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Celebrating 110 years

A Brief History of the TTAA

The TTAA was founded in 1911 by a small group of motoring enthusiasts who saw the lack of suitable roads and legislation to control the now budding motor vehicle industry in Trinidad.

The then Colonial Government recognized the need to collaborate with the organization formerly known as TAA (Trinidad Automobile Association), an organization promoting responsible drivers, and sought their representation on the Transportation Board. As part of the Colony of Great Britain, the TAA was accepted as a member in both the RAC (Royal Automobile Club) and the AA (Automobile Association of Great Britain).

Even with a mere 400 members and a meager bank account, the TAA utilized this - with government's approval - to make necessary

improvements to the driving landscape of the country. Such initiatives were; rounding off dangerous corners, signposting and directives which were of international standards. Schools' signs and now familiar major road signs were among these erected. In 1937, the TAA offered to purchase traffic-lights for the corner of Edward and Duke Streets. This however, was rejected by the City Council who stated that they could not afford the upkeep. It was not until 1952 that the TAA installed the first locally produced traffic-lights at the junction of Maraval Road and French Street. This was the first of many that spread throughout the country, an amenity that we could not do without today.

In 1948, a fire destroyed most of the TAA's records. Pictured here are a few of the surviving documents.

From its inception, the TAA conducted examinations for learner drivers. Examiners were appointed by the TAA throughout the country. However, 1948 saw the growth in the

number of examinations and the decision was made to transition this responsibility to the government of the country. It took a decade to transfer these responsibilities, and in 1958, the role was taken over by the Licensing Office.

The international bodies that the TAA was invited to be a part of may be a long list of motoring who's who.

In 1933, the TAA became an active member in the world body of motoring organizations, AIT (Alliance Internationale de Tourisme). When the AIT was regionalized, Trinidad moved into Region 111 with the Bahamas, Barbados, Canada, Jamaica, and the USA. TAA members were now entitled to the visitor facilities in clubs around the world.

In 1953, the TAA applied for, and was granted, the authority for the control of motor sports in T&T. This was granted by the RAC on behalf of the world body, the FIA (Federation Internationale de l'Automobile). However, in 1976, the TAA wrote to the RAC relinquishing its control of Motor Sports in T&T which led to the creation of TTASA (Trinidad and Tobago Automobile Sport Authority).

Original drivers license issued by the TAA



Letters of association with the Royal Automobile Club and Automobile Association of Great Britain

In 1969, the TAA was invited to join the FITAC (Federation Inter-American de Touring y Automovil-Clubes), the regional group of motor clubs in the Americas. This initiative has drawn us closer to our Latin American neighbors. Today, the TTAA is firmly associated with the FIA (Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile), formerly known as FITAC. Whenever you see the TTAA logo, you are guaranteed to see the FIA seal.

Among some of the prestigious awards the TTAA has received in its lifetime was the Public Service Medal of Merit, Class 1 - Gold, presented to the organization by the then President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Sir Ellis Clark, on Independence Day, August 31, 1982. Sir Ellis Clark was also the Patron of the TAA during his time as President.

As the TTAA 'drives' smoothly and safely into 2021, it will be carrying with it a history of 110 years. As one of the oldest automobile associations in the world, this brief history merely scratches the surface of the work that the TTAA has accomplished since its inception. We look forward to another century of service, and the implementation of ideas and solutions that will benefit the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

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Gold for the TTAA

For Outstanding Public Service

The TTAA has long prided itself on providing excellent service to its members. They have ensured that only the benchmark vendors, superior products, stellar services and quality knowledge is available to all and sundry.

It is this commitment to client and country that one would label as honourable, and, for this unending pledge to keep the nations roadways safe, the organization was awarded the very prestigious Public Service Gold Medal of Merit in 1982. This award has been granted to persons or organizations who have shown outstanding and meritorious service. The TTAA has been the only Automobile Association to do so to date. Presented by Sir Ellis Clarke, first president of Trinidad and Tobago to Mr. Lance Oswald Warner and Mr. Cecil Dolly who collected the award, the TTAA further pledged to tirelessly work with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in some of the following areas:-

1. Defensive Driving Courses
2. Working closely with relevant officials on the implementation, review and revision of traffic laws.
3. Providing the necessary framework for the issuance of international licenses
4. Review and make recommendations regarding traffic light systems and road way flow

While the above just a snapshot of some of the functions of the TTAA, one can clearly see how important the organization has been to the populous of Trinidad and Tobago. It is also no easy task for any organization to operate successfully for over 110 years. The TTAA has continued to remain, not only relevant, but a necessary entity as we as a country chart our way forward.

The TTAA providing you with the Best! Come drive with us!



The late Simeon Alexander, H.B.M., President of the TAA greets His Excellency the President, Sir Ellis Clarke, Patron of the TAA.



The Secretary, Mrs. Hilary Correia, receiving her award for 27 years' service from Her Excellency, Mrs. Clarke. Looking on are His Excellency the President, TAA President Mr. Simeon Alexander and Mrs. Alexander.



Candid moment, President Sir Ellis Clarke, Mrs. Clarke, Board Members of the TAA and Highway Patrolmen of the TAA.

Simulator Driver Training

The TAA has procured a training simulator as part of their defensive driving programme. This will be part of an initiative to better prepare young drivers for the road and to add a practical element to their defensive driving courses.

This compact, sled style frame is a professional simulator system for helping driving schools, secondary schools or organisations seeking to train novice drivers all the way through to experienced drivers.



