

# STAR

"The Newspaper That Cares And Dares To Bring Out The Truth"



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## SAN IGNACIO HUSBAND AND WIFE CRASH ON THE NORTHERN HIGHWAY

**SAN IGNACIO TOWN, Cayo, Thursday, October 25, 2007:**

Ladyville Police is actively investigating a head on collision, which occurred at around 12:30 pm on Wednesday, October 24, 2007, on the Northern Highway in which the two vehicles involved were individually driven by a husband and wife couple, both primary school teachers from San Ignacio.

As a result of the rather strange occurrence, the investigation, according to the police, could very well follow the path of an act committed with criminal intent instead of a traffic accident.



**Eugenio Contreras Jr., 39**

With no official report from the police press office, the incident might have gone unreported in the media. It came to our attention at the request

and insistence of the wife's side to bring the incident to the public's attention.

The information reaching us therefore is that the 13-year marriage, which has produced two children, a 12 year old daughter and a 7 year old son, has been going through some turbulent times over the past several months. At the invitation of the family, we visited the mother's home in San Ignacio Town and were invited into a bedroom where we spoke with a badly bruised and scraped wife with a visibly swollen instep of the left foot.

The wife, **Aida Herrera Contreras**, 34, informed that she is currently on study leave from Succotz Roman Catholic School while pursuing a Bachelor's degree in primary education at the University of Belize, Belmopan Campus. The husband, she informed, is **Eugenio Contreras Jr.**, 39, currently



**Aida Herrera Contreras, 34**

teaching at the Government Primary School in Biscayne Village on the Northern Highway. Mr. Contreras is also a semi-pro/FIFA qualified referee.

Mrs. Contreras informed that the relationship reached its climax on Wednesday, October 24, when she came upon some disturbing email exchanges between her husband and a woman. Accompanied by her 7-year old son in the back seat of her white Kia Sportage vehicle, she reportedly departed from San Ignacio Town at around 10:00 am on Wednesday, October 24, for the drive to Sand Hill to let her husband know that the relationship was over and to request, she said, for him to hand over the keys for the house they shared on 18<sup>th</sup> Street in San Ignacio Town.

When she arrived in Sand Hill, he was not at the house belonging to his brother, where he stays during the weekdays. She then drove the next

## The New Dr. Winnel Gentle

**SANTA ELENA TOWN, Cayo Tuesday, October 23, 2007:**

Many of us grew up with Pastor Alvan Gentle's church in Esperanza Village, Cayo. We have known of Pastor Gentle's Church from our childhood days long before all those Evangelical churches started to spring up across the nation.

Pastor, now **Bishop Alvan Gentle Sr.** has dedicated his entire life in service to the Creatator. He is now advanced in age notwithstanding, he continues to serve the congregation at Holiness Temple Church of God in Christ at the very same location in Esperanza Village.

A press release coming out of Bishop Gentle's Church informs that his wife, Mrs. Winnel Gentle, has

been awarded an honorary title of Doctor of Divinity from the Universal Life Church and University of the Holy Ghost Theology and Outreach Mission, USA. The Honorary Doctor of Divinity Degree was awarded to Mrs. Gentle for outstanding and meritorious service in the work of God.

**Dr. Winnel Gentle** is also the holder of an Associates Degree in Religion from the Caribbean College of the Bible. She is the holder of a Universal Ministerial License.

We congratulate the new Dr. Winnel Gentle and wish her and the church only the very best as they continue in service to the Most High.

**Please Turn To Page 11 For Certificate Of Award**



**Dr. Winnel Gentle, DOD, ADR**

**Please Turn To Page 11**

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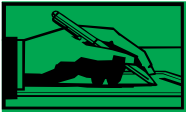
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## Editorial



### Vote With The Best Interest Of Your Country At Heart

The people have been suffering the hardships of the high cost of living, higher taxes, higher telephone, electricity and water rates.

The people have witnessed a 100% increase in the cost of their passports as well as a 100% increase in the environmental taxes and much, much more.

The people have also witnessed the sale and, in some instances, the giving away of their national assets to relatives, friends and cronies of those in high places.

The people have witnessed the destruction and raping of the nation's only development bank as was the now defunct Development Finance Corporation.

The people have lived through the blatant abuse of their social security funds by way of questionable dealings.

The people have witnessed the shameless attempt to saddle them with the private debt of the principals of Universal Health Services.

The nation has witnessed an endless chain of corrupt deals, one after the other, from the breaking down of a wall in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for a price tag of \$200,000, to the privatization of the company registry, to the issuing of donated hurricane supplies for shameless and blatant partisan political campaign purposes. And more recently, the lopsided Profit Sharing Agreement as it pertains to the exploration of the nation's new found oil wealth, while having been publicly exposed by the ever vigilant leader of the opposition, supported by the clamoring of the people, the prime minister turns around and merely *"cancels"* this obviously corrupt deal without even as much as holding anyone accountable for this latest irregular action that they were trying to sneak past the Belizean people.

All of this is taking place while, just this week, we were treated to the news of the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, **Hon. Dr. Ralph Gonsalves**, removing his minister of the Public Service for merely jumping the line in a bank and for influencing action against the bank employee who dared to put him in his place. In

direct contrast, politicians in Belize are allowed to virtually get away with murder. In Belize, a political *"God"* will never stand in line at a bank. They either go direct to bank managers or send their *"messengers"* to do these *"small"* tasks unless, of course, if the transaction involves the proceeds from one of those *"big"* deals.

And just when we thought that there was nothing else left for them to get their hands on, word is emerging of the sale of 2,700 acres of the Bacalar Chico Marine and Wildlife Reserve and that the government has already accepted a down payment of one million dollars from a South Korean developer.

Furthermore, the people have witnessed their Prime Minister publicly telling them that it is OK to lie.

And now, five months before the next general election, the people are witnessing the falling of the crumbs and the spoils, off the table of those who are seeking to retain power. The very same select and privileged few who will exhaust all efforts to retain power in order that they may continue to live in the lap of luxury while the masses suffer.

Feeding the masses with four months of crumbs can hardly compensate for fifty-six months of famine and hardship.

