



## REMEMBERING THE LEGENDARY DOCTOR CHARLES ROZA OF MACKENZIE HOSPITAL- UPPER DEMERARA

By Dmitri Allicock for Guyanese Online

The delivery of healthcare in the bauxite mining community of what is now called Linden was once ranked tops in Guyana and around the Caribbean. Free housing for their workers, along with employment, competitive pay, augmented with good healthcare, were among the enormous contributions of the Demerara Bauxite Company {Demba} to the people of Upper Demerara and Guyana. The **MacKenzie Hospital** built and funded by Demba, practiced very decent health care. Every employee received free care and their family members had to pay half of a nominal fee. My parents paid a total of \$9.00 for my birth and the entire 5 days of hospitalization of my mother. For those that were not part of the company, care was given for a small sum. Those were the days when you spend up to 9 days in the hospital after having a baby or until the baby's umbilical cord fell off.

**Guyanese-born Doctor Roza** was a legend of the Mackenzie Hospital. He was the first Guyanese staff member at Demba. In 1924, he worked at the first Mackenzie Hospital that was located where the now defunct Power house was built.

No one was rushed out of the hospital and was treated until they were fully better. Doctors and nurses both gave of their best and the hospital was ranked as one of the leading hospitals in Guyana and the Caribbean. The excellent and quality patient care practiced by the hospital cemented a very high degree of trust and respect from the entire community.

Doctor Roza's excellent work was responsible for saving my Uncle Vivian Allicock's life in 1924 when as a child of 8 years old he fell unto a cutlass and was stabbed in his abdomen. When the much larger Mackenzie Hospital of 1925 was opened he continued his great work there.

Many called him Uncle Charlie since he was almost a family member to all the people of Upper Demerara for so many years. He was loved; respected and held in the highest of regard by all. Doctor Roza the chief medical officer of this hospital was probable the single most representative fact to reflect on the healthiness at that time for the Bauxite Industry. His exemplary service included difficult surgeries, medical practitioner, and obstetrician at times. He delivered former Guyana's high commissioner to India. Doctor Roza also delivered my dear cousin Doctor Carmen Subryan. He ran the Mackenzie hospital for decades.

Most of the former and some of my generation were seen at one time or the other by Doctor Roza and so many owe their lives to his superb skills and kind heart. He correctly diagnosed and saved the life of my younger brother Yuri, when his appendix had ruptured in 1968.

Dr. Roza founded and opened the current Charles Roza School of Nursing where all the Mackenzie Hospital Nurses are trained. One of the most outstanding acts and supreme compassion of Dr. Roza was the case of a little baby girl found abandoned and laying in the sand of Wismar hill in 1961. He



cared for this unfortunate and badly ant's bitten baby in the hospital until she was fully better. He then legally adopted this beautiful baby and raised her as his very own. Her name is Debbie Roza.

**DOCTOR ROZA AND HIS WONDERFUL FAMILY**

There were others remembered contemporaries of Doctor Roza who served like **Dr. Caruthers**. **Dr Cambon** once treated my grandfather James when he very ill. After he recovered and returned home to Old England, Dr. Cambon and his wife would take his speed boat on occasion and travel up the Demerara to my Grandfather to take medicines and enjoy the outdoors.

Another was world famous **Dr. Gigioli**, who rose to fame from this hospital. Born in 1897, Italian born Dr. Gigioli was the medical officer for Demba in 1922. He would pushed for the building of the 60 bed 1925 Hospital fully equipped with X-ray, laboratory facilities, sterile operation theater and a trained staff. His fame was in the fight against Malaria in Guyana but his first calling was in the treatment of hookworms. 80% of the population was affected by this disease. He provided the workers with boots and proper sewage disposal and the infection dropped significantly.

The more recent contributions to the community of **Dr. Baird** of the 1970s are also fondly remembered by many grateful patients and residents.

The well dressed Dr. Roza in his white shark skin suite, tunic neck and white leather polished shoes holding his stethoscope, briskly approaching you was



a welcoming sight to so many. His comforting words and touch was a full guaranty that you would be receiving the best of care. This remarkable man would work into his eighties at the Mackenzie Hospital and retired to England soon after the Nationalization.

This reflection on Dr Roza of the Mackenzie Hospital is just a small way of saying a big ***thank you*** to his blessed family that we are very grateful to.

**Baby delivered at Mackenzie Hospital- 1959**