This simulator includes:

- Triple 27 inch screens
- Real car seatbelt and handbrake (linked to the software)
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- + 50 logins to our new online Defensive Driving Course

The TAA will make an official announcement when the simulator has arrived on T&T's shores.

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In the Pursuit of Excellence



Selwyn Bunny Persad
President, elected in January 2020.

According to the Oxford Dictionary an expert is, "a person with special knowledge, skill, or training in something." With over forty years of experience in the automobile industry, Mr. Persad is one such expert.

Most Trinidadians know Mr. Persad as the owner of HiRPM (Gulf City Mall) and Space La Nouba (La Romain) for over thirty years. Some may know his affiliation with Raft-a-bout (with an eighteen-year history at the San Fernando Yacht Club) and even his role as the former convener of San Fernando Carnival. However, most people are not aware of

his extensive life as an automobile enthusiast. Here is a glimpse of that life.

As a young man, he developed a fascination of cars. This allure transformed into an aspiration to learn all technical aspects of the industry, and led him on a search for knowledge from both local and foreign motor vehicle authorities.

For over fifteen years Mr. Persad practiced as an auto mechanic, gaining first-hand experience through his company, HiSpeed Auto Supplies. He has worked in every position within the company, from crew to manager, eventually supervising and training his own team. Among his many talents in the technical application of the business, he oversees personnel operations, facility management, safety, and of course, car configuration and maintenance.

In the late 70's Mr. Persad joined TTASA (Trinidad and Tobago Automobile Sports Association), where he held membership for thirty-eight years. With the same tenacity that he applied as an auto mechanic, he expanded his knowledge and moved up the management ranks of the organisation. He spent two years as the Members' Representative, three years as an Honorary Treasurer, six years as the Vice President, and served two consecutive terms (four years) as President. After serving as president he was made a TTASA Honorary Member, an FIA Delegate of TTASA, Trustee, and finally, Chairman of the Board of Trustees.

Through his affiliation with TTASA, Mr. Persad developed his relationship with the FIA NACAM (Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile - (North America, Central America, and Mexico). Through the FIA, he has been trained and certified in various aspects of automobile sports, safety, and administration. Holding the position of FIA delegate, he earned many positions in FIA NACAM. Positions such as PRO Secretary General, Secretary General, PRO Treasurer, Delegate to all the English-Speaking Caribbean, Sport and FIA Sport Director to the English speaking Caribbean, and Director on the Board FIA Americas.

He studied at the FIA Institute, trained at the NASCAR Research and Development Centre, North Carolina, and interned at Lowe's Motor way, also in North Carolina. He was certified in track preparation, design, safety and response person administration, and car safety – helmets, roll-cage, fire suppression, etc. Never afraid to get his hands dirty, Mr. Persad is an internationally qualified Field Investigator, Race Administrator and Facility Administrator, and is responsible for the inspection of racetracks and conducting interviews with participating officials.

Certified by FIA NACAM and NASCAR as a Race Director, he presided as the Race Director of TTASA for 20 years. Among his credentials is the training he received in Geneva, Switzerland, as an International FIA Steward. This certification allows him to preside over F1 or world touring car championship races.

Among the proudest moments of his life, Mr. Persad highlighted the events of January 7, 2017, where at the FIA NACAM General Assembly, held at Mexico's F1 circuit track 'Autódromo Hermanos Rodríguez,' Mr. Persad made history when he became a recipient of the lifetime appointment of Honorary Member to the FIA NACAM. This appointment is a rare one - having only been given to a limited number of people globally.

When mentioning all of Mr. Persad's administrative responsibilities in the organisations mentioned above, one must not forget his passion as a driver. His experience behind the wheel proved that he could hang with the best of them. His competitive experience in motor racing spans various categories as a driver in drag racing, rally, circuit racing, hill climb, endurance racing and time attack.

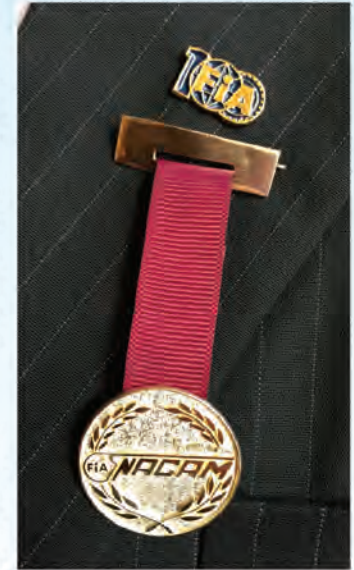
Some of his accolades in competitive intra-regional motor racing include: Champion Driver of the 1600cc class in 2004, at the Endurance Race Meeting; and in 2018 Endurance 1st place winner 1500cc category in GMR&SC in 2018, with both events held in Guyana. Presently, he is a co-driver for a competitive endurance race team in Guyana – for which he has provided crew, team-member and driver's support for teams

immersed in the endurance races.

As an event producer, he has been invited to co-ordinate and execute numerous national, international, and intra-regional racing events. He served on the organizing committee for the Motor Sports Exhibitions in 1990, 1992 and 1996, where he was responsible for creating marketing materials and soliciting the interest of car owners, team managers and sponsors. This initiative helped to build and form the current framework for local car shows. In 2002 and 2009 he was a major proponent in the planning and executions of two General Assemblies for FIA NACAM, in which over 15 regional countries were invited.

The crown jewel of his initiatives came in his personal financing, planning and co-ordination of the San Fernando Grand Prix in 2010. This event hosted one of the largest audiences in the city's history, with over 35,000 patrons in attendance, and a special guest attendee, the Prime Minister of Trinidad & Tobago.