## STAR Newspaper

*"The Newspaper that cares and dares to bring out the truth"*

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Out of necessity, which is the position into which they have forced us, we must take the four months of crumbs but we must **NEVER** lose sight of those fifty-six months of starvation.

We must take the piece of land that they are only now giving us. We must take the land fill. We must take the 10% increase in pension that they are only now dishing out. And for those of us who, during these difficult economic times, can afford the trip, that *"cabinet in its wisdom"* is only now affording us to shop in the Corozal Free Zone on November 17th and December 15th, we must take that crumb because it is insignificant in comparison to all the hardships that we have had to endure over the years.

We must also take the \$25

increase in noncontributory pension from the Social Security Board. And all those male persons over the age of 67, are encouraged to form long lines outside every Social Security branch office countrywide so that they may likewise get on the Social Security political payroll because you deserve much, much more after suffering for so many years from the high cost of living and high taxes.

And finally, when they come around with that ham and turkey during Christmas week, we must also take it and ask them for more.

Your vote is sacred and secret. On election day you must go to the polls and mark your ballot with the best interest of your country at heart.

### Withdrawing Charges - "NOT SO" Says The Mother Of The Girl

**SANTA ELENA, Cayo, Tuesday, October 23, 2007:**

In last week's edition of the newspaper we headlined the article regarding the dismissal of San Ignacio's Sacred Heart Junior College Math professor **Anthony "Kevin" Rosado**.

In the article Rosado was quoted as saying *"I have been advised that my niece is now preparing to let the authorities know that the allegation and the statement she gave to the principal and the police are false."*

On Tuesday evening we received a call from a lady who told us that she is the girl's mother.

She informed that Rosado's statement is the **FURTHEST THING FROM THE TRUTH** as they have every intention to proceed with the matter.

She demanded an apology and informed us that her attorney would be contacting us the following day to demand a total retraction of the statement.

We offered to provide her copies of the newspaper in question to facilitate the process but she informed that she already has a copy of the newspaper.

As we go to press this Friday morning, we are still awaiting that call from her attorney.



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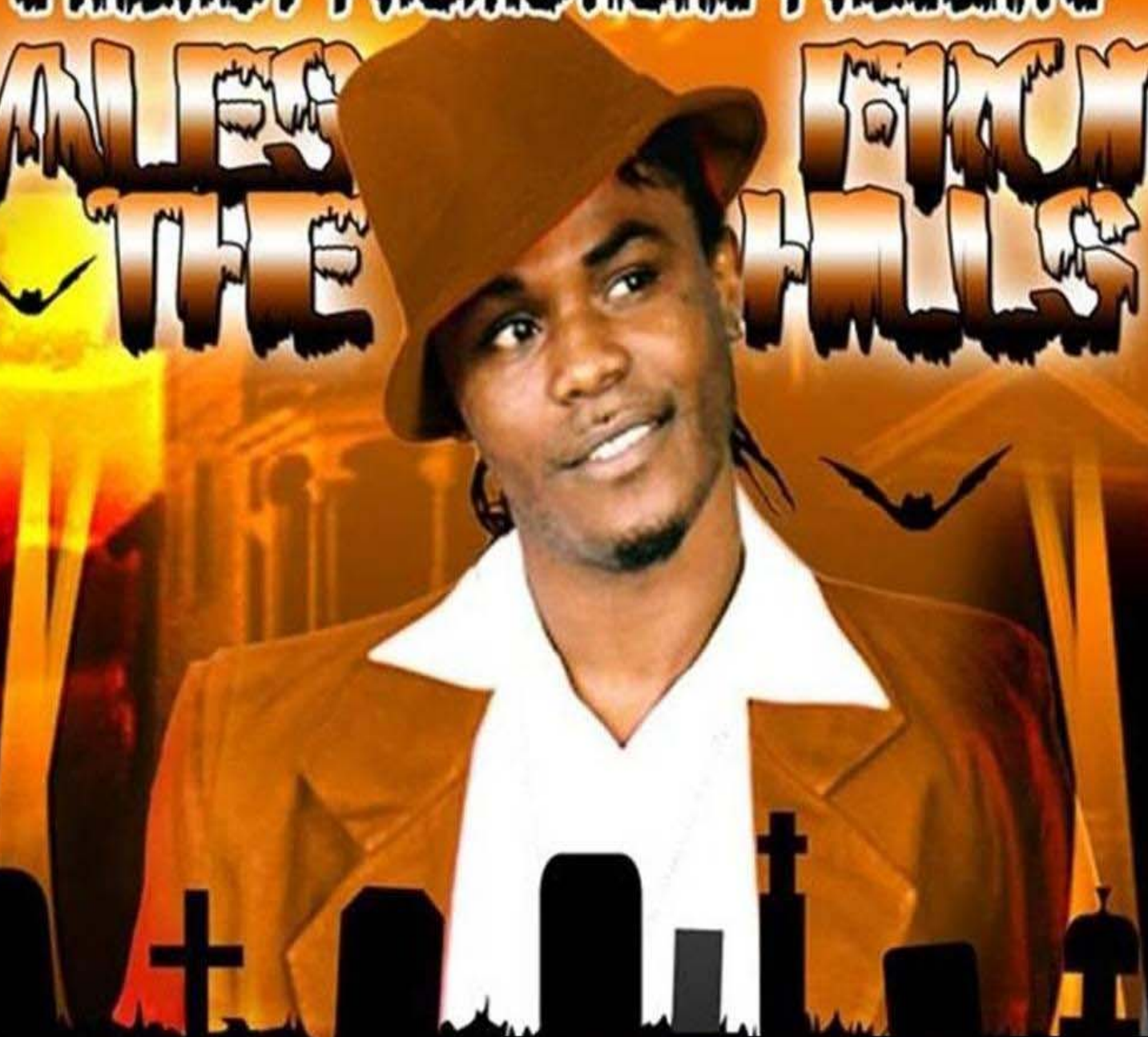
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# One Year Later - The Biggest Multiple Murder In The Nation's History "NO CASE FILE" Confirmed The Director Of Public Prosecutions

SAN IGNACIO TOWN, Cayo,  
Wednesday, October 24, 2007:

It remains the biggest case of multiple-murder in the history of Belize.

