

**Cayman Islands Civil Service Association
Co-operative Credit Union Limited**

Historical Perspective

**Celebrating
40
Years**



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Introduction

In 1975, seven members of the Cayman Islands Civil Service Association each pooling \$5 each, started the Cayman Islands Civil Service Association Co-operative Credit Union Ltd. Thus, forty years ago, our Credit Union was started with CI\$35 as each of the seven Civil Servants pooled \$5 from their meager salaries. In contrast, today, we celebrate the success of our Credit Union with assets in excess of CI\$230 million and shares and deposits in excess of CI\$202 million.

Currently, there are two Credit Unions operating in the Cayman Islands. They are the Telecommunications Employees Co-operative Credit Union Ltd and the Cayman Islands Civil Service Association Co-operative Credit Union Ltd, which is the first of the two such Co-operatives in these Islands. We have weathered the storms over the past forty years as we have moved from strength to strength, in the good old Credit Union way of ‘Member helping Member’; to God be the glory for His hand of mercy that has and continues to be outstretched to us.

Our 7 founding members are:

1. Mr. Gilbert McLean
2. Mr. Louis Moncrieffe
3. Mr. Lemuel Hurlston
4. Mr. Colford Scott
5. Mr. Ray Miller (Deceased)
6. Mrs. Rachael Ebanks
7. Mr. George McCarthy

The current President of the Cayman Islands Civil Service Association, Mr. James T. Watler, having completed the CaribDE7 Training Course in beautiful Dominica in January 2012, identified the history of the CICSA Co-operative Credit Union Ltd as his project. Mr. Watler set out to interview the Founding Members for posterity measures and posed a number of questions to them regarding the reasons and rationale for starting the Credit Union. The following questions were asked of the following Founding Members:

1. In 1975, what would you say was your primary reason or reasons for starting the Credit Union?
2. There were seven of you who felt so strongly that you each put down \$5 as your commitment to getting the organization off the ground. Can you recall what your thinking was at that time?
3. What was the economic climate like at that time?
4. How did you publicize the creation of the Credit Union which was quite a different concept from what people here were used to?
5. At what stage did you involve outside help? For example, Mrs. Cicely Delapenha?
6. Research has shown that to start a credit union, you first need to find a group of people with something in common and normally you will need a “yes” vote of 500 or more potential members in order to form a credit union. How do you respond to this?
7. The Credit Union has grown tremendously and continues to grow. Did you envisage it reaching the multi-million dollar status that it currently has attained?
8. Any thing else you would like to add?

History of the CICSA Co-operative Credit Union Ltd

The history of the development of the CICSA Co-operative Credit Union Ltd. is a most fascinating history which evolved like a fairytale story. As the largest segment of the local workforce, the Civil Service during this time experienced very difficult challenges as the economy was in a depressed state. Thus the Credit Union was born out of necessity.

In endeavoring to write the “History of the Cayman Islands Co-operative Credit Union” we shall discuss the following objectives:

- Research and write the history of the Credit Union so that the membership knows how, when, and why this organization came into existence; and
- It will enable us to look at our past, evaluate where we are currently, and be better able to strategically plan our future.

Reason for this Action

The reason for undertaking this exercise is to educate members and the community at large because unfortunately many of our members do not know the reason why our forefathers decided to start the Credit Union and how we got started; likewise, they do not know the philosophy.

Many members, as well as the general public, tend to see the Credit Union as being another bank. There are members who use the Credit Union as a bank. It is imperative that our members know why our Credit Union was established. The reason for such an establishment must be made known as the organization has reached a standard that our founding parents never dreamed of.

Therefore, the aim of this project is to inform, enlighten, educate, and instill pride and joy in members as they learn the reasons why our founding parents made the bold decision to establish the Credit Union.

The overall purpose was vested in the well-founded belief that Civil Servants in the Cayman Islands during the 1970s needed help in being able to access funds to purchase property, renovate an existing home, buy an apartment, to name a few things, that many Civil Servants were not able to qualify for at the local banks.

The pooling of resources by a small group of persons enabled them to purchase land and to renovate existing homes without the burden of overextending themselves financially.

Our Humble Beginnings

In reflecting on the emergence of the Credit Union whose commencement began in 1975, we shall firstly look at what a credit union is. A credit union is a member-owned financial co-operative; democratically controlled by its members; and operated for the purpose of promoting thrift, providing credit at competitive rates, and providing other financial services to its members.

Many credit unions also provide services intended to support community development or sustainable international development on a local level and could be considered community development financial institutions. This was absolutely the vision of our seven Civil Servants who made this bold move in the mid-1970s. The brainchild of the aforementioned Civil Servants, the Cayman Islands Civil Service Association Co-operative Credit Union on March 25, 1976, became the first such body to be duly registered under the Co-operative Societies Law 1962.

A Historic Moment – CICSA Co-operative Credit Union is Launched

This is a most significant and historic date for our young but budding Credit Union which commenced its journey as a vibrant and dynamic institution. Its intent which still continues today is to help better the lives of its members. ‘Members helping Members’ is still our primary aim. Pooling resources together made each member able to do his or her part in propelling the organization forward.

The unity fostered through this Credit Union has borne fruits and the people of the Cayman Islands are the recipients of this success. Our bond is the Civil Service which is some 3,300 strong as well as their family members, so with a population of 60,000, this means that our Credit Union touches the lives of the majority in our country.



The CICSA Co-operative Credit Union is registered as an entity on 25 March 1976. Seated from left to right: Gilbert McLean, founding member #1 and first President; Robert Bodden, Registrar of Companies & Co-operatives; Louis Moncrieffe, founding member #2 & Director; Standing L to R: Linford Pierson, Director; Kearney Gomez, Director; Marcia Bodden, first Chairman Supervisory Committee; Lemuel Hurlston, founding member #3 & Treasurer; Colford Scott, founding member #4 & Secretary; Rachael Ebanks, founding member #6 & Credit Committee member; Kirkland Nixon, Director; and George McCarthy, founding member #7 & first Chairman Credit Committee.

In order for us to capture the sentiments and reasoning as to how and why our Credit Union was conceived, it was felt that we should ask our founding members, the seven who met and pledged to work towards providing some form of self-help to Civil Servants during the difficult economic times that we were experiencing during the 1970s.

Another Historic Milestone – CICSA Co-operative Credit Union's Second AGM



First President of the Credit Union, Gilbert McLean delivering the Board of Directors' Report to the 2nd AGM that was held on July 22, 1977 at the Beach Club Colony, West Bay Road. Persons seated at the head table include Kirkland Nixon, Director; Lemuel Hurlston, first Treasurer; and the Hon Haig Bodden, ExCo Member for Agriculture, Nat Resources, & Co-operatives.

The Credit Unions' 2nd annual general meeting was held on July 22, 1977 at the Beach Club Colony, West Bay Road. The speaker at this meeting of the Credit Union was the Honorable G. Haig Bodden. At this meeting the following persons were elected to serve as its first Board of Directors: Mr. Gilbert McLean, President; Mr. Colford Scott, Secretary; Mr. Lemuel Hurlston, Treasurer; Mr. Kirkland Nixon and Mr. Louis Moncrieffe as Directors.

Likewise the following were elected to serve on the first Credit Committee: Mr. George McCarthy, Mrs. Veronica Dilbert (deceased) and Mrs. Rachael Ebanks. This Committee was responsible for the assessment of loan applications.

