Education
Career

ABSTRACT

This is the Presidential Address at the 104th Annual Meeting of the North Pacific Surgical Association held in Vancouver, BC, Canada, November 10–11, 2017.

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Neely Pantan.

1. Introduction

Professor Alberto Ferreres, Members and Guests of the North Pacific Surgical Association (NPSA), it has been an Honor and Pleasure to serve as President of this prestigious Association for the past year.

2. Family and education

I was born on Grand Cayman in the Cayman Islands, my Parents

Naomi (nee Bodden) and Ormond Pantan had seven children (Fig. 1 L-R Karen, Heather, Dwight, Ormond, Naomi holding Kennedy, Neely, Gilda and Luceine). My ancestry in these islands dates back to the 1600's. In the 1950's when I was a child the population was about 6800 on the three islands and is just over 61,000 in 2017. The Cayman Islands were dubbed as "The Islands that Time Forgot" by John Maloney's article in the Saturday Evening Post, 1950.¹

The families that originally inhabited the Cayman Islands were tough, resilient and industrious. Up until the early 1900's resources were scarce, environmental conditions were challenging, health and education services were lacking and the people had to establish trade links with Caribbean islands, North and Central America. Staples were imported by sea and a major export was hand woven thatch rope. Fig. 2 shows downtown George Town in the 1940's and Fig. 3 is an aerial view of the modern city.

The early Caymanians were Master Mariners and over 300 schooners and ships were built on the islands. Fig. 4 shows Caymanian seamen on the deck of a schooner, Fig. 5 is launching of the schooner *Wemby* in 1920 owned by my Great Grandfather Albert Pantan and Fig. 6 is regatta day in George Town in the early 1900's. The three Islands remained sparsely populated and underdeveloped until the early 1960's. US shipping giant National Bulk Carriers employed hundreds of Caymanian seamen providing a major source of revenue for supporting their families and contributing to the development of the country.

The Cayman financial services were introduced in the 1960's. The Government at the time structured a financial regulatory

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Fig. 1. Panton family.

system that enabled the British Crown Colony to realize enormous economic development and diversification outpacing many other Caribbean islands. Caymanians enjoyed the highest per capita wealth in the Caribbean and were on par with the prosperity of Britain. Between 1060–1890 the Cayman Islands went from being one of the least developed, both legally and economically, jurisdictions in a poorly developed region to being one of the most developed in gross domestic product per capita terms.²

My Great Great Grandfather, James C. Panton came to the Cayman Islands in 1857 as a teacher and missionary with the Presbyterian Church. I attended primary school at the Prep School which was established by the Presbyterian Church in 1949. I

received a scholarship to attend the Cayman Islands High School graduating in 1960. After two years of advanced level studies I went to the University of the West Indies (Mona, Jamaica) in 1971 spending a year in the Faculty of Sciences entering Medical School in 1972 and finishing in 1977. Four of my five years of medical school were funded by a Canadian Government Scholarship. I did my internship and a year as Senior House Officer at the University Hospital of the West Indies. I was accepted into the University of British Columbia General surgery Residency Program in 1979 completing my training in 1984. My first year of Residency Training was funded by a World Health Organization Fellowship.



Fig. 2. Old George Town.

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