In 2017 Mr. Persad joined the board of the TTAA (Trinidad and Tobago Automobile Association), this was in part due to



Mr Persad's lifetime appointment of Honorary Member to the FIA NACAM Medal



NACAM President Don Jose Abed presents Mr Persad with the FIA Lifetime appointment of Honorary Member

his friendship with the late Mr. Rawle Mahabir, who sadly passed away in January 2019. His interest in the TTAA was born out of his desire to learn more about the mobility aspect of the automobile industry. Mr. Persad joined the board of directors in 2017 and by January 2020 he was elected President. One of his first initiatives has been to reintroduce the TTAA to the Trinidadian and Tobagonian public.

Road safety, responding assistance, etc. are some of the initiatives highlighted under Mr. Persad's Presidency. His plans rely largely on the younger directors of the board moving the organisation into the

twenty first century, so new ideas can be developed. He spotlights the guidance of Mr. Steve Castagne, a long-standing board member who possesses a wealth of knowledge that he constantly draws from.

And this wouldn't be much of an automobile association if the Board of Directors weren't car connoisseurs themselves. When asked what his dream car was, Mr. Persad replied, "I would love to own again a 1969/70 Datsun 240z, showroom condition. I remember when I used to go Wallerfield when I was young and stand outside the gate, 6:00am in the morning, standing in the rain. I wished more than anything to be a part of what was going on inside. Years later I was fortunate to manage the facility."

Making history, Mr. Persad is the only person to have been the President of both TTASA and TTAA. Not one to settle, Mr. Persad is determined to make the TTAA an organisation that vehicle owners will feel safe and proud to be a part of.



FIA NACAM General Assembly held at Mexico's F1 circuit track Autódromo Hermanos Rodríguez

What are the TTAA Member Benefits?

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- Accident Registration services.
- Injury Benefit when involved in a motor vehicle accident.
- Discounted rates on vehicle Insurance and Homeowner's Insurance through a partnership with M&M Brokers.
- Tourist Assistance through our affiliation with other motoring clubs around the world and our membership in the international body for mobility FIA (Federation Internationale de l'Automobile).
- We are the Local Authority for granting International Driver's Permit – TT\$150.00, prepared and delivered at the TTAA Office.
- Discounts on the purchase of Valvoline Motor Oils at select locations around the country.
- Discounts on Tire Purchases through our partnership with Maxxis Tires.
- Discounts on over 1200 Automotive Products through our partnership with Lange Trinidad Limited.
- Tint Meter Service.

Additionally we are now offering discounts to existing members on their renewal fees and a special incentive for members who introduce new members to the TTAA.

For further information please feel free to contact the TTAA office at:
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Gerald Mendes
Vice President

Let me introduce to you Mr. Gerald Mendes. Currently the Vice President of the TTAA, Mr. Mendes joined the organization in 1984. He was asked to do so due to having an extensive background in telecommunications which proved quite useful to maintain timely responses by the wrecking services provided by the TTAA.

Mr. Mendez hails from St. James and attended the St. Mary's College. He further studied at Weighbridge College, England where he received his full Technological Certificate in Electronics. He is also a Board-Certified Protection Professional, certified through ASIS International, USA. Mr. Mendes masters all things electronic/electrical and as such, he has been an integral part of the modernization of the TTAA hardware, software, and communication methods.

His personal career has seen him attached to many organizations in various capacities such as: Engineer, Decca Radar Service, Surrey England; Service Manager, Leon J Ache Limited, Trinidad and Tobago; Managing Director, Security Alarms Limited, Trinidad and Tobago; Director, Borde Communications Limited, Trinidad and Tobago; Manager Electronics Division, Securicor, Trinidad and Tobago; Manager Electronics Development, Securicor International (Caribbean Division), Trinidad and Tobago; and The Owner, GCL Services Limited, Trinidad and Tobago, since 1995.

A seasoned footballer Mr. Mendes won't shy away from a match. He is also quite interested in archery and is a founding member of the Trinidad and Tobago Target Archery Federation.

When asked about his favourite brand car, Mr. Mendes responded that he believes once a car is reliable, the brand won't matter. He, however, fondly recounts memories of a cool afternoon on an open road while sitting in a friends Aston Martin and feeling quite exhilarated by the performance of that vehicle.



Mr. Richard Ramdwar
Secretary

This director has over twenty years of tenure with the TTAA. He joined the TTAA with a clear understanding that the value of the organization is incomparable.

This Fatima "old boy" has been following quite closely in his father's footsteps and chose to become an "insurance man" quite young. He attended the London School of Insurance and

is a qualified insurance broker and adjuster. Due to his involvement in marine sports, he also pursued his passions in that area, and is a licensed marine captain and engineer.

His expertise in insurance however, affords him, and TTAA members, best practice in securing quotations, coverage and claims guidance.

Mr. Ramdwar came in as an ordinary member in the TTAA and has moved through the ranks, serving in the positions of Secretary, Treasurer and Vice President. While he sits on various boards and is quite busy, he never shirks responsibility and has added yet another portfolio to his plate as he was recently appointed to the National Transportation Board. When asked how he would describe himself, he simply said - a motor enthusiast.



Rae Smith
Director

Having joined just about a year ago, this director was drawn to the TTAA because he saw the organization as having real significance in contributing to the overall safety on the nation's roadways, while enhancing the experiences of motorists.

