



MEMBER'S BIOGRAPHIES

FEBRUARY 2012

FORWARD

In 2009, when I first thought that dancing would be a good form of exercise for older persons, little did I realize that it would become so popular and inspiring.

In June 2010, the Senior Steps: Dancing for Health pilot project was launched in Belmopan and Corozal, which proved to be a success in many ways. After 6 months the evaluation revealed that the health of most of the participants had improved. High blood pressure had stabilized, weight had decreased but also the members were having fun whilst exercising.

The thoughts and feelings of the Senior Steppers are captured in the following pages and illustrate how much they have benefited from being part of this ‘happy family’, having formed relationship that counteract loneliness.

Thanks must be extended to Ix-Chel Poot, Programme Officer at the NCA for providing on-going support; to Karen Chaleki for the fun instruction in dance and exercise and Ella and Ian Anderson for producing the Senior Steps book.

Congratulations also to all Senior Steppers.

Lindy Jeffery, Executive Director, NCA

EFRAIN ALDANA

Date of Birth: **1st February**

Place of Birth: **Warrie Head, Cayo**

My name is Efrain Aldana and I am 64 years old. Like my wife, Gregoria Aldana, I am a devoted Catholic and help my parish whenever possible. I came to Belmopan in 1982 having worked in Toledo.

We are members of the Belmopan Humane Society where we enjoy working with other people who also love animals.

We joined the senior Steps programme from the beginning and we are very satisfied with all the opportunities offered to us. The main components are: Socializing – We know more people, made friends and share ideas.

Exercise – the need for exercise is emphasized and we have learned various techniques.

We have opportunities for dancing, singing and participating in skits.

The Senior Steps programme was established by the NCA and I hope that it will be sustained by the members. I think there is a need for more institutional support from GOB for programmes for older people and also from the Belmopan community. The members are trying to sustain the group but since all of them are retirees, there is a limitation to their financial contributions.

Moving to Belmopan

I moved to Belmopan in 1982 because I was transferred by my employer.

Words of Wisdom/ Philosophy of Life

I put God first in everything I do. That is work, play, leisure and it works for me, I recommend to all.



GREGORIA ALDANA

Date of Birth: **13th September**

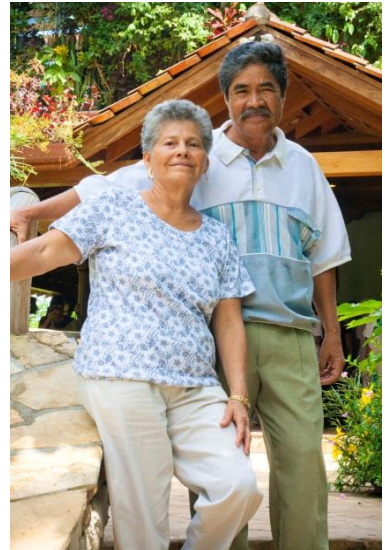
Place of Birth: **Orange Walk Town**

My name is Gregoria Ayuso Aldana and I was born in OrangeWalk Town in September 1949. I am a Catholic and I am an active person in my church.

I and my husband, Efrain Aldana, are church goers and we live to serve our God. We came to live in Belmopan in 1982 and because we liked it we made it our home. In 1993 Mrs. Hazel Hutchinson invited me to join the HelpAge Organization which I did for quite some years.

My husband and I are both members of the Belmopan Humane Society because we love animals and enjoy helping out in whatever we can.

At present we are in the Senior Step group and we enjoy every moment of it. I personally like the exercises, the socializing with each other and the advice on healthy foods. I also enjoy the dancing as a source of exercise as it has made me healthier. I sleep much better now and my blood pressure is okay.



I thank Ms. Lindy and Ix-Chel for creating this project. I also thank Karen for instructing us with the exercises.

Moving to Belmopan

I came to Belmopan in 1982 with my husband, we moved because he was stationed to work in Belmopan. I liked Belmopan from the beginning as the community is quiet and peaceful and I feel at home here. Over the years I have seen the city expand and the walk ways deteriorate. I am presently very involved with my church and my community.

Words of Wisdom/ Philosophy of Life

I approach each day thinking: God first, Family second and my actions are guided by my love for nature and animals.

GRACE AVILA

Date of Birth: **4th October**

Place of Birth: **Belize City**

I was born in Belize City and married a fisherman at the age of 17. I had 7 children, 4 boys and 3 girls.

I never worked and have always been a housewife, raising the children while my husband was away fishing and only returning at weekends. All the children graduated from Belmopan Comprehensive except the eldest girl who graduated from St. Catherine's.

My husband died 16 years ago and was buried on what would have been our 50th wedding anniversary.



I joined Senior Steps in order to get out of the house. I was home alone all day with only the animals to talk to. I really enjoy the company and look forward to Mondays when I meet up with everyone and we have fun. I think my health is improving and I'm sleeping better. The exercises also help my osteoporosis and arthritis.

I like gardening and attending to my plants, especially the orchids and roses.

Moving to Belmopan:

We moved to Belmopan in 1970 so I suppose we were some of the earliest residents. We were encouraged to make the move by a friend who was coming to teach. We migrated because we thought it would be beneficial and we would have the opportunity for a better life and also obtain a house. We acquired a house on Mahogany Street and that's where I've always lived in Belmopan. I have been an active lay minister in the Catholic Church for many years.

Words of Wisdom/ Philosophy of Life

Every day I ask God for guidance and strength to accept whatever He sends my way.

LANA BEVANS

Date of Birth: **21st July**

Place of Birth: **Stann Creek Town (now Dangriga)**

My maiden name was Lana Belisle. I am married to Eric Bevans and we are the proud parents of five children.

I grew up in Stann Creek town, now, Dangriga, however, after my marriage I moved to Belize City where I resided and raised my family.

I started my working career in the government service, working in various departments namely; Forestry, Agriculture and Education. I then moved on to the Reconstruction and Development Corporation where I was employed for 27 years, the last three years on transfer to Belmopan. It was during that time that I obtained a piece of land in Belmopan and that is where I now reside.



Moving to Belmopan

I moved to Belmopan in March 2010. I wanted to enjoy my retirement in a quiet and relaxing place.

Words of Wisdom/ Philosophy of Life

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your path straight.

LEONIE ELFREDA CAIN

Date of Birth: **28th July**

Place of Birth: **Belize City**

I was born on July 28 to James and Adelia Locke. I was the second of ten children, seven girls and three boys. As a good Methodist, I first attended Wesley Primary School and then went on to St. Hilda's College. Coming from a large family I stayed at home to get a good education in home economics. I wanted to be a good wife so I received lessons from my mother. I have so many pleasant memories from my childhood family days.

