



ONE

# CARIBANA

STORY



Peter Spyros Goudas, Guy Chopping, Livia Papadimitri

# CARIBANA

*This booklet has been designed to take you away from the frustrations and aggravations of day-to-day living routine.*

*It will transform you into a world of abandonment and fun, to a festival that takes place once a year in Toronto.*

*Mr. Goudas was around at the beginning of this festival and was involved in the activities shortly after it all started.*

*He is familiar with the pain, the effort, the joy and the drive ingrained in the hearts (and maybe souls) of the people involved and the satisfaction they experience when everything comes together and is presented and displayed for your ultimate pleasure.*

*Many articles have been written about Mr. Goudas life story and his involvement in Caribana.*

*We would like to have you read one particular article published by the Indo Caribbean World Newspaper approximately 10 years ago.*

*The article reflects the early beginnings of Spyros Peter Goudas who, in the 60s and 70s, was determined at that time to familiarize himself with and to fully understand the ethics and customs of different cultures in his pursuit to capture the food market in Canada.*

*The whole Caribana idea reflects the unique culture of the twin-islands of Trinidad and Tobago, which, although very small in size, made a huge and gracious gift to Canada on the auspicious occasion of its 100th birthday.*

*And since we are on the topic of gifts, on March 29th, 2002, Spyros Peter Goudas was presented from the Trinidad and Tobago Government an award "In appreciation of (his) outstanding contribution and dedication to the development of the Arts, Culture and Education of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in Canada."*

*(The occasion was a double celebration: it also happened to be his 60th birthday!)*



*Indo Caribbean Newspaper  
Flashback Caribana 1975-1976  
July 30, 1997*

*Exclusive interview with Multicultural  
Food producer, Peter Goudas*

*My name is Guy Chopping and I was born in India. I was told that a band named the Jewels of the Indies were to be performing at Caribana.*

*I had never heard the name Caribana before, nor had any person I asked from my part of the world.*

*I happened to be in the office of Mr. Goudas (Spyros Peter Goudas) and asked him the question: "What is this parade they call Caribana?"*

*During the next twenty minutes I was offered a trip back in time, and on the way to his film library he told me that this was not just a parade but the most magnificent display of multicultural talent and effort in North America, second only to the carnival of Trinidad.*

*This festival only happens in Toronto once a year. The film told me how Caribana started in Trinidad, an island of 1.5 million people, and because of the multicultural growth in Canada was brought to Toronto as a gift from the people of the Caribbean to Canada in its*



centennial year, 1967.

I was also surprised to hear from Mr. Goudas that this was the year of his immigration to Canada, where he had no money, friends, or any knowledge of the English language, and was forced to sleep in the streets. I guess Canada didn't only receive a gift from the Caribbean that year, but also one from Greece!

During the filming I heard a number of names mentioned such as the Mighty Sparrow, Lord Kitchener, Lord Melody, Calypso Rose, Byron Lee and the Dragonaires, Toots and the Maytals, Bob Marley, Jimmy Cliff, The Tradewinds, King Fighter, The Merrymen, Earnest Costello, Rosco & The Rebellions, Free Soil, Aubrey Mann, Carl Secharran, King Ricardo (The Limbo King) and of course, JEWELS OF THE INDIES.

Mr. Goudas recognized these names as some of the top people in the business because he was the authority on music from the Caribbean at his 813 club. Sometimes DJs came from all over to listen to the show when he was on, to see the excitement and enjoyment of the crowds in the club, and they were always on the floor, dancing.

He remembers one incident at the club that still gives him a chuckle to this day.

One night, Willie, his manager of the 813 club, asked Rosco, the leader of Rosco and the Rebellion, the top Caribbean band in Canada at that time, to play at the club. Rosco told him the

charge was \$1,000 for the night. Willie told them he thought that was too much but Rosco held firm. Willie then said "I'll make you a deal". Your band will go first and you play anything you like, for as long as you like, and after you, the house DJ Mr. Whoo will go on (this was Mr. Goudas' nickname during his DJ performances because his eyes appeared similar to the Chinese shape).

When he is finished with his set, I will ask the crowd whom they wanted to play again. If they said Rosco, then you will go on and I'll pay you what you asked for. However, if they chose Mr. Whoo, then you do not get anything.

Rosco agreed, and shook hands on the deal with Willie.

That night, Rosco took his band on stage and proceeded to play some of the best music you ever heard from a band, and they were very energetic and entertaining in their performance.

They totally lived up to their reputation of the best Caribbean band in Canada and kept the crowd jumping.

Mr. Whoo then came on and he played his music, talked to the crowd, and also had them dancing like there was no tomorrow.

