



Friends of Paradis des Indiens

An excerpt from
“A TIME IN PARADISE”
by Patrick de Verteuil

When we married, so long ago, Mica was offered a very limited choice: from Miss Michaëlle Moravia she could graduate to Mrs. Michaëlle de Verteuil or to Mrs. Patrick de Verteuil. Should we remarry in the modern enlightened Canada of today, her choice would be Mrs. Michaëlle Moravia or Mrs. Michaëlle Moravia de Verteuil.

On arrival in rural Haiti, Mica was offered no choice at all; she became Madame Patrick. Surnames (signatures as they are known here) have very little currency, being reserved for the rare, legal documents. Madame Patrick she became, and Madame Patrick she remains. This apparent demotion has over time been rectified as it became evident that she, and not I, was the doer.

The full magnitude of this change was brought home to me the other day as I crossed the veranda leading to the waiting room at the Jérémie airstrip.

As I passed, I heard a voice ask, “Who’s that guy with the beard?”

And the reply: “Oh! That’s Madame Patrick’s husband.”

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