Having attended Presentation College, Mr. Smith went on to pursue his career in sales and marketing and has been quite successful in so doing. Although he has his Master's in Information Systems and Technology Management, he has always harnessed his creative side. He pursued his interest in the arts and did his first acting course with Raymond Choo Kong. He is also a free-lance announcer/commentator and is one of the famous voices of Wallerfield. Mr. Smith does a lot of voluntary work as he strongly believes in giving back. He has served as a former director of the Red Cross and is a past president of the San Fernando Rotary Club.

While Mr. Smith is quite new and has not had the opportunity just yet to be part of any TTAA public events, he can't wait to let the rubber hit the road for the duration of his tenure.

Mr. Smith held back nothing and gushed quite early to state that his favourite car was a Jaguar and would like to one day own a Jaguar XJ220.



Mr. Maurice Valere
Director

Having joined the organization over twenty years ago, he was initially captivated by the many services the TTAA provided for regular car owners throughout the country. However, he quickly realized that these services not only helped with the mechanics and performance of the vehicle, but also assisted with the mechanics of the road and developed a great appreciation for the training and health and safety measures

he was now exposed to, having entered the proverbial fold.

Not to be fooled by his youthful appearance, Mr. Valere is one of the country's most noteworthy attorneys, having completed his education at Fatima College locally, then the University of Boxhill, England and University College of Whales, Aberystwyth.

It was his legal mind which singled him out, and he was asked to move from an ordinary member to a serving director with the view of bringing new perspectives and insights to the running of the organization.

Mr. Valere hopes to see the organization grow leaps and bounds and develop more of a digital and social media presence to make services readily available to an ever-growing membership.



Brij Maharaj
Director

With an eye for detail, this director of the TTAA is a humble man. He gained his education at San Fernando Government Secondary School and attended other technical institutions where he gained his certification.

While Mr. Maharaj previously worked for companies such as TEXACO, his passion and love for automobiles led him to pursue, develop, and eventually establish 'The Brij Maharaj Automobile Museum', the first and only of its kind in Trinidad and Tobago. Visits to this amazing gallery can be booked through their office directly or as a tour organized by the National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Maharaj has in fact, unlike most, made his desires, hobbies, and career merge and therefore can truly say he loves what he does, especially since retiring from the corporate world. He can be seen frequently boating, fishing and mostly completing restoration projects from which he derives his greatest joy. He believes that he can share his knowledge and expertise through his displays and add value, content, and context to future generations.



In Good Hands

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mr. Maharaj wholeheartedly endorses the message of safety for all road users as shared by the TTAA's vision and can frequently be seen in attendance at rallies, safety training, and car shows hosted by the TTAA. He also believes that the organization will grow exponentially over the upcoming years and will therefore be quite effective to car owners.

Having travelled quite extensively, Mr. Maharaj admits to having no favourite brand and he has seen quite a few makes and models across the world. He however believes that the proper maintenance and upkeep of any vehicle is required to see optimal road performance.



Ray M.S. Brathwaite
Director

Proud to be Point Fortin! Hailing from the south land, this director is not shy about his pride in all things south. He joined the TTAA in 1981 and has taken pleasure in serving ever since.

Mr. Brathwaite has quite an extensive career spanning from senior management at Petrotrin to being the JCI (Joint Commission International) Senator of the Americas; an independent, not-for-profit organization that accredits and certifies health care organizations and programs across the globe. Having a master's in business, he was quite sought after by a number of companies and is still proving to be quite a resource for a number of groups and organizations.

Mr. Brathwaite has frequented and been quite instrumental in a number of the TTAA car shows, defensive driving, and training sessions. He has been a representative to the National Safety Council and was the 1st Deputy Chairman for the Civil Aviation Authority.

His hobbies include collecting currency (paper and coin), which works quite well with his love for travel; collecting stamps, of which he has quite an assembly; and accumulating model airplanes and cars.

Mr. Brathwaite sees the TTAA as crucial to car owners, providing services that are incomparable for enabling better drivers and road conditions through the many recommendations made to the Ministry of Works and Transport, and training sessions offered to companies and the public.

When asked of his favourite brand his was quite solid with his response of Nissan. As for a dream car he remembers the good old Velox Voxhall and the glory days of the Mini Cooper. However, his modern picks would be a BMW740 or a Range Rover Sport.



Selwyn R. Persad
Director

This director, keeps proving that he is not to be slighted as his efforts go far beyond his years. He believes that the organization could really benefit persons through the services provided.

Mr. Persad has quite the management repertoire, managing everything from night clubs to established daily businesses. Making his alma mater of Presentation College proud, he continues to assist his community through various charities and voluntary projects.

Mr. Persad was brought onto the TTAA board as the social media and marketing liaison and has ensured that the TTAA is now quite visible on all major platforms. The task of making sure that the TTAA is seen across the generational divide is no easy one, yet Mr. Persad continues to find new and innovative ways to make interacting with the TTAA convenient for all.

He can frequently be seen at all TTAA events coordinating their media efforts. His youthful view, and perspectives ensures that this organization will remain relevant for years to come.



Kaffe Henry
Office Manager

Ms. Henry, found the TTAA whilst searching for employment. However, little did she know that her new venture would lead her to a perfect fit.

Ms. Henry, a past pupil of St. Joseph's Convent and Roytec, is making good use of her business management certification as the Office Manager of the TTAA. She holds professional qualifications in both coaching and business management.

Having worked in the banking and insurance industries for close to 15 years, she was brought on board to revamp and digitize the office spaces, policies, and procedures as they press forward to better serve the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago regarding all things road safety.

