



THE J S QUARCOOPOME DYNASTY · IN MEMORIAM

John *Adjiri* Quarcoopome

*Beloved Father · Organist · Man of Peace*



*Man of Silence · Man of Faith · Man of Peace*



*John Adjiri Quarcoopome*

A TRIBUTE TO DAD · WRITTEN BY **DR. NII OTOKUNOR**  
**QUARCOOPOME**

O

ur father called me Tutuu. I never quite understood the name and never bothered to ask its origin. But somehow I was comforted by the fact that he always used the name affectionately. People claimed I looked like him and, I must admit, on occasions I have looked myself in the mirror to check if this was really true. However deep down I knew that, physical resemblance aside, the two of us were like night and day: I was the hothead who had little interest in compromises but Dad was the perfect peacemaker and certainly among the least confrontational people to walk the face of this earth. His quiet disposition made him appear uneasy in the limelight. Still, his fervent belief that there is power in silence made him a good listener and a keen observer. And though some people mistook him to be timid he was always the proverbial "Sir Oracle" whose utterances silenced barking dogs. *Even in death, his silence speaks volumes.*



Astute in his private life as he was in public, our father long recognized the challenges of living in a large multi-family household. He knew he had to be a strict father to achieve his ultimate goal of placing us on the paths of success. Aware of how impressionable we were as children, he was vigilant about our education and in his role as a parent. He prohibited us from cursing, lying and, in particular, uttering profanities, which he literally scrubbed from our mouths. To this day, most of us still have difficulty using those filthy

Ga terms. When he caught you misbehaving, he simply shot you a disapproving glance that made you feel guilty for days. After the glance came his signature double reprimand, "*dzeedzεmẽ, goway*".

Of Dad's many traits, it was his obsession with hygiene that was most striking. His particular hatred of bodily sores may have inspired his ban on playing soccer. But boys being boys, we found a way around the sanction. Too young to play, I was allowed to tag along only because I watched out for the old man's arrival from work. When I spotted him on his final descent from the YWCA, I screamed "*Daa mbaa eee!*" So ominous was this alarm, one abandoned even a goal-scoring opportunity and immediately headed for the bathroom. Of course, by the time Dad reached home, our freshly minted bodies had powder in the wrong places, hair uncombed, and shirts turned inside out. Dad always feigned ignorance of our activities, until one of us developed a sore — then all hell would break loose. When he said, "*kitee tsus mliŋ*", you knew you were about to be caned, a penalty that he reserved for the most serious offences.



One memorable encounter with his personal barber encapsulates his crusade to raise us differently. Dad's monthly routine was to send us to this barber for one only hairstyle, the bow. Then in the mid-1960s came a new haircut called "Tokyo Joe" — a near completely shaved scalp that left a small patch of hair at the front. Tokyo Joe was so much in vogue at the time our schoolmates and friends all sported it. By the time Dad announced our next trip to the barbershop, peer pressure had reached boiling point and both

Nat and I had resolved to join this new revolution in hair fashion. We therefore conspired to deliver a totally different message instructing the barber to give us the "Tokyo Joe". The skeptical barber smiled mischievously and remarked: "Sure, it is your Dad's wish, indeed!" — but still proceeded with the cut.

For more than four hours after we returned home, we avoided Dad like a plague, hoping that once evening came and the barbershop closed for the weekend, he would have no choice but to accommodate our minor indiscretion. By late afternoon when he finally discovered the "disaster" on our heads, we knew we had made the worst decisions of our young lives. He literally chased us back to the barbershop with an unambiguous instruction to the barber to lose the hair patches. Apparently, the crafty barber knew our father better than we did. That day alone, he stayed well beyond his usual closing time, as if he expected our return. With the wicked smile still on his face, he wasted no time in fulfilling Dad's wish, which instantly transformed our heads to virtual "*sakora*" — a far worse haircut in any schoolyard. Expecting the worst, we never prayed so hard for hair to grow back over a single weekend!



