

ROSINA CHRIS GILBERT (December 25, 1926 – June 26, 2026)

1 Rosina Christiana Guada was born in the British Colony of Trinidad

Rosina Christiana Guada was born to her parents Peter Guada and Gladys Guada (nee Montenegro), on December 25, 1926, in Guaico, Trinidad. As a Christmas baby, Rosina was given the Spanish name Christiana. She was known by family and friends as Chris, for most of her adult life.

In the 1920s, Guaico was a small, rural village in northeast Trinidad. The economy dependent on cocoa production, which surpassed sugar as the most valuable export crop.



The community expanded the road network and relied on the Trinidad Government Railway for transportation. Sangre Grande was the main market town for the cocoa industry in Trinidad.

2 Gladys Montenegro and Peter Guada get married



Gladys Montenegro was 17 years old, when she met Peter Guada, who was a tailor and wayside preacher in Sangre Grande. A wayside preacher was a street evangelist, who spreads a spiritual message in public spaces like sidewalks, parks or transit hubs.

Under British colonialism in Trinidad, the Shouter Baptist religion was banned. The loud sounds of shouting, singing and clapping were a threat to colonial order. Peter became a Presbyterian pastor.

Born in Venezuela, Peter grew up in a Venezuelan community in Trinidad, called Sadoo River. Peter did not speak English, when he went to school at age 12.

3 Chris Gilbert was educated by Canadian Missionaries

Chris Guada began her formal education, at the age of four, at the Canadian Mission Presbyterian school in Guaico. The mission spread Christianity, by establishing schools in smaller villages for the Indian population. The ringing of the bell at the Canadian Mission school in Guaico, often set the daily schedule for the surrounding estate labourers.

After the abolition of slavery in the British empire in 1834, more than 140,000 Indians indentured labourers were transported to Trinidad to fill a shortage of labour on sugar and cocoa estates. Afro-Trinidadians like Chris, also attended these missionary schools. In Guaico, the school was a half a block from the Guada's home.

The image below shows Peter Guada and Chris. It was taken from a group photo at the wedding of Matilda Guada and Desmond Hoyte, on May 6, in either 1938 or 1939. This is the earliest photo of Chris at the age of 13 and the only photo of her father Peter.

Gladys and Peter exhausted their financial resources to prepare Chris' sister Hannah to win a scholarship to attend Bishops High School. Gladys' sisters Irene and Ineze Montenegro read about the scholarship in the newspaper. The sisters arrived unannounced on the train from San Fernando to Gauico to visit Chris and her family.

They invited Chris to live with them in San Fernando and attend high school. Irene and Ineze arranged for Chris to attend Naparima Girls' High School, which was founded by Canadian Presbyterian missionaries.



Peter owned a house in Guaico, but he rented the land. His dream was to own a house, while being able to use his own land. Peter died of a heart attack, at the age of 44, after buying an acre of land and starting to build a house.

Gladys was able to finish building the house. She earned an income by renting half the house and living in the other half. Gladys found other jobs to earn income, such as work on road construction projects and selling charcoal, which was used as fuel for a portable stove called a coal pot.

When Peter died, Chris was 14 years old and was in the early years of high school. The Montenegro sisters returned to Guaico and convinced Gladys to let her daughter Orina come to live in San Fernando. Orina was about eight years old. The sisters were not interested in helping Donald, who was five years old. Donald stayed with Gladys in Guaico.

Chris was depressed by Peter's death and the breakup of her family. Life with the Montenegro sisters was difficult. She had to do housework and focus on her studies. She had a breakdown and was found at the San Fernando railway station trying to get to Guaico.

However, Chris was determined to stay with the Montenegro sisters and finish high school. After she graduated in 1945, Aunt Irene got her a job as a nurse at San Fernando General Hospital. Irene was the head nurse or Matron of the hospital.

In this position, she was instrumental in the development of health care in Trinidad and was a co-founder of the Trinidad and Tobago Nursing Association. She was honored as an officer of the Order of the British Empire, which is the medal in the photo above.



4 Chris migrates to London, England to work as a Nurse

Irene arranged for Chris to emigrate to England in 1947, as a young nurse with experience working in the British Colony of Trinidad. Chris found that training as a nurse at Mile End hospital in east London was repetitive and boring. The main duties were emptying/cleaning chamber pots, making beds, while washing patients and dead bodies. She suffered from culture shock, poor food and rationing.



Chris sent a letter home to Irene to complain. A few weeks later, Chris was called into the Matron's office and was not sure why she was there. Then she noticed a letter on the desk, with Aunt Irene's writing. After that meeting, Chris never again complained about working as a nurse. Instead, she trained to be a midwife, an operation theatre nurse and then worked at the Royal Eye Hospital.

