
Tantie Buy Ah Video Camera for GC

by Slimen Saliba

Indianapolis was not Tantie's first appearance at a General Conference Session. Slimen Saliba, dean of the School of Business at Andrews University, first brought her from his birthplace of Trinidad, West Indies, to the General Conference in New Orleans in 1980. She was such a hit at a Caribbean Union College alumni banquet that Saliba brought her back to Indianapolis for an even larger bash attended by more than 500, including Ralph Thompson, the newly re-elected secretary of the General Conference, and George Brown, the General Conference president-elect (declined) and re-elected president of the Inter-American Division.

Slimen had first made Tantie's acquaintance when he was a college student and she was a celebrity, making star appearances on the Trinidad literary stage. A product of a matriarchal culture where the aunt plays a central role, Tantie was an irascible, irrepressible, bruising character who also could cherish and be cherished.

Slimen went off to the United States, finished an M.A. at the SDA Theological Seminary, served as secretary of the South Caribbean Conference, and received a Ph.D. from Northwestern University, but he never forgot Tantie. And, probably, neither will you.

— The Editors

All yuh know full well how Tantie did fraid to fly on airplane. Whenevah she did have was to travel from St. Vincent to Port-of-Spain, is only passenger boat

she takin.

One time near Kick-em-Jenny, Boysie get so seasick he nearly dead. Tantie say, "Boysie could trow up all he want, ah go wash he clothes out for him aftah. Is bettah to trow up in de sea than to crash in de air."

But evah since de las GC in New Orleans, Tantie get hot foot. Dat same Tantie who make Boysie trow up taking boat because she fraid plane, dat very same Tantie when yuh miss she now, is either she in Brooklyn or she visiting somebody in Toronto. And is gone she gone on de self same plane she used to wash she mout on. Dat same Tantie.

So dis time, when Tantie hear that GC set for Indianapolis, she announce in two-twos, "Ah dey wid dem. Ah going to Indiana to the Hoosier Dome."

Nex ting ah hear is Tantie buying ah video camera for de GC. Every day she singing, "Memories, like the corners of your mind, Misty water running over . . . Memories, oh, oh, oh, memories." Dat is what life is all about. Memories—ah needs a movie camera to capture memories.

All yuh tink Tantie easy? Dis time when she leave Piarco for Indiana, is de basket, she pink parasol, and she new video camera. She might be smelling like a snackette, but she was looking like Hollywood.

Tantie call Meena in de States long distance to ask if Meena could make a booking for she at de GC. Yuh remeber Meena? Meena is Boysie's brother wife. Tantie did nevah like she.

No sooner Tantie get orf de phone, than she start quarrelling.

“If yuh hear de heavy American Meena talking! De gurl confuse up mih head. Ah tought ah had de wrong number ! Ha-ya, hi. If you hear de gurl! Auntie, is that you? How are you doing? Are you calling from Trinidad?”

But look at mih crosses nuh! Is wha wrong wid Meena at all! She forget when Boysie brother bring she home by me, is I who did have was to teach she de Queen’s English! Now she trying to make style on me wid language.

So ah say, “Tantie, doan be so hard on de gurl if she trying to improve sheself wid better lanuage.”

GLOSSARY

Boboloops: A woman who is well endowed, heavy.

Commess: A pleasant, happy meeting, complete with general confusion.

CUC: Caribbean Union College

Dong: Down

Douggie: Walter Douglas, originally from Granada. Douglas is professor of church history and mission at the SDA Theological Seminary. A long-time member of the board of the Association of Adventist Forums, he is currently the president of the Caribbean Union College Alumni Association.

George: George Brown, president of the Inter-American Division, who turned down the nomination for president of the General Conference.

Hard: A scrawny, bony, thin leg.

Jook: To be punctured by a nail, the act and the sound.

Kick-em-Jenny: A section of water known for its rough seas.

Liming: To stand around in a small group, joking and ogling passers-by.

Magger: Scrawny, mangy, flea-bitten.

Piarco: The airport in Trinidad.

Snackette: A place where candy is made and sold.

Two-twos: Immediately, without hesitation.

Washcong: Sneakers

Zafa: That’s for . . .

Bettah language!
Tantie say.
“All ah allyuh young people feel dat yuh have to go to college to learn bettah language.
We ole people doan know better language!
All ah allyuh waiting for Webster to give allyuh permission to talk.
“Well, lemme tell yuh something. We in de islands have some words dat even

Shakespeare can’t dream to use yet.

“Take de word, *jook*. When ah say ah nail jook—improve dat. See if you could say it bettah.

“Take de word, *hard*. When yuh say dat Vibert leg tin and hard, improve dat. See if you could say dat bettah.

“When yuh say dat de dawg looking *magger*, improve dat. See if you could say it bettah.

“And if yuh doan stop provoking me, ah lick you and Boboloops and Meena dong. See if yuh could improve dat, too.”

