

## **Vishwanath, Garner and Kallicharran inducted into the Hall of Fame.**

Emotions ran high at the 14th annual Cricket Hall of Fame's Induction Ceremony as six individuals, including three former international cricket stars, Gundappa Viswanath of India, Joel "Big Bird" Garner of Barbados and Alvin Kallicharran of Guyana, were honored for their contributions to the development and growth of the sport. Unfortunately Kallicharran, who now lives in England, was not present to receive his award. It is learnt that he suffered a heart attack just days before the ceremony.

The other inductees were former Sportmen's Athletic Club's standout Jerrine "Black Boy" Thompson (posthumously), Arnold Black founder of the New Britain Social Club and Basir Shadi Khan, who have made outstanding contributions to the sport both in New York and Connecticut.

At least two of the inductees were visibly moved, one almost to tears, while delivering their acceptance speeches prior to their enshrinement into the prestigious halls.

Five others, Majority Party Leader on the Hartford City Council Elizabeth Horton Sheff, Councilman Dr. Robert Painter, former West Indian Social Club's president, Doreth Flowers, Councilman Kendall Stewart and Assemblyman Frank Seddio, both of New York, and the Hartford Public Library, were also recognized with Presidential Awards for their contributions to their community and support for the sport.

Held at the Radisson Hotel, Cromwell, Connecticut, Saturday, September 27, Garner, a former West Indian fast bowler, said that cricket is a diverse merging of culture which unites and builds character. "Your strength of character comes with the game; it prepares you for life. Cricket is one of the only sports in which you can get people to compete fiercely against each other and still remain friends at the end of the game," he said.

A member of the West Indian team which dominated the game in the 1980s, Garner said that when we are engaged in a game, we don't talk about individuals, we strive to be united. It keeps us together. As West Indians we play the game with pride and joy. When West Indies win, everybody is happy, he stated. "Cricket helps us to understand others. Many people may not realize but when we travel to other lands to play, we usually take time off from the game to go out to see how the people live and work."

Garner, who was visibly shaken, stated that he would like to share his success with two of his past teammates who have passed on, Malcolm Marshall and Sylvester Clarke. "They were my good friends. We were a team. You can't do it alone," he said.

Former Indian batting stylist Viswanath, who scored 14 Test centuries, said that it is a dream for any sports person to get into the Hall of Fame. He reminisced on some of his exploits during his illustrious career and stated that West Indian players like Sobers, Clive Lloyd and Kallicharran, were some of the greatest left-handed batsmen to ever play the game. He also took time out to wish Kallicharran well stating that he is a fighter and will get out of his illness.

Master of Ceremonies Rudolph Cohen, a former West Indies cricketer himself, said that it gives him an especial sense of pride and pleasure to see more and more people of color, other than just players in England and Australia, honored for their roles in the game. This is a very important change, he said, which is evident by the presence of these former great players at this function. "You are in the mecca of cricket," he told the honorees. Just a few weeks ago we were graced with the presence of former West Indies spin bowler Lance Gibbs, only for this to be followed by a visit of the great Sir Garfield Sobers, who was in Hartford to promote the 2007 World Cup, which is scheduled to be held in the West Indies. "Hartford holds a special place in the honor of cricket," he added, "and that is why you were brought here tonight."

Deputy Mayor Veronica Airey-Wilson, brought greetings and presented each inductee with a proclamation from the city. She said that she envisioned that cricket will continue in Hartford and thanked all the people who believe that cricket is important enough for everyone here to enjoy the game. She said that she hopes that they will continue to show their support and belief in the Cricket Hall of Fame.

Councilwoman Horton Sheff in her response said that she was honored for being recognized for the role that she is playing in her fight for the education of children in the state. She said that her intentions in the Horton Sheff vs O'Neil suit, aim to bring equality to education for all the children in the state.

Dr. Painter added a bit of humor and drama in his response as after thanking the Hall of Fame committee for the recognition admitted that he did not know anything about the game then pulled out a miniature bat saying that he

is ready to start taking lessons.

The program opened with the Hall of Fame paying tribute to the armed forces who are doing a splendid job in defending the country. It was spiced with musical entertainment which was provided by saxophonist David Davis, Evangelist Gwenath Douglas-Skinner and singer Brian Libert, who sang a prelude to the top three inductees to the tune of the popular "My Way."

At a reception held at Express Kitchens, Main Street, the previous evening, Attorney General Richard Blumenthal, the honored guest, lauded the people responsible for bringing the sport to these shores, which he said has made great contributions to "our culture, values and citizenship."

Michael Chambers, Director of the Hall of Fame, thanked Max Kothari, owner of Star Hardware for hosting the reception and stated that the Hall of Fame is trying to show the community what certain individuals have done to make the game a viable contribution to the country.