I met Edney Cain at church as he was also a good Methodist. We became very friendly and after two years we were married by Rev. C. L. Cadogan on July 16th, 1951, a Monday morning at 6:30am. We had two daughters, Sharon and Maria, who gave us four lovely grandsons.



Edney worked as a Civil Servant for 51 years. In 1984 he was appointed Ambassador to Washington. While in DC I started craft classes, the first one was patchwork. In 1987 Edney was appointed Belize's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, where I was able to attend more classes in patchwork, lampshade making and embroidery. I love craft, especially at Christmas and Easter and also preserving fruits. I am an avid gardener and arrange flowers from my garden for my church. Recently I fell in love with chess and Senior Steps. I look forward to Monday afternoons when I go to meet my Senior Step Dance group members from 3-5 pm. I enjoy the fun and laughter I have with them. I say there is not another group like this, one big loving and caring family. Tuesday afternoons I attend my chess class where I am happy with the knowledge I have gained. I am thankful to God for a very happy life with Edney and on July 16th, 2011 we would have celebrated sixty years together. I would like to tell the Seniors to come out to join and enjoy the fellowship. Make the seniors happy and friendly.

Words of Wisdom/ Philosophy of Life:

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

MALIKAH CARDONA

Date of Birth: **1st October**

Place of Birth: **Belize City**

I am well-known in the field of physical planning. I have a Bachelors degree in Physical Planning & Environmental Studies and a Diploma in Physical Planning Technology from the University of Technology in Jamaica. I also have diplomas in related fields such as Cartography, Photographic Science and Disaster Management.



My employment with the government spans some thirty-four years in the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment. From 1994 to 2007 I served as the Physical Planner, Principal Planner and Deputy Commissioner of Lands & Surveys (DCLS) in the Lands and Surveys Department respectively.

I live in the garden city of Belmopan. I enjoy a sociable lifestyle, particularly by contributing voluntarily to organizations such as the Belmopan LIONS club, Cancer Society and Belmopan Help-Age. I am also a member of the Belmopan Choral Society. Complimentary to my professional achievements, I pride myself in being the mother of four daughters and seven grand-children.

Moving to Belmopan:

I was forced to move to Belmopan because of work as my life was really in Belize City. At the time of my move I was active in ballet dancing and I felt like I was leaving my life behind. Over time Belmopan became my home as I got married and established my family here. I started to love Belmopan because of the clean environment and it was a quiet place to raise children with good schools. It also helped that my older brother was at the time living in Belmopan, so I wasn't alone.

Words of Wisdom/ Philosophy of Life

The comforts of clean environment are the success to a long and healthy life.

MYRTLE CHANONA

Date of Birth: **15th March**

Place of Birth: **Belize City**

I was born to my parents, Elswith and Felipe Coye, on March 15th at the family's home on Freetown Road in Belize City. Thanks to many trips to nearby St. George's Caye, I developed a love of the outdoors and quickly became an avid fisherwoman...a hobby I still enjoy today.

In July of 1979 I married Anthony and our union blessed us with five children and three grandchildren. I continue to be an active member of my community, having served on several school boards and charity organizations.



I am the company secretary of Blue Mountain Ranch Ltd, a family owned citrus and cattle farm on the Hummingbird Highway and landscaping operation in the City of Belmopan. My personal passions include dancing, cooking and tending to my private orchid garden. I embrace each day of my life as a blessing from God.

Words of Wisdom/ Philosophy of Life

Pursue excellence in all that you put your heart and hands to do.

ANA D'SILVA

Date of Birth: 7th December

Place of Birth: **Corozal Town**

As a young girl I always had animals and I love horses. Today I have my three dogs to keep me company. My father was always proud to say that his gardens and livestock put the food on the table.

I have lived in San Ignacio, Mountain Pine Ridge and the Pomona Valley in the Stann Creek District while my husband was in Forestry and the citrus industry. If I had my way I would purchase land in Punta Gorda as is such fertile land.



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I always had plants and in 1979 I opened a nursery in Belmopan with local plants and also from Mexico.

While in Houston in 2000 I had a fall and broke my hip and needed a hip replacement. After that the nursery became too much for me to carry on.

I started the Bull Frog Inn in 1981 when I saw a need for a small hotel and restaurant in Belmopan so I opened the restaurant along with two rooms for rent. I give thanks to Cyrillo Mahung, who as the manager of DFC at the time, gave me a loan to expand the business, which has since grown into a popular hotel and restaurant with twenty-six rooms.

Today I live humbly in my one room apartment, content because my wonderful son, John, looks out for me. I have three sons, Matthew who lives in Houston, Michael who has passed away, John and nine grandchildren. I am thankful and grateful for the people around me.

Moving to Belmopan:

My husband retired from the citrus industry in 1973 and suggested we rent a house in Belmopan. Since my sister was living here, I suggested we purchase a house and have been here ever since. Belmopan has been good to me.

Words of Wisdom/ Philosophy of Life

Hard work has its compensation.

FELICITA FINNEY

Date of Birth: **28th February**

Place of Birth: **San Joaquin, Corozal**

I was born in the beautiful village of San Joaquin in the Corozal District.

When I was fourteen years old, I was sent to the Novitiate at Nazareth, in the Toledo District, to become a Sister (Nun). After seven years of preparation I became a Professed nun, taking the vows before being sent out in the field to teach. I taught in San Ignacio, in Benque Viejo, and in Belize City. At the end of this period, I prepared myself, through prayer, meditation and spiritual direction, to leave the convent. I felt I needed to pursue other self-assigned commitments.



In 1969 while I was attending the Teacher's Training College, I heard that they were interviewing teachers to teach at the new Capital in Belmopan. There are so many memories of those first few months in our new City, but I need more space to tell them.

After three years of teaching at the Belmopan Infant School, I was given a scholarship to do my Certificate of Ed and my Bachelor's Degree in Teacher Ed. in Jamaica. In 1980 I was offered a Scholarship by the University of Alberta in Edmonton Canada, to do my Master's Degree in ED. When I returned I was placed to teach at the Teacher's Training College when the University College of Belize opened 1992 I was one of the pioneer teachers who was selected to lecture there.

I met my husband JT Finney in Santa Barbara, California in 1979 and although to marry was not in my agenda when I left the convent, JT was a great person. We got married in Belmopan in 1980. I still love him and miss him. My life has been filled with wonderful and cherishing memories, of service to students, to children and my country Belize.

