

## EDWARD GERALD PATRICK St GEORGE

1928-2004

Edward St George is dead. He was as Maltese as they come: his father was Nazzareno Zimmermann Barbaro and his mother was Cecilia de Piro. His paternal grandfather Ermolau was the man who endowed the Nazzareno Church and his maternal grandfather Igino achieved notice from being the only Maltese at the famous siege of Ladysmith in South Africa and also from becoming President of the Maltese Senate.

From an early age he proved to be bright – sometimes embarrassingly so: at the age of nine he twice successively beat a much-respected schoolmaster at chess. He had no problems with learning at school and his only sporting accolade was concerned with converting a rugger ball. Dom Raphael Appleby, a contemporary of his who would become Head Master of Downside, wrote the following only a few days ago:

*“I remember Edward St George well. To a small boy he was something of a hero in the school as he was a real nonconformist. I remember him infuriating all the rugby coaches by turning up for the house place-kicking competition in a regulation suit with one boot on his right foot: everyone else was beautifully turned out in rugger kit. Edward proceeded to kick every goal and to win the competition easily for his house. The pundits were furious!”*

Edward’s half page obituary in last Friday’s Daily Telegraph was an eye-opener. He had managed for most of his life to keep a low profile allowing all the publicity of the track to fall upon his brother Charles who was accredited with winning fifty-six classic races. Edward’s death has brought with it a barrage of praise concerning the heftiness of his charitable donations.

“The secret of life is to find something you really enjoy doing, then find someone else to pay you for doing it,” said Edward St. George, barrister, international businessman, racehorse owner and philanthropist, in a rare interview. Original thinker and man of many lives, he was born in Lija at Villa Parisio on on March 6th 1928. One of his early memories was of being strafed by a German fighter pilot in a Messerschmitt as he bicycled home. Another was of being patted on the head by Mussolini as he paddled in the sea with his governess Miss Anita, on the lido of Camaiore at Viareggio in

Italy.

At the height of World War II, 12-year-old ‘Teddy’ left Malta for England, alone in a convoy of ships, torpedoed nightly by German U-boats, to attend a somewhat Dickensian preparatory school, run by cane-wielding monks. For the next four years, he did not see his mother. This was followed by Downside and Merton College, Oxford, where he obtained a first in Law. At Oxford, during an argument over ‘digs’, he met one life-long friend, American eccentric globetrotter Burt Kerr Todd and through him another, Lhendup ‘Lenny’ Dorji, and brother Jigme, from the royal family of the small Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan.

After university, Edward and Burt set off on a two-year tour of the world with a third friend, Paul Bower. In Katmandu, capital of Nepal, they obtained a rare audience with the fearsome Maharajah Mohun Shamshere Jung Bahadur Rana and rashly sought permission to climb Everest from a never-attempted Nepalese face. The bemused Maharaja granted it and the trio were forced to hike 500 miles across some of the world’s highest snow-capped mountains. They were the first Westerners to reach base camp, but unfit, unprepared, and unaccustomed to dysentery, they gave up quite quickly afterwards. Edward often scoffed at exercise. He used to say: “The body is like a car; the more mileage you put on it, the quicker it is likely to break down; best to keep it in the garage and polish it up from time to time.”

Called to the Bar at the Inner Temple in 1951, Edward continued to build strong ties with the Kingdom of Bhutan and became adviser to the late King. Alarmed by the screams of a hapless offender being flogged in the ‘dzong’ during one audience, he suggested a constitution along Westminster lines and set up a judicial system. The assassination of his close friend Prime Minister Jigme Dorji, by the Commander-in-Chief of the army, occasioned the kingdom’s first formal trial by jury. To local amazement, he convened a court of ‘oyer and terminer’ and insisted the accused was treated with dignity; shaved and properly attired. Despite having written it, he always said the ‘summing up’ was so moving that the King, the apologetic accused, the whole court and even he himself were in tears.

The King then sent the crown prince (and present King), daughters and a nephew to England with Edward to be educated. This nephew Paljor Dorji, nicknamed ‘Benji’ became Bhutan’s first Chief Justice, despite studying ‘the Sporting Life’ newspaper more diligently than his tomes on jurisprudence. This was not surprising as Edward spent days at the racecourse with his

brother Charles trying to earn some extra 'loot' by punting. In 1954 he married Kathleen, the daughter of bookmaker William Hill and had two daughters, Sarah also a barrister and Caroline who has four children. He often had trouble making ends meet, and when really broke, he used to pick a two-horse race and back both horses with two different bookmakers. He would then collect his winnings in cash and delay paying his losing bet (usually to his father-in-law) as long as possible.

