

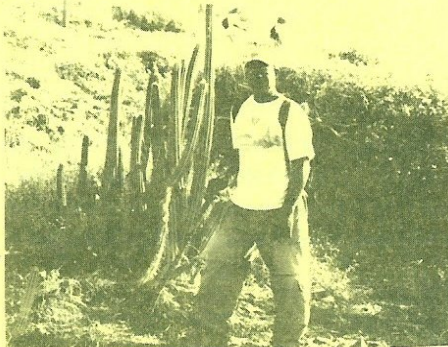
JULY - SEPTEMBER 2003

# NEWSLETTER

## THE PRESIDENT SPEAKS

by Sonia Maynard-John

*It is now midyear and our hiking page has surely turned. Our Education Committee, under the chairmanship of Raymond Hector,*



*has exposed us to new areas such as the Brook's Hill, Claremont, and other trails.*

*The committee also introduced us to the experience of a kayak trip at Salt River. The folks who attended this trip had a great time, and we feel impelled to do it again for the benefit of those who have never had the thrill of kayaking.*

*The Hiking Association was formed to encourage Virgin Islanders to learn more about the history and culture of our territory and the rest of the Caribbean Islands. So, in the spirit of sisterly and brotherly love, let us stay focused as we keep on hiking and exploring from shore to shore, from island to island. This should be our aim.*

*Let's not limit ourselves in our quest for knowledge, but continue in an effort to learn more. The Caribbean is a train of islands and there are many places among them waiting for us to explore.*

*Special thanks to all who have helped to make our upcoming Dominica trip a possibility. When we work as a*

*team we can be assured of success. So let us not be weary in lending or giving a helping hand in the interest of our organization. Your ideas and mine combine to make for good team building.*

## ALONG THE TRAIL

### *Bake sale*

The bake sale which was held on May 10 was a resounding success, thanks to the organizational skill of the chairperson, Lystra Marquis. A wide variety of goodies, made and submitted by Hiking Association members, were offered to the public for sale.

There are many other fund raising activities which we can use in order to involve a wider number of our membership. Our members are standing by, eagerly awaiting the opportunity to contribute their talents. Come on and let's do it.

Kudos to all the participants, sellers and contributors, who made the Bake sale a success. Kudos to the members of the Fund Raising Committee.

### *Turtle Watch*

A Turtle watch can be a fruitlessly frustrating event. One wonders, at times, if the turtles do not intentionally refuse to satisfy the curiosity of the strange two-legged creatures who gather on the Sandy Point shore during the laying season to see them lay their eggs by not coming ashore until the beach has been abandoned by the prying eyes of the mosquito-bitten, cold and sleepy bipeds.

Fortunately, on the evening of May 23, six Leather back turtles came ashore in the presence of the 31 Hiking

Association members and friends who had gathered to observe this awesome, life-perpetuating event.

These massive volkswagen-like creatures, animals measuring more than 6 feet and weighing as much as 1400 pounds, lumbered their way up from the ocean and surgically dug their nests in the sand where they laid and concealed their eggs, and then returned to the sea. Far removed from the noises and lights of civilization, wrapped, as it were, in the arms of Nature, this was an event which was rendered even more spiritual by the occurrence of a lunar eclipse.

### *Kayak Trip*

After exploring the Salt River area by hiking along the mucky shores of the mangrove and becoming marooned (*See the April-June Newsletter*), we decided to explore the area from the safety of kayaks.

A few adventurous souls gathered at the Salt River Marina on the morning of May 26 and realized in no time at all that most of them did not know how to handle a kayak. But curious, hardy, intrepid explorers that we are, this did not deter us, nor did it present us with an insurmountable problem. We quickly learned the rudiments of kayaking, and had a most enjoyable experience, one which warrants a repeat performance. Look out for the date and time.

### *Scenic Road West*

Partially obscured by the scrub growing beside the once popular trail, one could discern the remains of a burnt automobile. Adjacent to this were piles of



household refuse: stoves, baby strollers, pots, pans, and used paper cups and plates. Was this in the vicinity of the Anguilla landfill?. No. It was the Scenic Drive West, a part of the St. Croix Heritage Trail system.

The concept of the St. Croix Heritage Trail, which was designated one of fifty Millennium Legacy Trails by the White House Millennium Council, was introduced with a lot of fanfare. But, alas, like most of the other Millennium-related activities, much hasn't been done to improve or maintain the already existing trails.

Many of the most scenic areas along this drive are concealed by overgrown brush, and the ever present garbage, household discards, bottles, cans, and burnt out cars could be seen as we wended our way over the ruggedly desolate terrain.

On this hike we trekked from Estate River via Rtes. 69, 78 and 58 to the Mt. Victory campground. Down in the valley, to the left, we saw the fertile valley comprising parts of estates Hermitage, Fountain Valley, River and Parasol, an area once dedicated to the growing of sugarcane.

Shortly after entering Rte 78 we made a detour up a hill from which we could see both the north and south shores. What a breathtaking view! Another detour took us to the Mill of Estate Bodkin which has a grove of guava trees growing along the dirt path leading up to the mill. Of all the mills in St. Croix, this one has the highest elevation.

Passing close to Scenic Ridge one could see Mt. Eagle and Blue Mountain as well as Estates Hard Labor, Two Friends, Springfield and others. The flora along the way was quite interesting, including Passiflora, tan-tan, yellow cedar, Christmas bush, jumbie bead and many other medicinal and non-medicinal vines, shrubs and trees.