One year ago, on October 3, 2006, a family of six was burnt to death inside their house in the village of Blackman Eddy, Cayo.

Within three days, a suspect, in the person of **Albert Ara**, 27 (at that time), was arrested and charged with one count of arson and six counts of murder in the death of **Elias Mayen** and his spouse **Maria Suchite** along with their four young children. The matter has since gone through no less than eight adjournments.

The accused was brought before the court again on Tuesday, October 23, 2007 and when the prosecution requested a further adjournment, the magistrate requested an explanation as to the reason for the request. The shocker came when the prosecution informed that after an entire year, the police is yet to submit a file for the case. In effect the basic Preliminary Inquiry (PI) is yet to commence as the case was adjourned until December 13, 2007.

We contacted the Officer in Charge of the Cayo (Police) District, **Sr. Supt. David Henderson**, for his comments on this latest revelation. His response *"There is a file for every case"* When we insisted that he speak to this specific matter as a family member had expressed concern that the case appears not to have moved anywhere since the accused was arrested and incarcerated over a year ago. He continued to speak in general terms, insisting that *"There is a file for every case"*.

We tried to contact the local Prosecutor **George Gomez** for his comment but he was not in office.



**Albert Ara, the accused Arsonist and Mass Murderer**

We next contacted the Director of Public Prosecutions, **Attorney Lutchman Sooknandan** who confirmed that his office is yet to receive the case file from the police. He told us to advise the family that he would immediately get the ball rolling.

When we finally got in contact with Prosecutor George Gomez, the next morning, he confirmed the statement

he made before the court the previous day. He additionally informed that he is in receipt of an urgent message from the DPP Sooknandan requesting for the police to submit a case file without any further delay.

What is interesting in this revelation is that here we are, confronted with a matter involving the **BIGGEST** multiple murder in the history of this country and it is being treated in such an apparent lackadaisical manner.

The families on both sides of the spectrum, and indeed the public at large, are seeking closure in this case.

The stark difference becomes further obvious when this case is placed in contrast with the recent road traffic accident which claimed the life of the son of the Minister with responsibility for the police, it was within a matter of a few days that the case file was sitting smack on the desk of the Director of Public Prosecutions.



**Half of the murdered family of six - Elias Mayen and Maria Suchite with their infant child.**

This matter is further compounded with the additional revelation that the very same **Albert Ara** is additionally facing a 2005 burglary charge which has been adjourned for a whopping **ELEVEN** times while it sits dangerously on the verge of being struck out by the court as there is said to be hardly any evidence on which to successfully prosecute the accused.

The wheels of justice is said to grind exceedingly slowly but any slower than this might render the wheels of justice stagnant as it is also said that justice delayed is justice denied.

## Known Honduran Gang Member Deported From Belize

**BELIZE CITY, Friday, October 26, 2007:**

The actual details are somewhat sketchy, but a police press report issued today informed that three days earlier, on Tuesday, October, 23, Belize City police were engaged

in an early morning anti-gang operation in the city when, at around 4:00 am, they came upon Honduran national, **Walter Suazo** who, police say, is known to be a member of the MARA SALVATRUCHAS (MS-13 street gang).

The detainee was held on immigration charges and on Thursday, October 25, he was served with an expulsion order.

The order was executed on Friday, October 26 as Suazo was escorted to the Phillip Goldson International Airport from where he was shipped back to his native land of Honduras.



**Walter Suazo**

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## Larry's Barber Shop & Miss Elida's Boutique Burglarized

**SAN IGNACIO TOWN, Cayo, Thursday, October 25, 2007;**

As we await the promised intervention on the part of **Commissioner of Police Gerald Westby**, to address the matter of the challenges confronting us regarding getting crime news from the San Ignacio police, we continue nonetheless, to bring this aspect of the news to our readers as best we can given these obvious constraints.

During these challenging times, we must acknowledge the cooperation we have been getting from the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) as, in keeping with the Freedom of Information Act, the office of the DPP continues to honor our request for relevant information.

Although it is a much valued and reliable source of information, the office of the DPP will only have information as it pertains to actual arrests and prosecutions. Therefore all those reported incidents where no arrests have been made, continues to seep thought the crack thereby giving the false impression of a reduction in the rate of crime within the community.

Notwithstanding, in those cases where arrests and convictions have been secured, we are having a hard time to get pictures from the police as



**Lawrence "Larry" Flowers**

they come up with all kinds of excuses to withhold the information.

It is in light of this situation that we are greatly indebted to all those persons who continue to provide us with lead-off information enabling us to at least attempt to bridge the gap.

Therefore, although a bit late, we are obligated to inform of the burglary that took place almost a month ago at Larry's New Look Barber Shop which is owned and operated by **Lawrence "Larry" Flowers** and the neighboring Mini Boutique/Stationary Outlet belonging to **Mrs. Elida Neal** a hardworking and humble lady indeed.

Larry could have quite easily joined the growing ranks of the unemployed within the community but he instead chose to create his own employment

by opening his own barber shop. Over the years Larry's Barber Shop has grown to be a popular place often times overflowing with customers, especially on weekends. It is therefore discouraging and disappointing to hear that burglars would actually violate the humble efforts of an individual like Larry.

The situation gets even worse when anyone would rob from a hardworking, struggling, single mother like Miss Elida who wakes up every morning and spend all day at her little shop as she tries to make an honest living instead of staying at home and feeling sorry for herself.

In relation to the incident, Larry informed that he served his last client at around 7:00 pm on Wednesday, October 3, 2007. He said that he secured his barber shop before retiring for the day.

When he returned to work the following morning at around 7:30, he immediately observed that the front door to his shop was slightly open. He was advised neither to enter nor touch anything. He was additionally advised to go over to the nearby police station to report the incident.

After spending about half an hour at the police station, he returned to the shop accompanied by two policemen.

The policemen observed that those who pulled off the burglary gained entry into the shop by cutting off the padlock. Upon checking, Larry found out that all his electric hair clippers and the entire line of perfumes in stock were gone resulting in a loss estimated at around \$1,800.