Finally, the following persons were elected as the first Supervisory Committee of the Credit Union: Mrs. Marcia Bodden (deceased), Mr. Linford Pierson, and Mr. Kearney Gomez. These three individuals were elected to act as "watchdogs" for the group's financial operations. It is noteworthy that all elected Officers held prominent positions in the Cayman Islands Civil Service and served the Credit Union free of charge.

Membership Drive Launched

A membership drive was launched on 1 April 1977. This was done at the suggestion of the Caribbean Confederation of Credit Unions. The Honorable Haig Bodden, Executive Council Member for Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Co-operative Societies, launched the campaign with a recommendation that the Credit Union was ideal for persons who wished to participate in a disciplined savings program. The following was the text of his message:

“After more than a decade of selling Savings Plans, thousands of people have said to me that they can do better with their money in a bank. To date, no one has said that they have done better. The fact is, no person has enough will power to save money continuously over a long period. Everyone needs help. This help is amply provided by institutions such as Credit Unions. I highly commend the Cayman Islands Civil Service Credit Union to any one in need of a disciplined savings program. Remember, anyone can save money, but it takes a good person to keep it saved.” (CICSA Credit Union Quarterly, Second quarter – 1977 p. 5.)

The newly formed group of seven whose intent was to start a local credit union sparked interest which spread like wildfire and members of the Civil Service were encouraged to take part in forming a study group consisting of 36 members. The initial 1975 meetings turned quickly into a matter of heightened interest among the Caymanian group and a **Study Club** was formed and weekly meetings held to review the possible structure and rules in addition to the fundamental Co-operative principles that guided credit unions worldwide.

Following meetings over the next several months, a number of campaign drives to enroll more members were held. The campaign encouraged members to recruit at least 15 new members. Members that recruited 15 new members or more were given a prize. The member that recruited the most members was given a trip to Miami courtesy of the Credit Union. Mr. Moncrieffe stated that: “he won quit a number of trips and on two occasions Mrs. Linda McLean won over him so she got two of the many prize trips to go to Miami whereas the others were won by him.”

Thus a vigorous recruitment campaign was launched not through a media blitz but via word of mouth. Mr. Moncrieffe pointed out that, “there was no need to engage the media in this drive, because in no time some 500+ members was recruited” as the literature suggested that to start such an organization there had to be at least 500 members in order for it to be a success.

This commencement tradition of serving on the Board and Committees without being paid continues even today, as none of the serving officers on the Board, Credit, and Supervisory Committees are paid for the positions that they hold. This reflects the Cayman Islands Civil Service Association’s Motto of “Excellence in Service”. Thus Civil Servants are truly ‘servants of the people’! They freely give of themselves without expecting anything back in return.

This in itself is a testament to the faith and confidence that our Members place in our Credit Union. There are those who will readily testify that what they have amassed in terms of assets be that land, home, savings etc. they readily attribute to the Credit Union who was there for them, affording them the opportunity to borrow and utilize the funds for investment purposes.

It was precisely for this purpose that our founding parents saw the need for such an institution to be formed and therefore be able to meet the needs of a diverse cadre of people who had varied needs which the other financial institutions were not truly meeting the needs of especially those Civil Servants whose earnings were on the lower income bracket.

History of the Formation of the Cayman Islands Civil Service Association Co-operative Credit Union Limited

The Vision of Our Seven Founding Members



Mr. Gilbert McLean

Mr. Gilbert McLean, Founding Member Number 1

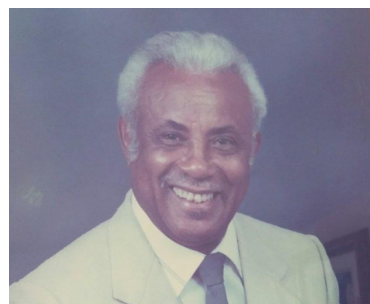
Mr. McLean, first President of CICSA Co-operative Credit Union Ltd. along with the other six founding members commenced a journey into the unknown as they by faith ventured out in endeavoring to start a co-operative which they hoped would serve the needs of a struggling Civil Service.

Times were extremely hard and it was to this, that this body of concerned top Civil Servants strived to assist. During this time Mr. McLean was also President of the Cayman Islands Civil Service Association which is not to be confused with the name of their birth child, the CICSA Co-operative Credit Union.

The late Rt. Excellent Norman Washington Manley, National Hero of Jamaica stated, "We go into the world to stand on our own feet and make our own way forward by hard work and great discipline." Mr. McLean over the years have been a tower of strength as he led the Civil Service Association and then became instrumental in forming the CICSA Co-operative Credit Union Ltd. which provided greater opportunity to do exactly what the late N. W. Manley articulated.

Many who would not be able to stand on their own two feet would have fallen by the wayside and not be able to attain the discipline of saving which the Credit Union provided to its members.

Interview with Louis Moncrieffe, Founding Member Number 2, 1 May 2013



Mr. Louis Moncrieffe

Mr. Louis Moncrieffe, retired civil servant and former Chief Accountant, recalls that he was involved with the commencement of the Credit Union along with his other 6 colleagues. The challenge he pointed out which faced them was to find some form of "self-help for a growing group of very dedicated and committed Civil Servants who were often refused loans at the local banks as they sought finances to buy land, build homes, or invest in establishing a small business."

Mr. Moncrieffe recalls that in 1975 he was Vice President of the Cayman Islands Civil Service Association and Mr. Gilbert McLean was the President.

He pointed out that a small group of them met a number of times and discussed issues that affected them as Civil Servants and especially those faithful employees who at their level, were depended upon to perform mammoth and heroic tasks. They were struggling to make ends meet. This group of concerned Civil Servants had asked Government for a raise of 15% to bring them closer in line with their private sector counterpart but Government blatantly said that they would only give 10% instead.

Due to this, the Association prepared itself to take industrial action. As Civil Servants, he pointed out that they were not allowed to take such action but it was decided that since Civil Servants could take a maximum of 3 sick days [without a doctor's note], this was an avenue that they could take in order for the "powers that be" to realize the effect of such action by those who so faithfully executed the tasks that were required of them.

The irony is that back then Civil Servants were blamed for the increase in the budget, as we are today. Today (2015), Civil Servants are now facing the possibility of having to contribute to their medical coverage and pensions. Also in 2013/14 our salaries were reduced. Civil Servants are now therefore in a less favorable position that underscores the need for a vibrant co-operative.

Mr. Moncrieffe said that the suggestion to establish a credit union came from the then Internal Auditor Mr. Evan Alexander who was a retired Civil Servant from the Jamaica Public Service. He said that the group did not know anything about the functions of a credit union or how to start such an entity so he was asked to write to the Jamaica Co-operative Credit Union League, JCCUL, for assistance and guidance in setting up a credit union here in the Cayman Islands. Mr. Moncrieffe recounted that from his memory the response came back so quickly and to this day he recalls that, that was the most, speedy response to a letter that he has ever received.

The response indicated that a lady by the name of Mrs. Cicely Delapenha was coming to Cayman for holidays and that she was well versed in setting up credit unions. The group of seven which comprised of six men and one woman, met with Mrs. Delapenha and she walked them through some of the procedures and requirements of setting up a credit union. At the very first meeting the seven Members put forward \$5 which constituted a total sum of \$35; it was with this very humble and meager sum that they ushered in the dynamic and vibrant organization now called the Cayman Islands Civil Service Association Co-operative Credit Union Ltd.