Words of Wisdom/ Philosophy of Life

Never give up your dreams, even at an older age, you can accomplish them.....PATIENCE, ENDURANCE, HOPE.....ATTAINS ALL THINGS.

LORRAINE FRAZER

Date of Birth: **13th December**

Place of Birth: **Dangriga**

A smile a day keeps the doctor away.

I first came to Belmopan in 1990. My husband was transferred from Dangriga to come to Belmopan to work.

I heard about the Senior Steps program from when it first started. I joined the program because I wanted to exercise both to improve my body for health reasons and also to socialize with other people. In my opinion, I think it is a very good program.



Moving to Belmopan:

I moved to Belmopan twenty years ago when my husband was transferred for work. We use to live at Melinda on the coastal road. Moving to Belmopan was a big difference from living in a village. Life in the village was very open and connected and we would look out for each other. I've had to adjust to life in Belmopan but I think Belmopan is the best place to live as it's safe and you have access to every district and good doctors.

Words of Wisdom/ Philosophy of Life

Try to be nice to others through sharing and showing love and kindness and stay away from disagreements.

PAT GRAHAM

Date of Birth: **16th February**

Place of Birth: **Jamaica**

Coming here from Jamaica 38 years ago my husband and I found life difficult. There were few amenities, no TV, no washing machine, no supermarkets and only 1 shop operated by Beto Espat and his brother. Only Government employees lived here and they all went to Belize City after work on Friday. We were the pioneers.

Gradually life improved we made friends, our boys went to school and grew up here, we became Belizean citizens.

There was nothing for older people to get involved with until the Senior Steps dance programme started.



We have all benefited from the exercise and the health tips that we received, as well as meeting regularly with other senior citizens and enjoying the camaraderie. This has been so good for us and we hope that this can continue. The chess club has also been good for us, stimulating us mentally.

Moving to Belmopan:

I migrated from Jamaica to Belmopan in 1974 with my family, 38 years ago. It was a new capital but with little to offer us newcomers except peace and tranquility.

Words of Wisdom/ Philosophy of Life

“Trust in God” That has gotten me through a lot of difficult things in our lives.

LINDY JEFFERY

Date of Birth: **21st September**

Place of Birth: **Bristol, United Kingdom**

I came to Belize in February 1991 from the UK as a VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas) to work for an NGO as a rural youth development officer and also, as I found out when arriving, to cover the women's development post as well. I enjoyed my 2 years with Help for Progress working all over the country. Obviously I fell in love with this remarkable country Belize because I stayed and am now a naturalized Belizean citizen and consider Belize my home. For the past 20 years I have worked primarily within the community development field by assisting different groups to establish projects and programmes to improve their lives. I have worked all over the country and in many rural communities so feel I know Belize quite well.



I worked with HelpAge Belize for almost 2 years before accepting the position of Executive Director of the National Council on Ageing in late 2003. I am still here today and continue to find the work with older people very challenging but also very rewarding. Older people have so much to offer their community if only they are provided with the opportunity to express themselves and able to participate freely.

Although the Senior Steps programme was an initiative of the National Council on Ageing, it was never the intention to manage the programme forever and so I am very proud of the Senior Steps members because they have accepted the responsibility and continue to develop this group. Having reached the age to be accepted into the realms of 'older age', I can now officially be a member of Senior Steps and be proud to call myself a Senior Stepper.

Moving to Belmopan:

Initially in February 1991 I was based in Belmopan when working as a VSO for Help for Progress, then after 5 years working in Orange Walk and Corozal I returned in 2000 to stay.

Words of Wisdom/Philosophy of Life

Make the most of everyday. Don't sit back and let others make decisions for you but get involved and make a difference in your life and the lives of others. Also have fun and laugh a lot.

HELEN & RUSSEL KEMP

Date of Birth: **Mrs. Kemp 20th March and Mr. Kemp 29th July**

Place of Birth: **Both were born in Belize City**

Mrs. Kemp: When I came to Belmopan in 1971 I felt like I was living in a swamp as it was so muddy and there was only one store to buy groceries on Toucan Street. If you didn't buy your groceries at that store you had to leave Belmopan and it was dangerous to travel on the highways as it was mostly mud and very slippery. We have seen Belmopan grow and change into a very beautiful place. In 1974 I opened one of the first stores in the shopping center along with Mr. Lopez's Pharmacy. We are really pioneers of Belmopan.



Since attending Senior Steps over the past year, we have achieved a lot. It gave us the opportunity to meet wonderful friends. We also experience improvement in our health.

We wish to express our thanks to Miss Lindy, Miss Ix-Chel and to Karen.

Moving to Belmopan

Mr. Kemp: Moving to Belmopan gave us the opportunity to get a house without the hassle of going to a Bank or Credit Union for a loan. When instructions were given to Government Departments to move up to Belmopan, Civil Servants were told to go to Belmopan to choose a house. At that time "Reconstruction Development" Belmopan was responsible for all the houses. A hire/purchase condition was agreed upon. I worked 38 years with the Government of Belize and so we took advantage of the benefits of moving to Belmopan in early 1971 with our four children. All four are now living in the USA.

Words of Wisdom/ Philosophy of Life

Mr. Kemp – Believe in yourself. Love your neighbors.

Mrs. Kemp – Keep God in your lives at all times.

VIOLETA LONGSWORTH

Date of Birth: **14th July**

Place of Birth: **Merida, Mexico**

I was born in Merida Mexico in 1944 and was registered as British in 1963 when Belize was British Honduras.

My husband and I came to live in Belmopan in September 1972. We had two children Michelle and Nalini. Nalini unfortunately passed away in Orange Walk in 1980.

I am a lay minister of the Roman Catholic Church and have visited many homes over the years to give the host of the Holy Communion. I have also worked with the Hospital Auxiliary and assisted in other community activities including teaching sewing at the Comprehensive Secondary School.



My hobbies are sewing, gardening and playing tennis

Moving to Belmopan

My husband worked for the government service and so, as a result of the Government's hire purchase Housing Scheme, we finally owned a home on 32 Mahogany Street in site 7.

Words of Wisdom/ Philosophy of Life

Do unto others as you would like them to do unto you

IRIS MARTIN

Date of Birth: **27th September**

Place of Birth: **Belize City**

I am a retired nurse and I live in Belmopan City. I am a mother of three adult sons.

My hobbies are sewing, craft and dancing. I work with my hands and my brain to make pretty things and this makes me feel fulfilled.

Dancing is exercising the body and this is good to keep me healthy, I also feel good when I dance.

I am a member of Senior Steps and we meet on Mondays for physical exercises and dance steps. I love the socializing with my friends that we get to know at the dance class. I feel happy and fulfilled after class because I feel that I am taking good care of my health.

