

Gentlemen of Jones Club History

In the latter months of 1952, while imbibing cocktails at their favorite “Watering Hole” located in downtown Christiansted at 43A Queen Cross St., what was then Jonesies Bar, three Canegata brothers – Cedric (Ceddy), Lloyed and David - along with their good friend, Arol Steele, decided to boost the merriment and joy of the Festival Parade and participated for the very first time, coming down the parade route behind Lloyd’s girlfriend at the time – his 1950 Jeep, better known as Clementine. The four were joined by the owner of their favorite watering hole, Minnard “Jonesie” Jones, and were formally attired in top hat and tails with walking sticks. As they passed the reviewing stand in Frederiksted, they were dubbed the Gentlemen of Jones.... and so it began!

While being formed to do their part in bringing liveliness to the holiday festivities, the Club was not just a social one. Within a few years of their formation and having added the other regular patrons of Jonesies Bar to their ranks, with names like Rexford Hodge, Owen Schjang, Ulric Benjamin, Keith Forbes, Almeric Christian, Randall “Doc” James, and the Lang brothers – Herman and Andy, the Club took on community assistance, raising funds for various causes, particularly assisting the island’s hospitals, and takes credit for funding the first air conditioning units to be placed at the hospital in Frederiksted. In those days, funds were raised by holding softball games, picnics and parties, including their annual Gala.

Then, in the early 80s, two of the original members – Ceddy and Arrol – who had once worked together at the Department of Public Works in the 1950s and had the responsibility of decorating the town of Christiansted for its annual Christmas festivities, decided to raise money for decorative Christmas fixtures, as the government was no longer providing the service. This was the beginning of the tradition that has now lasted for over forty (40) years, with the current Club members now continuing the practice.

As the new century approached in 2000, and with a resurgence for the St. Croix Festival Parade to be more joyous, carnivalesque, and festive, upon being asked by the then-Festival Committee leadership to participate in the Festival Parade, the Gentlemen of Jones began its history of leaving its mark as the 20+-year-floupe to consistently win first place honors each and every year of participation. From Top Hat, Tux and Tails, to Pirates of the Caribbean; from Soul Train Dancers to Superheroes; from Cowboys to A Deck of Cards; and from Citizens of the Roaring 20s to Emergency Service First Responders in the 2000s, the Gentlemen of Jones have left an indelible impression for all to witness with its beautifully designed floats and colorfully and carefully selected costumes. The Club takes particular pride in its ability to feed its participants with its famous guinea-bird soup prior to the start of the parades, and with its ability to furnish a minimum of three (3) floats in every parade, one of which contains a mobile restroom for its participants to utilize while enjoying themselves in the parade.

The Club has grown to over sixty (60) members with familiar Crucian family names littering its membership – Canegata, Biggs, Weber, Schjang, Schuster, Lang, Benjamin, Finch, Rholsen, Williams, Evans, Steele, Forbes, Halyard, James, Jones, Morales, Munchez, Rodgers, Webster, Capehart, Coleman, Christensen, Pedersen, Kainth, Knowles, Clarke, Christian, Camacho, Moorehead, Rosario, Nieves, Torres, Felix, Singh, George, Smith, Ramsingh, Ramos, Hodge, Henderson, Hassell, Curran, Davis, Anduze, Matthew, Thomas, Schuck, Woodson, Gittens, Lee, SanKitts and Dempster – and is honored to represent and pay homage to the founders and other members who have since passed on, while lighting the town of Christiansted every holiday season and participating in every Crucian Festival Parade. Their motto suits their purpose:

“WE ARE THE GENTLEMEN OF JONES...LET US LIGHT UP YOUR LIFE!” Shine on, Gentlemen! Shine on!!