Mr. Moncrieffe seemed elated that he was a part of the development of what is now a thriving robust multi-million dollar organization which meets the needs of hundreds of thousands of Civil Servants and their families throughout the Cayman Islands. A small dream became a huge vision and success story for the people of these Islands. Unlike the commercial banks which do business for a profit, the Credit Union does business for its people, the shareholders, ensuring that they invest in provident and productive activities which benefit ALL!

Following the initial meeting held in the lobby of the Legislative Assembly (LA) Building, a number of subsequent meetings were held and long arguments and discussions took place which, despite divergent views and ideas, arrived at a consensus as to the way forward. The result was that the Credit Union began to take shape and more and more members were recruited. It was in the lobby of the LA that the bold decision was taken to start the Credit Union and at that stage there was no turning back.

Mr. Moncrieffe stated, "This was the best investment I ever made in my entire life." From the \$35 the Cayman Islands Co-operative Credit Union was born. He further stated, "We spent nights upon nights at the old Public Work's Compound arguing and refining the terms and conditions of what shape and form we wanted the Credit Union to take." Despite the many arguments he said, "We eventually came to consensus on what we wanted in our Credit Union." He further recalled that Mr. Ray Miller, now deceased, would in his humorous way break the tension of intense arguments with a joke or two so that those engaged would not come to a deadlock and once the ice was broken they plowed onward.

When asked, "What was his thinking at that time?" he stated, "I and the others were focused on finding a means of how we could better help Civil Servants who were not financially well-off. We were all struggling as our salary was very small." He further reflected and said, "When I took up the post of Deputy Accountant General under Mrs. Marcia Bodden in 1971, my meager pay was \$230.00 per month." This was in no way near what persons in private sector positions were getting and that is why the push for a 15% increase was more in line with what those in the private sector were getting. "We fell far short of what they were making," he recalls as he continued. "We were the ones who provided the infrastructure for the private companies and other businesses to thrive and make money, yet we were neglected." Unfortunately, today that trend continues, where the private sector keeps on demanding more and more services and Civil Servants continues to lag behind in pay and benefits as they perform similar jobs within the public service to those held within the private sector.

When asked, "What was the economic climate like around that time?", he stated that it was very stiff. He further pointed out that in 1973, Mr. Jim Bodden, the leading politician, along with the Honorable Financial Secretary Sir Vassell Johnson went to the Caribbean Development Bank and arranged a loan which helped to construct the following important buildings during that time: the Legislative Assembly Building, Radio Cayman, upgrading of the airport and the Dock, and the purchase of the Tower Building. These added investments helped Cayman through this difficult period of time as the country was not in a very good financial position.

On getting the word out and publicizing the establishment of the Credit Union, Mr. Moncrieffe recounts that it was easy as it was done by word of mouth. The news spread fast and many persons joined when they were told that the Credit Union was going to be providing loans as well as a means of saving money similar to that of a bank. They were told that the difference was that you would be borrowing from yourself as well as from your friends and co-workers as well as you would be lending to your friends and co-workers. You would no longer be just another customer but a partner, shareholder, member and owner of the Credit Union.

This, he said, sparked interest which spread like wildfire and membership reached 1,428 in a few years as the good news was spread by each member. The norm is that in order to start a Credit Union you need a Yes Vote, from at least 500 or more potential Members. History has shown that our Credit Union proves that it was an exception in getting started. Today (2015) we have a Credit Union second to none, a Credit Union which caters to over 16,000 members who have an investment of over \$230 Million Dollars. All of this was possible by a few persons who had a vision, a small group who pursued their dream and made it become a reality.

The question was posed, ‘did you envisage the Credit Union reaching the multi-million dollar status that it currently has attained?’ As he sat back and reflected, he stated, “Most definitely yes, it was what I and the others understood what Civil Servants needed to help them move forward in a society that was growing but unfortunately leaving them behind. Yes, we recruited members from the top to the bottom and in between, both of these extremes. So yes, I was confident that it would succeed. We started the Credit Union with seven Members with each member contributing \$5 making it a grand total of \$35 as the initial seed money to get things going.”

He continued, “We became the first registered Credit Union in the Cayman Islands. There was another one that had been started prior to this, but it was not registered. Mr. Val Anderson was the person that started that Credit Union. It did not survive to being registered thus it failed, and it did not become vibrant, active and dynamic as ours did and continues today. Initially we did not have the numbers as the literature suggest but what we did was to use the old method of each one invite one to join and it worked for us!”

Finally he stated, “My objective was that the Credit Union would be the second Cayman national bank, but in the Credit Union way. So yes, it was my hope that it would reach the highest stage and all members/shareholders would be justly proud as they are now. It was my vision that it would be, as I mentioned earlier, next to or only exceeded by Cayman National Bank.”

It is interesting to note that the vision of Mr. Moncrieffe has indeed come true as our Credit Union has risen to the occasion and like Cayman National Bank has become a strong, vibrant and solid financial institution in the Credit Union way, ensuring that its Members/Shareholders interests are intact and well secured.

Interview with Mr. Lemuel Hurlston, OBE, JP, retired Chief Secretary, Founding Member Number 3, June 2013



Mr. Lemuel Hurlston

In response to 8 questions regarding the reasons for starting the Credit Union, Mr. Hurlston responded as follows:

“In 1975, the world economies were experiencing one of the earliest recessions. In the Cayman Islands the cost of living was rising faster than incomes and Civil Servants were anxious about their financial circumstances. A job reclassification exercise had been carried out by the Government and was an apparent burden on the limited public financial purse.

Some sectors including teachers and nurses were poorly graded and a sense of restlessness persisted.

The Cayman Islands Civil Service Association and its Management Council were in discussions with the Government about salaries and wages and the general terms of employment of Civil Servants. At one such meeting of the Management Council of the Civil Service Association, Mr. Louis B. Moncrieffe, Vice-President of the Association, proposed that the idea of the formation of a credit union be examined and explored.

Mr. Moncrieffe was employed in the Treasury Department and he had discussed the concept of credit unions with Mr. Evan A. Alexander the Internal Auditor. Both of these gentlemen were familiar with the existence of credit unions in their native Jamaica and were supportive of the benefits although neither had any previous detailed knowledge or experience in the field of co-operative societies.

The Management Council with Mr. Gilbert McLean as President, decided to first approach the Jamaica Co-operative Credit Union League for advice. The League became aware that an experienced credit union personality, Mrs. Cecily V. Delapenha, was travelling between Jamaica and Grand Cayman on private business and invited her to have initial discussions with the Management Council.

Mrs. Delapenha had considerable experience having served for many years as a volunteer within the movement in Jamaica and for many years had worked closely with father John Peter Sullivan a Catholic Priest who is regarded as one of the founders of the movement there in 1941.

The initial 1975 meetings turned quickly into a matter of heightened interest among the Caymanian group and a study club was formed and weekly meetings held to review the possible structure and rules in addition to the fundamental Co-operative principles that guided credit unions worldwide.

Mrs. Delapenha convinced the group that a credit union would have a place and could potentially play a part in the future economic success of the members and the Islands generally. She noted that there had been an attempt, some fifteen years earlier, at having a credit union in Grand Cayman but it had not proved successful. She therefore strongly advised that this new attempt be made with a determination to succeed and grow from strength to strength.

Her advice included how to set up a full set of books of accounts up to and including a balance sheet and how to be fully transparent and accountable to the membership body with all appropriate checks and balances.

On one occasion she suggested that the seven members present, commence the establishment of the study club and elect its first officers. Emerging out of the study club is the ranking of the seven Founding Members: Mr. Gilbert McLean, Founding Member # 1; Mr. Louis Moncrieffe, Founding Member #2; Mr. Lemuel Hurlston, Founding Member #3; Mr. Colford Scott, Founding Member #4; Mr. Ray Miller (Deceased), Founding Member #5; Ms. Rachael Ebanks, Founding Member #6; and Mr. George McCarthy, Founding Member # 7.

