

DOROTHY W. ABBOTT RECOLLECTIONS FOR ROTARY

By Chip Griffin, February 15, 2007

Dorothy W. Abbott just died this past week, at the age of 100. She, like her husband, past president, and Paul Harris Fellow, Paul Abbott, exemplified Rotary's motto, "service above self," all her life. Thirty-seven years ago, at the age of 63, on May 14, 1970, Dot Abbott was honored with Rotary's 11th Lifetime Service Award. She was the 3rd female recipient, following Grace Carlisle (in 1963) and Violet Smith (in 1968). Dorothy Abbott may well have received the honor earlier; she won this award in spite of, not because of, the presence of her husband, Paul Abbott, in this club. Dorothy Abbott and Edith Dodge (in 1980, now 101) have been the only spouses of Rotarians to receive this honor. If we honored more of our spouses in this way, seems like we would extend their lives to the centennial mark.

Here is part of the tribute honoring Dorothy Abbott, in our Rotary club in 1970, during Ron Calhoun's year as president and as recorded by Harold Clifford: "one of the Region's outstanding women, wife and mother, whose brief but highly successful teaching career had been followed by years of service, leadership and cooperation in nearly every worth while organization and activity: church and Sunday school, YMCA, Memorial Library, Monday Club, Parent-Teacher Association." Dorothy continued her service above self for an additional 37 years after this lifetime of service in 1970.

I talked briefly with Dorothy when we Rotarians sang Christmas carols at St. Andrews Village in mid-December. Viv Daniels peeked into Dot's dark bedroom, and Dot invited us in when we exchanged greetings and a few words.

Well, my next-to-the-last encounter with Dorothy Abbott was a revealing and humorous one, on a Sunday morning this past December . As I was dashing into the Congo church, I saw Dorothy's caregiver having a time of it, after just opening the two van doors on the passenger's side. Dorothy was in the front seat, and her sister-in-law Peg Abbott was in the back seat, both raring to get out. The caregiver had gone to the back to get one walker (Peg's) and placed it alongside both doors and was then back retrieving Dorothy's walker, when Dorothy bounced out of the car, next to me, and grabbed onto Peg's walker. Peg shouted out that this was her walker, when I joined in the fray and slowed Dorothy down and kept Peg from jumping out until both walkers were there. We switched chairs, and both Dorothy and Peg were already through the church door before the poor caregiver had a chance to completely shut the van doors and catch up. And Dorothy was having a tough day, being a bit light-headed, she claimed. They are both incredibly energetic, dynamic, wise, and role models for us all!