

Kilgour Dowdy, Joanne ***Olympic Hero***: Lennox Kilgour's Story; illustrations [by] Dillon Sedar Pompano Beach, Fl: Caribbean Studies Press, 2014

Kilgour Dowdy captures an important part of our Olympic history in this picture book- an aspect of our history which is sadly lacking. While there are publications which include the history of our Olympians, Dr Basil Ince's ***The Olympians***, and Nasser Khan's ***Profiles Heroes and Role Models of Trinidad and Tobago***, are not geared for children. Khan writes on our world record cricket hero, Brian Lara in his children's book ***Get Caught Reading Series***, however, ***Olympic Hero*** is pioneering work for a younger audience.

The story of Lennox "Gour" Kilgour is one of perseverance, patience and patriotism. We are told that this bronze man despite his loss in the CAC games went on to win the silver medal in the Pan American Games in 1951 and a bronze medal in the Olympic Games of 1952 with little means to support his training. Lennox was "hustling to make extra dollars for food for a doctor for all the expenses that an athlete needs to cover". He "never left his country to train, or use any high-tech equipment to win medals" as is the practice today with many of our top athletes. He cuts a lonely figure on p.23 when he returns to Trinidad after participation in an international meeting. This contrasts with the treatment meted out to successful athletes today who are greeted by government representatives, even at the highest level and are showered with gifts.

Dillon Sedar's illustrations, an etched technique, coloured with crayons as if drawn by a child, are clearly appealing to children. The language will also be successful with this group because of Kilgour Dowdy's frequent use of repetition. We note that for Gour it was always "practice, practice, practice"; smiling- "smile, smile, smile" and "shine, shine, shine". He was often "pushing, lifting, pressing and snatching". Dowdy's style is that of prose poetry and her use of metaphors beautifies the language- "bright sun bronze sons" provides a vivid image of young athletes "flexing their bronze muscles in the tropical light". Her use of similes is equally engaging, note this "bronze champion...who one day ...would shine like gold."

We are transported to an earlier time of remedies recommended by old folk of “cod liver oil, malt, milk, ice cream and figs”. Which of us growing up did not partake of the first three to make us strong and healthy?

Kilgour Dowdy also introduces us to early athletic coaches- Dr. Milton Lovell, Mr. Ottley, Carl De Souza and Lionel Seemungal, men to whom Lennox credited much of his success and was eternally grateful.

Gour’s achievement is outstanding when placed against a backdrop of limited resources for training. He therefore competed against tremendous odds but managed to make his country proud. It is a story of motivation, thus while Dowdy reveals the motivation of this hero to succeed, it is a story which could influence young readers to hard work and the resulting rewards.

Kilgour Dowdy has opened the door for others to produce work for children to celebrate the achievement of Trinidad and Tobago’s earlier athletes. We look forward to picture books on Rodney Wilkes, Kent Bernard, Hasely Crawford and Ato Boldon.

The bibliography and internet links are a useful addition to this book, which will encourage further reading on this topic. This book is a fitting tribute by a proud daughter to her bronze father who grew up to be a champion. Gour will “smile, smile, smile.”

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