The seven members each agreed to place five dollars into a study club savings account to be opened. A name was chosen, bankers selected, and the following officers were elected:

Gilbert McLean	President
Louis B. Moncrieffe	Vice-President
Lemuel Hurlston	Treasurer
Colford Scott	Secretary
Ray Miller	Member
Rachel Ebanks	Member
George McCarthy	Member

Humble Beginnings – Our First Office

Every Wednesday for seven months the members of the study club held meetings during which they studied and learned about the management and development of the Credit Union movement. Each time the study club met, members contributed \$5 at each meeting. In March 1976, the group membership had grown to 36 and study club savings rose to approximately \$1,139.00.

The old Government Education Building became our first home and office. It was in this same building that the Author joined this dynamic, fast growing organization. Mr. Rupert McCoy and Mr. Moncrieffe were the Members that encouraged me to join. I started with the usual \$2.00 per share with my first deposit of \$10, thus rendering me 5 shares. At this time, I signed a salary deduction form whereby \$25 would be taken from my meager salary and deposited into my shares.



The old Government Education Building - Our First Home/Office

Mr. Hurlston pointed out that, "History was made as the Credit Union was registered on March 15, 1976, under the Co-operatives Society Law and began business. Everything initially had to be carried out on a completely voluntary basis. Guests invited from overseas to speak at meetings were accommodated and entertained (without a budget) by the small group of Caymanian volunteer leaders.

There was no office and volunteers served from their respective public service office locations. As the Treasurer, I also assumed the role of manager. The significant decision and concession by the employer, the Cayman Government, to offer members payroll deduction facilities was a major benefit and advantage to make savings convenient. This facility continues to date.

Savings were recorded in passbooks of members and monthly statements of accounts were presented to the board of directors. The word spread throughout the Islands that the Credit Union was functioning and growing nicely and that the volunteers were all keen to ensure its success and prosperity. The Government was always very supportive of the movement and its objectives.

Meetings were interesting and usually ended in some social gathering in a bar or restaurant where discussions would continue. The leaders were very proud of the results of the efforts made as pioneers and founders. The goals established were reasonable and achievable. Targets were usually exceeded and maximum dividends returned to members annually. It

was always the collective view that this Credit Union would make a big difference in the economic lives of the members and that as such, its growth and development and success were without limits. The desire was always to have the “common bond” of membership expanded to include others living in the Cayman Islands.

The first part-time Manager employed was Ms. Una Bush who had been the Manager of the Government Savings Bank for many years and had retired from that post. Others to follow included Mr. Lloyd Armstrong and Mr. Ned Solomon.

The first office was located in a rent free building which had been formerly used by the Education Department and was located on the property adjacent to the Government Administration Building.”

It is important to note that the building was situated near the Police barracks on the grounds of the Government Administration Building (Glass House). In those early days, staff had none of the modern day’s conveniences such as air-conditioning. As membership and services increased, the Credit Union quickly outgrew the first office and was then moved to the Elizabethan Square.

It became necessary to move again and temporary space was obtained in the Government Tower Building on North Church Street. However, as the Civil Service grew, Government found itself in need of more office space; thus, again the Credit Union office was moved to the AL Thompson Building in central George Town across from the General Post Office.

Mr. Colford Scott, Founding Member Number 4



Mr. Colford Scott

Mr. Colford Scott is the fourth Founding Member of the Credit Union. He was the first Secretary to the Board of Directors. Over the years Mr. Scott has continued his involvement in the growth and development of the Credit Union.

His insight and dedication to seeing that the organization moved from strength to strength continues. He remains a member in good standing and is always willing to lend a helping hand when called upon, in particular, our AGMs where he usually conducts the elections for the Credit Union.

Mr. Ray Miller, Founding Member Number 5



Mr. Ray Miller

Mr. Ray Miller, now deceased, is our fifth Founding Member. Like his other six colleagues he too had a vision of the Credit Union becoming an organization to be reckoned with.

He saw the need of Civil Servants who were struggling to meet their monthly expenses and the idea of a ‘self-help organization’ caught his fancy.

Like the others he pledged and put forward his CI\$5 which, as was discussed earlier, was the seed money that started the Credit Union.

As was mentioned earlier by Mr. Moncrieffe, Mr. Miller was the one who would break the ice when there was a deadlock or an impasse, by simply cracking a joke or two to relieve the tension so that the group could get back on track on a particular task.

It is often said that it takes all kinds of personalities to mesh and blend together to accomplish a task. Mr. Miller was one such person who was a valuable member of the team as they waded through, endeavoring to find the right fit for the Credit Union that would meet the needs of Civil Servants during this difficult time.

Interview with Mrs. Rachael Ebanks, Founding Member Number 6, 3 June 2013



When the Credit Union was established in 1975, my primary reason for being intimately involved in starting the Credit Union was to establish a savings account which I considered to be a safe place to invest my savings and where I could earn interest and get a loan if and when I needed one.

We originally held our weekly meetings at the Public Works Department, and it was decided amongst ourselves that it would be best to start with savings of \$5 each to get the Credit Union off the ground.

At the meetings we discussed how to get as many persons to join as we could, where we could set up an office, and how we would be able to give members loans.

The economy was strong and good in those days although Civil Servants were having a hard time getting loans in the banks. We all spoke and encouraged our co-workers to join the Credit Union as I envisaged that we would grow into the millions and even billions one day.

As word got around, people were more than happy to join because they knew it was a good organization to join as there were potentially very good benefits that one would derive by joining. We didn't have issues with people joining.

I am one member who is very proud and satisfied with the progress the Credit Union has made over the years. I never however believed that the Credit Union would have grown to the over 14,000 members as it is today.

It was one of the best financial moves that I have ever made in my life. The commercial banks don't give anything on your savings anymore. Up to today, I still bank with the Credit Union and the majority of my savings is with the Credit Union.

Mrs. Ebanks spoke of the excitement and joy that they, as our founding parents, experienced as they went about recruiting members to join the Credit Union. It was their mission to involve as many persons as was humanly possible to participate in this great new venture to which they had committed their money, time, and effort. The economic climate was obviously right as this new institution would cater to all Civil Servants and their family members, it was not just for the rich ones, but it encompassed and included **all** Civil Servants. One did not need to start out with several hundred dollars; it gave rise to persons investing as little as \$2. Our founders decided to start with \$5 each and this small token multiplied as the numbers swelled from the glorious seven to 36, and then to hundreds and now thousands.

Interview with Mr. George A. McCarthy, Former Financial Secretary and Chief Secretary (now retired) OBE, JP, Founding Member Number 7, May 2013



Hon. George McCarthy

In 1975, what would you say was your primary reason or reasons for starting the Credit Union?

“While the answers given by the founding members to this question may differ as to the reason for starting the Credit Union in 1975, most will agree that given our status as Civil Servants, we were at a disadvantage in comparison to our private sector counterparts. This was mainly due to the significantly wide disparity in salaries paid.

Because of this disparity it was generally felt that when we had to do business with the local banks, particularly for those Civil Servants who were at the lower end of the salary scales, it was often felt (whether real or imagined) that we were not accorded the same level of respect and courtesies that would be extended to our counterparts from the private sector.”

