

UZUAKOLI METHODIST COLLEGE CENTENARY CELEBRATION

GOODWILL MESSAGE/TRIBUTE

From DOB Sir Edet J. Amana KJW, FNSE, FAEng DIC, PhD, DSc, OON,

I give Almighty God thanks and praise for the honor and privilege to be part of the centenary celebration of my alma mater, Uzuakoli Methodist College (UZUMECO). The young ones will refer to me as an “**Ancient Old Boy**”. I entered the school in January 1953 and was reared in the great tradition of the heroes who passed through Hardy House. The story of my life is the story of the school which nurtured me.

My choice to have my secondary school education in UZUMECO was a shock to many people as most of my friends in Oron opted for Oron Boys High School (OBHS). UZUMECO was a two (2) day’s journey from Oron in 1953 (it is now a 3-hour drive) and so my mother was opposed to my choice. I was determined to be different from my friends; I loved the feeling of independence and adventure which UZUMECO presented, and I now know that choice was God’s plan for my life. There was a drama the morning of my departure to school. My mother feared the worst; she thought she would never see me again. She clinged on to me and wept bitterly, and I wept with her in sympathy. I remained conscious of that weeping session all through my 5 years in school. I was determined that, not only would my mother see me again, I would thrive and blossom in the school.

Within my first week in school, I learnt the greatest lesson which has sustained me through the changing scenes of life – Praise and Thanks to Almighty God. The school song MHB 64, V:2 says “**Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work and defend thee: Surely His goodness and mercy here daily attend thee. Ponder anew, what the Almighty can do. If with His love, He befriend thee.**” God truly has befriended me. I always ponder how the grace, love and mercy of God have taken me to heights unimaginable over the years.

Two events stand out from my days at UZUMECO. The first was the passion of one of our principals, Rev McGuire to provide pipe borne water to the school. His commitment was such that he did not spare himself any pains. He fainted several times out of exhaustion from going up and down the slopes that led to the Ilo stream where the water was harvested for pumping to the school. I had my first lesson in practical hydraulic engineering by watching him construct a weir to divert water to the machine

which pumped the water from the stream to the overhead tanks in the school compound. The second was the industry of one of our science teachers, Mr O. T. Inyang who came to teach us chemistry in our final year, straight from his Higher School Certificate (HSC). His enthusiasm and passion were palpable. All the chemistry students found the subject fun and scored high grades in the School Certificate exams. Passion brings success to the most complex, or the most mundane undertaking. **Passion is a guarantor of success.**

I opted to do my HSC at Kings College Lagos (KC) even though UZUMECO started HSC in science subjects in 1958. Moving from UZUMECO to KC opened new vistas for me. The disciplined Christian background I had at UZUMECO made me a star in KC. In the Founders Day celebration of 1960 (the year of Nigeria's independence), I received from the hands of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Nigeria's Prime Minister and Special Guest of Honour to the celebration, prizes for Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics. The front-page headline in the *"Daily Times"* newspaper stated, **"Kings College Boy clears Three in a Row"**. The newspaper headline stated KC boy, but in my heart I knew that it is my UZUMECO background that made this happen. This paved the way to the award of a 6-year scholarship for me to study Structural Engineering to PhD level at Imperial College London. At Imperial College, my coming top of the first-class honours degree after 2 years in the college set an unbreakable record.

In life, my Christian values of love, discipline, and integrity endeared me to my employers and colleagues alike. During my short stint in Shell-BP (Warri, PH, Lagos) MHB 64, V:3 which says: ***"Praise to the Lord, Who, when tempests their warfare are waging. Who, when the elements madly around thee are raging, biddeth them cease, turneth their fury to peace. Whirlwinds and waters assuaging."*** materialized in my life. God bid the tempest cease their warfare in my life when I got shot in Ugheli during the civil war, May 10, 1969. I came out of the storm victorious but with the scars of battle. The school song, MHB 64: V1-5, has been my guide through life.

My classmates included the following – The Very Rev Emmanuel Ekekwe, Engr Lawrence Domkpe, Mr Mbu, Mr Lambert Nnadi, Engr Emmanuel Ojimadu, Engr Davis Ekpo, Dr Gabriel Ekeke, Mr Chigbu Nnochiri to mention only a few - we were about 30 in the class. Some other contemporaries, seniors and juniors, with whom I had close relationship were Prof Kendrick Udo, Dr Udo I. Okon, Chief Gospel Ugwa, Chief Dick

Nwokeohuru, Mr Chibuzo Nwagbara, Barr Barinua Wifa, Mr Albert T. Badey, Mr Okon J. Okpo. Some of my teachers were Rev McGuire, Mr Spray, Rev Collingwood, Mr Omoega, Mr Onokola, Mr U.U. Okure, Mr Thatcher, Mr Vincent McEldery, Mr N. Umoh, and Mr Akadu.

Amana Consortium Limited, the Engineering Consultancy company I started in January 1972 is one of the leading engineering design companies and has won several awards in Nigeria. My formative years at UZUMECO has served me well. I have offered my services wherever value-addition is required. I brought innovation to my presidency of two engineering organizations - Association for Consulting Engineering in Nigeria (ACEN, 2004-2006) and the Nigerian Academy of Engineering (NAEng, 2010-2012) which serves as a Think-Tank for government in Technology, Engineering and Innovation.

UZUMECO gave me a good foundation for services to Methodist Church Nigeria. God has made me a serial builder of churches and cathedrals - Methodist Church Nigeria, Cathedral of the Cross Oron, dedicated December 13, 2003, and Lady Doris Amana Memorial Methodist Cathedral Oyubia, Dedicated December 11, 2010). I was Methodist Church Nigeria Technical Adviser, Investment Adviser, Member, Founding Board of Trustees for Wesley University Ondo (WUNO) and later Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council (2013 to 2018). As Pro-Chancellor of WUNO, I introduced the idea of multiple campuses for WUNO with two eastern campuses at UZUMECO and OBHS. Recently I was chairman of the inauguration of Methodist Church Nigeria Mission UK and Ireland. This initiative is a chance to bring Methodist revival to the UK and Ireland in the throes of religious revisionism.

My tribute ends with the school song MHB 64, V:5. ***“Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore Him! All that hath and breath, come now with praises before Him! Let the Amen sound from His people again; Gladly for aye we adore Him. Amen.”***