

TRIBUTE TO DR. CAROL ABABEJA APUNYO

Dr. Caroline Apunyo Abeja **Atat** – The soft voice of reason

Rotary International has about 1.5 million members in 529 districts. During her active service, Uganda belonged to District 9200 which comprised Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, and her primary responsibility is to assist the governor with the administration of designated clubs. We speak therefore for hundreds of Rotarians who have interacted with her in the course of serving mankind.

Carol built a sterling career as a humanist serving in among other places, Rotary. She was recently recognized among those who have served humanity longer than 2 decades.



Carol the Rotarian, Centennial President in the year 2004/05. Laying the legacy before her, Carol initiated the famous Fellowship Installations.

At the time of her installation as President of her Club, the situation in the north was desolate

with many people still resident in Displaced People's Camps. She did not have the heart to host a hearty party when people in the country were suffering. She opted for a simple installation function during the normal club fellowship. This practice has since gone viral, with some modification, amongst many Rotary Clubs.

APPRECIATION FOR A LIFE FULLY LIVED

The major projects initiated in her year of presidency included the stocking of the reading center in Lira with reading materials and the energy saving stoves which commenced in Lira and eventually adopted by other Clubs for distribution in the Internally Displaced Camps.

Following her Presidency, Carol served in many offices beyond the Club, initially as coordinator of the RFHD and later as the Assistant Governor Northern Region 2006/7 where she was been commended as a key resource in the Northern Uganda region with 12 clubs.

She participated in multiple Medical camps in the Northern Region but most prominently in the five day medical camp in the North, which served almost 30,000 beneficiaries who had not seen doctors in more than 10 years of insurgency. She actively participated in all medical and psychiatric disciplines.



A LADY OF DIGNITY AND HIGH ETHICAL STANDARDS



**ROTARY
KAMPALA
SOUTH**

Indeed, her name among the very first to be floated as the first lady Rotary District Governor 9200. After a while she slowed down in the Rotary activities. She said to a fellow Rotarian, ***'Rotary is among the best organizations***

to serve, a good combination of service and fun. However, as a woman, I have to balance rotary with family, work, church, etc. I fear that am growing too fast in the lead-

ership hierarchy; I am surely moving towards the highest office of Rotary but my family is getting less time. I decided to step back to allow other women to grow in leadership. Please allow me be"

CAROL THE INDIVIDUAL

Dr. Abeja could change a Land Rover tyre all by herself. She conducted several construction projects to completion by herself; in one case traveling to Jinja to buy building materials. The soft spoken Doctor from Apala had beaten

significant odds in life to define herself beyond the chauvinist premise of women being weak. Carol, who had sacred duty to her home area, was the best student in Uganda at A levels in 1984. Going through adversity to emerge as a doctor. From conducting prostate examinations as an intern at Lacor, leading a project to provide

energy efficient stoves in Lira to emerge as a commercial Farmer in her village, she was never too far from Atat. As a community health professional, she had a soft spot for the girl child; providing a girls-only toilet at a school where teachers and students shared the facility. An exceptional leader with a high dose of integrity, who was team leader at a few NGO's.

OUTPOURING OF GRATITUDE CONTINUED

She was brilliant, firm and indeed frugal in money matters. Carols was the "firm voice" known for not mincing her words when she felt we were not following procedure especially about unplanned expenditures which strained members' pock-

ets. She maintained that club dues were sufficient to cover all planned expenses and therefore members should not be distributed with intermittent financial solicitations.

Following her exceptional performance as coordinator of the Rotary Family Health Days, one Rotarian R.C. Kampala North commented thus, ***"She is thorough!"***

'Her candle has surely burned bright'

An effective communicator who spoke fluently with authority through her presentations and with excellent demeanor. She had infectious time management and maintained to detail documentation.