I also felt that the person who visited Senior Steps periodically to talk to us about healthy living was very helpful.



Seniors come join us. 😊

Moving to Belmopan

In February 2002 I retired from my work abroad and returned home to Belize and settled here in Belmopan City.

Words of Wisdom/ Philosophy of Life

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise is forever. Taken from Psalm 111 verse 10.

AURORA & PAUL Mc CORD

Date of Birth: **Mrs. McCord 3rd August and Mr. McCord 21st March**

Place of Birth: **Mrs. McCord was born in Chunox Village in the Corozal District and Mr. McCord was born in Belize City.**

Hi, my name is Aurora McCord. I was born in the village of Chunox many years ago. I was the first born in my family and maybe that is what makes me so mindful of others.

I was one of the first women teachers to attend the Belize Teacher's College for the Catholic Dioceses and Mr. McCord was a member of the Police force.

I was a teacher by profession both in Belize and the USA.

When Paul and I thought it was time to retire we decided to return to Belize.

Although we lived in Corozal in our younger days, we decided to make our new home in Belmopan. I especially like Belmopan because it is clean and spread out. The people are friendly and reasonably reserved and I like that.

Today we have settled in somewhat comfortably and I am very involved in a program we call "Senior Steps." I look forward to the fun, camaraderie, and just being with the group. It has revitalized my life. When you are at "Senior Steps" you forget the chores and all the things you must do, but don't really want to. I will do my part to make sure that "Senior Steps" keeps moving on and on and on. It is a great organization.

Moving to Belmopan

We retired in Belmopan in 1995 Mr. McCord came first and finally they settled completely in 1997.

Words of Wisdom/ Philosophy of Life

Be honest with everyone and in everything you do. Your life will then be so simple.



JESUSITA OLI NABET

Date of Birth: **23rd October**

Place of Birth: **Benque Viejo Del Carmen**

My name is, Jesusita Oli Nabet nee Ochoa, and I was born on October 23 in Benque Viejo Del Carmen in the Cayo District.

I moved to Belmopan City with my husband and raised my children at a house on Sarstoon Street where I still reside today.

I am affectionately known as ‘Mama Oli’ and have five children and five grandchildren, who I love dearly. I also have numerous other children who I consider my own.

I am an active member of my church and also a Justice of the Peace, a responsibility that I take very seriously. I enjoy dancing but my greatest pleasure is helping people and ensuring that I do whatever it takes to make everyone’s life around me easier.

My faith in God is strong and has allowed me to lead a very fulfilling life and I strive every day to live my life to the fullest.



JACQUELINE WILMA NEAL

Date of Birth: **12th May**

Place of Birth: **Belize City**

I have been married to Rodney Neal for the past forty-two years and we have three children and four grandchildren.

I was born and raised in Belize City where I attended Holy Redeemer Primary School and then went on to St. Catherine's Academy in 1958. I graduated in April 1962.



I started teaching in St. Ignatius Primary School which lasted for seven years. After getting married in 1969 I moved to Central Farm, Cayo District, where I continued to teach at Sacred Heart, Santa Elena Primary School and Central Farm Anglican School, before moving to Belmopan in 1981 upon the transfer of my husband to the Ministry of Agriculture.

After moving to Belmopan I continued teaching at the Belmopan Infant School until I retired in 2000. To this point my teaching career spanned 38 years. I then took up the post of Principal of Precious Moments Preschool from September 2003 to 2005. I have been involved with several voluntary organizations since coming to Belmopan – namely, The Belize Red Cross, Belize Cancer Society, HelpAge and Senior Steps. I have also served on several Committees.

I joined Senior Steps in June 2010 and I have found it very enjoyable and relaxing. The dances and exercise sessions have helped me to improve my mental and physical status and gained more stamina. The information gathered from the health talks have also made me more aware of my eating habits. I won't hesitate to say that we have become one big family, laughing and having fun each time we get together.

Moving to Belmopan

My husband was transferred to the Ministry of Agriculture in 1981.

Words of Wisdom/ Philosophy of Life

A life lived for others is a life worth living

MABEL NEAL

Date of Birth **15th July**

Place of Birth: **Belize City**

As a nurse working for the Ministry of Health I moved to different districts in connection with my job description.

Having first taken a Nurses Aid Course in 1963, this qualified me to study Nursing at the Belize School of Nursing from 1967 – 1969. I graduated with a qualification in Practical Nursing and Midwifery. Although I did a practicum in Belize City during my studies, when I qualified I was sent out to be a rural nurse in San Felipe, Gales Point, Corozal, Hattville and Dangriga.



I retired in 1996 but was asked to go back to the Ministry of Health for a further 3 years on contract.

I came to join Senior Steps group through my good friend, Ms. Lorraine Frazer, who invited me. Since that first visit, I am happy to be a member of the group.

Senior Steps has helped me mentally and physically. Meeting new and old friends, sharing and caring for each other laughter, exercising helps my aches and also keeps me fit and alert. Being with the group 3-5 on Mondays takes away some of my depression.

Thanks to the leaders of this group.

Moving to Belmopan:

In 1970 my husband and I decided to buy a house in Belmopan so that on retirement we would have somewhere to rest our heads. He was the priest at St. John Cathedral from 1998 – 2008 but unfortunately it so happened that he died far too early and I was forced to move to Belmopan on my own going on three years now. I am comfortable and relaxed living in Belmopan. I enjoy the quiet, the fresh air and the peacefulness.

Words of Wisdom/Philosophy of Life:

Meet friends and live in harmony with people.

ISABEL ORIO

Place of Birth: **San Estevan, Orange Walk District**

Hello, my name is Isabel Orio and I am seventy-three years old. I have been happily married to Orlando Orio for fifty five years.

I was born in San Estevan Village in the Orange Walk District. I had six children (3 boys and 3 girls) of which one boy and two girls have passed away.

My husband and I joined HelpAge Belmopan in 2001 after being invited by Mrs. Hazel Hutchinson. Since then we have done volunteer work for HelpAge.

From early in 2011 I have been active and proud of participating in the “Senior Steppers group” under the tutelage of Mrs. Karen Chaleki.

I look forward to our Monday Sessions and excursions to Caves Branch at the invitation of Mr. Ian Anderson and his wife Ella.



I would also like to give credit to Ms. Lindy Jeffery for being supportive to our activities.

I pray for my family, my health, my friends and for the plants that I love so much.

Moving to Belmopan

I have been living in Belmopan since 1991.

