



SAINTS PERSPECTIVES

Things Inspirational

From Skipper to Mr. Chairman to Dr. Chris A lifetime of Achievements

University of Guyana,
Thursday, 7th November, 2024.



Dr. Chris Fernandes delivering his acceptance speech

The year 2024 will certainly be marked as a pivotal year in the affairs of humankind. In Guyana, the Chancellor of the University of Guyana (UG) informed Mr. Christopher Fernandes (Chris) that the Special Conferral Committee of the University considered him to be of the highest calibre of humanity and an exemplar in the field of international business and innovation, and that they unanimously agreed to confer on him the singular distinction of an **Honorary Doctoral degree**. Chris received this award at a ceremony at the University on Thursday, 7th November, 2024.

In his acceptance speech (pictured above), Chris identified those who



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influenced his life's journey.¹ These extracted items stand out:

My parents, 'Honest' John Fernandes and his rock behind the scenes, Alda Fernandes (who exposed me to the virtues of **SELFLESSNESS, HUMILITY and EMPATHY**). I truly feel blessed with a head-start in life just for being guided by these two wonderful people.

I was born to a father whose first priority always was to the Catholic Church and the philanthropy of few that met his level of commitment. His virtues of **FAIRNESS, HONESTY**, and his **MORAL COURAGE** shaped my young mind and charted the path of my professional career

My wife Desiree taught me the virtues of **COMMITMENT, FAITH and LOVE**. While people commend my many years of supporting the Catholic church, St Stanislaus College and the Mercy Hospital, Desiree's commitment was often what kept me going.

If those statements indicate that Chris was already "pre-destined" or "pre committed" to serve his School, Sports, and Country (S.S.C.); the historical record shows that the Saints Stanislaus College Association was formed on the 21st of November, 1943 by his father John – the same year that the first Saints Magazine was published. Honest John then proceeded to bring forth Chris in 1944 to ensure that Saints will be well looked after well into the 21st Century.

Guyana, as a developing nation with a very promising future, is doing the right thing in identifying and honoring those who chose to "stand and support" when many chose to cut and run. The Fernandes family chose to stand and **deliver for their country** through the good times and the turbulent times. By focusing on excellence and honesty they were serving as beacons for Guyanese to follow.

In the case of Dr. Chris, he is blessed with 4 sons who may be destined to uphold the family tradition. The eldest son, David, is on the School Board and is President of the Guyana Squash Association. Philip, the 3rd son is the President of the Guyana Hockey Board.

¹ See the Reference below for the full text of the acceptance speech.



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John Senior had no idea that he was creating one of the best “dynasties” whose mission was to do good for others and your country. We can imagine him declaring “Mission Accomplished and Ongoing.....”

To repeat what was stated in the latest “News and Views”, “Mr.” Chris Fernandes, received awards from several groups. This would come as no surprise to anyone who knows of his wide experience in business and in social, cultural, humanitarian, and sporting activities in Guyana, all on top of his long tenure as the first and, since 2005 to date, only Chairman of the Board of Governors (BoG) of his alma mater - Saints Stanislus College; and being on the Board of St. Joseph’s Mercy Hospital, Georgetown.

Chris pursued his tertiary education at the Irish Management Institute and Pennsylvania State University, and then joined the family business where he is currently the Chairman of John Fernandes Group of Companies. After displaying his skills in the management of the family business, he was elected as the first President of the Shipping Association of Guyana Inc. over the period 1995 – 2002.

He also held the position of the Chairman of one of the sub-committees of the Caribbean Shipping Association, and from 2003 to 2010, Chris also served as the Hon. Counsel for Germany to the Cooperative Republic of Guyana.

In 2002, during the presidency of Bharrat Jagdeo, the Government of Guyana recognised his long and dedicated service in the field of Commerce and Shipping by awarding him The Golden Arrow of Achievement (AA). Additionally, in 2007, he received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce & Industry (GCCCI) for his outstanding accomplishments and significant contributions to the business community and the wider Society.

When David Granger assumed the presidency (2015 – 2020) he also recognized Chris’ service by upgrading the AA award to the CCH (Cacique Crown of Honor) Award.

It is reasonable to assume that both ruling parties appreciated Chris’ politically neutral philosophy and his dedication to support his country.

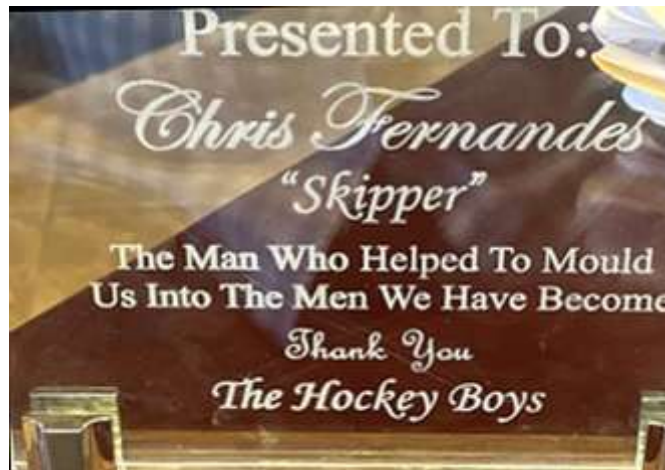


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In addition, the Shipping Association of Guyana honoured Chris with a Lifetime Achievement Award to recognize his high level of guidance and achievement in the industry.

Throughout his time as a student at the College and later as an alumnus, Chris has been very active in the sport of field hockey, and he has trained many top players in the country. These “Hockey Boys” have thanked and presented an award to their “Skipper” who has “helped to mould them into the men they have become”.



In a recent letter to the Ministry of Education, Dr. Chris has announced that he will be stepping back from the role of Chairman of the Board of the College, effective as of the last day of this year (2024), but stated that he will continue to sit as a member of the Board and continue to give advice to both his successor and the Board as a whole.

On behalf of all of the alumni of the College, the Toronto Alumni Society wishes to offer Dr. Chris our most sincerest thanks for the hard work he has done in leading the College to its superior education and extracurricular status in the country, and wishes him all the best in his “semi-retirement”, but still look forward to seeing him around in our visits to the College.

AMDG



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References:

[Chris. Fernandes – Acceptance Speech on receipt of Honorary Doctorate](#)

[Chairman of the Board Receives Awards – Saints News and Views, Dec 16, 2024](#)

[St. Stanislaus College Magazine, Vol 1, April 1, 1943](#)