

The Most Unforgettable Character I Have Ever Met

Just mention the most unforgettable character I have ever met, and immediately there comes to mind my schoolteacher, the late Miss A. G. Maheia. She operated a private school in the city of Belize for boys and girls from grade one through grade six. All her pupils were well-behaved, and her reputation as a great educator was known throughout the British colony of Belize.

A strict disciplinarian both in and out of school, she wielded more power over her students than their parents did. She was known as a no-nonsense teacher who demanded respect, integrity and obedience. This meant respect for your elders; integrity in whatever you said or did; and obedience to all those in authority. Anyone who went to her school had to “tow the line”. If you did not complete your homework or were unable to recite the usual poetry assignment on Fridays, disciplinary measures were taken. One such measure was standing in front of the class with your hands shoulder high or above your head; another was flogging with a whip made from the branch of a tamarind tree. I shall never forget the day when one of my classmates was to be chastised -he ran out of the class but was soon brought back by some of the other male students to ‘face the music’. If Miss Maheia seemed harsh by comparison, she was also compassionate and understanding—the latter a most important trait in the upbringing of young children.

Miss Maheia’s standing in the community went far beyond its boundaries. Many of the outstanding citizens of the colony, including their children, attended her school. Her impact on the educational system of the

small British colony of Belize did not go unnoticed. Several years before her retirement, she was awarded the MBE medal (Member of the British Empire) by Her Majesty, the Queen of England, for public service in the highest tradition.