In 1956 aged 28, Edward accepted what was considered in the colonial service, a playboy's post, as Chief Magistrate in Nassau, Bahamas. He immediately fell in love with the islands and the Bahamian people, who were warm and hospitable. In return he dispensed island justice leniently and with plenty of humour. He identified with the grass-root Bahamians and young political activists; junior prosecuting counsel Lynden Pindling would, as the Prime Minister of the Bahamas, lead his country to Independence in 1973. A young court policeman, Albert Miller, would later become Edward's partner and company President. Edward sent no one to prison and took the taxi-drivers side in a national dispute. This did not go down well with the old guard who admonished him to be more serious. He once provoked the ire of Solicitor General Sir Ralph Campbell over a 30 mph speed limit on the long road home to his house in Lyford Cay, pushing for 60 mph and eventually persuading him to split the difference at 45. It remains so. He was for a time acting Solicitor General himself and was always a popular fourth at the bridge tables of Lyford Cay society in the 50s, sometimes peeving his smart hostesses with wild grand slam bidding; this he referred to as 'the Bhutanese convention'.

Sadness followed with the tragic death of his wife and restless again, he joined the United Nations Organisation in 1960, as legal adviser, taking up a post in Beirut to negotiate a peace treaty in the Middle East. Journeying through the Middle East, Fiji, the Philippines and Indonesia. Among others, he became friends with Ratu Mara the Prime Minister of Fiji, the King of Morocco and Professor Sumitro Djojohadikusumo Minister of Trade in Indonesia. During these trips he developed another hobby: bullion coins.

Initially working with Spinks and the Royal mint, he produced silver and gold coins for Bhutan. Later he conceived an international project with the World Wildlife Fund and the IUCN for the issue of coins bearing the Head of State on one face and an endangered animal on the other. It was a brilliant concept, which raised \$5 million for conservation among the 24 participating countries ranging from Thailand to Tanzania. This was followed by an issue

for UNICEF to commemorate The International Year of the Child, participated in by 35 countries, including the International Republic of China; its first ever global accord. Edward's dream of a full Troy ounce gold coin led to South Africa's Krugerrand. He was actively partnered in these coin projects by his second wife Mary Mullen, whom he met in New York. Despite ranting on the subject of American women, they married in 1968 and had one daughter Laura, a music therapist and Reiki master. Edward briefly went back to practicing at the Bar in London, but Mary who did not much care for the 'moth-eaten' aspect of the English gentry nor the cigar-smoke of racecourse boyos encouraged him to move back to the Bahamas which he duly did in 1967.

Edward loved nothing more than a business deal, and business foes often ended up close friends like debonair mogul Charlie Allen of Allen & Co in New York, an early investor in Grand Bahama. Edward was a brilliant negotiator with an open inquisitive mind. He treated business like a chess game, jumped on a plane at the drop of a hat and spent hours every day dreaming up ideas or 'spieling' on the telephone. Landing this time on the island of Grand Bahama, he worked with Sir Charles Hayward and the Firth Cleveland Group, while forming a law firm, first with John Lamb, then with Bahamian Ruby Nottage. Sir Charles was then a minority owner of The Grand Bahama Port Authority; itself a subsidiary of a US listed public company.

In a daring coup ten years on, Edward and Sir 'Union' Jack Hayward (son of Sir Charles) took on the management of the Port Authority under a treaty to govern the island called The Hawksbill Creek Agreement. As one source quotes: "When Edward took over in 1976 the place was really a ghost town. The group was losing \$2.5 million annually and the future looked bleak."

In 1979, majority owner and wily old hand, Sir Wallace Groves invited Edward to a meeting in his office. As one of Edward's many business skills was the art of reading upside down, he realised that Wallace was triggering a buy/sell agreement of Hayward family shares in the parent company ICD (InterContinental Diversified, formerly Benget). Edward and Jack refused Sir Wallace's offer and countered with a cheeky David vs Goliath challenge to buy out his 42% share of the company with \$42 million. 'We had thirty days to scrape up and borrow everything we could' said Edward. Somehow they persuaded the banks. "It was done with strings and mirrors," he used to say. One year later they stuck their necks out even further and raised another

\$70 million to buy out the other shareholders and turn the company private, contrary to the venture capital trend of the time. It was reported in the papers that a lawyer and a playboy were now running Grand Bahama. Upon reading this Jack (current owner of the football team, Wolverhampton Wanderers) was supposed to have muttered: "...but they've got it wrong; I'm not a lawyer!"