As many of the former staff were retiring around the same time Ms. Henry took up her post, she had the herculean task of managing a seamless transition, to ensure that workflows were not disrupted. She has had the great fortune of working with excellent staff, people who give of themselves day-in and day-out to guarantee that all the interactions with the organization are pleasant ones.

Ms. Henry admits that while she previously had no interest in cars per-se, her involvement with the TTAA has afforded her a new found respect for the industry. She is grateful for the guidance received from Mr. Persad and looks forward to the growth and further development of the organization.



Trevon C. Jugmohan
Director

In mid-2020, Mr. Trevon C. Jugmohan of First Instinct, was invited by the President of the TTAA, Mr. Selwyn Bunny Persad, to join the Board of the TTAA. He was approved and appointed to the position of Board Member on Wednesday 14th October.

One of the youngest members of the board, Mr. Jugmohan has been an actor and theatrical producer in Trinidad and Tobago

for over a decade. His position on the board was influenced by his experience not only in the arts, but also as a writer.

In 2008, Mr. Jugmohan was a Copywriter with Valdez and Torry International. From there he moved to the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Company, where he worked in the Corporate Communication Department, working on press releases, speeches and contributing articles for their quarterly newsletter, 'Watt's Happening'.

The bulk of Mr. Jugmohan's experience comes from his apprenticeship with Raymond Choo Kong. There he honed his skills, not only as an actor, set and technical designer, and director, but as a producer. As a producer, he developed marketing strategies and wrote the copy / text, for advertising, press releases, social media and much more.

The Staff of the TTAA are here to Serve



Teresa Audain - CSR



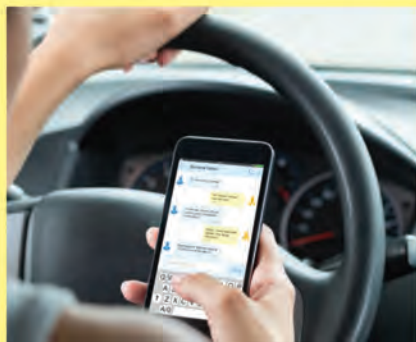
Roslyn Kissoon - Senior CSR



Nataline Artherton - Courier

DID YOU KNOW?

Almost 95% of a car's life is spent parked.



Defensive Driving Tip

There are many actions to take if you want to be a defensive driver. One of the most relevant tips in today's world is the fact that a safe driver is one that isn't distracted. These days we're preoccupied with our phones and changing the radio instead of giving the road our full attention. By driving distracted, you put all drivers at risk, including yourself and your passengers. If you receive an important phone call or message that you must respond to, pull over and resume driving once the conversation is over.

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Dennis Williams

Mr. Williams served on the Board of the TTAA in the capacity of Director. He became affiliated with the organization in 1984 and was particularly thrilled to answer the call to serve such a dynamic institution.

Mr. Williams hails from Sangre Grande and has a passion for road safety, and he has established the Dennis and Leela Driving School for which he is an instructor. As a young boy, Mr. Williams attended the Guico Presbyterian Primary School and continues to make his alma mater proud.

Having served as an instructor with the National Safety Council both locally and internationally, Mr. Williams is recognized as one of the top in his field copping the 2007 Trendsetter International Instructor of the Year Award. He was also responsible for the registration and the issuance of clients for international driver's permits.

Mr. Williams currently successfully manages a driving school, real estate company, and travel agency with a mindset of excellent service to his customers. He has ably assisted the TTAA with car shows, defensive driving courses, and road safety events.

All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, and not one to be ever described as such, Mr. Williams thoroughly enjoys long drives (no surprise there), gardening, travelling, and fishing.

When posed the big question of, "What is your dream car?", he responded by saying, "I have none! Once a car is well maintained and working, that car will be your favourite."

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John Correia

As the treasurer on the Board of the TTAA, he took his responsibilities quite seriously as he believes that its financial sustainability is key.

Mr. Correia chose to become a member of the TTAA approximately forty (40) years ago. He saw the worth of the organization to him, as a user, through their many services offered at the time. Being an accountant, it is no wonder that he naturally offered his skills to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization.

After attending St. Mary's College, Mr. Correia completed his management degree and went on to acquire his ACCA qualifications. A man of numbers, he worked at WITCO for many years as an accountant. Though now retired, he continues with his hobbies to keep himself going. So, one may ask, what does a retired accountant do for fun? Well, John has enjoyed the wonderful world of archeology in Trinidad and Tobago for the past 40 years. He has also had the pleasure of discovering pottery that was over 200 years old in a swamp in Grenada. He fancies the study of ancient man and Pre-Colombian culture. Mr. Correia is a member of the board of WITCO Credit Union, and the supervisory committee of the Central Finance Facility of T&T (Credit Union, of credit unions).

This Diego Martian shows no sign of slowing down and has been an integral part of all showcase events hosted by the TTAA.

When questioned about his favourite brand of vehicle he responded with, Nissan, and said that his dream car would be anything "four wheel drive" because he enjoys hilly terrain.



Steve Castagne Consultant and Advisor

Q&A

Q: When did you join the TTAA and why?

A: I thought I joined in 1972, but I was corrected, I'm told that I joined the TTAA in 1974, I was approached by members of the board who saw my trade and skill-set as a possible asset to the organization. There was a fair amount of controversy between the car clubs of Trinidad and the TTAA, and the decision was made to bring in younger members to help bridge the great divide.

Q: As you mentioned, can you break it down, what was your trade and skill-set that they saw valuable?

A: Several reasons make up that value. I was involved in cars; as a race car driver, I bought wrecked and written-off cars from insurance companies and restored and sold them, and I was building M&M Insurance Brokers, which was being financed by the car restoration company. I was involved in anything that could make a living.

