

## TRIBUTE TO THE LATE ALPHONSO “LES” LAING



Olympians (from left) George Rhoden, Byron LaBeach, Les Laing, Cynthia Thompson and Herb McKenley look relaxed before their induction at the Jamaica Amateur Athletic Association's first Hall of Fame ceremony at the Jamaica Pegasus Hotel in New Kingston last night. See report in tomorrow's Gleaner.



Dr. Herb McKenley (right) gets the attention of his three surviving team-mates of the 1952 Helsinki Olympic gold medal-winning 4x400 metres team who are joined by Dr. Cynthia Thompson (2nd right) at the inaugural JAAA/VMBS Hall of Fame Awards ceremony on Wednesday night at Jamaica Pegasus Hotel. From left are George Rhoden, Byron LaBeach, Les Laing, McKenley and his four team-mates including the late Dr. Al Wint who were honoured and inducted into the Hall of Fame along with Olympic team coach of 1948, 1952 and 1956, the late American Joseph Yee Jr. Dr. Cynthia Thompson and the JAAA founder, Norman Massey, who died in 1965.

On the morning of Sunday, February 7, 2021 Alphonso “Les” Laing passed away peacefully in his sleep. The Jamaica Athletics Administrative Association (JAAA) offers condolence to the Laing family and to the wider track and field fraternity.

Les Laing was a member of the ‘*Magnificent Five*’, sometimes referred to as the ‘*Galant Five*’ (Herb McKenley, Arthur Wint, George Rhoden, Les Laing and Byron LaBeach) who took the world by storm in 1952 at the Olympic Games which were held in Helsinki. The team ran a world record time of 3:03.9, breaking a 20 year-old record.

Although he rarely spent time in Jamaica, everyone remembered him as the quiet one by nature. Les also competed in the 200m at the 1948 (London) & 1952 (Helsinki) 200m Olympics where he placed 6<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> at the

respective Finals.

Olympian Laing hailed from Linstead, St. Catherine and his prowess in Track and Field began at the Dinthill Technical High School where he majored in Agricultural Science. He pursued this subject at the Jamaica School of Agriculture and later received a job as a teacher in Puerto Rico in his field.

In June 2003, the then Jamaica Amateur Athletic Association, now referred to as the Jamaica Athletics Administrative Association, held a VMBS sponsored function to honour the entire 4x400m gold medallists team in the 1952 Olympic Games. When he arrived for the function in Kingston Jamaica, Laing was astonished at the level of interest still being shown after 51 years.

He was also inducted into the Central American and Caribbean Confederation Hall of Fame in 2005.

He was married to Carmen Phipps, sister of Frank Phipps and is an Olympian herself who competed with the late Dr. Cynthia Thompson, in the high jump event in 1948. She was the 1946 Central America and Caribbean (CAC) champion in High Jump. The union produced three children, one girl and two boys.

Les Laing died at age 95 years, twelve days short of his 96<sup>th</sup> birthday. Jamaica says thanks to Les Laing, a quiet giant who has left a great legacy in Jamaica athletics.

May his soul Rest in Peace.

February 10, 2021.