He also observed that the celotex which forms a casing between his shop and the adjoining mini boutique,



**Mrs. Elida Neal**

was broken. He is of the opinion that those who broke into his shop were attempting to enter the business place of his neighbor through his shop. However, when they ripped away the casing, they came upon a wooden wall forcing them to abort that mode of entering into the shop next door. They instead exited Larry's barber shop and proceeded to cut away the two outside padlocks from the front door of the mini boutique. One of the damaged padlocks was found on the ground outside of the building.

The owner of the Mini Boutique, Miss Elida Neal, was contacted and upon checking, she estimated the loss at around \$2,000. Among the stolen items were tennis shoes, wrist watches, belts, shirts, hats, sunshades, fashion jewelry and perfumes.

Although there are reports that some to the merchandise stolen from Miss Elida's place are already being offered for sale on the streets, police are yet to apprehend and charge anyone in connection with these incidents. These crimes are a tremendous setback for both Larry and Miss Elida.

Just a few months ago, the nearby Boyz II Men clothing store was burglarized in similar fashion as the locks were cut away. In this case however the heavy duty lock cutter was found near the door.



**Larry's New Look Barber Shop and Elida's Mini-Boutique**

the dams are full, the hydro electric plants working at full juice. One has to wonder why?

One outage happened very violently with flashbacks all over the house on Tuesday, I think it was? Don't know what happened, but they blew the CPU of my desktop computer. Was checking prices in the computer store ( \$2500 ) for a new CPU and that is way out of my budget possibilities. Guess we are going to go computer less in the future.

Just brought in the computer this morning to see if the technician at

the repair shop can find a fuse or something in the power supply? But I doubt it. I took a look yesterday and couldn't find one.

Lost the laptop about two months ago and now I've lost my desktop. Got two printers now with one monitor and no damned CPU's. I think the electric company need to fix that switch that is cutting off so badly and pay me for a new computer, or just give me a replacement? I can't do my tourist business this way. Just negotiating January bookings and reservations too. Tourist season just picking up.

## Ray Has His Say



**By: RAY AUXILLOU, Hillview Community, Santa Elena, Cayo, Thursday, October 25, 2007:**

The STAR Newspaper this week was quite good. Extensive articles and a lot dealing with local events. Expanded issue!

One on land owners versus BNE and other Oil Companies and the allegation that the Minister of Lands, Florencio Marin was railroading the legal process in which landowners and oil exploration companies were supposed to negotiate a settlement before signing a contract. If they couldn't agree they went to arbitration.

According to the article it was implied that oil companies had bought off **Florencio Marin**. Which I don't believe. I think he was

expediting oil exploration, impatient with a fair compensation process that absorbs time. Still, from the slant of the article and many examples given, the Minister is in the wrong and he should step back and let the process work itself out and quit trying to be a bully.

Land owners claim they are not allowed to even negotiate with the oil companies under threats of land confiscation. The oil exploration companies are laughing like hell and traipsing all over everybody.

Land owners have done the right thing though. United we stand, and divided we fall. By uniting they are going to get redress from Florencio Marin. Civil suit maybe?

Another long article, by **Peter Thompson** from the village of Santa Familia, covering a wide gamut of thoughts of development in Cayo was also good in the STAR and should be food for thought and fodder in the twin towns.

Our dysentery problem is winding up okay at our house. Monday I heard second hand that the water company or somebody had been out to check water in Hillview and found bacteria. They shut off the water yesterday for a few hours and were superchlorinating.

We are getting a lot of electrical outages in the Twin Towns, when

## An Open Letter From Jana To John

**TO: The Mayor of San Ignacio, John August**

**FROM: Jana C. Uhlik, Santa Familia**

**Copies to News Media, Health Department**

**Dear Sir:**

I am very upset about two situations in town. I watched them both for a while, hoping you would realize yourself the impact they cause, but seeing that nothing is happening – instead they are getting worse! – I decided to write this open letter to you.

1: – Those tires lying alongside the road across from Juan Chuc’s Store on Bullet Tree Road in San Ignacio Town are a very serious health hazard.

These tires when filled with rain water makes them breeding grounds for mosquitoes that causes Dengue and Malaria not to mention the fact that they are road hazard for passing traffic and pedestrians walking along the road.

You should not allow business of this sort to operate right next to the road with no frontage between it and the road.

Here is an excerpt from Reuters News Agency from October 5, 2007: *“Dengue, a mosquito-borne virus that causes high fever, nausea and painful body aches, is reaching epidemic levels in the Caribbean and Latin America, health officials say. Changing weather patterns as well as increased tourism and migration have*

*raised its prevalence, according to a Pan American Health Organization report released this week. The disease is raging now during the wettest time of year for most countries in the region. The virus, which has four distinct strains, usually keeps victims bed-ridden for a week with painful flu-like symptoms. About 5 percent of cases develop into the more severe and sometimes fatal hemorrhagic form marked by internal and external bleeding..... Puerto Rico’s health department on Friday said it was seeing more than 500 new cases weekly and had recorded 6,175 so far this year with 4 confirmed deaths. ... On Friday, Health Department employees [in Puerto Rico] handed out educational material on street corners, urging people to eliminate potential breeding grounds for mosquitoes and seek medical attention at the first sign of the disease. ... The Dominican Republic has reported more than 6,000 cases and 30 deaths this year, according to local press reports. Mexico has reported 67,562 cases with 5,212 developing into the hemorrhagic form, according to the Pan American Health Organization. Guadalupe registered 899 cases. Health officials in Martinique declared a dengue epidemic last month with more than 1,300 cases reported, and Jamaica has had about 100 cases. ... Dr. Raul*

*Castellano, the PAHO coordinator in Puerto Rico, said nearly every country in the region was trying to control the disease but greater efforts were needed. ... We have to break the chain of the mosquito.”*

**DO WE HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL DENGUE GETS HERE BECAUSE OF THIS I R R E S P O N S I B L E BEHAVIOUR?**

**OR DO WE HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL A CHILD GETS SERIOUSLY INJURED OR EVEN KILLED BY A FALLING TIRE?**

2: Parking in town was bad enough before all those designated taxi parking stands. Nobody likes to shop in town now. I mean who wants to carry their purchases a quarter mile or more from the shops to their car...especially in the heat and rain. I am very surprised if businesses aren’t already noticing a fall off in the number of customers.

