

# GuyFolkFest.org

Celebrating Our Cultural Heritage

Nesbit  
Chhanghur

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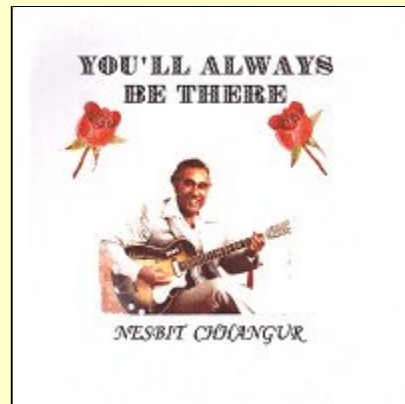
## CELEBRATING OUR CREATIVE PERSONALITIES

### NESBIT CHHANGHUR

by Vibert C. Cambridge

Nesbit Chhanghur's song "Guyana Lament" is an important record of the dark times Guyana experienced during the early 1960s. It is also a testament to the healing properties of music. "Guyana Lament" contributed to racial healing.

Nesbit Chhanghur, born in the early 1930s, began his musical career at home in Fyriish, Berbice. The Chhanghur's home was a center for Indian culture in the village. His father Russell Chhanghur played the sitar and other siblings played harmonium, piano accordion and the fiddle. Nesbit played the dantal. He got his first guitar lesson from Buddy Hector. According to Nesbit, Buddy Hector was an African Guyanese carpenter who played the guitar and was one of the many musicians living in multi-racial Fyriish in the early 1940s.



Nesbit Chhanghur has been called "Guyana first singing cowboy" and the "pioneer of country and western music in Guyana." His love for country and western music developed as a result of a 78 rpm Bluebird record his father bought from an itinerant English salesman who serviced the expatriate communities that lived on the sugar estates owned and operated by Bookers during the 1940s. The songs on the record were "T is for Texas and T is for Tennessee" and "Blue Yodel." The performer was Jimmy Rogers. Nesbit Chhanghur sharpened his singing skills as a regular performer on the important radio shows produced in New Amsterdam by the legendary Olga Lopes Seales - "Berbice Calling" ( a talent

show) and "Olga Lopes Sings."

Besides performing music, Nesbit Chhanghur has had a full career as a teacher and as an administrator. He was a history teacher and choir master at the Berbice Educational Institute. In 2002, he received an award from the alumni of the Berbice Educational Institute at a reunion held in Toronto, Canada. He was the first Guyanese to serve as executive director/general secretary of the YMCA in Guyana. It was at the YMCA complex in Thomas Lands, where British troops were garrisoned, that he composed "Guyana Lament." The recording of the song and its popularization (it was played up to 24 times per day) were encouraged by Radio Demerara's Rafiq Khan.

Nesbit Chhanghur, singer and composer lives in Ottawa, Canada with his wife Greta. In 2002, Nesbit and Greta celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. They have four sons and two daughters. His sons Rohan, Anthony, Brian and Sean are also musicians and accompanied Nesbit on the influential CD You'll Always Be There. Nesbit Chhanghur, a Guyanese cultural hero, received a Wordsworth McAndrew Award at Folk Festival 2002 in Brooklyn, New York.



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The CD **You'll Always Be There** may be ordered from [www.eCaroh.com](http://www.eCaroh.com)

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