Q: Was there any one particular person that saw that potential in you, and the potential of what you brought to the TTAA?

A: The association was Mrs. Hilary Correia. She was the person who was the driving force in the organization, so she brought in people who she thought would give new life to the organization. One of the key people she brought in was Mr. Kenny Roberts, who eventually became the president. Kenny Roberts was the safety officer at Caroni (1975) Limited. He was also a member of the national and the world safety council. Kenny brought in defensive driving, around which the Automobile Association saw new life. Motor racing was of no interest to Mr. Roberts. So with the bickering of the car clubs, the decision was made. Whether it was the right decision now, it was then.

Q: What was the outcome of having a president that didn't have an interest in the sporting arm of the organization?

A: In 1976 the association gave up the sporting arm of the organization. This was mainly due to the newly formed car clubs. The TTAA was there to provide roadside assistance to the public. So many initiatives have been the brainchild of the TTAA, such as the breathalyzers and radar guns, but other people got the credit for whatever reason.

Q: So as a race car driver yourself, how did you feel about the separation of the safety and sporting aspects of the TTAA?

A: I continued to race cars until my interest turned to racing boats. In those days, there were races throughout the year, the biggest being the annual Great Race that started in the Trinidad Yacht Club and ended in Tobago, for those who aren't familiar with the sport. I've raced speed boats such as King Sailor, Top Gun, Beep Beep, Coyote, to name a few. As far as racing cars, I primarily raced one car, they called it "the bread-van", an old Austin A40 that was very successful in its day in the UK.

Q: So you brought in your speed boats as well as cars?

A: My team and I were involved in building race car engines and other commissioned jobs. We still have the garage going but we don't do "young people ting" again, although there are times we get involved. Everything now is computers, sensors, and solenoids. We brought in the first super-chargers to Trinidad and for the racing boats, we brought in nitrous oxide to Trinidad. People didn't even know what that was at the time and eventually, it was banned because no one could beat us. Nitrous oxide was just becoming popular all over the world. We did our research, and brought it in, and used it in

the boat. Even though other people brought it in eventually, their lack of experience with the new fuel would blow out their engines, and they still couldn't beat us.

Q: Going back to the TTAA, the job as a board member is a voluntary one. How does one find the time to make the commitment to something that is not your personal business?

A: My motto was always, my time should be spent on what I want to do, and in my business only. So yes, I developed my own business. And if I liked it, and it's doing well, we'll develop it more. But I've always had my own garage, ever since I was made redundant in 1970, when the international company I was working for left due to the black power movement. From that day, I decided to work for myself. I didn't want to be on anyone else's board, but I was then asked to be on the Airport Authority board, and I couldn't refuse the Prime Minister. Then I was asked to be the Chairman of the Diego Martin Regional Corporation, again for the same reason. When you get into those roles, you end up being stuck there for years. I went there for three years and ended up staying for ten. I also served on the CL Financial board for six years. I try to stay in my own comfort zone and the businesses I'm involved in.

Q: What businesses are you involved in?

A: The businesses I'm involved in include real estate development companies, and companies involving the unions (primarily as a consultant). I'm also the Chairman of Newsday, and Chairman of the M&M Group of Companies. Those are my interests.

Q: So what was the state of things when you first joined the TTAA?

A: When I joined, the TTAA would have had 70,000 members. It was comfortable at that stage. We had a fall out in the late 70s because the country started getting rich, and people didn't see the need for the services of the TTAA anymore. By 1981, it was declared insolvent by the auditors. The older heads who were in control of the TTAA did not see the significance of what needed to be done. By 1982, the auditors told them that they will not be auditing the books again, and it's only at that stage did they realize that it was time to retire. This is the point Kenny Roberts took the helm as the president, and I took the treasurer position.

We embarked on a mission of turning the TTAA around, and we did everything possible to bring the market on board. The economy by 1983 began to "over-heat" and it took us until 1984 to realize what

was happening. By then people were looking at their dollars again. Overheating, prices were going sky high and we started working on the various projects. Roadside assistance went from motorbikes to avenger motor cars, which were dying, and we then realized the need for a wrecker service.

Mrs. Correia and her office team, Kenny Roberts and I were the driving force, and eventually, three key elements came to play. First, the defensive driving courses, secondly, asking insurance companies to give a 10% discount for TTAA members, which was refused, and thirdly, we put on a symposium with the little money we had. We expected thirty to forty people but only seven showed up for us to show them what defensive driving was about. They bought into it but offered no discounts. Kenny said to me, you are the insurance man on the board, you have to get us this discount. So, I negotiated and got a discount for TTAA members only. That was exciting. Immediately we saw an increase from 6,000 members to over 20,000 members, in the space of two years.

As time went on, all the insurance companies began to give the discounts and we started to die again. At the same time, I came up with the idea of doing a lifetime membership to raise some money which we got a buy in to. We went and bought the three wreckers and that helped carry us forward.

We soon realized that our prized asset was our employees, and if we had to close down the TTAA, the staff would have gone home with nothing. The target was to put aside enough investments in case we ever had to close the organization. In that event, two things would happen, those that were on pension would get pension and those that would be made redundant, would be paid adequately. So we have a fund for that, and that has been accomplished. We built it back up and that was an exciting time.

Kenny unfortunately got sick, and for a long period of time he did what he had to do, but he wasn't the Kenny that was blazing the trail again. We brought in other members, but we never crossed over into the path that Kenny had taken us until now, where we have a vibrant team, with Selwyn, Gerald and the others. This comforts me because I told them, as soon as they will allow it, I would like to step down from the board.