This was a difficult but very educational hike.

### **Scenic Road West** (continued)

This hike, on June 21, began where the last hike (June 8) ended at Mt. Victory. Walking back to the juncture of Rtes. 58 and 78, we resumed our exploration of Rte. 78 by making a left turn after stopping at the juncture to refresh and fortify ourselves for the long journey ahead

with mangoes picked from trees found growing at the side of the road.

For many of us this was virgin territory. The vegetation was somewhat uninteresting and monotonous with an overabundance of tan-tan, logwood and tamarind trees.

As we wended our way we could see the clearly defined ridges and gorges of the Caledonia Valley on the left and the mills of Nicholas and Mt. Victory to the south. On the right was the historic Maroon Ridge range and the U.S.C.G. Lighthouse. Finally, bypassing the Ham's Bluff mill, we came to the entrance to the Crusher, our intended destination.

This was good preparation for our upcoming Dominica trip. It was down hill most of the way, forcing us to use muscles that have remained idle for much too long.

## **AROUND THE BEND**

### **East end Moonlight hike**

This romantic hike begins at Cramer's Park on July 13, at 6:30 PM. Walking in a southerly direction along a dirt road we will pass the National Radio Astronomy Observatory dish telescope on the right. At the top of the hill, near the sign marked "Nature Conservancy" and overlooking Jack's Bay, hikers will turn to the left and ascend one of the Goat Hills.

There are two Goat Hills (Mama and Papa, I suppose) and a Kid Peak in this area. One of the Goat Hills is called Sugar Loaf.

From our destination atop the easterly Goat Hill we will look down on the Millennium Monument which was built on Kid Peak, just above point Udall. Other views from this vantage point include Saba directly to the east, which can be seen on a very clear day, and the British Virgin Islands, St. Thomas and St. John to the north. Looking to the south we will see the ocean waves breaking on the shoals of Isaac's Bay.

After enjoying the beautiful moonlight and the cool breezes coming from "Hurricane Hole", hikers will return to the starting point at Cramer's Park.

### **Dominica Trip**

**St. Croix:** - Area: 84 square miles.

**Dominica:** - Area: 290 square

miles.

**St. Croix:** - Dry with no running rivers and a few seasonal ponds.

**Dominica:** - Very rainy with 365 rivers, numerous waterfalls and lakes.

**St. Croix:** - Highest Peak is Mt. Eagle, elevation 1165 feet

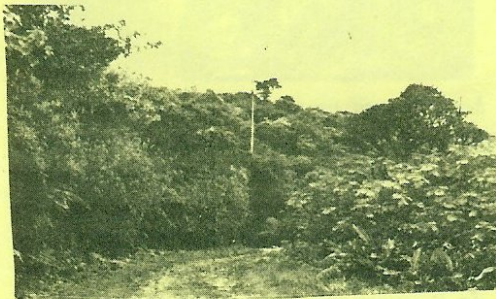
**Dominica:** - Highest Peak is Morne Diablotin, elevation 4747 feet.

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The comparison can go on and on, but the differences can only be appreciated if you join us on our excursion to the Nature Island which is known by its original name, Waitikubuli ("tall is her body") and by the name given to it by Columbus who stumbled upon (discovered?) the island on a Sunday (Domingo, in Spanish) and called it Dominica.

We will attempt to explore the secrets of this beautiful island during the period September 19 to September 26.

Highlights of the trip will be our hikes to Morne Diablotin, the Valley of Desolation, the Boiling Lake (92°C), the beautiful Emerald Pool, the majestic Victoria and Middleham Falls, the Carib Territory, and many other places of interest.



Dominica is like a well tended flower garden, and agriculture, one of the mainstays of its economy, is evident wherever one goes.

If we are lucky we will see the beautiful Sisserou, the national bird of the nation, and we will most certainly hear the melodious flute like songs of the Siffleur Montagne, or Mountain Whistler, as we get up to the higher elevations of the island. At night we will hear the raucous songs of the delicate and delectable Mountain Chicken, but we will most likely not encounter Agoutis, Manicous and the wild pig. These creatures have been hunted almost to the point of extinction in order to satisfy the palates of tourists and other visitors to the island, who find it impossible to eat anything but these delicacies when once they've tasted them,



(Continued from Page 2)

washing down the flavorful meat with glasses of refreshing Kubuli..

#### **Mount Victory Camp out**

The Hiking Association camped at the Mt. Victory Camp last year and was pleasantly surprised to find such accommodations right here in St. Croix. Our experience compared favorably with those we've had at off-island destinations.

This year's Camp will run from August 15 to August 17. Plan to join us for the camaraderie, hiking, cooking, and other outdoor activities.

#### **Good Hope-Pool Sunset Hike**

This early evening hike will be held on Sunday, September 7. Folks are wondering why these afternoon/evening hikes are held on Sundays when most of the hikers have to go to work early on the following day. They would like the organization to consider doing some of these hikes on Saturdays. And, indeed, it would be a good idea to alternate Saturdays and Sundays in the future.

We will proceed from Good Hope and hike most of the way along the coastline to the Frederiksted Pool.

#### **MILESTONES**

We offer our heartfelt condolences to Celina Santana whose brother passed away

#### **RECOMMENDED READING**

Leonard M. Adkins, **THE CARIBBEAN, A Walking & Hiking Guide**, 3rd Ed., Hunter Publishing, Inc.

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