One of Chris' favourite shows was Call the Midwife, which is a British period drama television series about a group of nurse midwives working in the East End of London in the late 1950s. In real life, Chris was doing this work in the late 1940s.

While conducting an eye examination, Chris met a young law student named Peter John Valentine Gilbert (February 12, 1932 – June 26, 2021). After the war, Peter was in the National Service. When he left the military, Peter pursued a Law degree at King's College in London. While attending university, the Bureau of Labour sent Peter to work at a train station as a Janitor. Peter did not like sweeping, so he told the supervisor he had some dirt in his eyes and went to the Royal Eye Hospital.

5 The Gilbert family migrates to Regina, Saskatchewan

Peter and Chris got married in 1954 and lived with his parents John and Ida in London. Soon after, Clifford and Frances, were born on July 29, 1956, and November 2, 1957, respectively. Despite his qualifications as both a barrister and solicitor, Peter had great difficulty finding a job as a lawyer in London.

As a result, he started looking for work in Australia, New Zealand or Canada. Peter decided to take job in Regina, with the Saskatchewan Government Insurance Office (SGIO).



Peter arrived at the airport in Regina in 1958 and went directly to SGIO for his first day of work.

Once Peter was established in Regina as a lawyer, he sent for Chris, Clifford and Frances. After migrating to Regina, Chris and her family had to adjust to Canadian culture and cold weather. Peter and Chris had two more children. Chris decided to go home to Trinidad, so Gladys could help her with the birth of Valerie. She was born in Trinidad on April 30, 1961. Richard was born in Regina on September 5, 1964.

Once the children were old enough, Chris went back to her career as a nurse. Based on her British experience, she accepted a position as the Head Nurse of the Childrens' Ward, at Grey Nuns (Pasqua) Hospital. The Hospital served the health care needs of southern Saskatchewan.



On her first day, Chris asked anybody who did want a Black woman as their boss to transfer out of the department. Several nurses decided to work somewhere else in the hospital. Chris worked closely with doctors to update and improve nursing practices. She initiated progressive policies which treated patients as children.

Chris was active in the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association (SNRA). In the photo on the left, Chris is speaking at an SNRA conference.

The SRNA included nurses in management roles, so it was deemed ineligible to act as an official collective bargaining agent. This led to a movement that created the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses (SUN) in January 1974.

6 The Gilbert family moves to Vancouver, British Columbia

Peter was a partner in a private law firm called Blakeney, Griffin and Gilbert in Regina. He decided to take a job with the City of Vancouver in the Civil Litigation department in 1974. The Gilbert family moved to Vancouver and Chris was hired to run the children's ward at St. Paul's Hospital.

However, St. Paul's decided to close the department. As a result, Chris was given a position as the Head Nurse of the Central Supply Department (CSD). CSD was responsible for cleaning, decontaminating, sterilizing, and distributing reusable medical devices and surgical instruments. The department was a vital hub of a St Pauls' hospital.

Chris observed the CSD staff at work and learned their responsibilities. After using her holiday to take training on sterilization procedures, she produced a manual of procedures and restructured the department. When Chris retired in 1987, she turned the CSD manual into textbook to teach an original course for nurses at Vancouver Community College (VCC).



In 1989, Chris was presented with an award of excellence from the Registered Nurses Association of BC. Chris was recognized for her work in enhancing the quality of her department through staff training. She developed a six-week training program at St. Pauls' hospital, which is credited with being the core of a similar course at VCC. The award was presented in Vancouver at a special banquet, held in conjunction with the annual convention of the nurses association. In the above photo, Chris is holding the plaque she was awarded for excellence in nursing.



Chris was awarded a certificate on December 3, 2025, by the Surrey City Council and Mayor Brenda Locke, to recognize her upcoming 99th birthday on December 25, 2025.

“May you find a few moments of reflection that allows you to celebrate the wealth of knowledge and insights that you have built from your life experience,” said Locke on the certificate.

At that time, it was believed that Chris was the oldest Trinidadian in the Lower Mainland and possibly BC. Chris got dressed to go to receive the award at a banquet held by the Trinidad and Tobago Cultural Association. However, she was too tired to get out of bed and travel to the event.

Rosina Chris Gilbert died peacefully in bed, early in the morning on June 26, 2026, at her apartment, on fifth street and Lonsdale, in North Vancouver. When Chris bought the apartment in 1988, she had a plan to age in place, in her apartment, until she died. Chris also had a plan for what she would like to happen, after she dies. This plan revolves around a memorial service, just up the road from her apartment, at St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church. Peter died on June 26, 2021. (Written by Richard Gilbert).