

# Leading Liberian Rubber Planter, Bill Morris, Dies

By **Tete Bropleh** - March 9, 2017



## ***– First to Process and Sell Rubber Products Directly to World Market***

The death is announced of Mr. William (Bill) Lyon Morris Sr., President and Chief Executive Officer of Morris-American Rubber Company, commonly known as Morris Farm of Todee District, Montserrado County, and Kakata, Margibi County.

Bill passed peacefully at home in New York City last Friday, March 3, 2017. He was 68.

He was the son of Mr. Harry L. Morris, Liberia's biggest rubber planter besides the Firestone Plantations Company. Mr. Morris, who died in New York in the early 1990s, had been acclaimed, since the 1950s, to be the "rubber king of the world" because no other individual had planted more rubber than he. His rubber plantation in Kakata, Margibi County, and Todee District, Montserrado County, Liberia, at one point reached 8,000 acres, outstripping all other individual rubber planters in Liberia and around the world.



Harry Morris married an American, Mrs. Wilma Holland Morris, and this union was blessed with three children, Constance, Bill and Judith. Constance became an educator and

administrator, Bill an agriculturist like his father, and Judith, a medical doctor who has a practice in Manhattan, New York City.

Bill Lyon Morris, the couple's only son, was born November 18, 1948 and graduated from Bordentown Military Institute in Bordentown, NJ. He also attended Lincoln College in Pennsylvania.

Following the death of his father, Bill took over the plantation and ran it successfully until his death.

Several managerial experts over the years assisted in this effort. Among them were Keith Jubah, who was unfortunately killed on the plantation on November 1, 2009; Edward Sangudi, a Tanzanian, Charles Bright, former Finance Minister, R.L.; and F.A. Dennis, former President, Liberia Bank for Development and Investment.

One of the great and unique developments on the plantation for which Bill will be remembered is that several years ago, for the first time in the history of the Liberian rubber sector, Morris American Rubber, by which Morris Farm became known, established its own factory to process its rubber. The company thus became the first and only rubber plantation that stopped selling its product to Firestone. The factory produced a product called TSR, meaning "technically specified rubber," and sold it directly to world markets.

But due to the drastic fall in the world rubber price over the past six years, the factory was temporarily closed.

Mr. F.A. Dennis is, however, optimistic that the factory would reopen, with the necessary funding of US\$1 to US\$2 million through bank loans and equity.

The reopening of the factory, Mr. Dennis stressed, would positively impact the country's foreign exchange situation as well as create more jobs on the plantation.

Bill Morris is survived by his Mother, Mrs. Wilma Holland Morris; two sons, William and Christopher, a daughter, Susan; two sisters, Mrs. Constance Morris Hope and Dr. Mrs. Judith Morris de Celis.

His sister, Judith remembers her brother Bill as "a kind, gentle, intelligent and hardworking man, who loved his country, family and friends. He was respected by many who always knew he was there for them."

F.A. Dennis also remembers Bill Morris as "an employer who deeply cared about his workers. Whenever the rubber price suffered a slump, Bill would always say, 'The children should not suffer. We must keep the schools and clinics open for their sake.'"

According to sister Judith, the body will be cremated, just as his father Harry's was. A memorial service will be held in the States and another at a later date in Liberia, when the ashes of both father and son will be brought home for interment.