Words of Wisdom/ Philosophy of Life

Don't leave for tomorrow what you can do today.

CHRISTINA S. PALACIO NEE FLORES

Date of Birth: **25th October**

Place of Birth: **Seine Bight Village**

I am a retired nurse. I lived in Belize City from 1973 to 1977. I entered the nursing profession in December 1969. I married Bernard Palacio on 8th May, 1976 and have three children, two girls and one boy.

Moving to Belmopan

I moved to Belmopan in 1979. My husband and I were working here. I have been here since then. I am now a widow.

Words of Wisdom/ Philosophy of Life

Whenever you do anything, do it to the best of your ability.



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LINA PAREDES

Date of Birth: **18th March**

Place of Birth: **Quintana Roo, Mexico**

My name is Orfelina Paredes but my friends call me Lina. I was born in Quintana Roo, Mexico but now I have dual nationality. I was married at the age of 19 to Armando Paredes on December 26, 1962. I have 6 children.

I spent my life at home taking care of my children and making sure they had all their needs satisfied.

Despite the many running my home, I be involved in During my free time Hospital Auxiliary was their Vice to organize tea to buy things for the would also volunteer craft at two primary

For more than 20 serving as a lay Catholic Church in always been fundraising for the should mention that and performing.



responsibilities of always found time to community work. I worked with the and at one time I President. We used parties to raise funds Belmopan Hospital. I to teach arts and schools.

years I have been minister for the Belmopan. I have involved in church. I think I I like to be dancing

Moving to Belmopan

As a consequence of my husband completing his first degree studies in Canada, he was appointed as education officer and transferred to Belmopan on 10th August, 1970. I naturally accompanied my husband to Belmopan, the new capital of Belize.

Words of Wisdom/ Philosophy of Life

Words of universal import are: “Be humble but do not tolerate humiliation.”

My philosophy of life is that good will come to those who do good.

LICIE PECH

Date of Birth: **13th July**

Place of Birth: **Yaxkaba Yucatan, Mexico**

My husband and I moved to Belmopan on the 11th of July 2010. My husband Renan Arturo Couoh Escobedo is the Technical Director of Football development for the Football Federation of Belize, and of course his job is what brought us to Belmopan.

I have one daughter, Claudia Guadalupe Couoh Pech, who is 29 years old and she has one child; my beautiful two year old grandson Dylan.

In Mexico I taught cultural arts and make up.

My first friend in Belmopan was Mrs. Feli Finney. Mrs. Feli was the person who invited me to be a part of the Senior Steps dance group where I have met many lively and energetic women and I have made genuine and lasting friendships. These ladies and their happy dispositions have guided me through many facets in my life. I am even learning to play chess because of these women.



I have had many wonderful experiences with the Senior Steps group; the one I remember the most is our visit to Senior Steps Corozal. There have been sad times as well when we have had to say goodbye to members who are moving to other countries. These farewells also help us to renew our bonds of friendship and unity. I thoroughly enjoy the recent trips to Caves Branch. I really do enjoy writing my thoughts and ideas down and these are just a few. Lately I've been thinking that my dreams and reality is so similar that I am living in a dream.

Moving to Belmopan:

I moved to Belize from Mexico in July 2010 because my husband started a new job with the FFB at their headquarters in Belmopan.

Words of Wisdom/ Philosophy of Life:

If I dance and if I smile, I am young.

MARJORIE PETZOLD

Date of Birth: **29th August**

Place of Birth: **Corozal Town**

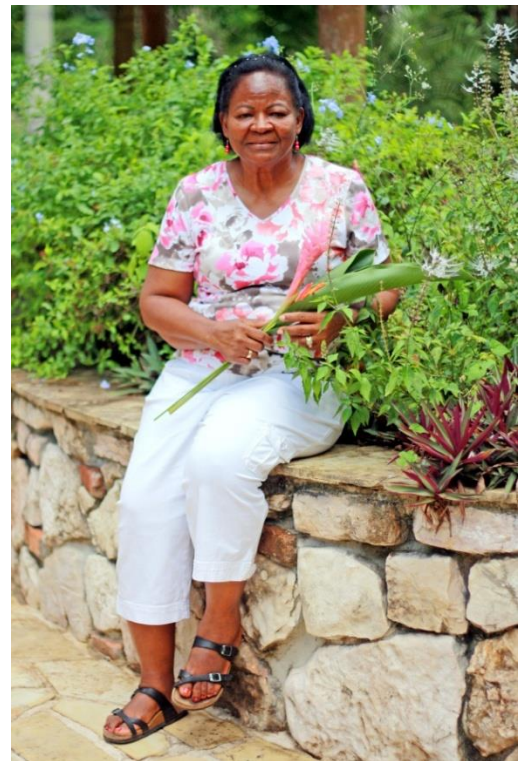
In 1976 my job moved to Belmopan. I worked in the Survey and Land Department all my career life.

I am a member of VOICE and at a meeting I was informed of the Senior Steps group.

Senior Steps is making me fulfill my fantasy – “not to become a shut-in”. It makes me feel vibrant and happy striving to maintain good health by exercising and eating right. By so doing I am guaranteed an active and long life.

Moving to Belmopan:

When I first came to Belmopan I was not receptive to life here, things were inconvenient, we had to travel for medical services and there were no shopping options. I think what made it worst was I didn't like to travel too much. As services became available I became more compliant and now I am content to live here. Actually, I have lived more than half of my life here and I must say it has been the best part of my life. I have come to appreciate life more and I have made many more friends.



Words of Wisdom/ Philosophy of Life

My philosophy of life is “do the best you can whenever, wherever and as long as you can”

NELLIE QUIGLEY

Date of Birth: **17th June**

Place of Birth: **Orange Walk Town**

I am a graduate of St. Catherine's Academy (SCA), class of 1946.

I retired at the age of 76 after 27 years as sales representative with G.T.E. Yellow Pages, and I was planning to stay in Belize City. However my daughter moved to Belmopan to work here and she persuaded me to move with her. We have been living here since 2002. In the beginning I did not like living in Belmopan but I have gradually come to appreciate life here and I even decided to sell my house in Belize City. I enjoy a sense of security and safety; and I really like that the City is clean. I am happier now since I have made friends at Senior Steps. I wish that words could express what Senior Steps has meant to me. I look forward to the days we meet and have fun.



Moving to Belmopan: ☹️

Although I initially did not want to move to Belmopan in 2002, I have since settled and having formed many friendships, I actually enjoy my life her now.

Words of Wisdom/ Philosophy of Life

Life is what you make it.