Mr. McCarthy continued, “Following frequent and much discussions amongst ourselves as to how this perceived disparity could be remedied and, taking into account the collective spending power of the Civil Service as an organization, the view was taken to explore the concept of starting some form of a ‘self-help organization;’ hence, the concept was introduced for the starting up of a Credit Union.”

There were seven of you who felt so strongly that you each put down \$5 as your commitment to getting the organization off the ground, can you recall what your thinking was at that time?

“The thinking behind depositing \$5 each time we met was primarily twofold by nature: (a) to demonstrate our commitment to the cause of solidarity in our action to help ourselves – the Civil Service – by way of setting up a self-help organization; and (b) given our salaries and limited economic means, \$5 was regarded as being a fairly generous contribution.”

What was the economic climate like at this time?

“The economic climate at the time was quite vibrant. This could mainly be attributed to the Financial Industry which was then in its early growth stages and which for the first time began to provide employment opportunities for men whose prior scope for betterment of themselves and their families would mean having to become seamen.

In addition, the early-to-mid-1970’s which continued into the early 1980’s also saw major infrastructural improvements such as the completion of the Government Administration Building, the Court Building, the Legislative Assembly Building, road improvements with the upgrading of the West Bay arterial, and the development of our Airport and Seaport facilities (in both Grand Cayman and Cayman Brac).

These developments which were then taking place, and for which the Caymanian public was quite excited to see happening, did not have the immediate effect of bringing about any improvement in the salaries of Civil Servants.”

Again here Mr. McCarthy, like his fellow colleagues, highlights the dire need for Government employees to be able to access the economy which at the time he states was growing in the Financial Industry area plus a number of Governmental infrastructural projects were taking place. Despite this Government employees were not able to reap the benefits due to their not being paid as they should.

The local lending institutions as it was seen and or perceived did not treat Civil Servants the same as private sector workers. Like their counterparts in the private sector, Government workers needed to invest in purchasing land, a home, purchase a car, and other necessities but with their meagre salaries they were unable to qualify.

How did you publicize the creation of the Credit Union which was quite a different concept from what people here were used to?

“The publicizing of the Credit Union was mainly done by word-of-mouth. This publicity was also significantly helped by the late Honourable Haig Bodden, then Minister for Co-operatives. I can recall him being a great source of encouragement in the early days of CICSA Co-operative Credit Union’s development as he was always inquiring as to our ongoing progress.

In addition, he was the key-note speaker for our very first Annual General Meeting which was held at the Beach Club Colony on West Bay Road. Further, Minister Bodden had a great appreciation for the benefits that would accrue to the Civil Service and the community in general, from the establishment of a Credit Union. It is likely that his views were informed from his experience as a leading life insurance executive.”

At what stage did you involve outside help, for example, Mrs. Cicely Delapenha?

Mr. McCarthy stated, “The services of Mrs. Cicely Delapenha were secured at the very beginning of CICSA Co-operative Credit Union as an organization. While the details are somewhat now vague, I can recall that she came to us with great recommendations from Jamaica. Messrs. Louis Moncrieffe and Lemuel Hurlston can accurately fill in the details.”

The Lady with a Lamp – Our Guiding Light Miss Cicely!



Mrs. Cicely Delapenha

How do you respond to this? Research has shown that to start a credit union, you first need to find a group of people with something in common and normally you will need a Yes, vote of 500 or more potential members in order to form a credit union.

To the above question he stated, “This seems to be a reasonable proposition in theory; however, in the early days of the Credit Union, the primary driver was the need to effect economic improvement in the lives of Civil Servants and not the pursuit of concepts. We were, however, made aware at the very beginning as to the need for having a common bond; hence, the reason for the rules which were then introduced. Looking back, I cannot recall being made aware then of the findings from this piece of research and I am also very happy that most of us (inclusive of myself) did not, otherwise it is likely that we would have become quite bogged down in much talking, (trying to get it right) rather than getting underway with the business of setting up the Credit Union.”

The creation of the group of 36, namely the Study 'Club', fell far short of the 500 or so persons having a common bond and or understanding as the literature suggests that is needed for such a venture to become a success in establishing a credit union. The power of 'word of mouth' even beat the publicity that is often used via the various media sources. A committed and dedicated group of 36 told their friends and they joined, and so forth. Thus our Credit Union did not have to go the route suggested in the literature.

The Credit Union has grown tremendously and continues to grow. Did you envisage it reaching the multi-million dollar status that it currently has attained?

"I was quite optimistic from the very beginning that the Credit Union could develop into a dynamic financial institution, but given what has occurred to date by way of its growth, CICSA Co-op Credit Union, has surpassed the greatest of our imagination."

Is there anything else you would like to add?

"The only comments I would wish to add is to say how proud I am of our Credit Union; how proud I am of the wisdom and commitment of the persons who gave of their services over the years in guiding the growth of the Credit Union; how proud I am of the present leadership: the Board, Committees, and executive staff led by Ms. Corinne Glasgow, who from all indications is a remarkable visionary, a committed, yet humble, leader who is always very helpful and respectful to staff and members of the Credit Union; and significantly, one of the most effective public relations persons the Credit Union has ever secured as a Managing Director."

In his recollections, Mr. McCarthy, one of our founding members, stated that the primary reason for starting the Credit Union was to provide 'self-help' financial services to Civil Servants who were at the lower end of the salary scales. Government workers were experiencing great difficulties in being able to qualify for loans at the local banks.

The old saying that 'necessity is the Mother of invention' rings true here. Mr. McCarthy pointed out that there was a significant disparity between the salaries of Civil Servants and their private sector counterparts.

Mr. McCarthy pointed out that, "The fundamental principles governing the operation of successful credit unions are such that the business will in all circumstances prosper and grow. Members are educated and committed to honouring obligations and commitments to repay loans with interest, on schedule, so that everyone can be afforded an annual dividend on their savings after all expenses are covered from the income earned.

The not-for-profit insurance facilities available globally through CUNA Mutual Insurance Society (established in 1935 in the USA) are further guarantees that safeguard member's savings and loans. International Credit Union Week, the third week of October, is generally celebrated as a day of fun, food, and fellowship on the grounds of the Offices of the Credit Union, and more recently a Fun Run-Walk has been added. Formally a Church Service was held at one of our local churches during the week of special promotional activities."

Mr. McCarthy was confident that our Credit Union would be a success as it was founded on sound principles which were tried and proven, thus success was assured. The further guarantee of insurance also provided additional assurance so that members could feel more at ease, knowing that their investment was based on sound business and financial footing.

Our seven founding members are to be cherished and highly praised for their foresight, commitment, dedication, and determination in bring badly needed relief to a struggling Civil Service whose personal financial needs were not being met through the commercial banks.

Construction of our First Permanent Home

As the membership grew and the Credit Union had to keep moving its offices, it became clear that the best option for was to have a permanent place. The decision was made to sell the small piece of land bought by the Credit Union on Crewe Road in 1980 and purchase six acres of land on Thomas Russell Way. At various Annual General Meeting's members agreed to put a portion of their annual dividends towards the building fund. In 1990, the new office building was completed and the staff moved in to serve members in modern and comfortable surroundings.

The organization has grown from a volunteer based one to one still dependent on volunteers but with an office building of its own (with sufficient land for future expansion and investments) and a staff of some forty plus employees.

A small branch office and staff are also available to meet the needs of members on Cayman Brac and Little Cayman. Services, including educational grants, have been expanded and longer term financing provided. Below are photographs of construction of our first building on our own property located at 58 Huldah Avenue, George Town, Grand Cayman.