Q: Okay, so can you tell us about the current board?

A: There are people who are good at certain things, but we can have the same purpose, and this is the



A Gathering of Committee Members and Trustees taken at the TAA's 65th Anniversary Celebration in 1976. Standing, from left to right - Asgar Ali, Clyde Allamani, Kenny Roberts, Steve Castagne, Bobby O'Brien, Roger de Gannes, Clinton Cromwell, Marcel Xavier (Trustee), Ena Blood (Trustee) Hilary Correia (Secretary) and Simeon Alexander (President)



His Excellency, President Sir Ellis Clarke being greeted by Steve Castagne. From left to right, Rex Hogan - TAA Treasurer, Mrs. Jennifer Castagne, Mrs. Hilary Correia, Mrs. Doris Alexander and Her Excellency Mrs. Clarke. Occasion was the 65th Anniversary of the TAA.



All smiles with Steve Castagne



1974, from left to right standing, Clinton Cromwell, Lennox Farrell, Roger de Gannes, Kenny Roberts, Luis Kenny and Albertha Edwards. sitting, Asgar Ali, Rex Hogan, Hilary Correia, Steve Castagne, Rudolph de Bruin and Clyde Allamani.



Steve addressing the meetings to organize the TAA insurance plan.

time. When I think of it, after owning it, I don't think it's the best car I've ever owned. The best car I've ever owned, if I had to give an opinion, it would be a Toyota Prado. It is the most durable car, it requires little maintenance, you can't kill it, and it's enjoyable to drive. That's if you want to keep a vehicle for a long time. But to me, the best finished cars are the Audi's, best driving car would be a BMW, and the best all-round car will be the Prado.

Q: We couldn't end this interview without asking the advice of a businessman with your experience, what advice would you give to young entrepreneurs?

A: A bucket and a sponge is a business.

drive of the board members of the TAA. We all have our strengths, and I believe that this team is a well-balanced one. There are people who are very good at certain things. If you refer to each person on the board – each as a driver, driving in a different direction, but with the same purpose – for example, there are people who could multi-task, multi-tasking is very relevant. I'm a multi-tasker, that's my strength.

Q: When were you president of the organization?

A: I was never president of the TAA. I became president of the Brokers Association because I was filling in for the president. The president that we had when I reached that level in the industry was Charles Peterson from CIC, one of the greatest men I've known in the industry. Charles could only sit for so long, so he'd sit for two periods, then sit out one, so I would sit-in in the period that he had to sit out. When Charles found out that he was terminally ill, he came to see me because my period was coming to an end and he told me he wasn't coming back. He didn't tell me why, but he spoke with the other board members and they passed a resolution where I would sit another two terms. He said, I know you don't like to be president and chairman but give me that two term period and we'll pick the team to carry us forward. And I knew something was wrong then, but I took the post and left as soon as I could, which was too long.

So you see, I don't think me being the chairman of something as a good thing, I'm very aggressive, I'm very opinionated, and that doesn't allow the rest to blossom. It's always better that you pick a very neutral person that can hold back on their opinion and only give their opinion when it counts. That's why we always choose a person for chairman or president that could run a board and give everyone an equal chance. The chairman is the person that gets the most out of every person on the board, and in the absence of the board, he becomes the board.

Q: Did you have any input in this current board?

A: Rawle Mahabir, now deceased, came to me and asked me what I thought about this guy he had and he told me what his background was because he wanted my opinion. I thought that Rawle had an ultimate goal, and that was to get the TAA into the FIA; even though we were members, he wanted to make that relationship even stronger. I didn't know Selwyn before, but he came in and immediately he started to work and I saw that he was a worker and he was not there to just sit on a board.

Rawle and Gerald use to share the term. When Rawle died, I suggested that Selwyn take over and I saw this as a good combination. Gerald is gentle, intelligent and gets things done at his own speed, whereas Selwyn is quick and always ready to go. So they make a good team. What made the combination better was Gerald's seniority and experience with the TAA and Selwyn being new. Selwyn brought in his son, Richard, who has the social media expertise we need, and he's bringing in more people. I brought in Richard Ramdwar and I see a lot in Richard that will benefit the board. The younger team has been put in place, so now it's to get these old people out, and once they're out, it goes in the direction it should go in with the younger people.

Q: Can you tell us a little bit of your life outside of the business world?

A: I reside on the North Coast of Trinidad and now I really enjoy fishing. Close to home, I fish for my food and my wife has the garden. The only thing we buy now is a little bit of meat and shrimp. And as a lesson for all, I'm eating healthy because I have to now. I put myself in a position where I have to eat healthy to stay alive. That's a lesson for the young ones.

Q: We've asked the other board members this question, what is your dream car?

A: I am a very fortunate person. Luck is getting everything you ever wanted and dreamed of, and being happy with it. My bucket list was filled when I was forty years old. By 1988, there was nothing I ever wanted that I did not do, wanted to do, or did not have. And what made it even better was that every single thing I ever wanted, I could either make or make happen.

So, for example, when we talk about car racing, I paid \$2,000.00 for my racing car and yet I was able to race with the Andrew Cheeks and Frankie Boodrams and others who were spending tons more money. When I went to race boats, I made money on every racing boat I had when I sold it. I still have some of my racing engines. As a matter of fact, one Great Race, Ken Charles took two of my engines and modified them and he won. King Sailor had two of my engines, he came second. I came third with one of my engines in Beep Beep, and Coyote came forth with one of my engines. The engines that Ken Charles took were brought in, but all the others were engines I built from scrap. I paid \$25,000.00 for Coyote and I sold it for \$85,000.00.

