

Former Senator, Horace A. Callwood, Sr.

Testimony by Chaneel Callwood

Good morning to the honorable Senators and staff. I am humbled to be speaking before you today to give testimony on the legacy of my beloved father, the honorable former Senator Horace A. Callwood, Sr., who passed in 2020.

As we reminisced looking through my father's archives, I came upon a flyer from the 1966 era, describing the Poor People's Campaign. This platform remained important to my father throughout his life. It is to be commended that the teamwork of the people including but not limited Horace A. Callwood, Senator Earl B. Ottley, Valdemar Hill, Sr., and many others on the Victory '66, led to thousands of people achieving home ownership over the years.

He never gave up the fight for the people and for growing the economy. He wanted our people, who in his generation many of whom were living in situations where they rented land, to get a piece of the rock. They fought to build up the V.I. so people could get well-paying jobs so they could live here and raise their families here and build up the community. Back then people would have to go to New York for opportunity.

These senators changed the election law and put in substantially what is now Title 18. These changes gave us our civil rights by opening opportunities for people to freely join political parties of their choice without being invited and thereby meaningfully participate in shaping the party platform and harnessing the power of a team to advance their causes. Mr. Callwood was a strategist for many political campaigns, including those of former Governors Alexander A. Farrelly and Charles W. Turnbull.

Horace met every week with the Horace A. Callwood Democratic Breakfast Club, named in his honor, at the Windward Hotel and, the East End Democratic Club at the Bolongo Hotel. These clubs advocated for community improvements. Their efforts combined with Rotary resulted in the construction of sidewalks in Red Hook, and look out, they are advocating these sidewalks be expanded over to Smith Bay.

Mr. Callwood was one of the first contributors and helped gather other contributors together to support the Obama campaign which persuaded then candidate Barack Obama visited the Virgin Islands on a campaign stop. In his humble way, he gave his tickets to others, including me, so they could have a chance to meet him, since he and other party leaders already had met with him earlier.

Mr. Callwood quietly made donations to support community and neighborhood causes and organizations. He was a founding member of the Paul Harris group of the Rotary II St. Thomas Club and he helped sponsor other Rotarians to attain fellowship. Horace was a past president of Rotary II and a recipient of their Person of the Year Award in 2016.

Mr. Callwood ranked 3rd in the CAHS class of 1952 and his classmates included former Governor Charles W. Turnbull, former Chief Presiding Judge of the V.I. Superior Court, Verne A. Hodge, the late former Senator Elmo E. Roebuck, and many other community leaders. His mentors were the late former Senator, Earl B. Ottley, and the late Manassah Francis. Their families lived in Savan. Mr. Francis encouraged him to join the Manassah businesses and to run for senate.

Over the years, Horace A. Callwood assisted many people in attaining their dream of owning land or homes by advising them on how to save, build credit and obtain financing.

He loved the V.I. and wanted to build up “the country.” He was a great strategist, always planning. He was a great point man both in the military sense of the word (a soldier, not a general, who takes the first, most exposed position, advancing through new territory) and by the conventional definition (a most trusted associate, the person upon whom one would most rely).

I am most proud that he was always our backup – mentally, physically and emotionally. He was, in a word – reliable. You could go to him with any problem and he would help you, whether you were his child, family, friend or associate.

I remember Sunday afternoon drives to visit family and friends and maintain relationships. He was a busy man and these times he made with us were special. He was always proud of our accomplishments in school and our musical abilities.

He took us to Sunday School every week and we would watch Puerto Rican cartoons afterward on WKAQ and WAPA (channels 2 and 4).

He made kites for us and taught us how to build them. Kite season was really exciting! He took us to the golf course at UVI to fly them. He also brought home our favorite candies on Fridays. Us children reminisced about him on February 17th, his heavenly birthday and recalled a few things:

- Him coming home on a Friday night with a bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken and taking what seemed like forever to bring it upstairs because he just had to play a round of pool.
- I remember him teaching us to build kites and taking us out to fly kites. I loved when our family would fly kites!
- I remember him bringing home chocolate bars like Babyruth. When he brought home the candy he got everyone their favorite kind. Sugar Mamas, Raisinettes, Coconut Long Boys, Babyruth, Mounds, and Milky way.
- Remember the Sunday drives? Yes, they were the best! I was always excited to go. On these drives he showed us the importance of taking time for family. Going to visit people and connect with them was important. The people were important

He was a great father and we really miss him.