The foundation of the first Credit Union building being laid on Thomas Russell Way (later renamed Huldah Avenue) 1990



First building under construction 1990

Both photographs provided courtesy of Mr. George A. McCarthy

The Credit Union quickly outgrew the space in the above building. In 1999, the building was expanded to meet the needs of Credit Union's 5,000 members. This 6,000 sq ft building was officially opened by Mr. Jocelyn Jolly, President of the Caribbean Confederation of Credit Unions (CCCU) in December 2000.

By August 2008, when the global financial crisis was being felt everywhere, our Credit Union had already doubled its membership to 10,000 and had CI\$140 million in assets. With a staff complement of 40, the building was too small to contain all the operations of the Credit Union. In 2009, the strategic decision was taken to add on to the existing building during the global financial crisis so that the Credit Union would be poised to deal with growth after the financial crisis.

An additional 8,000 sq ft was added on and completed in December 2011. Staff moved into the new building 3 January 2012 and in September 2012 the CCCU Board of Directors, JCCUL representatives, and the former Chairman of World Council of Credit Unions (WOCCU) Mr. Melvin Edwards, attended the official opening of the 8,000 sq ft 'add-on' building and the renovated 6,000 sq ft 'old' building.

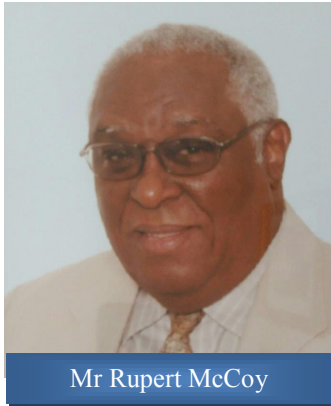
President of CCCU Mrs. Yvonne Ridguard Harris and Chairman of CICS Co-operative Credit Union Mrs. Deanna Look Loy made history when the 2 females officially opened our new building on 20 September 2012.

The Credit Union philosophy continues to resound in our Credit Union as members continue to help members. Hundreds of Caymanians have been able to buy their first piece of property or buy their own home or apartment through the Credit Union. Promotional loans to purchase land have been offered by the Credit Union since February 2007. In August 2008, the Credit Union extended the terms on loans from a maximum of 10 years to 15 years; and in April 2010, long-term loans for up to 25 years have been offered.

Our Credit Union has helped young and old, even businessmen and women to either get started or to be better able to re-organize and expand their businesses in a highly competitive local economy. At this very difficult time when many businesses are closing their doors, our Credit Union is continually utilized by our members to survive the global financial crisis that continues to affect many into the year 2015, and to build for the future.

Mr. Rupert McCoy – Credit Union’s Pioneer Recruitment & Promotions Officer

Mr. Rupert McCoy was one of the early members of the study group of 36 Members who dedicated Wednesdays as their meeting day each week in 1975. This group worked towards gathering information, plotting, and charting the direction of which the Credit Union would take. They looked at forging links with the Jamaica Credit Union League for guidance and assistance as they laid the foundation for our Credit Union.



Mr. McCoy became and still today remains a very strong advocate of this movement. He has spent a lot of his spare time talking to Civil Servants and getting them to join. Even during his lunch time, Mr. McCoy would ask Department Heads of Government to allow him to speak to staff about the benefits of the Credit Union.

He is responsible for getting hundreds of members to join the Credit Union.

In 1977, one year after the launching of the Credit Union, members including Mr. McCoy was asked, “What does the Credit Union mean to you?” Mr. McCoy stated, “I am a founding member of the Credit Union. I recommend it wholeheartedly as a means of saving. During the past two years, I have had several setbacks in my family due to illness. These have made it almost impossible for me to save money for the rainy days. However, I still managed to save regularly with the Credit Union. Now that things are brighter with me, I have pledged to increase my savings with the Credit Union. I am now confident that if any problems should arise I will always be able to secure a loan from the Credit Union.”

For many years Mr. Rupert as he is affectionately called, provided free of charge financial counseling to members. The Credit Union often referred persons who were struggling to balance their budgets to be counseled by Mr. Rupert. Even today, he continues to offer his services in helping members of the Civil Service Association and the Credit Union to budget and to live within their means. He continues to be a most valuable member of the Credit Union Team who believes in the Credit Union Philosophy of ‘Members Helping Members’!

Credit Unions versus Banks

Credit unions differ from banks and other financial institutions in that the members are the owners of the credit union and they elect their board of directors in a democratic one-person-one-vote system regardless of the amount of money invested in the credit union.

Credit unions see themselves as being on ‘higher moral ground’ than that of banks; they are community-oriented and serve people on the basis of ‘not for profit’. A member is a shareholder so he/she automatically has a vested interest in the success of the organization. It is as one may say, ‘our credit union’ whereas having an account at a bank you are only a customer not a shareholder.

A volunteer Board of Directors who is elected by and from the membership itself, sets policies including interest rates. Credit unions offer many of the same financial services as banks but often offer more competitive rates. Common services include: shares, savings, checking accounts, loans, credit cards, ATM and online services.

Only a member of a credit union may deposit money with the credit union or borrow money from it. As such, credit unions have historically marketed themselves as providing superior member service and being committed to helping members improve their financial health. Thus the Cayman Islands Civil Service Co-operative Credit Union adopted the motto of **“Members Helping Members”**.

By pooling one’s resources in the form of shares, members can borrow from themselves and other members in order to be able to engage in buying property, making a down payment on a piece of land or a home or an apartment, etc. which is, in credit union terms, “for provident and productive purposes”. Credit unions in the microfinance context provide a better range of loan and savings products at cheaper costs to their members than do most microfinance institutions.

Legally and for tax purposes, credit unions are considered to be non-profit organizations. Banks assert that since this status exempts credit unions from many federal and state taxes that is the reason why credit unions can provide more competitive products. This has led to a variety of laws which limit how credit unions operate and accept members.

Historically, credit union only had individual member accounts which banks found to be less desirable than the more lucrative business or corporate accounts. As credits unions have gained momentum in helping its members financially without extortion, the financial landscape is changing. More and more pressure is brought to bear on credit unions from other financial institutions and lobbyists to have credit unions confirm to ‘for-profit’ financial institutions philosophy of reaping as much as possible from its customers.

Not-for-profit status, in the credit union context, should not be confused with ‘non-profit’ charities or similar organizations. Credit unions are ‘not-for-profit’ because they operate to serve their members rather than to maximize profits regardless of the costs. Unlike ‘non-profit’ organizations, credit unions do not rely on donations, but instead use the savings and deposits of members.

Credit unions are regulated, financial institutions that return the undistributed surplus i.e. net profit to its members as dividends, loan interest rebate, educational grants and scholarships, or reinjected into the credit union for further development and improvement in services to their members.

Our Connection and Affiliation with Global Bodies

Our Credit Union is affiliated to the regional apex body, the Caribbean Confederation of Credit Unions, which in turn, is affiliated to the World Council of Credit Union. We are governed by international standards of operation set by the World Council and incorporated into our local laws and policies.

The World Council of Credit Unions points out that a credit union's revenues from loans and investments need to exceed its operating expenses and dividends (interest paid on shares/savings) in order to maintain capital and solvency. Further, credit unions use excess earnings to offer members more affordable loans, a higher return on savings, lower fees, and new products and services.

