

Good Afternoon, Honorable Carla J. Joseph Chairperson of the Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs and Consumer Protection. Good Afternoon to Other Committee Members and Non-Committee Members. Good Afternoon to my family and my friends.

My name is Beverly Stephens-Samuel, and I am the daughter of Mr. Benburin Stephens. I would like to start off by thanking Senator Ray Fonseca for putting forth this proposal to name the road between Nadir and Bovoni after my dad. I would also like to thank Senator Marvin Blyden who grew up in the Nadir/Bovoni area for also helping to sponsor this Bill. As you have read, my dad rescued our neighbor Janice Daniel and five of her sons from their burning home back in 1986. Janice is no longer with us, and neither is one of her sons. If Sollie, as we knew her, was alive, I know she would be here today.

You might ask, "Why this road?" From birth, I grew up in the Nadir/Bovoni area. The Bovoni Baptist Church has been our family church home from the time it opened 58 years ago. My mom, Valaria Stephens is said to be the first convert there and last month for her 90th birthday they celebrated her. I attended the Bertha C. Boschulte Junior High School when it opened in 1980. My children and my nieces and nephews attended the Bertha C. Boschulte Junior High School. My great niece now attends the Bertha C Boschulte Middle School and my niece Riana Thomas now works there. My husband Gurvin and I built our own home in Bovoni. So you see, Nadir and Bovoni are what I know and love, without the noise pollution of course. My siblings, Ashley, Bernard, Lorraine, Myron, Carolyn, and Coleen are all extremely happy that you have taken the time to consider this road naming.

After my dad rescued the Daniel family from their burning home, he was recognized by Former Governor Alexander Farrelly and Former President of the United States, President Ronald Reagan. I have been trying for a few years to get this road named in his honor.

I would like to read a little about my dad as written by me in his funeral booklet back in August 2010.

Tribute to My Dad:

Dad, you were a good father to me and a good grandfather to my three children Destiny, Rachel and Elijah. I am so happy that you were a part of their lives from birth to adulthood. When others had male figures around them, they called pops or godfather, I had no need because you were a strong father. Carol and I discussed it several times how good a provider you were to us. Dad, you taught me how to thread a needle and hand stitch. You could be found many times at Smokey Frett's tailor shop in Savan because even though we now live in Nadir, you were a real Savanero. At a young age, even though I did not understand it back then, I knew something big was happening when election time came around. You were a strong Democrat. You marched me straight to the legislature to get my first summer job.

One visit home from college to visit my infant daughter, you said, "She is going to cry" and I did. As I got older you seem to know when I was down no matter how hard I tried to hide it. On July 12th I accepted Christ. I did not feel comfortable witnessing to you and praying with you when in fact I had not accepted Christ. I made that step, and we would watch the gospel channels together while mammy was at choir practice. I would tease that no one in the family could sing like you. I would read the scriptures to you and make sure you said your prayers before going to bed. One evening while in bed, weak, you started making some movement and I said to myself, "Where is he going now?" You were going on your knees in bed to pray. I had to smile.

Dad, I saw you getting weaker and I held on to the words of Pastor Nelson: "We, as Christians cannot face death like others that have no hope." Our hope is in God that we will see each other again. I was the last one to spend time at your bedside. I anointed your head with oil and said the 23rd Psalms the day before you died. Today I must reflect on the song by David Ruffin "*I wish it would rain*". You see rain (or the shower) can hide the tears that I shed but it cannot hide the pain that I am feeling.

Dad, I love you then, I love you now and I will love you forever in my heart, mind, and soul.

Your youngest daughter,

Beverly

So, I may not have my dad's aggressive ways as he did with me when I needed my first summer job; but, I do have his strength, his will and determination and his love for family and community. I thank God for this opportunity to come before you. With Him, all things are possible. I thank you Senator Joseph, Senator Fonseca, Senator Blyden, and Members of the 35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands. I would also like to thank my neighbors and the people in the Nadir/Bovoni area who signed for the road naming. I gained so much knowledge and heard so many stories about my dad and my family from them.

Sincerely,



Beverly Stephens-Samuel

Daughter of Benburin Stephens