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Julian Stanley Kenny, 24 January, 1929 – 9 August, 2011: An Appreciation

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Julian Stanley Kenny made his first appearance in our time and space on 27 January, 1930, the 3rd of 7 children born to Anthony and Louise Kenny.

The opening line of a popular song states, *“It only takes a spark to get a fire going.”*

To a young lad who had traditionally thought that all plants grew from the soil, an orchid plant growing on a piece of tree trunk sparked a curiosity in living things; a curiosity that developed into a fire of inquiry into the workings of the natural world around him, a curiosity that was to be one of his distinguishing characteristics.



Jake as he was more popularly called, navigated his way successfully through the education maze, gaining a Degree in Zoology from the University of Toronto in Canada. On his return to Trinidad and Tobago, he took a position with the Fisheries Division of the day, a position that necessitated his travelling through the length and breadth of the islands and afforded him the opportunity to acquaint himself with their natural history. During this period he met and married the former Miss Joan Wedderburn, a happy union that produced a son – Peter – and a daughter – Philippa. After some years with the Division, he left for London where he completed his doctorate at Birkbeck College, London University and on his return

to Trinidad in 1963, he took up a post as the sole Zoologist appointed to the fledgling College of Arts and Sciences at the St. Augustine Campus of the University of the West Indies.

With his interest in natural history in general, it is not surprising that at the U.W.I. he veered in the direction of ecology – the study of the interaction among plants, animals and the environment in which they exist – and a die-hard environmentalist was born. He spearheaded research that highlighted the ecological dynamics of some of the natural areas of the islands, including savannas, wetlands, cave systems, marine systems and coral reefs among others. As a result of the detailed information he had on these systems he became concerned with the degree of degradation he saw taking place in the name of progress: quarrying in the Aripo Savanna; removal of mangroves from wetlands; use of fishing gear that was deleterious to maintenance of fish stocks, and he championed any reasonable cause that sought to lead to a protection of the environment. He thus supported many an NGO among them Fishermen and Friends of the Sea.

His interest in conservation went beyond the natural environment to the built environment. He was passionate about the preservation and, where necessary, the restoration of buildings, particularly those of historical interest. His efforts to have Nelson Island restored and be named a heritage site appears to have found little sympathy with the powers that be.

With his wide knowledge of and care for the environment, it was no surprise that when he was appointed an Independent Senator, he would become principally the voice for the environment in the Senate.

His expertise in matters environmental was clearly recognised in his appointment as:

- Advisor to the Inter-ministerial Committee on the Law of the Sea convention
- Chairman of the Board of the Institute of Marine Affairs
- Member of the Cabinet appointed Committee that drafted the National Parks legislation, among others.

Among the posts he held in the private sector was Chairman of the Guardian Wild Life Fund.

In the year 2001 he was appointed chairman of an ad hoc committee to spearhead the establishment of a Biodiversity Centre - one of his dreams for the country - at the St. Augustine Campus of the University of the West

Indies. Under his chairmanship significant progress towards the realisation of the dream was made until the project, for reasons still not clear to me, appears to have been put on ice.

His last official appointment was as Chair of the Board of the EMA, a post from which he resigned after 6 months of effort. As Paolo Kernahan puts it in a tribute paid after his passing, and I quote:

"He was not afraid to show who he was backing in that fight and this was made clear in his last act of defiance against this administration for its failure to meaningfully address the threat posed by rampant quarrying."

Wordsworth, in his Ode on *Intimations of Immortality*, wrote:

*"What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now for ever taken from my sight,*

*Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind."*

What remains behind? Jake has left us a legacy of concern for the preservation of the environment, and a tireless effort to staunch further degradation. A proverb that has been attributed to Native Americans or variously to Ralph Waldo Emerson or David Bower, states that:

*"We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors,
But borrow it from our children."*

If we can but gain strength from what he has left us, his living will not have been in vain and we will be able to pass to generations yet unborn, at least a percentage of that which we borrowed from them.

REVIEWERS 2008 – 2012

The Editorial Committee thanks the following persons who took time off from their busy schedule to review papers over the last five years.

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