At the middle of the session, Big Willie came upon the stage, and asked the crowd whom they wanted to play the rest of the night.

Actually, he picked a very strategic moment for Willie to make this announcement. He had just finished playing "Mule Train" of Derrick Morgan and was in the middle of the Sixth and Seventh Book of Moses of the Toots &





*the Maytals of Frederick Hibbert with lyrics as follows*

*The six and the seven books  
He wrote them all  
From Genesis, and Exodus,  
Leviticus and Numbers  
Deuteronomy and Joshua  
Judges and Ruth  
Yeah,  
and the six and the seven books  
he wrote them all*

*When he stopped the music and asked Willie to make the announcement.*

*If you know this song, you will know that once you start dancing it, there is no way you would go back to the table before it is finished. He knew that the crowd would want him to play the rest of the song). The crowd started chanting "Whoop, Whoop, Whoop" and clearly showed their preference for Mr. Whoop. (Maybe Arsenio Hall was there that night, because his audiences started to make the same noise in his TV show). Poor Rosco was disappointed and declared that maybe he should go commit suicide since he lost out to a DJ, especially to a white boy playing Caribbean music! Thankfully, he did not follow through with that, and Willie, whose heart is as big as his massive frame, still paid Rosco, and they are all still friends after all these years.*

*At almost the same time, a gentleman by the name of Kenn F. Shah approached Mr. Goudas to take part in the Caribana parade by sponsoring certain bands.*

*He convinced him that this would be a wonderful idea for Goudas Foods. Mr. Goudas agreed, since they played the jingle "Goudas rice is very nice" along the parade route from Varsity Stadium to the waterfront.*

*He thought that this would be an innovative breakthrough in advertising Goudas Foods. He also wished to be*



*part of the most colourful celebration in Toronto, as Caribana approached almost nine years in existence.*

*He was also involved in financing costumes and supplying many different varieties of food at the camp. This was a very involved process.*

*To design a costume, involved taking a number of measurements and materials, checking if the costume is too high or too low (too high could be dangerous since it might come into contact with the electrical street wires), trying to coordinate it with the theme of the band and the King and Queen costumes, and selecting the best and most appropriate music for the band.*

*This process was done over a period of almost 6 months, and since it ran way into the night, all the people had to be fed and entertained along the way.*

*It was a lot of fun, and by the time we were through, everyone was well acquainted with the offering of products that Mr. Goudas had because they had tasted them all and gave valuable comments and feedback to make sure that the products were what they were accustomed to, and had top quality.*

*Mr. Goudas found this to be a fun experience and very rewarding because the knowledge that he got about their tastes and culture was priceless.*

*This also allowed him to meet many people including Esther O'Neil who had a Caribbean program on Multicultural*





Television; Pat McNeilly who was a reporter with the Contrast, the most famous Caribbean newspaper in Canada at that time, Jasse McDonald, personality of CHIN Radio, and also Mr. Winston Ali the President of Caribana, among others.

On the night before the parade, Mr. Goudas went to the stadium to see how things were progressing and whatever help he could give.

This was around 1 to 2 o'clock in the morning, and there was about 1000 different Caribana group members, from musicians to costume designers, working hard to make sure that everything would be ready for the big day.

Mr. Goudas noticed that he was the only white person there, and although the members of his group knew him, most of the others thought he was some tourist who was lost in Toronto, or some Greek runner who was racing in the Boston Marathon, but got lost and ended up in the Varsity stadium instead.

Soon however, they got to know who he was, and then one big fellow came up to him and said, "I understand you are the famous Mr. Goudas who has this rice that I keep hearing about. Well, I have some heavy steel pans to manage, and I can't do it unless I get some Goudas rice for early breakfast".

The idea occurred to him to send some people to his 813 club and have them prepare lots of rice pelau for everybody, and delivered to Varsity stadium with

lots of Snappy pop. This was a big breakfast celebration and the people were very appreciative.

They called him things like "cool man", "brother", "Rasta man" and similar names. They all had a full belly to start the day, and the look on their faces was worth the same as gold to him.

No amount of money could buy the kind of advertising that Goudas Foods got that day, or the personal appreciation of everyone towards Mr. Goudas. He was a very happy man.

The Caribana parade was absolutely breathtaking, and the weather was just perfect. Goudas Foods was not only a big part of the parade but with the handing out of small packets of rice, many people were able to take home souvenirs on that wonderful day.

They also left with the jingle

*Goudas rice is very nice  
Goudas rice is very nice  
it is good for pelau  
or Chinese fried rice  
so take my advice  
and buy Goudas rice.*

Mr. Goudas used a Super 8 camera to film the whole parade. He also took the film to the 813 club where he had his own broadcast and editing facilities.

