



Members of the Class of 2003

Robert H. "Bobby" Symonette

(1926-1998)

The term "Renaissance Man" is the best descriptive for Robert H. (Bobby) Symonette, a Bahamian son whose lifework has permeated every strata of civil society, from his five-year presidency of the Bahamas Olympic Association; his instrumental role in the creation of the National Family Island Regatta in George Town, Exuma; his patient fabrication of a gargantuan and diversified business empire; and above all else, his prolific career as a world-beating Star Class sailor.

Having commenced his tutelage at the tender age of eleven, Bobby matured into a versatile sailor, racing in a variety of craft but his mastery of the 5.5 meter Star Class was complete. His list of accomplishments include a Silver Medal at the World Championships in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil in 1962, with Percy Knowles as crew; Gold Medal at the Duke of Edinburgh Cup in 1962; winner of the Scandinavian Cup in Broken Bay, Australia in 1974; winner of the Scandinavian Cup in Benodet, France in 1977; Gold Medal at the European Championships in Sweden in 1971 with his brother, Craig as crew; Gold Medal at the World Championships in Nassau in 1980. Additionally, he represented The Bahamas at the Rome Olympics in 1960; the Tokyo Olympics in 1964, and the Mexico Olympics in 1968.

Bobby also managed to serve the international yachting community, having been selected to the membership of the Keel Boat Technical Committee of the International Yacht Racing Union. He also served as a member of the Judiciary Board of the International Star Class Racing Association.

In spite of the magnificence of all these wondrous accomplishments by Robert H. (Bobby) Symonette, perhaps the most telling of all his legacies will always be the helping hand he extended to preserve the one sport indigenous to The Bahamas, sloop sailing. For were it not for his personal guidance and generosity, this Bahamian art form would have long ago endured the same fate as many of our lost conventions.

Certainly, the Commonwealth of The Bahamas can be rightly proud to have given birth and sustenance to an outstanding warrior such as Bobby Symonette, a man who left his country a much better place than he found it.