Dad loved music so much that he named his first three sons after his favourite classical musicians — Beethoven, Handel and Hayden. However it was his love of church and choral music that made him famous. At seven I became the youngest member of the choir, with a choir robe that could easily have come from a fabric the size of a woman's cover cloth. While it was difficult those days to attend

choir practice twice a week and service on Sundays, watching Dad play the organ so gracefully and skillfully was always a reason to persevere. Still, it was our memories of this favourite musical instrument's place in our home that have remained the strongest. Dad's organ was so sacred to him — whenever he readied for work he studied the precise configuration of the cloth that covered it. As a ritual he inspected the keyboard for fingerprints when he returned. When he detected fingerprints, he saved my interrogation for last, knowing that when others denied playing the organ, I would buckle under pressure. Sadly, I never failed him.

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*Once I began playing and the choir started its march into the chapel, I noticed far behind a proud father smiling approvingly as he quietly followed. He waited for me to savor my five minutes of fame before taking over.*

Dad never had time to tutor us in music yet, later, he must have felt our desire to learn an instrument. With two or more keyboards in the house at any time, we each discovered our respective talents — or lack thereof. When he transferred to Kumasi in the 1970s, I took to church music to his delight. For months Dad never once commented on my performance; however when he began relaxing in the living room during my practice sessions, I knew immediately that I was coming under scrutiny. On his insistence, I began accompanying him to church. One Sunday, he asked me to take the lead to church, which I did, since that was not the first time. Upon arriving at church I noticed that service was about to start. Because Dad

was driving I presumed that he would make it in time to take his place at the organ. As I desperately looked around for him, the pastor inquired if there was an organist in the congregation. Being the son of the resident organist, all eyes were suddenly focused on me. At that moment I told myself that playing organ in church was not a Quarcopome family obligation and would not yield to pressure. But, with so many entreating eyes, I couldn't help but step nervously into my father's big shoes.



His passion for religion went beyond simply delivering fine church music. He recited the psalms with conviction and inculcated in his children the virtue of submitting to God's will. His favourite adage, *mõ fěēmõ kε egβε* ("To each person, his or her path in life"), served as an admonition against jealousy. To him, one should never attempt to appropriate another person's humanity. For this very reason, he respected the individuality of each of his children, recognizing that each one's uniqueness strengthens rather than weakens the family.

In espousing individuality, Dad never interfered with the career choices we made, except to caution us about hidden dangers. As the third son, I grew up in the shadows of two accomplished brothers, both scientifically oriented. When it came to choosing a career, I must have surprised him when I decided to become an archaeologist and later an art historian. However he did not throw tantrums like some parents did when they couldn't make doctors, engineers, and lawyers out of some of their children. Instead he stood quietly for a while and then inquired: *"that, too, is fine, but will that feed*

*your family?"* Knowing him, he intended this seemingly harmless question more as a challenge than a slight. From that day, I resolved to prove to him that I could make a living out of a relatively unfamiliar profession.

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*That simple probing question of many years ago has worked wonders. It is what has made me what I am today — what rings in my ears at my most difficult moments, re-energising me and stirring in me that indomitable passion to succeed.*

Dad, if your spirit is here with us today, I would like you to know that simple probing question of many years ago has worked wonders. It is what has made me what I am today. It is what rings in my ears at my most difficult moments, re-energizing me and stirring in me that indomitable passion to succeed. I am sure you have employed variations of that approach on every one of your children, which explains why we continue to excel. So, I would stand on behalf of my brothers and sisters, to thank you from the bottom of my heart for allowing us to find our respective paths in life. Thank you from the depths of my being for not imposing your will on us. And, above all, thank you for bringing the best out of us.



In his last years Dad's relationship with his first daughter, Joyce, became the envy of all. Joyce was his nurse, caretaker, and confidant, which explains why Dad called her his precious daughter — clearly,

his way of acknowledging her enormous devotion and sacrifices. Dad, your death has left a void in Joyce's life. What do you expect her to do on your next birthday? What do you want her to do with all the food she prepared for your New Year's Day celebration? That list of sumptuous meals you requested for January 1, 2006 will forever be etched in her memory.

HIS CHILDREN — STANDING UNITED

*Wilfred · Nathan · Ebenezer · Joyce · Ivy ·  
Benedict · Gabriel · Ruby · Abigail ·  
Michael · Gloria · Edna · Martha*

*May God richly bless you and accept your soul into His  
bosom.*

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THE J S QUARCOOPOME DYNASTY

*Roots. Strength. Heritage. Forever.*