

Repeating Islands

News and commentary on Caribbean culture, literature, and the arts

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Chinese Aruban is Principal Engineer on Hubble Telescope



Our post from yesterday on Chinese Jamaicans prompted a reader to point us in the direction of an Aruban of Chinese descent who has made news recently because of his connection to the launching last Monday of the Space Shuttle Atlantis. Dr. Edward Cheung, a native of Aruba, is the Principal Engineer of the Hubble Space Telescope Service Project. His work, as Rosalie Klein writes, “has been vital over the years in keeping the telescope operative and innovative, designing and implementing, along with his team, equipment that solved various problems, some impossible to anticipate, which cropped up once the space observatory was placed in orbit. On a number of occasions they managed to save the beleaguered project.”

Dr. Cheung’s grandfather came to Aruba from Hong Kong to work in the Lago Refinery and eventually opened a small establishment, The Fontein Rum Shop, where the future scientist would spend most of his time. His father, Kong Ming, would also own a grocery store, the Kong Ming Market, which would pay for his son’s education at the Worcester Polytechnic Institute where he did his undergraduate studies. Dr. Cheung received a Masters and PhD in Electrical Engineering from Yale University with a specialty in robotics. He earned his PhD with a scholarship provided by Philips Labs and NASA.

Dr. Cheung, although living in the United States, maintains close ties to his home island. When problems cropped up with a vital part of the Hubble Space Telescope, Dr. Cheung and his team devised the ARUBA box, ASCS/NCS Relay Unit Breaker Assembly, which was attached to the HST in the spring of 2002, during the last successful mission of the ill-fated Columbia Space Shuttle. Dr. Cheung confesses that he devised the acronym “to excite and stimulate interest in space and engineering amongst young students back on his home island.” The worldwide telecast of the ARUBA Box mission was a moment of great pride in the small Caribbean island.

For more on Dr. Cheung go to <http://www.aruba.com/news/arubans-in-the-news/dr-edward-cheung-proving-to-all-arubans-they-can-reach-for-the-stars/>

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