My friends and I now go to either Spanish Lookout or to Belmopan to make our purchases rather than deal with the parking situation in town. One CENTRAL TAXI PARKING lot for all taxis to use should be enough...not several scattered throughout the town. San Ignacio used to be such a pleasure to visit ...now I don’t even like to drive in to pick up my mail at the post office. I mean who wants to drag parcels for posting or received all over town? There should be designated parking

for customers who wish to spend money in town. Isn’t that how the Town Council earns funds? By way of successful businesses? Not like that! Also, the taxi drivers are very obnoxious when they hustle fares which makes visiting San Ignacio very unpleasant. Maybe they want me to take a taxi from the post office to where I’ve parked my car? Shopping at Courts?? No way! Who will carry the fridge I plan to buy to wherever I can find a parking spot? Or maybe you would recommend me carrying the fridge up the hill on my back? Sure. I don’t know what caused this situation and as much as I wish for the taxi drivers to have good business, this is NOT the way!! Maybe you can find other solutions such as a small taxi stand in town (3 taxis is WAY enough!), which gets “refilled” as soon as one drives out with a customer. And let the businesses, the Post Office and other public places have their parking spots. Mr. Mayor, please address these situations.

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## Letters to the Editor

### We're From The Same School

**Dear Editor;**

Your newspaper is the bomb, it has a lot of information. It also gives us living out here in the US a more broaden view of what's happening back hom It is not so politically orientated like some of the other newspapers in the city.

### SHCJC Students Extending A Helping Hand

**Dear Editor;**

Kindly allow a space in your newspaper to spread the awareness of a very important venture that students of Sacred Heart Junior College are undertaking as part of their community service program.

The School Support Program started when Sacred Heart Junior College decided that it could do more to assist the victims of hurricane Iris.

After Iris, students at SHJC gave boxes of toys in response to the need of the children in those hurricane ravaged areas who had lost everything.

We believed then that receiving a gift before Christmas would be good for the children. That same year the decision was taken that it was the responsibility of the school as a Catholic institution to do more and thus we decided to target the same areas of the country the following year, except that this time we realized that basic school supplies would be more useful to the children than toys.

Over the years, the School Support Program has given out supplies to schools such as Aguacate, Blue Creek, Corazon Creek, San Lucas, Conejo Creek and Santo Domingo Villages in the Toledo District.

The people responsible for the program are students of the Junior College at Sacred Heart, who work tirelessly, as the go around soliciting donations, conducting fund raising drives such as Dollar Day, BBQ

Keep up the good work. I let all the investors and traders read it here where I work at, you know they always travel.

I went to school with Nyani. Keep up the good work.

Regards.

**Adrian Card**

sales, Dances, Bake sales, Jumble sales, just to mention a few.

These students wake up as early as 5:00 am to make every fund raiser a success so that they help to put a smile on the faces of the children from the various school they visit.

The community plays a major role in making this program a success. The students go out to the community for assistance, and with whatever donation they receive, along with what they fund raise, the students were able to purchase over \$3,000.00 worth of school and teaching supplies to donate to the rural schools in the Cayo and Toledo Districts.

If you are interested in helping these students to put a smile on a child's face, then we encourage you to kindly contact us at Sacred Heart Junior College, telephone number 824- 2102. You can assist by donating teaching materials or schools supplies.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to all those hard working students who have made the School Support Program a success every year!

Let us continue to help educate our children! For more information please contact:

**Ian R Segura,**  
**Coordinator, School Support Program Sacred Heart Junior College San Ignacio, Cayo**  
**Tel: (501)824-2102 (ext 22) or (501) 604-8807**

### McField To Musa "I am appalled and Embarrassed"

**RE: Concern about the possible de-reservation of part of Bacalar Chico National Park and World Heritage Site**

October 26, 2007

**Dear Prime Minister,**

It is with deep concern and incredulity that I write this letter regarding the apparent threat to one of the most precious, critical pieces of our national patrimony —the Bacalar Chico National Park and Marine Reserve.

This reserve is one of the few in Belize that actually contain substantial caye mangrove forest, wetlands and beach ridge habitats all within the reserve boundary (as most such land on the cayes has been privately held for many years).

The fact that the ecologically linked terrestrial and marine habitats were large, functionally intact and actually within the protected area, was one of the reasons this area was included in the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve World Heritage Site designation.

The de-reservation of any parcel of this reserve would represent a gross dereliction of our duty and our commitment as stewards of this World Heritage Site.

As a marine scientist, I have spent the past seventeen years working in partnership with the Government of Belize to develop and assist management of the existing network of marine and coastal protected areas.

I have promoted Belize as a model of marine conservation, with its visionary marine reserve network design in publications and conferences around the world. I worked on the initial designation of both the Bacalar Chico National Park and Marine Reserve and the broader Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System World Heritage Site in the mid-1990's and was responsible for overseeing a \$300,000 grant from the European Union that funded the baseline assessments and initial management of Bacalar Chico through the Fisheries Department.

The reserve is now actively managed by the Fisheries Department, with input from the Bacalar Chico Advisory Committee, which has representation from the town and village councils of San Pedro and Sarteneja, as well as commercial stakeholders (tourism and fishing industries) and government departments.

The park is featured on many tourism websites as an asset and attraction of the Ambergris Caye destination.

The park's incredible ecological significance is well known and documented in the management plan, the World Heritage Site Evaluation of 1996, and in the recent National Protected Areas System Plan and Policy.

Given all of this, **I am appalled and embarrassed** that the idea of de-reservation of this public asset and

sale to a private entity is being entertained by our government.

I sincerely request that you reconsider this idea and suggest that the interested buyer selects from the many parcels of land that are already within private ownership on Northern Ambergris Caye instead of carving out a piece of our national and World Heritage, that has already been committed to the public endowment of future generations.

