**ROBERT YOUNG’S TRIBUTE**

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 **by**

 **Harold Dougan**

**Friends, countrymen and extended Bowman and Young families, I stand before you today as an alternate to my dear cousin Hughes who is now the only survivor of the Villager subset group of three comprising Toby Huggins, Hughes himself and our dear Robert, whom today we are sending off to the great Valhalla.**

**At this juncture, I must acknowledge the presence in the house of the Hon. Arnhim Eustace, former Prime Minister, former Leader of the Opposition, and a former great friend and co-Edinboro resident of Robert.**

**My cousin Hughes has had to go off to the United States at this time and could not be with us this morning, for which he has tendered his profound regrets. He has asked me to confirm his credentials as one of the three friends by mentioning firstly that the three of them attended the St. Vincent Grammar School at the same time and emerged from it, with Robert and Toby going off to UWI St. Augustine to study Engineering and he to UWI Mona to study Medicine, and secondly, more importantly, that when later in life Robert decided that he wanted to date Irma, he marshalled Toby and Hughes himself to accompany him on all his pre-dating trips to the Bowman home to provide him with the succour and strength to confront the daunting and overprotective parents and the equally daunting bunch of sister-daughters of all ages, all of whom shared in an island-wide reputation of being brighter than their peers. Hughes tells me that many times they would sit outside in their car for long periods until it was considered sufficiently propitious to do something that would hopefully get their presence acknowledged and induce an invitation into the house. Those well-beefed up visits suffered many a setback but turned out to be good strategy, resulting in the fullness of time in Irma becoming Robert's wife for 49 years until his death.**

**Though not one of the notorious three friends myself, I could establish my own credentials by informing that my relationship with Robert went way way back in time as his parents were big friends of several Ratho-Mill parents, my own included, and his mother was my god-mother, the best god-mother in the world, especially at Christmas time.**

**Credentials notwithstanding, I will assume responsibility for all the shortcomings in this tribute.**

**It has become the custom these days to commence a funeral tribute by declaring that your aim is to celebrate the life of the beloved deceased rather than to bemoan his loss. I have grave difficulty taking that position, or at least saying it, since I am not yet reconciled with the shock of the suddenness and the untimeliness of Robert's death.**

**For me, Robert was an exemplar of discipline and the epitome of good health, and lived a squeaky clean physical life. He didn't knowingly consume anything he shouldn't consume, and regularly exercised with quite considerable rigour and spartan selfflagellation. Indeed, even the sports he indulged in, like the martial arts - judo, karate, kung fu, taekwondo - seemed to have been selected by him mostly for their exercise value than their sports value. He was always confident, even combative, in his physical fitness, and I remember a long time ago Cims Martin, of sombre memory now, but at the time bigger and heavier than Robert, drew him into a wrestling tussle on the beach, but in the twinkling of an eye, and to his utter dismay, Cims was made a mess of and found himself felled in the sand like he was absolutely no match for Robert. I am sure that that was one incident that Cims would have hastened to jettison from his memory.**

**Somehow, I seem to recall that the Hon. Arnhim Eustace was present at this happening, and may have wished he too had an opportunity to inflict a high-fall on Cims, as Robert did.**

**Up to his death, Robert looked extremely buff and well-conditioned. It is for these reasons, but also because he was younger than I am, that I sure would not have wagered that I would survive him. And that's why the suddenness and untimeliness of his death is still a shocker to me, making it difficult for me to talk of celebrating his life rather than bemoaning his loss.**

**Robert's full name was Ian Robert Anthony Young, as I understand it, the selfsame name in every respect of his father. A son who acquired his names that way would be a highly favoured son; and indeed Robert was. No, he was no prodigal son who spent lavishly and extravagantly on useless things. But his life from birth through his early manhood was one of privilege, albeit enlightened privilege.**

**From a very young age, Robert developed a very acute interest in how things worked. This inquiring spirit developed essentially into an interest in science and technology. So at an early age, Robert became steeped on a regular basis in magazines like Popular Science, Popular Mechanics, American Scientific and National Geographic. These were very serious magazines that most of his peers would have considered too mature and abstruse for them. Automobiles consumed his mind all his life and he was never without an issue of Car Mechanics or Autocar to read. Photography was an interest Robert developed early as well, and subscribed regularly to Amateur Photographer and Popular Photography magazines. An interest in ham radio developed later and persisted through his life.**

**As a boy and young man, Robert devoted a substantially much higher percentage of his time to the pursuit of these interests than did his peers for whom so much of their preoccupation was with liming with one another, chasing girls, playing cricket and football and other sports, parties, frolicking generally, or simply getting up to mischief.**

**It was to the pursuit of these interests that so much of the spoils of his privileged life was devoted. Robert did more than subscribing to magazines. Of all his interests, the one that took pride of place was the automobile. Not surprising then that he studied Mechanical Engineering at the University of the West Indies. And in pursuit of that interest, Robert not merely drove an exceedingly wide array of models and types of vehicles, but rotated ownership of them nearly as much. A lot of vehicles passed through his hands. It was as if he needed to test the performance himself of every development in the motor industry. Thus, if not the first, he was one of the first to own the revolutionary Mini car out of England with its independent suspension, transverse engine, front-wheel drive and no long heavy drive-shaft. Was its traction better? Did it over-steer? Did it utilize space more efficiently than rear-wheel cars? Robert did not do this solely for his own benefit; he would share his findings with us, and demonstrate them, to boot. Not only would he arouse our interest in these matters, he would also educate us, complete with demonstrations. I distinctly remember him driving that mini off the main road up into our yard in Ratho-Mill over ground that bore no semblance to a vehicular path and further up the hill on very rugged agricultural land that was lying fallow at the time. For us, the traction superiority of front-wheel drive was confirmed. This kind of routine repeated itself with all the vehicles he owned from time to time, and jumped from vehicles to cameras to electronic calculators to computers to speakers, on and on. A normally laconic man of a few well-chosen words, one had only to touch however obliquely on any aspect of these subject matters to see how rapidly he would morph into an expansively talkative chatterbox, In all of those areas, Robert was the man, the pioneer, and we learnt a lot from him.**

**But Robert was more than cars and cameras and ham radio and electronic calculators and computers and amplifiers and speakers. From the time he got married, forty-nine years ago, he also became a dedicated and devoted family man for whom family preponderated over self. He gave so much time to family that his wife, a little concerned that he could sustain it, un-Vincentian-like, indicated to him that it would be ok if he joined his friends for a drink and a huddle at the Round Table in Calliaqua now and then. Robert turned up once, had a few drinks, bonded well with us, but never came back. His mind was made up on a nuclear family life.**

**Professionally, Robert was a trained mechanical engineer. For a while he worked as an engineer with Vinlec or by whatever name it was known at the time. Following that stint, he joined the family-owned Valu Electrical Co., which came under his full tutelage on the death of his father. As a businessman and entrepreneur, he could not claim too many kudos as Valu Electric, a marque electrical and electronic company, perished under his watch, though he may not have been entirely responsible for the demise. After that, he worked as a private electrical contractor or electrical consultant until his death.**

**It's left now only for me to say: Farewell, my friend. And May You Rest Forever In Peace!**