She was the dotting Grandma, not only to her own grandchild, but also to the many young Rotarians who looked up to her. One Club member boasted, 'I used to interact with her in our Kikandwa project and she used to tell me how she loved to help the community and that she was happy that I was active in Kikandwa'. She was a true Rotarian that believed in

making Rotary affordable to all. She believed that a lot more should be spared to be used in the community. Another club member recalls her assurance that he would enjoy Rotary. Recalling their last moments together he says, ***"I last spoke to her on 18th May this year and my last words to her were that 'I am praying for your Mum and you too'."***

Another colleague remembers her ability to communicate with an individual amid a crowd, "I particularly liked the way she would seem to pay attention to you as an individual even in group settings".



A light hearted moment with a bosom buddy

PAST ASSISTANT GOVERNOR CAROL

Carol is referred by many in Rotary, as a Mentor and Friend. She touched many lives and will be missed by many.

I met PAG Dr. Abeja Carol in October 2013 during my rotary induction training; another member recalls. Carol emphasized the issue of being ethical and told a story during leadership of a health project

in Northern Uganda, of how unethical government officials fought hard to have her transferred to another district because she had curtailed their ways of stealing project funds

I had the pleasure of working with Carol for many years as an upcoming Rotarian and later as a well-matured person in Rotary leadership. She was among the very first crop of Lady Presidents in the District. I still remember the anger PDG Chris Mutalya, and I felt when the then District Governor of then D9200 terrorized her so much that she cried. You see, many Rotarians had still not accepted ladies as Rotarians, let alone as Rotary leaders. We, especially Chris, encouraged her to stay on course, because she was an excellent leader, and I still remember Chris' communication to the DG at the time, quarrelling "Kisoga" style as we call it. She could also argue her point stoutly and solidly.

Gone like a candle in the wind, traveling back from a club project in 2010, one member reminisces; "It was just the two of us in the car and we talked about work, and family; I got to know about her daughter Jane, how she had had her when she was relatively young and the special bond that they share. She really made me feel welcome in the club.



One day, on a work related assignment in Kabale, Carol, made a decision to visit the elderly couple that she had never known, the parents of a club member. Following introductions, the doctor in her found a patient in her host. She made a decision to bring him to a facility in Kampala where the issues could be addressed. The club member learnt that the ailing parent was at Kyengera and could spend the night at either of their premises. This action was and will always be dear to me

ALL PROUD TO HAVE KNOWN CAROL

As a new member to the club and to the ladies forum, it wasn't easy breaking the ice but Carol kept mentioning my name here and there, thereby warming up the house; it really felt good to know that someone out there knew I existed. Even before ever meeting physi-

cally I learnt, during my introduction, that she would become my in law as I would marry into her clan 'Palamyek clan'. I could feel her excitement all the way from Manafwa. We developed a very soft spot for each other. Fate has robbed my family of meeting our in-law Atat.

Not to be outdone by the new tongue-twisting names for children, the club babes named a 9 month boy, Odwe!. "Having met a Rotaractor, I admired her, respected her and so wished she were my friend. She was principled, soft spoken and not judgemental. Odwe smiled back at her.

EXUDING A KIND PERSONALITY

Carol, the person we remember, had warm personality, a very cheerful and endearing smile, a strong hug. Above all she was "Atat" to the ladies in the club, "club babes", and never missed the opportunity to pass on the wisdom and wise counsel.

You were a beautiful soul, your inner beauty radiated through your naughty eyes and that all-knowing smile....oh and that little girl voice. You brought life and grit to everyone you touched.

It was so empowering to see life through your eyes and know that whatever lies ahead, you have been there and you would hold our hands through it all.

We say farewell to a counselor and a woman of principal her, but her dedication, her integrity, and her forthright nature and warmth remain with us.

It was fitting perhaps that God called her soon after she became a grandmother. She lived a full life.

We have privileged to meet Carol in the course of life'.



Apwoyo Atat. Rest in peace until we meet again.

FOUR GENERATIONS IN ONE PICTURE



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