CORDELIA RAYMOND, JP

Date of Birth: **19th September**

Place of Birth: **Orange Walk**

I have been married for thirty eight happy years to a loving husband and am a mother of three lovely children and grandmother of two.

I am presently retired from professional catering as a Culinary Arts instructor and owner/manager of a successful catering service.

I am currently involved in a variety of enjoyable hobbies, social activities and community service. This includes playing guitar and keyboard, art work, gardening and landscaping. I am also a youth leader for the church a member of the Senior Step Dancers and an avid chess player.



Moving to Belmopan

I moved to Belmopan 3 years ago. My husband and I were retiring and since he has a citrus farm in Stann Creek Valley, he had planned on retiring on the farm but I wasn't in agreement with the idea. Eventually we picked Belmopan (well he suggested and I agreed) a decision we have not regretted. I enjoy being a part of the Belmopan community, it is a beautiful place with nice people and life is quiet and slow.

Words of Wisdom/ Philosophy of Life

Serve God, Give Thanks, Serve others and be happy.

JEAN ROSADO

Date of Birth: **5th March**

Place of Birth: **United Kingdom**

In 1959 I came to Belize after meeting and marrying Oscar Rosado in 1959, a Belizean man who was studying Forestry in the UK.

My early married life in Belize to a forestry officer was spent living at forest stations. My first home was at Augustine Forest Station in the Mountain Pine Ridge and then Melinda Forest Station in the Stann Creek Valley.

After Hurricane Hattie I returned to England with my two children and my husband joined me after the clean up process. We later spent four years in Canada where my husband continued further studies.



In 1996 my husband passed away and although I have many friends I was left alone. I joined Senior Steps not just for the exercise but for the companionship and I enjoy it very much.

Moving to Belmopan

In 1979 we moved to Belmopan and I started a small scale restaurant business and am still enjoying it today. I like being busy and having something to do. I have also boarded many volunteers over the years.

Words of Wisdom/ Philosophy of Life

Accept each day as it comes.

PATRICIA ROBINSON

Date of Birth: **1st October**

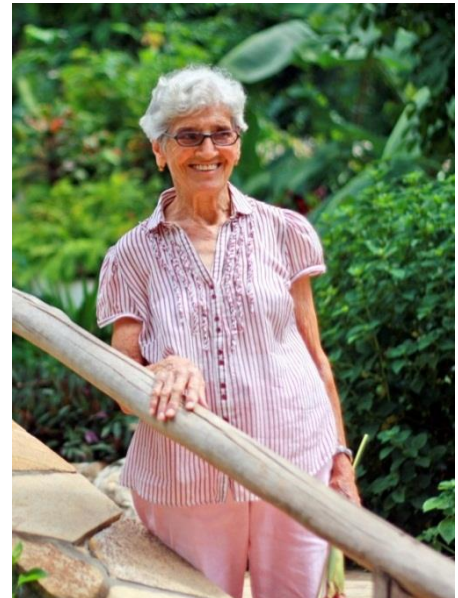
Place of Birth: **UK**

I first became aware of Belmopan from Mr. Magnus Halcrow when I was living in Belize City. He was appointed by Government to be in complete charge of the building of the New Capital - no name had been given to the site - it was always referred to THE NEW CAPITAL.

Mr. Halcrow visited my home to talk to my husband, Mr. Eugene Robinson, who was the General Manager of the Belize Electricity Board. He wanted to informally discuss plans for the new Power Plant which would supply and distribute energy to begin the work of the NEW CAPITAL.

The Belize Electricity Board set up an Office on Unity Boulevard, New Capital Site, to prepare for the installation of Electrical Power at the New Power Plant.

My first view of the new town in the area of the Wood Streets was at dusk, not one of the houses was occupied and the doors of most were open and moving in the evening wind. It was a magical moment, quite eerie and yet alive at the same time because of the new life due to come into a once pristine ancient forest.



Eventually when my family moved to the New Capital at mile 50 or thereabouts on the Western Highway in November of 1978 an Ecumenical Church was used as a Meeting place of Worship for all three denominations i.e., Methodist, Anglican and Roman Catholic.

A large general domestic/grocery store was available and this shop drew me like a magnet as it contained all manner of interesting items for every purpose. Schools opened up and the once poorly regarded NEW Capital site became an important CENTRE for diplomats and education. This emerging City had a newly designated Cathedral with its own Bishop and gradually became home from home to all its new citizens.

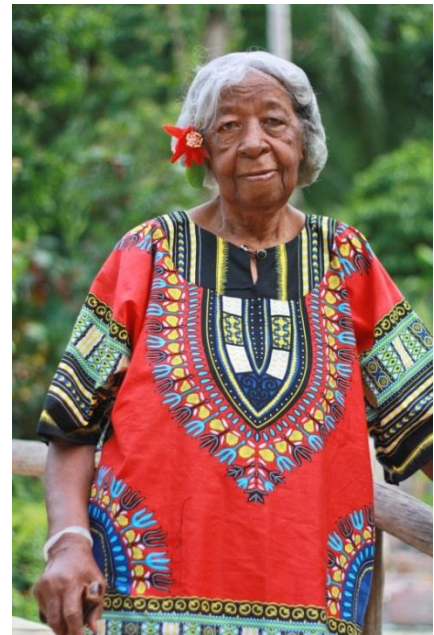
EVA ROSE

Date of Birth: **13th August**

Place of Birth: **El Porvenir Dept. of Atlantida, Honduras**

My name is Eva Idally Rose and I was born on August 13, 1921 in El Porvenir Dept. of Atlantida, Honduras to Belizean parents Lilian Evelyn Bowden and Osborne Neubert Reneau, who were working in Honduras at that time. I came to Belize City at the age of six years and attended school there. During my young adult years, I lived in Dangriga where I met Doriel Rose. We were married on June 10, 1950 when I was 29 years. When I returned to Belize City at age 46, I was the mother of six children, four girls and two boys. After my children moved away, I remained in Belize City until my health required me to be near my family.

I joined the “Senior Steps” in 2010, which gave me the opportunity to socialize with more people, to enjoy trips and other outings while benefitting from weekly exercise. At age 90 the “Senior Steps” group has enlivened and revitalized me.



Moving to Belmopan:

I moved to Belmopan in 2001 at age 80 years. I quickly made friends while attending church, distributing religious magazines, sharing the plants from my garden, shopping at the market, and walking the sidewalks. My first impression of Belmopan was that of a serene space with mannerly people who greeted me with the time of day.

I am an active member of my church and I enjoy sharing my faith with the community.

Words of Wisdom/ Philosophy of Life

Love one another as you would want others to love you.