Anyhow, Meena make de reservation in de Hyatt and Tantie didn’t lick she dong. Is so much loving up kissing up when she and Meena meet. Ah had was to pinch mihsself. To tell yuh de truth, Meena was on some special diet to lose weight. I thought she was looking okay—a lil pull down, but not bad. Tantie say she looking dry like a raisin and offah she a piece of sweetbread from de basket. Meena say is too much calories. Anyhow, we had a nice room in de Hyatt, jus across from de meetings.

Well, ah tell yuh, dis was a historic General Conference. On de outside, Tantie nearly mash up de building. On de inside de delegates and dem nearly mash up de GC.

When yuh enter de dome, yuh have to go thru a funny kine of door. It does spin yuh rong and rong and den fling yuh in, yuh have to throw yuhself in dis narrow space between two glass doors and hope for de bes. Well, Tantie stick in de door. To dis day, ah doan know how she parasol wedge like dat, but day had was to call security to unjam de door and let she out.

Meanwhile, de boys and dem on de inside was movin. Las GC dey was movin motion and making action. Dis time dey was moving people an’ making waves.

Yuh know something? Ah still cyan figure out why George didn’t tek de ting. Some say is too much hard wuk; some say is too much travel; some say he getting ole.

But Tantie say, is Douggie to blame. Is Douggie who tell George not to tek de people job. An yuh know Douggie, if he say so, is so. So much a women in de church lookin for

wuk an dey doan know what to do wid dem!

Well, dis GC really had plenty action. For two days dey battle ovah de role of women in de church. It was like de cricket match in de Oval, de one ah did take Tantie to—combined islands against North America—and Tantie was in de middle of de match. She say, combine islands ent fair. Dey forget is woman bring dem here.

She say, whedder is African or Spanish, Chineese or Indian, she doan care, is de same ting. De way how dey carrying on it look like woman good to cook and good to wash but women ent good to know what is right and what is rong. Only man know de difference—not woman. Combined islands doan want women to preach to man.

Anyhow, by Thursday night, match tie. Dey agree to let women preach, baptize and marry. But dey musn't ordain dem.

Tantie say is cheap dey cheap. Now de women an dem have to do de same wuk for less money. Ah have to talk to Duggie. He should talk to dese fellows.

Anyhow, she say ah sorry ah wasn't ah younger woman, ah woulda put mih name in for president jus to see what dey woulda do wid me.

Ah still trying to figure out what she bring de video foh.

De fust Sabbath, dey ask Tantie to usher. She dress up wid she hat, gloves, and washecong. For Sabbath school she had on pink gloves. For divine service she change to white gloves. For de whole day Tantie was conducting traffik in de aisle.

In de evening when she finish, she decide is time to do some recording. We still trying to figure out de pictures.

Every now an den someting wud come in focus and before yuh could ketch it, it turn fuzzy again. One ting ah know, we have plenty picture of roof and seat. Half de time Tantie forget de camera on and de odder half she had it outa focus.

De nicest ting bout dese meetings is de fellowship. Yuh does meet everybody here. Who ah ent see, ah hear was dere. Ah ent know

where people get money from, but dey come.

Everybody mek dey own service. De teenagers was outside on de steps liming; de young marrieds was in the corridors walking up and dong wid dey crying babies. De middle age ones was inside listening to de meetings and den dose pass middle age was dere too, but dey was sleeping.

But when she pack she grip to leave Indianapolis, she going home praying for —

**Uction in de pulpit
Action in de pew and
Drama in de parish**

Improve dat if yuh can. See if yuh could say it bettah.

It was nice commess. Some make dey rooms a snackette; some decide to eat out in de restaurant; some of dem licking dong dey chicken and dey beef. Odders of dem is only macaroni and cheese. Worthington foods make dey name. Some of dem pay for dey lunch before Sabbath; odders of dem pay for dey lunch on Sabbath. Tantie say, as long as she pay before Sabbath, is none ah she business who want to wuk and cook de food; she hands clean. She has done she part. Zafa dem who want to break de Sabbath.

De final coup was of course de CUC banquet. Everyone was dere. Wid de steelban in de background, at tought ah was back home. De food was good. De music was sweet. Even de College Heralds try dey hand. And we had all kinda church big shot dey too numerous to mention. De first lady of the Secretariat was de Madame Chairwoman and Tantie was in and out wid massive camera lights capturing memories.

De meetings finish; de preaching is ovah; de voting is done. De Mission Spotlight was de las

ting dat cap off de 10 days. De music, de pomp,
de ceremony, de orchestra—ah-h-h, yuh have to
be dere to see it, to feel it, to enjoy it, to be
bless by it.

Las GC it was Harvest '90; dis GC is Global
Strategy.

Tantie say, dis strategy ting is allyuh college
educated way of speaking, an she doan know

what dat means.

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