So understand, everything I've wanted to do, I've

always done. So, if you ask me about my dream car, the Bentley GT might have been my dream car at the



Standing, Charles Salvatori, head of the Insurance Company that supported the TAA's plan for member discount. Sitting with Steve is June Gonzales, a TAA committee member.



Giles Edwards, TAA committee member, addresses the TAA assembly, as Steve and other committee members look on.



Steve addressing the TAA assembly, this meeting was held to persuade the insurance companies to give discounted rates to TAA members.

The Future is Here

Citizens know the TTAA as the “road-side assistance people”, but being one of the oldest automobile associations in the world comes with other responsibilities, such as innovation. With the information provided by Secretary of the TTAA, Richard Ramdwar, here are some of our innovations.

During the Covid 19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown in T&T, Selwyn Persad (TTAA President) encouraged the board of directors to participate in an online FIA course. The FIA, through their university, held the 8th edition of their Emerging Leaders Programme which partnered with ESADE Business School in Barcelona. Here, the leaders of the FIA discussed ideas on how to innovate and reinvent themselves moving into the post-Covid 19 future. Featured speakers included executives from the RAC (Royal Automobile Club) England, Australian Automobile Association (AA) and AC Barcelona.

The roadside assistance that was first offered by the TAA (Trinidad Automobile Association) 110 years ago has changed the landscape of the automobile industry in T&T. However, members can now rely on ForenSys who will be on the scene to assist them with the report for the claim process. Through the ForenSys network, members will have access to discounts either following an accident, or with a regular service

One of the first initiatives is the move to a new office space. Woodford Street has been good to the TTAA for decades, however, limited parking posed a problem for members visiting the organization. This physical move is also accompanied by a virtual initiative to implement a digital payment platform which will spare members from having to visit the office to update their membership fees.

A major part of this overhaul is new training methods. The TTAA has sought funding for ten driving simulators, manufactured in Australia and certified by the AA. The new generation of drivers will be able to get behind the wheel with this realistic approach to the defensive driving course. Each simulator has been programmed for right-hand drive and will test one’s ability to handle an automobile while paying attention to road signs and everyday obstacles. These will all add to one’s RAG (Red, Amber, and Green) Score, the international standard for defensive driving tests.

The FIA suggests targeting young people 14-25 years of age, to better prepare them for life on the road. Through the Ministry of Education and insurance companies, the TTAA plans to go into schools to offer drivers’ training to novice drivers. These will not only teach about the perils of the road as a driver, but also as a pedestrian road user.

The TTAA’s association with the Ministry of Works and Transport has grown over the years, and Mr. Ramdwar is soon to become a board member, to represent the TTAA in future road safety and infrastructure initiatives. With the implementation of the demerit-point system for errant drivers, the TTAA will provide the training services, through the Ministry of Works and Transport, which will allow drivers who have demerit-points an opportunity to expunge some points off their records.

Many TTAA members have had a major issue over the years with insurance companies where the value of their car is concerned. Before the loss or after the loss, what is my car worth? The TTAA has constructed the motor vehicle algorithm, using several hundred points of data, which can gauge the true value of one’s car. This will be made available to TTAA members, as well as the general public.

A looming road issue in Trinidad and Tobago has been disability parking. With guidance from the FIA, the TTAA has been given the authority by the Ministry of Works and Transport to regulate, with immediate effect, the Disability Parking Programme. Now each disabled member, once verified through a licensed physician, can apply for their disability parking sticker. For the first time in T&T you will have to acquire this TTAA and FIA sanctioned sticker to be able to use the handicap parking spot located near the front door of most organizations.



New Office space – 8 Francis Road, Maraval, Port of Spain

Among the projects the TTAA has in store for T&T is the building of the TTAA Training Facility. This compound will be outfitted with classrooms, simulator rooms, offices, meeting rooms, evaluation stations and a physical training course. A private donor has pledged ten golf carts which will be used on the new course. This will complete the trifecta of; in-class theory, virtual practice and physical training. The TTAA is working alongside the Mayor of Port of Spain in allocating land for this project and, once approved, the FIA will sponsor the construction of the facility. Another synergy that will be facilitated at this compound will be TTARP (Trinidad and Tobago Association of Retired Persons).

Just like the sailing industry got a huge boost when Chaguaramas was made a duty-free zone, the same goes for the classic car industry. Brij Maharaj (TTAA Board Member) is the regional classic car expert and owner of the classic car museum in San Fernando and has been championing the integration of such a zone for classic cars in Trinidad. The TTAA, has petitioned the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Works and Transport to create a classic car industry in Trinidad. This will allow someone to bring a donor car into the country to be restored with our materials and our labour. This must be a government assisted project because of the barriers for entry. One cannot simply import a car older than five years, because you can’t register it. Additionally, all the parts to be brought in would be charged duty and VAT, making it much less appealing to foreign investors. The TTAA will manage this new industry in Trinidad, this opens up opportunities for skilled persons who would not be able to enter the fray on their own. This initiative is scheduled to be activated in the next six months.



Brij Maharaj seen in the Classic Car Museum, San Fernando.

The TTAA is reinventing the benefits that the members can access. With a new board of directors and capable office staff, we are finding new ways to help drivers in T&T. From the administering of international drivers permits, to courses and training, the TTAA has been our automobile association for 110 years, and we will see them grow and continue to drive the industry forward.

Looking forward to another 110 years.



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