He spent hours and hours, night after night, on this editing, trying to compress hours of tape into a 2 hour film. It was quite a task to synchronize the sounds with the pictures, making sure that the





*involved in this celebration.*

*As he watched the 1975 film he thought of how the 1976 parade would be even better, and dreamed of it being the biggest event Toronto had ever seen.*

*He hired Kenn F. Shah as his project manager. He and Willie Williams (Big Willy), along with Mr. Goudas, as well as 200 additional helpers, worked together to make the most colourful and magnificent costumes possible.*

*steel band sounds matched the steel band in the film, and the individual instruments and music were in perfect harmony with the pictures.*

*He then had Jasse MacDonald, who has one of the most powerful voices in the world to do a voice over.*

*They worked every evening for almost half a year along with the costumes designers, and finally their dream was achieved. Small packets of rice numbering 50,000 had been prepared as special souvenirs of the day.*

*The quality of the Super 8 film was superb, considering that this was not a production done by a professional studio or TV station. Mr. Goudas wanted to capture the environment leading up to the parade, so people can appreciate the tremendous effort that goes into producing these magnificent costumes and bands that are part of the parade, from a close up perspective, not from some remote tower along the parade route.*

*Needless to say none of them including the bandleaders and dancers had slept for weeks. They however had unlimited energy and drive to please the spectators coming from New York, Detroit, Montreal, Trinidad and many other parts of the Caribbean, as well as the Canadians and other nationalities who were living in Toronto (which as everyone knows, is the most diversified, multicultural city in the world).*

*When he thought he had managed to capture the essence of the parade, he called all the people who participated in some of the various bands to the club to see it. They were unanimous in their agreement that it was the best two hour film they had seen portraying the Caribana parade.*

*At 2:00 a.m. the day of the parade, they moved all of their trucks, instruments, costumes, souvenirs and people into position for the greatest event the Canadian people and the multicultural generation had ever seen.*

*Mr Goudas said that this allowed the people to see that this parade was not made up of a bunch of idiots dressed up in costumes and jumping up and down all over the place, but the work of some very skilled and talented people, bringing to Canada a culture that has prevailed for many, many years.*

*Mr. Goudas was trying to marry the cultures and the food.*

*In the past 12 months he had been introduced to rice and peas (pelau), cho cho, bodie, dasheen bush, eggplant, lady's fingers, karilla and many more.*

*Mr. Goudas understood this, and he wanted to show the world what was*

*This gave him the opportunity to understand who eats this and who eats that. This came at a time when he*







*was just entering the multicultural food market and had been trying to sell the idea of this type of food to the supermarkets. They eventually adopted the idea of having a multicultural or international section displaying Goudas Foods products.*

*They were all at Varsity Stadium at 2 a.m. rehearsing, testing instruments and sound systems, making small practice dance moves and all laughing and smiling in preparation for the big event. Some people even came to see him with the idea that this should be called "GOUDAS DAY". Now, everyone knew who Mr. Goudas was and that he wasn't just a lost runner but the organizer of the whole event!*

*At 6:00 am, the first drops of rain lightly spotted the parade route. Everyone thought that this was a cloud, which would pass, but the rain continued as a light shower. The parade started to move at 10:00 a.m. and most people had already strategically positioned themselves along University Avenue to get the best possible view of this spectacular display of costumes, colour, music and dancing.*

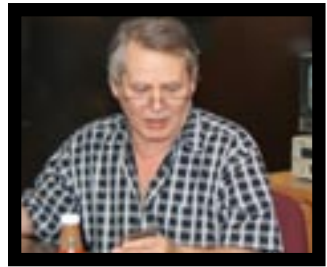
*As the parade was almost half way along the route the sky opened giving torrents of water to invade the festivities. The spectators ran for shelter from the relentless downpour. Some ran back to their hotels and cars, some to the dry subway tunnels. Some of the dancers and helpers of Mr. Goudas group finally had to run for cover.*

*The musicians tried every possible way to protect and cover their instruments.*

*The beautiful costumes, which had taken 6 months to prepare, melted into coloured puddles at the dancers' feet.*

*As he sat on the grass near the monument viewing the wrath of nature, he thought of the expenditure of time, effort and money and he said*

*"I had experienced many rainstorms in my life, but never had really paid much attention, as these storms have only wet my hair and clothes. This storm wet my eyes and broke my heart".*



*Mr. Goudas paused, took a deep breath and finished by saying that the Caribana parade is a wonderful thing that happens to Toronto every year and is one of the most beautiful gifts that the Caribbean has given to Canada.*

*It is safe to say that Mr. Goudas is one of the pioneers of the Caribana celebration.*



Publication Information

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# Mr. Goodbar's