We note the official Cabinet briefing for the meeting held on October 23, 2007 makes no reference to this issue. However, on the Channel 7 News of October 25, 2007 the Hon. Vildo Marin, stated that **“Well it's a Cabinet decision to sell, I think it is 2,700 acres, to de-reserve yes.”.**

We respectfully request that the Government of Belize inform the public regarding any discussions underway that will impact this national and global treasure and strongly recommend that the entire prospect of selling any part of Belize's national parks, particularly the World Heritage Sites, be discarded as unreasonable and unconscionable to the Belizean public and the international community.

Sincerely,

**Melanie McField, PhD**

Coordinator, Healthy Reefs for Healthy People Initiative  
Smithsonian Institution.

Cc:

**Hon. Francis Fonseca**, Attorney General, Minister of Labour, Education and Culture And President of the National UNESCO Commission

**Hon. Godfrey Smith**, Minister of Tourism and NEMO

**Hon. Florencio Marin**, Minister of Natural Resources and the Environment

**Hon. Vildo Marin**, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries

**Hon. Lisa Shoman**, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade

**Hon. Manuel Heredia**, Area Representative, Belize Rural South

**Hon. Philip Zuniga**, S.C., O.B.E., President of the Senate

**Senator Godwin Hulse**, Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Belize Business Bureau

**H. E. Mr Bassam Said Freiha**, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Delegation to UNESCO

**Joseph Hendrikx**, UNDP

**David Craig**, Chairman and **Valdemar Andrade**, Executive Director; PACT

**Martin G. Marshalleck**, Chairman and **Tracy Panton**, Director; BTB

**Godsman Ellis**, Chair, BACONGO

**Yvette Alonso**, Executive Director, APAMO

**Beverly Wade** and **Wilbur Sabido**, Co-chairs, Protected Areas Commission

**Billy Leslie**, Chair, San Pedro Tour Guides Association

**Andy Palacio**, UNESCO Artist for Peace

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# Who Really Owns Belize Petroleum Rights?

CAYO, Belize, October 22, 2007

By: Jim Cavaugh

The recent decision by the Hon. Chief Justice of Belize, Dr. Abdulai Conteh that the residents of Santa Cruz and Conejo are the legal owners of the lands that they collectively occupy, was certainly welcomed by nearly every Belizean. However, the Chief Justice's decision doesn't solve as many problems as it creates.

The lock has now been knocked off of a Pandora's box of problems The Government of Belize (GOB) does not want to face, nearly all of which give more to the people at the expense of government. With the Chief Justice's decision these issues can no longer be swept aside; they must now be faced and resolved.

The most pressing issue now that the Maya are property owners, is who legally owns the Petroleum Rights of private property, their private property.

The Petroleum Law Chapter 225 of 200 emphatically states in Part I 3.-(b): *"The entire property in and control of all petroleum and accompanying substances in whatever physical state located on or under the territory of Belize or in areas in of the Continental Shelf in which rights of exploration and exploitation are exercisable by Belize are hereby vested exclusively in the Government of Belize."*

However, a search of the evolution of the Laws of Belize shows that the GOB claim is only based upon illegal and unconstitutional acts.

When Mexico nationalized their oil industry in 1937, Colonial authorities saw the potential profits of such a move, and although there was no oil production in Belize, the probability existed, so they passed the Petroleum Ordinance of 1937 which unilaterally and arbitrarily took all petroleum rights away from private property owners:.

Petroleum (Production) Ordinance, 1937.

**2.--(1) *The property in petroleum existing in its natural condition in strata in British Honduras is hereby vested in His Majesty, and His Majesty shall have the exclusive right of searching and boring for and getting such petroleum.***

And:

***"Provided that the owner of any land upon which petroleum is brought to the surface shall receive 5% of the Royalty or other consideration payable in respect of any petroleum won therefrom where the petroleum rights in respect of such land would, but for the passing of this Ordinance, be vested in him."***

Prior to this 1937 Ordinance, the laws specifically acknowledged that the owners of private property owned

all minerals rights to their lands except for gold, silver and precious gems.

The action to take the petroleum rights from private landowners was clearly illegal under the Colonial Constitution as no compensation for the valuable petroleum mineral rights was negotiated nor paid. But of course there was no oil production so nobody paid much attention to this theft of their mineral rights.

Although the Crown claimed all the petroleum rights of Belize, it agreed that it only had the right to grant exploration and production on Crown lands.

There was no question that the surface of Freehold property was controlled by the individual owner, and the Crown specifically accepted they had no right to authorize trespass or access except with the permission of the owner.

But when the Crown taketh away, it giveth a bit back to keep the peasants happy, thus the provision of ***"5% of the Royalty or other consideration payable in respect of any petroleum won therefrom..."***

Even this ***"gift"*** was laced with greed, because where the Crown was offering 5%, property owners elsewhere in the world were getting 12.5% minimum. And 5% of ***"Royalty and other consideration"*** did not make it very clear as

to just what a property owner was getting 5% of. This provision creates another big question: Does GOB have the right to determine what a landowner can ask in compensation? But in 1937 there was no oil so again, no questions.

The illegal appropriation was further aggravated in 1991 with the passing of the Petroleum Act of 1991 which stated:

***3.-(1) The entire property in and control over all petroleum and accompanying substances, in whatever physical state located on or under the territory of Belize or in areas of the Continental Shelf in which rights of exploration and exploitation are exercisable by Belize are hereby vested exclusively in the Government of Belize."***

And ***(4) The owner of any private land beneath which a petroleum reservoir is located shall receive from the Government five per centum of the royalty payable in respect of any petroleum won therefrom, where the petroleum rights in respect of such land would but for the passing of the Petroleum (Production) Act 1937 and this Act be vested in him."***

At least the Petroleum (Production) Ordinance, 1937 allocated 5% of the Royalty or other consideration to the private property owner, but the Petroleum Act of 1991 removed the valuable ***"other consideration"***

**Please Turn To Page 10**

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**"There is a way that may seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death." Proverbs 14:12 (NIV)**

# Who Really Owns Belize Petroleum Rights?

From Page 9

clause, again arbitrarily and without negotiation or compensation, in direct contradiction of Constitution of Belize, states at Section

**“17.-(1) No property of any description shall be compulsorily taken possession of and no interest in or right over property of any description shall be compulsorily acquired except by or under a law that-**

**(a) prescribes the principles on which and the manner in which reasonable compensation therefor is to be determined and given within a reasonable time; and**

**(b) secures to any person claiming an interest in or right over the property a right of access to the courts for the purpose of -**

**(i) establishing his interest or right (if any);**

**(ii) determining whether that taking of possession or acquisition was duly carried out for a public purpose in accordance with the law authorising the taking of possession or acquisition;**

**(iii) determining the amount of the compensation to which he may be entitled; and**

**(iv) enforcing his right to any such compensation.”**

The Constitution of Belize therefore emphatically guarantees that every person in Belize is entitled to protection from arbitrary deprivation of property without compensation.

