

## Who was Brother B?

At 4:15 on the morning of 13 March 1979 the revolutionary armed forces led by Maurice Bishop overthrew the Eric Matthew Gairy government on the island of Grenada. With his first speech to the nation the new Prime Minister, Maurice Bishop issued a clarion call.

“At this moment, several police stations have already put up the white flag of surrender.

“Revolutionary forces have been dispatched to mop up any possible source of resistance or disloyalty to the new government.

“I am now calling upon the working people, the youths, workers, farmers, fishermen, middle-class people, and women to join our armed revolutionary forces at central positions in your communities and to give them any assistance which they call for.”

That call started the peoples’ militia. The militia was an ad hoc group of civilians who formed into groups to complement the work of the revolutionary army. The militia maintained the peace in the rural and remote areas of the country and disbanded the police force in those places.

A Brother B responded to the call and joined every militia. In every parish the profile was the same. An elderly man, who stood out among the youth in the organization. An old Gairyite, converted to the revolution by the vigor and energy of the forward march against slavery and imperialism.

Brother B loved people. This man used his skills to help the poor and the needy. He enjoyed good relationships with people. He was fun to be around and put his energy into whatever he did. His role in the militia was no different.

He was the first to volunteer for every mission. At no time did he consider the danger to himself.

On reflection, the mission taken on by the militia was risky. Using a small fishing boat to oar into the night, across murky waters was dangerous. Add to this the interception and boarding of a yacht several times larger than the fishing boat. The persons onboard the vessel and its contents were unknown.

The militia’s weapon of choice was the M52. An M52 is a shoulder-fired semi-automatic rifle. A bolt locking mechanism powers a gas piston. The bolt is locked by two lugs that recess into slots machined into the receiver. The piston is actuated by residual gases from the bore. This weapon was heavy and clumsy. These days they are mainly used in ceremonies.

During the early days of the revolution the militia had no training. Later-on, the trainers who came to assist the recruits needed training themselves. The military maneuvers provided the best opportunity to simulate a real war and the harsh conditions of military life. Still, Brother B always showed up for duty using his limited knowledge.

The uniforms came one year after March 1979. There was not sufficient for everyone. People received parts of a uniform. This means using one's own shoes and jacket. Brother B's favorite was a heavy winterized jacket. The weight of the jacket must have hastened his demise.

This story relates to the many Brother Bs who joined the revolutionary militia in Grenada at the call of Maurice Bishop on 13 March 1979 and lost their lives in the service of their country.

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