JANET SATCHWELL

Date of Birth: **22nd February**

Place of Birth: **Belize City**

I was born in Belize City in 1935 and lived there most of my life. I was away from the City for several periods: four years studying in Jamaica; three years in England studying and teaching and three years in Pomona, where my husband was factory manager at the Citrus Company of Belize.

When my husband died in 1980 I moved to Belmopan, looking for a complete change and also for a refuge from hurricanes. I stayed for two years. One of the things I liked most about Belmopan was the intermingling of our many ethnic groups. In their neighborhoods, at school and in the workplace children and adults of diverse backgrounds were learning to live together.

I have always been a teacher, mostly of English Language and Literature. I served as Principal of St. Hilda's College for several years and taught at a girls' school in England for a short time. Other institutions where I taught were the Belize Technical College, Belize Anglican Cathedral College, St. Michael's College, Wesley College, and, of course Belmopan "Compre".



Moving to Belmopan

In 2003 I retired to Belmopan where I am enjoying the relative peace and quiet of the new capital and still do a little teaching when I can. At this time I am happy to have both my sons working here, and I also give thanks every day that the people I meet are so kind and caring.

When moving to Belmopan I was told that Belmopan was "for the newlywed or almost dead", but how little they know.

Words of Wisdom/ Philosophy of Life

Appreciate people for who they are; different is not necessarily better or worse.

SOFIA SQUIRES

Date of Birth: **1st August**

Place of Birth: **San Ignacio**

I was born in San Ignacio on the 1st of August 1937, I have four children. Among other things I love to be in the company with the Senior Steppers, for a healthy experience.

In 1981 I moved to the United States and stayed there for approximately 9 years. I returned to Belize in 1990 and settled in Belize City during a particularly heavy down pour I decided to make Belmopan my permanent home.

I have always been active in the life of the Belmopan community and was an active Red Cross member. After completing the Red Cross Shelter Managers training I was active in disaster management work in the Belmopan area. My experience with elderly care led me to open a small home care service in Belmopan, which I closed after providing end of life care for five patients.



These days I am enjoying the freedom of retirement and providing care for my five year old grandson. I enjoy the time I am able to spend with friends and love working in my garden.

Moving to Belmopan:

I had left Belize for some years and when I came back I had to decide where I was going to settle. I really moved to Belmopan because of my daughter as she had begun making a life for herself here. For me, Belmopan was love at first sight and I liked everything about the place. Belmopan has changed a lot and although more people have come to live here, I still enjoy a sense of freedom and of being able to move around the City.

Words of Wisdom/ Philosophy of Life
With God all things are possible!

BEVERLY SWASEY

Date of Birth: **13th March**

Place of Birth: **Belize City**

My name is Beverly Rita Swasey and I was born March 13, 1947 to Caroline Ernie Balderamos & Louis E. G. Swasey in Belize City. I am the last child of eight children, three boys and I am one of five girls. My formal education started at Holy Redeemer Primary School in 1950 and continued on at St. Catherine's Academy High School 1960, from where I graduated in April 1964. In May I started teaching at St. Ignatius Primary and later attended Belize Teacher's College 1971 - 1974. I Attended the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne (1975-76) and left with a Diploma in Education. After teaching for thirty-six years, I formally retired from teaching from Belmopan Comprehensive School in 2000.



Moving to Belmopan

I came to Belmopan in 1973 to teach at Bmp. Junior School, now Evergreen Primary School , until 1982. I then served one year as assistant Education Officer in Belmopan until 1983 when I started to teach at Comprehensive High School as assistant teacher of geography, history and social studies.

I serve my community through the following groups: Belize Cancer Society, Bmp Branch (1998); Bmp Women's Council (2003); Capital Culture Drama Group (2004) Bmp International Women's Group (2005). I served as councilor and deputy mayor on the Bmp. City Council between 2003-2006.

I am a Cancer survivor, a writer/ director / producer of plays.

I am now fully retired from paid employment since May of 2011 and this has allowed me to join the Senior Steps group.

Philosophy of life

My life philosophy is give to the universe and you will receive more than you give. If you want to be happy you need to serve your fellow man.

IONIE USHER

Date of Birth: **5th January**

Place of Birth: **Belize City**

My name is Sarita Ionie Usher and I was born and raised in Belize City.

I am a mother of six children and grandmother of seven. I am seventy-one years old with God blessings.

I used to be a food vender in Belize City but when I became seriously ill I needed to move to Belmopan. When I had recovered I found life in Belmopan very difficult, I did not have any close friends. I have since made friends with my neighbors and have come to like Belmopan. I think that it is a quiet and nice place to live.

My doctor told me that I must be active as much as possible so I started to go to the Help Age because I like to be with older people. I got to hear about the Senior Step dance group and decided to get involved. I like it very much.

I now do a little babysitting and my grandchildren keep me active.



Moving to Belmopan

I came to Belmopan in 2008 recovering from a serious illness.

Words of Wisdom/ Philosophy of Life

Take one day at a time and put God First in everything.

GWEN ZETINA

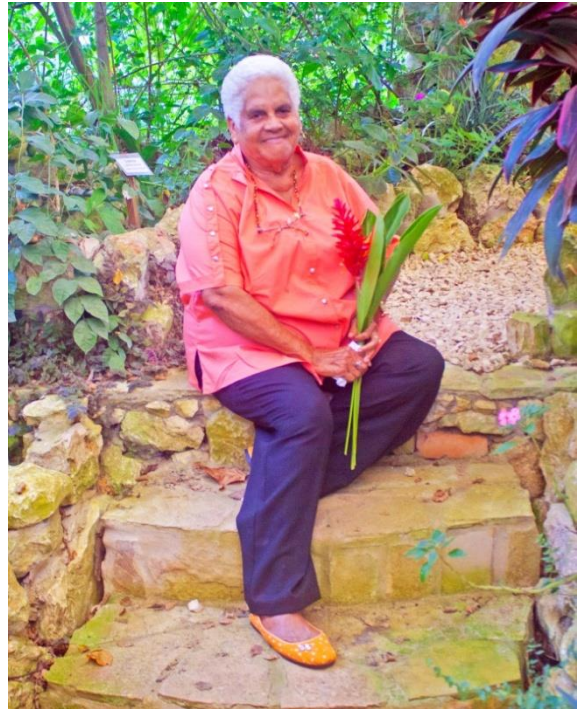
Date of Birth: **10th October**

Place of Birth: **Banana Bank**

I am Mrs. Gwendoline Zetina, and I was born on the 10th day of October 1935, in Banana Bank, Cayo District but I grew up in Belize City. I moved to Belmopan in 1981. Since then I am very active in the community. I am a lay minister at the Our Lady of Guadalupe Church; I also sing in the church choir. I am also a member of the Belmopan Lions club, HelpAge and the Cancer Society.