Why Credit Unions were Formed

Every age has had its economic challenges and problems and it was in fact a German crop failure in 1848 and the ensuing depression that inspired the formation of the first ever credit union. During this time, there were those who were the 'money lenders' whose exorbitant rates of interest and merciless methods of collection, resulted in farmers sacrificing their livestock as well as their lands to meet demands. In 1870, the founder of the global credit union movement Frederick W. Raiffeisen stated that "credit unions are according to paragraph eleven of the German law of Co-operatives, merchants as defined by the enterprise of which the owners are the credit unions members."

As early as 1845, at the young age of 27, Mr. Frederick W. Raiffeisen became aware of the problems experienced by farmers and wanted to do something concrete to help them. He had a strong personality and a strong commitment to his fellow citizens. He was a social reformer who introduced a socio-economic system with a major humanitarian component, which positively changed the lives of many persons by increasing their prosperity and well being.

Mr. Frederick W. Raiffeisen

Rabobank began as a collection of small local agricultural co-operative banks.



Their co-operative structure and connection with the local community are based on the idea of Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen (1818 – 1888).

"Raiffeisen came to the realization that charity actions could not generate any long term improvement in living conditions and that a different approach was necessary. The idea behind this was simply to teach poor people how to improve their own conditions. That meant replacing charity with 'self help'. Thus people would be brought together to help each other and themselves in a co-operative manner. A structure was necessary to put this idea into practice. That structure had to adequately stimulate its members to actively participate and to be sufficiently robust. The co-operative system had to be based on mutual solidarity among the farmers and had to meet the needs of small farmers." www.rabocanon.nl/en/raiffeisen-the-idea.

It was from this philosophy that the Cayman Islands Co-operative Credit Union Ltd, like many other credit unions, sprung up throughout the Caribbean as well as globally. Dire financial needs manifested themselves thus causing people to band together and pool their resources so that they could be loaned to those who needed funds to conduct business. Thus savings were collected and loaned out under reasonable conditions to needy members. Today this same philosophy persists within the credit union movements globally.

The idea of **‘people (member) helping people’** is our motto as our Credit Union goes from strength to strength. Thus the Raiffeisen system discussed above helped establish the solid foundation on which credit unions continue to build. This great organization helps bring groups of people who share similar occupations and social standing together to form a union and bond as they pool their resources and are then able to borrow from that pool to improve their financial, social, and educational situation.

Our founding parents stepped out on faith and reached out to our neighbors in Jamaica for help to establish our own local Credit Union. The Civil Service Association contacted the Credit Union League in Jamaica for advice and assistance in establishing our Credit Union. The Jamaica League was made up of 112 member-unions with a total membership at that time of some 68,000 members and having assets of J\$26 million in the mid-1970s.

How We Operated

The Jamaican League, in keeping with the universal credit union policy, provided free of cost the services of Mrs. Cecily Delapenha, who had wide experience in credit union operations. In August 1975 the initial start-up restricted membership of the Credit Union to the people in the group that it served. Since these early beginnings, our Credit Union has extended membership to the employees of utility companies whose immediate family members (mother, father, spouse, children, and siblings) are also eligible to join once the utility company employee becomes a member.

The office that first transacted business of the CICSA Co-operative Credit Union was located in the old Education Department building near the new Government Administration Building (Glass House). Banking arrangements were established with a prominent local bank. “We are hoping by this means to provide a good service for our Members” said Mr. McLean, President of the Civil Service Association and the first President of the Credit Union. “It will be a convenient way of saving for them, as well as prompt loan service with insurance benefits and low credit costs.” (Nor’wester 1976, p.10).

From the beginning one share was worth \$2, and in order to become a member, each member must own at least one share. Monthly deductions from Civil Servants’ salaries that were sent to the Credit Union became the standard by which Civil Servants saved and paid their loans to the Credit Union.

This type of deduction still exists today, as members find it more convenient having the amount taken out before the remainder of their salary is deposited in their respective banks although many Civil Servants send their whole salary to the Credit Union. A member is required to sign a form authorizing the Chief Accountant to deduct a specific amount from his/her salary each month and send to the Credit Union. Dividends, up to a maximum of 6 percent are paid annually on share deposits.

Global Financial Challenges

Mrs. Mary Lawrence, a journalist, stated in an article in the Cayman Islands Nor’wester (May 1976) issue that, “For some years the development of the islands had progressed by leaps and bounds as its people harvested the benefits of an economic boom....As 1975 progressed, however, the tentacles of world-wide inflation reached inexorably towards the Cayman Islands, forcing the private sector, Government, and inevitably the reluctant public, into a general belt-tightening.”

This parallels the current global financial and economic crisis which commenced in 2008 and continues to adversely affect the Cayman Islands in similar ways as did the problems highlighted by Mrs. Lawrence which transpired in the 1970s. Perhaps the financial crisis today is even more severe as it has rendered a significant number of persons unemployed; therefore, many of these persons are unable to continue to put bread on the table.

Prior to 1975/76, the Cayman Islands did not have a credit union; fortunately today, the Cayman Islands do have an excellent, well structured, well managed, and dynamic organization which has, since its inception in 1970s, served a very vital role for its members. The current economic crisis is affecting our Credit Union; but despite this, the organization is strong and is able to mitigate many challenges, and is therefore able to assist many of its struggling members. This highlights the foresight of our forefathers who during very tough times decided to establish an organization such as this one which has taken root over the years and continues to serve its members with dignity and pride.

The world, during the housing and financial collapse which began to take effect in 2008, has left the Cayman Islands in a tail spin as it endeavors to grapple with the related issues of job losses, unemployment, and rising debt and delinquencies. Seven years later, job losses continue and more of our members continue to experience financial hardship and are therefore unable to meet their commitments.

Our Credit Union has seen and continues to see an increase in delinquency. The effects of the financial woes are affecting our members but our well trained staff and astute volunteers attempt to address these matters regardless. Our Credit Union also finds itself endeavoring to find new ways and means of meeting the varied demands of its members.

It was during very tough economic times when this dynamic organization that we have today, had its humble genesis. No doubt the thought was, “How can we help our fellow Civil Servants and their families through this very difficult and trying time?” It is no wonder that our founders latched onto the phrase, “People helping People” and embraced it as our motto! The Cayman Islands Civil Service Association Co-operative Credit Union Ltd. is proud to be a true “Peoples’ Organization” that touches the lives of persons from all walks of life and embraces them as fellow co-operators.

Following on from our Motto, over the years, one can see the fruits of our labor as this organization have assisted hundreds and thousands of Civil Servants who would not have been able to accomplish much otherwise. The thriftiness of saving a little on a regular basis over time, which our Credit Union embraced from the onset, was key to the tremendous success that our members experienced and continues to experience as they embraces the philosophy and true spirit of the Credit Union Movement.

Committed to Serving our Members

The Cayman Islands Civil Service Association was the first body to take firm steps to provide its members with a systematic savings plan through the establishment of a credit union. One of our founding fathers, Mr. Gilbert McLean, Training Officer with the Personnel and Management Division in Government, and President of the Civil Service Association (Nor’wester May 1976 edition p. 9) stated:

“As money became tighter and interest rates climbed, we were forced to acknowledge the fact that though we represented the Islands’ largest wage-earning force, we had no established program either to encourage savings among members of the Service, or any plan which offered financial assistance in times of need.

Careful study of the situation by the Management Council of the Civil Service Association led to the proposal that the Association should form its own credit union; and subsequently, a study club of 36 Members was appointed to research the idea thoroughly, and eventually prepared a constitution.”

The Credit Union’s primary objectives were and still are:

- To encourage thrift through regular savings by its members
- From the savings accumulated, to make loans to members for provident or productive purposes at a reasonable rate of interest
- To inform and educate the members.