So two illegal laws, 1937 and 1991, arbitrarily took away valuable mineral properties from private property owners with no compensation, in clear and absolute contradiction of the Constitution of Belize.

These illegal and unconstitutional acts are the sole basis for GOB claims that they own the petroleum rights of private lands.

This government however, arrogantly plowed ahead and issued contracts to some 21 oil companies claiming GOB owned all Belize petroleum rights, in total disregard of the rights of the people they are supposed to protect, confident that no one could challenge their supremacy. They were wrong.... again.

Conteh's decision not only affirms that the Maya are owners of their land, but orders GOB to cease and desist from issuing leases, grants, exploration permits, or other acts that might affect the existence value, use or enjoyment of their property without their informed consent. GOB’s attorney, **Arthur Saldivar**, stated, however, that Conteh's decision is not retroactive, implying that existing agreements are still in force.

\* Does this mean that the leases and permits already issued for the Maya lands are still valid?

\* Or are the permits in force only prior to the land becoming Maya private property?

\* Will new contracts have to be negotiated with oil contractors?

\* Will Ministers be able to force the Maya to accept oil activities under the existing laws?

Conteh's Pandora box highlights other problems that must be faced too. The current Petroleum Laws, whether right or wrong, grants oil companies the right to explore, but requires that the companies enter into a written contract with landowners for compensation for disturbance and damages.

GOB claims flatly that because they own all of the petroleum rights (*at least until the ownership issue is decided*), they can issue oil exploration permits which require that landowners **MUST** agree to terms with oil companies or the Minister can order access to their lands, as he has already done with the Wang Huang property in Georgeville, Cayo.

So far whenever a landowner balks at being paid nothing to allow crews to invade their property, the Minister sends threatening letters demanding landowners to explain their actions or even issues an Order demanding access.

\* Do the Maya now have to live with the same Petroleum Laws as all other landowners in Belize?

\* Or does the order protecting Maya lands extend to all private lands?

\* Does Conteh's ruling recognize the rights of private landowners

to make decisions about the property?

\* What happens if a current law suit affirms that GOB does not own the mineral rights for private property?

\* What about those huge bribes the oil companies paid Cabinet Mobsters for their permits?

Oil investor, **Allen Saum**, complained he paid a \$100,000 in bribe, others are reputed to be up to \$300,000.

If all these willfully participating corruption enablers rush to file suits against the wrong doers in GOB, we will have to build a bigger court house! If so we should also build a bigger jail for all these thieves... both for corrupt officials and those who corrupt them.

-end-



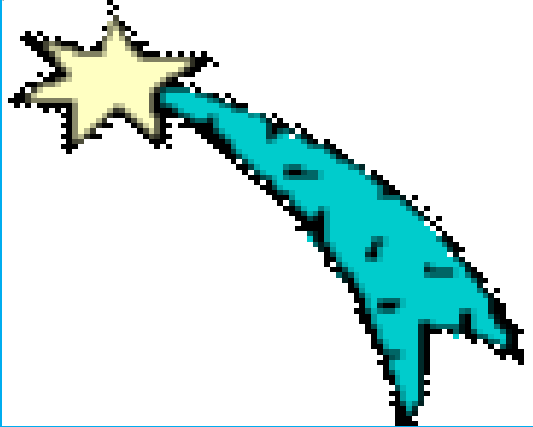
## LIQUOR LICENSE NOTICES

Notice is hereby given that under the Intoxicating Liquor License Ordinance Chapter 150 of the laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2000, that **JOSE RAUL ESPAT** is applying for a **RESTAURANT & BAR LIQUOR LICENCE** for the year 2007 to operate **LOW LYING BAR** (*formerly Best Corner*) located on George Price Avenue Santa ElenaTown in the Cayo District.

Notice is hereby given that under the Intoxicating Liquor License Ordinance Chapter 150 of the laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2000, that **MARIA GARCIA** is applying for a **MALT & CIDER LIQUOR LICENCE** for the year 2007 to operate **HILLTOP BAR** located in the Santa Cruz Area of Santa ElenaTown in the Cayo District.

Notice is hereby given that under the Intoxicating Liquor License Ordinance Chapter 150 of the laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2000, that **GLENIS SMITH & FELICITA MARTINEZ** are applying for a **MALT & CIDER LIQUOR LICENCE** for the year 2007 to operate **MARTZ EATS HANGIN** located at #89 Benque Viejo Road, San IgnacioTown in the Cayo District.

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# SAN IGNACIO HUSBAND AND WIFE CRASH ON THE NORTHERN HIGHWAY

## From Front Page

15 minutes to Biscayne Village and arrived at around 11:30 am. She reportedly met him at the school in Biscayne and there was a brief verbal exchange between the couple during which she reportedly informed him that the relationship was over and that she wanted him to return the set of keys for the house in San Ignacio. He reportedly told her that it was at the house in Sand Hill and that she would need to wait for the lunch break when he could leave the school compound to get it for her.

“With my 7-year old son sitting in the back seat of my vehicle, I returned to Sand Hill and waited at a Chinese Shop for his arrival” said Mrs. Contreras. “He arrived a few minutes later and after getting the keys, he handed them over to me. He then got into his white Suzuki Jimmy vehicle. But instead of turning around for the return trip to Biscayne Village, he continued driving towards Belize City. I waited for a little while before driving off in the same direction for the return trip to San Ignacio Town. About five minutes into the driving, I saw his vehicle coming in the opposite direction. I saw him heading in my lane but I thought that he wanted to frighten me and would swerve away. He did not change course and the driver’s side of his vehicle crashed into the driver’s side of my vehicle. After the sudden impact I was left trapped inside my vehicle with both feet in the mangled remains below and the steering wheel, complete with dashboard and all, pressed against my chest. I could hear my son groaning in the back seat of the vehicle. I told him to get out because I could not help him. I eventually managed to crawl out of the vehicle through the passenger side door and I fell to the ground on the side of the road. A lady came off a bus and she walked over to help me and my

injured son. I also saw some people helping to free my husband who was also trapped inside his vehicle. The lady, whose first name I later learnt to be Angela, stopped a vehicle in which my son and I were transported to the hospital in Belize City.

