BOOK REVIEW

By

KATHLEEN HIPSON

*Thriving in the Care of Many Mothers*

A Review by Kathleen Hipson

Kathleen Hipson is a freelance book reviewer whose work appeared in the Tampa Tribune for many years in the late 1990’s and early 2000’s.

About ten years ago, Ainsley Julian Borel, a man of dual Caribbean heritage presented his mother, a retired United States postal worker with a journal. He knew much about his father’s Trinidadian family but not much about his mother’s Jamaican family. She should write her story, he said.

Rosemary Yvonne Borel scoffed at the idea that anyone would be interested in “all that old stuff.” Her son assured her that he and her grandchildren would be; and so *Thriving in the Care of Many Mothers* had its beginning.

Rosemary tells how she progressed (much to her own surprise) from being a grandmother jotting down memories in long-hand to becoming the author of a published book.

So who were the many mothers and how did they come into her life? Her mother, who became a hotel manager, was unable to keep little Yvonne (Rosemary’s childhood name) with her because hers was a live-in job. (Her father did not want her and refused contact with her.)

These facts introduce readers to one or two differences between American and Jamaican circumstances. Things Americans take for granted, such as free government-supported education through high school didn’t exist in young Yvonne’s world. Rosemary tells of her mother’s struggle to obtain a good education for her only child.

Rosemary continues through childhood then brings her story into womanhood with the adventures and misadventures of youth. It would be a spoiler to detail her accomplishments. However, by this time you will be rooting for the determined young Jamaican woman who has just a touch of mischief in her make-up.

Then comes her tragic first marriage and the acquisition of another mother — her mother-in-law — and the birth of her children. It was her mother-in-law who taught her Trinidadian cooking.

Rosemary is clear about one thing: Trinidad and Jamaica are two very different countries with two very different cultures. Her readers sample both.

*Thriving in the Care of Many Mothers* is highly readable because of Rosemary’s keen observations and clear memories of the various countries she visited and lived in, and the people she met. Despite her reservations, this “old stuff” is quite interesting.