Like the global credit unions, membership in our Credit Union is open to everyone in the basic group it serves which is employees of Government and utility companies and their immediate family members. No one in the group is excluded therefore no one is denied membership. It did not set out to compete with banks or other financial institutions, but because it is a lending institution, this has become the natural order of the day. The Credit Union is simply a group of people helping each other; and in the spirit of self-help and being your brothers’ keeper; its volunteers serve without pay. As a closed membership organization, it can give better service at lower cost. It can treat its members’ problems with understanding and empathy.

Our Credit Union is apolitical and continues to remain neutral in politics. Despite the fact that credit unions worldwide campaign for better laws and favorable operating environments, credit union do not endorse political candidates. Our Credit Union is an independent financial institution that makes its decisions on the basis of what is best for the members it serves. Over the years we have adapted strategies to offer financial counseling and living by a budget to members to assist them in getting their financial affairs straightened out.

A primary basis for loans that was heavily used initially was character. As we have evolved and with the changing times legally and otherwise, character has had to be rethought and other forms of security have been introduced. A member’s character was what counted in the early days. Unfortunately today, the tide has changed; “A man’s word is his bond,” is no longer the case. So the Credit Union has had to refocus the character part of its original philosophy to ensure that loans are properly secured.

Conclusion

As was pointed out earlier our Credit Union grew and exceeded expectations and in 1990 we proudly opened our own facility located at 58 Huldah Avenue. This new facility became our pride and joy as we continued to forge ahead. On Thursday, 20 September 2012, we held the official opening of our newest building twenty two years after the opening of our first building. Due to the increasing need for more space, this second building became a must. The newest building is connected to the first structure that was erected in 1990 and expanded in 1999. Members are proud of our accomplishments and our movement continues to grow and surpass expectations.



The new Credit Union building 2012

It is interesting to note that just as at our commencement as an organization some four decades ago, the Cayman Islands now finds itself in a similar financial and economic depressed state. A number of our members have become unemployed as Government as well as the private sector has cut back on hiring due to the sluggish economy. So some members continue to struggle to try and meet their commitments as funds become tight.



Our Credit Union continues to address the needs of its members through the provision of loans refinancing, debt consolidation, and overdraft unsecured loans, amongst other things. The Board of Directors and management continue to explore options to address member needs and diversify its services.

Our Credit Union is a people-oriented organization as it reaches out to membership in many ways. For instance, members and their children are blessed to have the opportunity to apply annually for a scholarship grant to further their education.

Each year well over 100 applicants receive scholarship grants ranging from \$400 to over \$3,000 to assist them in pursuing tertiary-level studies, locally, overseas, and online so that they can acquire and/or enhance their skills academically and therefore be more proficient and productive in the world of work.

The above photo illustrates the Credit Union's strong commitment towards its members seeking to become better educated and more equipped to take their rightful place in society.

There is an Educational Grants Committee that is headed up by the First Vice Chairperson of the Board of Directors. The Committee reviews over a hundred applications that come in each year. Information on how to apply for a scholarship grant can be accessed by going to our website: <http://www.cicsa-creditunion.org> and downloading the relevant Educational Grant Application Form and Guidelines.

Our Credit Union continues to be a leader by providing funding to assist members with tertiary level educational endeavors even when many other institutions have cut or significantly reduced their education and training budgets. Scholarship grants for the sixth consecutive year have been made from our year-end profit. Prior to this, it was an expense in the annual budget of the Credit Union.

It is hard to believe that this year we are celebrating our 40th birthday. As we reflect back on the earlier days, we can truly say that God has blessed and prospered us through the years. Thanks to Him who has guided us, provided us with strength and health, wisdom and foresight that we have been able to make a difference in the lives of many of our fellow colleagues.

Board of Directors 2015

The general oversight of the Credit Union is the responsibility of the Board of Directors,



which is elected at the AGM of the Credit Union. Under the Credit Union Rules, the Board shall consist of not less than five and no more than nine members, all of whom must be members of the Credit Union. Currently we are comprised of seven members.

The composition of the Board is as follows: Standing L-R: Chairman – Michael Nixon; Zena Merren-Chin – Secretary; Christopher Goddard – Treasurer; Krishan Welcome – 2nd Vice Chairman; and James T. Watler – 1st Vice Chairman. Seated L-R: Georgette Myrie

– Director; Deanna Look Loy – Director; and Corinne Glasgow – CEO.

Ms. Corinne Glasgow, CEO



Ms. Glasgow has been our Chief Executive Officer for the past nine years. She has united and led the organization through the very difficult financial times that the global and local economies have been experiencing.

Her energy and charm motivates and encourages staff, volunteers, and members to always give of their best as the organization moves from strength to strength.

In 1995, at the CCCU Convention held in Curacao, Ms. Glasgow, the first female President of our Credit Union, was elected to the Board of Directors of CCCU to represent the northern Caribbean (Bermuda, Bahamas, Belize, and the Cayman Islands) for a period of three years.

Ms. Glasgow made history when she was elected to the CCCU Board of Directors as she was the first Caymanian to be elected to this august regional credit union body. She was also the first Caymanian to attend the prestigious Caribbean Development Educator leadership training course that was held in St. Lucia in January 2011. In July 2012 she also acquired the designation of International Credit Union Development Educator.

Credit Committee 2015

The main duty of the Credit Committee is to consider loan applications. This body is made up of volunteers who give up their personal time to perform this function on a weekly basis. The Credit Committee is the body that is responsible for approving out of share loans, thus it's function is vital to the organizations overall success. This Committee meets once per week and at times special called meetings are convened to address special and or excess loans.



The Composition of the Credit Committee is as follows: Seated L-R: Matthew Tibbetts – Chairman; Linda McLean – Deputy Chairman; Elaine Young – Secretary. Standing L-R: Trevor Williams – Member; Beverley McField-Walters – Member; George Fullerton – Member; and Jenny Powery – Member.

The Committee is elected by members at the AGM or a member can be appointed by the Board in the event that a member resigns or a vacancy arises on the Committee. Under the Credit Union Rules, the Committee must have at least three members. Our Committee is made up of seven members.

Loans falling outside the remit of the Credit Committee are referred to the Board with a recommendation from the Credit Committee. A member has a right to appeal to the Board of Directors if they are not satisfied with the Credit Committee's decision.

Supervisory Committee 2015



The role of the Supervisory Committee is that of being our 'watch dog', thus ensuring that everything is kept within the ambit of best practices. It is charged with inspecting the books, dealing with serious complaints made by members, staff, and or the general public. It performs audit functions on behalf of the Board of Directors, ensuring that the information is accurate and above board at all times.

The Composition of the Supervisory Committee is as follows: L-R: Joseph Solomon – Chairman; Patricia Bell – Deputy Chairman; Jennifer Smith – Secretary; and Vaughn McLean – Member. Missing from photo: Jenesha Simpson – Member.

The primary responsibility of the Supervisory Committee is to serve as a means of checks and balances at the Credit Union. This Committee is responsible for ensuring that the Board of Directors and management of the Credit Union:

- Meet required financial reporting objectives,
- Establish and maintain practices and procedures sufficient to safeguard members' assets,
- Monitor all activities of the Credit Union to ensure that it is being managed effectively and efficiently, that financial records are accurate and up to date, and that the possibilities for fraud and theft are reduced,
- Report to the Board of Directors on a regular basis with a summary of work undertaken, conclusions reached and recommendations for improvements as necessary, and
- Report to members at the Annual General Meeting.

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