In the early years I use to do sewing for my family and others. I have a great love of my garden and my plants, which led me to become involved with the agricultural flower show booth. I also made wreaths for funerals but now just provide floor arrangements for my charitable organizations.

In 2011 I was nominated and won the Golden Age Hero award presented by the National Council on Ageing.



Moving to Belmopan:

I came to Belmopan in 1981 on the retirement of my husband and me. He was the agricultural officer in Lucky Strike and I ran the Post Office. I also ran a feeding program for the kids and taught them first aid with Red Cross. I loved Belmopan from the moment I saw it. When we first moved here my house was surrounded by bush and there were no street lights. I can remember a time when there were only two taxis in Belmopan. I use to do work as a seamstress and I always take part in the Agricultural Flower show each year.

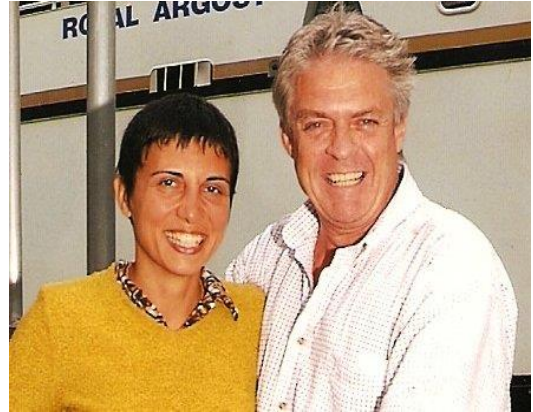
Words of Wisdom/ Philosophy of Life

I live to serve the church and people.

Thank you!

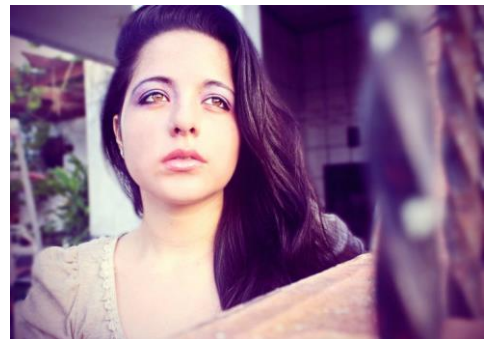
IAN & ELLA ANDERSON

The Senior Step book and bios idea came from Ian and Ella. They were inspired by seeing the excitement, enthusiasm and exuberance of the group during the Seniors Steps monthly visits to Caves Branch for the swimming aerobics. They claim coming up with the idea was the easy part.



MONICA GALLARDO

Monica took all of the photos for the hardcover books and the biographies. Many thanks for making us look so beautiful.



JOHN SHANNON

John almost lost sleep while putting together the great book. Without John the project would not have been finished. Thank you so very much.

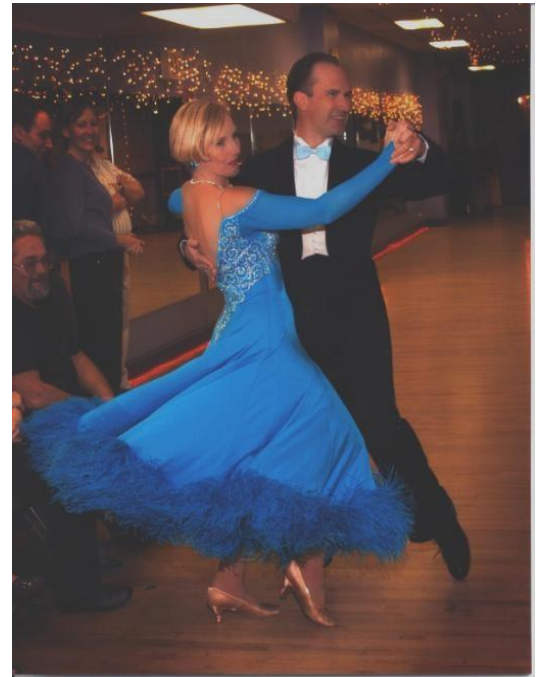


KAREN CHALEKI

Date of Birth: **8th September**

Place of Birth: **Portland, Maine USA**

Karen with her husband, Chris, competed in the ballroom world when they were in the states. They achieved the level of Amateur Championship Ballroom dancers competing all over the US. All the word Amateur means is that we didn't get paid to dance. The ballroom world is one of glamour and performance keeping both Chris and I in top physical condition. We competed at many levels but enjoyed competing against the 18 to 35 year olds, where we were considered Grandfather and Grandmother until we won the competition, then the respect was obvious.



I started with Seniors Steps as a spectator and quickly realized my ability to teach dance would be of benefit to the group. Little did I realize how much I would benefit from Senior Steps. The group has made me feel like a Belizean, except I still don't get the creole, but all the Senior Steppers are very patient with me.

Moving to Belmopan:

After our daughter's visa was recalled due to 9/11 the decision was made to go into early retirement and join her in Belize. We like to say that we adopted our daughter, but her whole family adopted us. We live in Ringtail Village, which gives us the ability to shut out the world if we desire and enjoy life and nature and more importantly each other.

Words of Wisdom/ Philosophy of Life

Life is what you make of it. Smile, it makes people wonder what you have been up to.

IX-CHEL POOT

Born: Not enough years to have my bio in this book

I've lived my entire life in Belmopan; in the same house on the same street. My parents moved to the budding city in the early 1970's where they met, fell in love and built our lives here. When I began to go to school there were no options you went to the Community Pre-School, to Infant School to Junior School to Upper School and then to Comprehensive High School. I would walk home from school caught up in a sea of other children flowing down the walkways, playing in the parks and stopping along the way to pick plumbs off the trees. We especially enjoyed playing in the deep drains during the rainy season when the water would gush like a small angry river rushing to empty out in some unknown end.



I received my Bachelor's degree in June 2008 and I began working for the National Council on Ageing (NCA) July of that same year. My job at the NCA is actually eighth on a list of diverse occupations; it is however, the job I must say I enjoy the most. I am privileged to work with a very unique set of people, each person a fountain of knowledge and experience. On the days I am able to spend time with these seniors I am reminded that age is just a number and your attitude and outlook on life determines how you will age.

Apologies:

**Our apologies to Janet Satchwell for misspelling her name in our book.
We have lashed the proof readers.**

**A heartfelt apology to Felicita Finney for listing her education as being in
the US. Felicita was educated in Canada.**