I later found out that my son sustained two fractured shoulders. While at the hospital I was informed that my husband was also brought in for medical attention. The last time I saw him was when he was being freed from his wrecked vehicle. I was told that he met my son in the x-ray room and he told him that he should have been in school and that if he was in school, he would not have been injured. While undergoing treatment, I received a call from the police and was advised to file a report at the police station in Ladyville.

We were discharged from the Belize City hospital at around 5:00 pm and were transported by relatives to the Ladyville police station where I spent the next two hours giving the police a statement in which I requested for action to be taken against my husband.

My extensively damaged \$11,500 vehicle was transported to my home in San Ignacio Town where it is currently sitting in front of my yard. My son and I are still in pain from the incident which could have been fatal in all respects.” concluded Mrs. Contreras

Ladyville police informs that the investigation continues as up to Thursday night they are still waiting for Eugenio Contreras to comply with their instruction to present himself to the Ladyville police to assist in the investigation.

When we located Mr. Contreras on Thursday night, his aunt informed that he was asleep but promised that he would return our call. We received his call at around 6:30 on Friday morning.



Aida Herrera Contreras’ white Suzuki Sportage after the crash, parked in front of her yard on 18th Street, San Ignacio Town, Cayo

Mr. Contreras said “When my wife showed up at my school that Wednesday morning, she came in a very aggressive manner with a bag containing some of my clothes that were wet and burnt. Then when I arrived in Sand Hill and handed her the set of keys and the cellular telephone which was a gift from her, she slapped me in face with probable intent to provoke a response thereby providing grounds for police intervention. I did not fall for the plan” said Mr. Contreras

“I simply walked away after giving her the cellular telephone and the set of keys. I did not turn around for the return trip to Biscayne because my vehicle was low on gasoline and so I drove up the highway to the gas station to put fuel in my vehicle before returning to school as my principal had only given the short time off to handle this personal matter. I left the gas station and was heading back to school when I saw this white vehicle coming towards me. I placed both hands on the steering wheel and began waving to the driver that was the last thing I remember doing. I regained consciousness when some people began helping me out of my smashed vehicle. I was placed in a Mercedes Benz car and transported to the Belize City hospital. It was while I was undergoing emergency treatment that I realized that the other person involved in the accident was my wife as I could hear her speaking on the other side of the curtain to some people who sounded like policemen. She was

insisting that she wanted to press criminal charges against me.

I met my son in the x-ray room and I asked him why he did not go to school today and he told me that he skipped school for the day because he was not feeling well. I told him that if he was in school he would not have been involved in the accident.

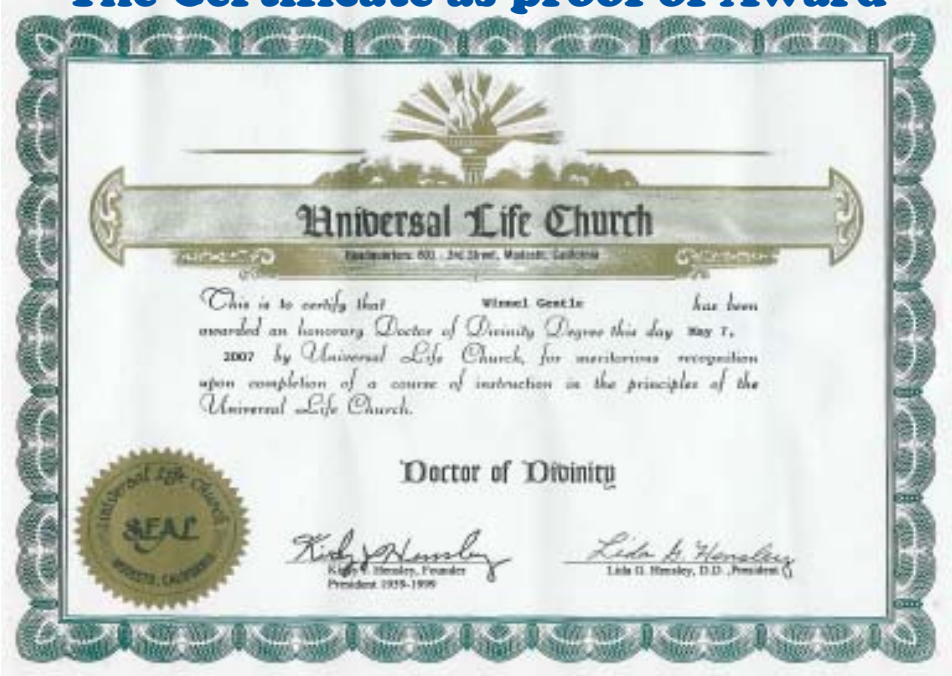
I was treated for a cut wound in the center of my forehead and an injured instep of my left foot. The policemen who were speaking to my wife told the doctor to advise them before I was released as they wanted to speak to me.

I was released from the hospital at around 7:00 pm. The doctor advised me to visit the police station to get a medical form. My aunt transported me to the Raccoon Street police station where I was issued with a pair of medical forms.

We returned to the Belize City Hospital where the forms were signed by the doctor. He kept one copy of the form and I have the other copy.

My aunt brought me to the farm where I am recovering. At about 3:00 pm on Wednesday, October 24, I visited the San Ignacio Police station where a statement was recorded. I was advised to report to the Ladyville police station as it is the place where the accident occurred. I will be going to the Ladyville police station later today. I have seen the remains of my vehicle and all I can say right now is that I am thankful to be alive and speaking to you this morning” concluded Mr. Eugenio Contreras Jr.

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