Edward often remarked that he loved being in the Bahamas so much he was going to throw his passport away. But in England he fell in love with Lady Henrietta FitzRoy, daughter of the Duke and Duchess of Grafton and they married in 1979. Henrietta moved to the Bahamas to her parents' dismay. She said they had visions of James Bond and roulette wheels and imagined, "we had slot machines all down the front drive." This myth was laid to rest as Henrietta and Edward founded the Grand Bahama Children's Home, for orphans and abandoned children as well as the Beacon School for handicapped children, the Genesis Academy for problem boys, the Pace Centre for pregnant teens and a huge scholarship program. "Freeport was a city without a soul," the late Prime Minister Sir Lynden Pindling once blazed - no longer. With Henrietta by his side, Edward settled permanently in Grand Bahama for the last 25 years of his life. They had two children Henry 21 and Katie 20 who are at university in Newcastle and Bristol respectively.

Popular at all levels, and mindful of the unique relationship he enjoyed with the Bahamian Government and successive Prime Ministers Hubert Ingraham and Perry Christie, Edward became inordinately proud of his work in the Bahamian community. For St Georges' High School, he created a school marching band, and chose its musical instruments, often turning up at assembly to make an impromptu speech or two. Ghettos were replaced with decent housing. It was not unusual for him to be found, in suit and tie, pottering around some rough neighbourhood on a whim, introducing himself with the words: "Good evening my friend, I'm Edward St George Chairman of the Port Authority. Is there anything we can do for you?" His informal management style could infuriate colleagues, longing for routine, because he insisted that anyone who wanted to see him in his office was welcome. Says Jack Hayward, "Nobody ever left disappointed; that's why there was always a queue."

An old-fashioned patriarch with a Mediterranean sense of family, he sometimes held up business meetings to take a call about a failed exam or missed flight. He called each of his children almost daily wherever they

were in the world giving advice, and expressing strong views on their friends and lifestyle. When a hippy boyfriend with a ponytail turned up on the doorstep, he was not impressed. “But he's very clever, daddy!” griped the adolescent. “In my experience, the only thing you find under a pony’s tail is a horse’s arse,” came the breezy riposte.

Once a year for a summer holiday ‘Uncle Ted’ took his brood to Malta. He remained Honorary President of the Santa Maria and Lourdes Band Clubs in Qrendi, whose feast days involved a noisy procession through the street amidst technicolour fireworks with Edward hoisted shoulder high. Visiting his many catholic cousins, he organized large family reunions which, while light-hearted, often ended with him counselling chastely: “As granny used to say, it was never charity that emptied the purse, nor love that emptied the heart.”

When his brother Charles died, Edward continued to run his Newmarket stables as Lucayan Stud and adopted his famous black and white chevron colours. Unlike his brother, he did not handle losing with equanimity; once commenting: “show me a good loser and I’ll show you a born loser.” But nobody who accompanied him to the races left empty-handed; he always ensured that even the youngest members of the party received a share of any winnings. He was quick to spot future talent and engaged Frankie Dettori and Olivier Peslier, before they became superstars. When Dettori once had an unlucky ride for him at Doncaster, he greeted him after the race with the words: “Frankie what’s the Italian for jackass?” Favourite trainers included David Loder, Jeremy Nosedá, Richard Hannon and David ‘Dandy’ Nichols. Naming horses after friends, family, and places in the Bahamas, some of the best included Brave Burt, Desert Prince (Irish 2000 Guineas and Queen Elizabeth II stakes), Bahamian Bounty, Lucky Lionel and Kool Kat Katie. His recent success with 9 year-old Bahamian Pirate in the Nunthorpe Stakes gave him the oldest Group One winner in racing history. Said Graham Greene of the Racing Post: “He was always prepared to sell if offered what he considered a good deal. This shrewd business sense enabled him to become one of the rare breed that made their racing self-financing.” Racing mates included Henrietta’s brother James Euston, although much of it had to be watched from the Bahamas, on satellite TV early in the morning (because of the time change) with Edward and guests gathered round the television in pyjamas. Edward’s sporting interests included American football; a Director of the American Superbowl champions, the LA Rams he negotiated their move to Missouri as the St Louis Rams.

Edward, also an avid collector of art, antique coins and jade, loved the auction room, and at one stage considered buying Christies and Spinks. Trained by his cultured mother ‘Cissy’ as a young man in Florence, he had an unerring eye, which amazed the youngbloods. His mathematical mind leant itself to architectural drawings and he loved nothing better than poring over plans for new buildings in Grand Bahama. He built a pink Palladian courthouse and Port Lucaya, a Bahamian-style village of shops, bars, music and restaurants around a scenic port. On the out-island of Andros, Edward gave his friend old-timer and master craftsman Kingston Brown a mandate to build a traditional wooden Bahamian sailing sloop. The boat took two years to complete, and each plank of the hull was handpicked by Kingston who would disappear into the bush for weeks on end. ‘The Lucayan Lady’ competed every year in the Georgetown Regatta to great local excitement. Wagers were laid. Edward and race fans followed in a dinghy shouting and cheering. Rules were disputed and crew hurled overboard for ballast. Kingston would dress in top hat and tails and once famously proclaimed: “I is a genius and genius he born, not made.” In his spare time, Edward minted more bullion coins for the Bahamas Government including one commemorating the ‘Golden Girls’ first Olympic Gold Medal for the Bahamas in the women’s relay race at the Sydney Games of 2000.

His global vision and concerns about relying too heavily on tourism for revenue, drove Edward to seek multinational partners to secure economic stability for Grand Bahama. His genius was to forge new ties with China and bring in such a reputable and important team of other investors. The Southern Company of Atlanta (later called Mirant), a giant US utility holding company took a 50% share of the Grand Bahama Power Company. An industrial harbour for large container ships was constructed with new partners Hutchison Whampoa Ltd of Hong Kong, the largest port-holding company in the world. Hutchison later bought into Devco (the land development company) and the International Airport. The Italian Mediterranean Shipping Company, 2nd largest in the world, own and operate container ships with their main hub for western trans-shipment on Grand Bahama. As a result of Edward bringing Hutchison to the Bahamas, they invested over \$350 million in the then government-owned Lucayan Beach Hotel, building the Our Lucayan complex of hotels, shops and casino. French company Vivendi stepped up to a 50% share of the GB Sanitation Company, and a shipyard with the largest dry dock in the world was built.

Most recently, CITIC (China International Trust and Investment Corporation), plans to create a commodities distribution centre worth several

hundred million that will manufacture and complete Chinese products for distribution in the Western hemisphere. Meanwhile in Nassau, Edward's introduction of South African tycoon Sol Kerzner to P.M. Sir Lynden Pindling, a decade ago, led to the Atlantis resort on Paradise Island, Nassau; 2nd largest employer of Bahamians after the government and an investment of 1.5 billion dollars. When President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa visited in 2003, he invited Edward to lecture the South African business community on how the private sector and Government should work together. Edward's last gamble was to partner Pharmachem pharmaceuticals to produce on Grand Bahama, a revolutionary HIV treatment, Viread which obtained FDA approval only ten days ago in December 2004. Developing countries, primarily in Africa, will be given this at its cost of production. Grand Bahama's population has swelled to over 65,000 and the island has rapidly become the commercial capital of the Bahamas.

In early September 2004, not one, but two, freak hurricanes packing 120 mile an hour winds, Frances and Jeanne, hit Grand Bahama in quick succession. "My life's work blown away!" exclaimed Edward taking the wheel of a truck in the midst of the first storm, determined to visit the power company and devastated settlements. He had not driven a gear shift for so long that this effort only served to endanger even more lives. After the hurricanes, he worked tirelessly to restore supplies of water, food and electricity and to rehouse the homeless, and repair the damage. Recently he said "thank goodness, we are almost back to normal again." Then in late October he started having chest pains.

Edward died on Sunday December 20th 2004 at midnight in the Methodist Hospital in Houston Texas after heart surgery. In the Intensive Care Unit, still groggy from anaesthesia, he regaled doctors and nurses with tales and jokes and announced that he was going home immediately. Shortly after complications set in, he remonstrated; "Bloody stupid of me to let them talk me into this." He was not one to give up on life easily, and as often before, he quoted from his one-time acquaintance Dylan Thomas: "Do not go gentle into that dark night; rage, rage, against the dying of the light." But in the end it was peaceful. That was Edward. Even the hardest in the hospital wept and as for the island of Grand Bahama and his family; it's sheer disbelief. He was thought to be invincible. His funeral in the Bahamas was attended by many thousands and the prime Minister made an official statement declaring the sadness of the nation and the debt owed to this outstanding man. He said, "Mr. St. George was truly a giant in the economic development of our nation's major city in the north. His vision for the future

of Freeport and the island of Grand Bahama generally, was a beacon for the values of self-determination and economic success so evident in the citizenry of the city which he dearly loved and to which he devoted his life's energies.”

“I hope,” Edward used to say, “I have left a footprint in the sand.”

Written by Sarah St. George.

Introduction by Nicholas De Piro.